UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, MERCED

"Waves of Revolution: Interrogations of Sikh Political and Spiritual Subjectivities in Punjab and the American West, 1900-1928"

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

Interdisciplinary Humanities

by

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DEDICATION

For my family.

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FIELDS OF STUDY

Sikh Studies; History; Literature; Anthropology; Asian American Studies; Critical Race and Ethnic Studies; Rural and Agrarian Studies

ABSTRACT

"Waves of Revolution: Interrogations of Sikh Political and Spiritual Subjectivities in Punjab and the American West, 1900-1928"

Amrit Deol, Interdisciplinary Humanities, University of California, Merced, 2021

My dissertation entitled "Waves of Revolution: Interrogations of Sikh Political and Spiritual Subjectivities in Punjab and the American West, 1900-1928" examines the development of anti-colonial thought and activity among Sikh laborers after their arrival to the American West from 1913-1928. Specifically, using interdisciplinary methods and methodologies in the humanities, I construct an intellectual and literary history of the Ghadar Party, a transnational Indian anticolonial organization that was established in Astoria, Oregon in 1913. The party's primary objective was to organize a munity against the British colonial government and bring India to independence. With the Ghadar Party, immigrant Sikh laborers created a political organization that was so powerful it almost defeat the British empire. I interrogate the Ghadar Party's success by critically analyzing the early twentieth century political poetry published by the *Ghadar Press* in California. Building on this literary foundation, I augment my analysis with approaches from history and anthropology to construct a literary, social, and political history of Sikh spiritual and political subjectivities in the early twentieth century. Prior historical studies on the Ghadar Party define the party as secular and consequently leave out the many ways in which Ghadar was influenced by the Sikh tradition, or *Sikhi*. Thus, I highlight not only the influences that Sikh knowledges have had on the Party's ideologies, but also how *Sikhi* has been depoliticized through this process of secularization of the Sikh tradition's political history.

This transnational project is thematically structured to: (1) understand secular developments in Ghadar's history and political activity in Punjab; (2) grapple with the ways in which immigration policy and law affected Punjabi-Sikh immigrants in the diasporic space of the American West in the early 1900s; (3) contend with the non-secular and its presence in the archives of Sikh laborers through their employment of *Sikhi* within their poetry. This dissertation project seeks to extend the work done by scholars within American Studies, History, Literature, Sikh Studies, and Critical Historical Anthropology to engage more deeply with the laborers of anticolonial movements. By borrowing methodologies from each of these disciplines, "Waves of Revolution" centers interdisciplinary research questions and hopes to advance each of these fields by uncovering new and collaborative ways to interrogate the archive, specifically through critical literary and historical analysis of non-secular knowledges in relation to race, religion, and empire. Through this project, I re-examine the archive and uncover the rich and deeply influential histories of non-secular knowledges in anti-colonial thought and the lived realities of Sikh peoples in the American West and Punjab in the early 20th century.

INTRODUCTION: A Resounding Echo of Mutiny

I am neither a Leninist nor a Gandhist; my only dream was the Indian independence and the prosperity of Indian people.
---Sohan Singh Bhakna (founder of the Ghadar Party), interview with P.S. Bajaj, date unknown.

Led by mill worker Sohan Singh Bhakna, in the early summer of 1913, Punjabi laborers along the Pacific Northwest met in Astoria, Oregon to discuss a matter of utmost importance—revolution.[1] Lala Har Dayal, a philosophy professor from Stanford University was called upon to sit in on this vital moment. Dayal who had ties with the Industrial Workers of the World and local anarchist groups in California's Bay Area, proposed that the laborers continue to create more scholarships for young South Asian men to come to the United States for education. He argued that only with a western education could the budding revolutionaries be equipped to return to South Asia and fight for its freedom from the British Raj.[2] The workers immediately countered back with a firm "No." Raising money for scholarships meant waiting too long for freedom, they were ready for action now. Har Dayal conceded and instead he proposed that then they should create a political party built on democratic ideals—one that should resemble the spirit of the 1857 rebellion. Over time, the workers came to a consensus that it should be called *Ghadar* (mutiny), and its weekly organ should carry its *gunj*, or echo, throughout the world. The first publication of the *Ghadar di Gunj* was published in November of 1913 in San Francisco, California. The paper was sent across the British empire declaring war:

> Today, there begins in foreign lands, but in our country's language, a war against the British Raj…What is our name? *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.[3]

By the winter of 1913, the laborers moved the headquarters of the Party to California. Ghadar scholar Maia Ramnath states, "he [Dayal] had begun making overtures to the more than five thousand 'young Sikhs' around Stockton who worked in field, factory, and small shop operations. Despite their habitual distrust of educated elites, these workers

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[1] This account is taken from Sohan Singh Josh's *Hindustan Ghadar Party: A Short History* and Johanna Ogden's "Ghadar, Historical Silences, and Notions of Belonging Early 1900s Punjabis of the Columbia River."
[2] Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party: A Short History* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1977), 158.
[3] Translation from Urdu to English: Khuswant Singh and Satindra Singh, *Ghadar, 1915, India's First Armed Revolution* (New Delhi: R&K Publishing House, 1966), 19.

responded well."[4] Dayal attempted to negotiate the barriers between elite South Asian (usually high-caste Hindu) students at the University of California, Berkeley and laborers, who were primarily Sikh, through continual discussions on the oppressions of the working class.[5] While Dayal was initially an influential leader of the party, other Sikh contributors, like Kartar Singh Sarhaba, also made deep connections with the Sikh laborers through Punjabi poetry. The party continued its global fight against imperialism until 1919, when they were disrupted by the investigations of the Lahore Conspiracy and San Francisco Conspiracy Trials;[6] however, its legacies—spiritual, intellectual, and material—remain in the many political contexts of Punjab and its diaspora.

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This dissertation began during an uneventful and excruciatingly hot Imperial Valley summer in 2002. I was eleven-years old at the time and my older brother of thirteen was always the one mustering up a new scheme to battle his boredom. We lived in the countryside of El Centro, California, which remains notorious for its lack of excitement and desert landscape. Our home was situated on a nine-acre farm that my father had garnered in a deal with its owner—no rent in exchange for its maintenance. The house was over ninety-years-old and had an eclectic layout to prove it. In the back end of the structure, there was a detached study and office space used by its first occupant, Rattan Singh Dhillon, to conduct his farming business in the early 1900s—my family used it for storage. The office contained a closet-sized room made of concrete walls on three sides and a huge safe door which served as its entrance. Surprisingly, no tenant was bothered by this safe for years and continued to move about it as if it were not there. Well, no tenant except my brother who proposed in the summer of 2002 that we crack it open. We stealthily borrowed a hammer and chisel from my father's tool shed and started chipping at the wall. The long summer days would pass by as we worked in shifts just chipping away, discussing what treasures might lay inside. Days turned into weeks as we continued to work until we created a gaping hole in the wall the size of my

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[4] Maia Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 90.

[5] Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia*, 90.

[6] The Lahore Conspiracy Trials began in 1915 and charged 82 revolutionaries with conspiracy to overthrow the British Government. While many members were captured upon return to South Asia, others distanced themselves from the movement in Punjab in efforts to escape the clutches of British law. However, as these trials in Punjab could not eliminate the movement within the diaspora, the British government pressured the US government to deport the revolutionaries in California back to South Asia where they could be controlled by British law. The US government thus charged the leaders of the Ghadar movement in California with conspiracy against the British, whom the US was at peace with at the time in the infamous San Francisco Conspiracy Trial of 1917. Many Ghadar scholars consider this to be the moment of the disbanding of the Ghadar Party as factions grew within the movement.

hand. Peering through with flashlights, we took turns looking in and saw a latch on the inside of the door. All it took was a long metal rod and some skillful coordination and we were able to open the safe door from the inside. Looking back, I applaud our patience as we ran to our parents, urging them to come with us to look inside. Ultimately, the safe contained no piles of gold or bags of money; however, it had a treasure of a different kind.

The owner locked within its concrete walls: documents pertaining to a farming business, newspaper articles on the 1947 India-Pakistan partition, stacks of sacred Sikh texts, boxes of pamphlets and journals written in Punjabi and Urdu by the Ghadar Party, and an extraordinary amount of white chalk. My father took the farming documents, my mother took the religious texts, and my brother was content with the chalk. I took the pamphlets and journals and kept them with me through every transition of my life, not understanding their content; however, respecting the significance they held for a man over ninety-years ago.

Image 1: "Some documents from the Deol Family Archive, Selma, California"

It was not until I learned to read Punjabi at twenty-one years of age that I realized I carried with me a revolution. I reached out to the elders within the Imperial Valley Sikh community and they told me that the Ghadar Party was a movement of Sikhs in North America and their fight against the British. They told me what were these Sikhs to be if not revolutionaries—their *sikhi* demanded them to fight for freedom. This project is the work of many summers, from that of 1913 to now. I humbly attempt to engage with the history of Ghadar and its Sikh members through the archive of its written word and by

centering the Sikh members of the movement, who were the largest population of the Party. Here I interrogate the spiritual and political subjectivities of Sikh people in the contexts of race, religion, and empire. Many previous historical projects on the movement have defined the movement as secular and have thus left out the many ways in which Ghadar had been influenced by the Sikh tradition. Thus, here I highlight not only the influences that Sikh knowledges have had on the Party's ideologies, but also how *Sikhi* has been depoliticized through this process of secularization of the Sikh community's history.

Since the 1960s, historians in the US and Punjab have written on the history of Ghadar. To understand the ways in which the secularization of the discipline history has affected histories on Ghadar, one must first understand the general trajectory of intellectual studies on the movement. Scholarship on Ghadar emerged in the 1960s in Punjab's academic context and was heavily influenced by Indian nationalist and/or Marxist histories. Centered around the desire to *historicize* Ghadar, scholars in this period sought to fit its history into pre-existing histories on Indian nationalism or communism. For instance, in 1969 Gurdev Singh Deol published *The Role of the Ghadar Party in the National Movement* arguing that the Ghadar movement belonged in nationalist history alongside the Free India Movement. Parambir Singh Gill attributes the early framing of Ghadar as nationalist history to the Indian government's efforts to push a secular nationalist narrative in the post-1947 context.[7] On the other hand, Sohan Singh Josh published his seminal text *The Hindustan Ghadar Party History Vol. I & II* in 1977 in which he highlighted the communist and Marxist influences on the Ghadar movement. Josh's work emerged during the height of Marxist influence in the Indian academy in the 1970s and 80s.

In the 1980s, scholars in the United States academy began to write on the Ghadar movemen,t and most importantly, these scholars situated the origins of Ghadar in the United States. A prominent example of such work is Anil Ganguly's *The Ghadar Revolution in America*, in which he argues that Ghadar was based on the democratic principles of the US. According to Ganguly, the Ghadar movement mimicked early American revolutionaries (who were also fighting the British) and thus, Ghadar's history is closely aligned to US history. However, this narrative of Ghadar history as an offspring of American revolutionary history does not dominate scholarship in the US academic context. Ganguly's simplistic reading of Ghadar intellectual history is complicated by scholars in the US, such as Seema Sohi who placed Ghadar in the context of global imperialist history. Seema Sohi's text *Echoes of Mutiny: Race, Surveillence, and Anticolonialism in North America* explores the rise in anti-colonial resistance and the increasing immigrant exclusion policies in early 20th century North America. *Echoes of Mutiny* offers a rich history of how the US and British empires colluded to suppress Indian anticolonialism. While Sohi's text does not venture into the history of Ghadar in the Indian context, it is extensive in its North American analysis.

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[7] Parmbir Singh Gill, "A Different Kind of Dissidence: The Ghadar Party, Sikh History and the Politics of Anticolonial Mobilization," *Sikh Formations* 10, no. 1 (March 2016): 28.

One cannot deny the contributions that these texts have had on the history of the Ghadar movement. Each text has offered a unique intervention in the history of the Ghadar movement, whether through nationalist, democratic, Marxist, or critical race analysis. These histories charter through geographical locations, capturing the truly global nature of the movement. Despite the volume of scholarship that has thus far been produced on the Ghadar movement, there is little work on intellectual drives of the movement's members. More particularly, there is a lack of engagement with the organizing efforts of Sikh people in the movement and a trend to either ignore or deny the presence of Sikh thought as a critical framework that had shaped the party's agenda. Revisiting the texts by Ganguly, Josh, and Sohi, I argue that while each text offers a rich history of the trajectory of the movement, however, neither has examined how *Sikhi* had influenced the movement. On the other hand, some scholars have also chosen to outright dismiss *Sikhi* as an influencing factor. In his essay "The Ghadar Syndrome: Nationalism in an Immigrant Community," Mark Juergensmeyer identifies the party as communalist and nationalist, but most importantly secular in nature. He states, "The movement was always political, untainted with the language of faith."[8] Thus, for Juergensmeyer the religious is not political. Similarly, Maia Ramnath's text *Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire* also take a contentious view against the influence of *Sikhi* on the party's ideologies.[9]

In 2014, Parambir Singh Gill published "A Different Kind of Dissidence: The Ghadar Party, Sikh History, and the Politics of Anticolonial Mobilization" in *Sikh Formation,* in which he argues that identifying the non-secular in the Ghadar party is a worthwhile pursuit. According to Gill, "Ghadar implicated *Sikhi* as both a force and a stake in the struggle to overthrow British rule in India."[10] Gill's article marks a prominent shift in the study of Ghadar. While little work has been done on the non-secular influences on Ghadar since its publication, Gill's article creates an avenue for such work to venture. This dissertation is in direct conversation with the work done by early Ghadar scholars (such as Josh) and the more recent scholarship (such as Gill) and hopes to push the discourse on Ghadar into the exploring its intellectual influences.

This dissertation grapples with how Sikh peoples, as both spiritual and political beings, relied on *Sikhi* to inform their anti-colonial practices. This project asks: How can we create an intellectual history of the Ghadar Party and its Sikh intellectual legacies? Can we write a history of the movement that takes to task the binary of the secular/non-secular in history? How are the formations of secularism expressed in Punjab during the early 1900s? Following the institutionalization of the Sikh tradition in northern South Asia through colonial rule and law, this project asks how is *Sikhi* (the Sikh tradition), and not Sikhism (the institutionalized religious formation), represented in the Party's poetry? What does the historiography of the Ghadar movement tell us about the larger

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[8] Mark Juergensmeyer, *The Ghadar Syndrome: Nationalism in an Immigrant Community* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1977), 3.

[9] Maia Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 5.

[10] Gill, "A Different Kind of Dissidence," 23-41.

narratological constructions of anticolonial movements in the Western discipline of History? [1112] I ask how the presence of *Sikhi* as a subjugated knowledge within Ghadar's history and historiography challenges traditional understandings of history and the archive. "Waves of Revolution" interrogates the unadorned, ontological question of what is Sikh(i) in the historical context of the Ghadar Party? Navigating Ghadar's history through a transnational approach, this project charters the many connections between Ghadar in the US and its relationships with the politics of Punjab. Here, I build upon the work done by scholars within Critical Race and Ethnic Studies, Postcolonial Studies, American Studies (with particular focus on the American West), and Sikh Studies to engage more deeply with the laborers of anticolonial movements.

Discourses and Fields of Study

First, this dissertation extends the work done by postcolonial studies scholars to critically examine Punjabi anticolonial histories. Scholars such as David Scott, have attempted to write and understand anticolonial movements through interdisciplinary approaches of history and literature.[13] I engage with similar interdisciplinary dialogues within these fields to understand the significance of poetry, race, religion, and empire in the Ghadar movement. Each chapter within this project will utilize interdisciplinary methodologies from the Humanities to ask new and complex questions pertaining to race, religion, and empire.

Second, this work contributes to scholarship on the American west. Through the work being done currently by transnational scholars within the field of U.S. Western History, we can see how the Turnerian thesis has been far left behind.[14] In my own work on the Ghadar Party, I follow in the footsteps of Seema Sohi and her critical text *Echoes of Mutiny: Race, Surveillance and Indian Anti-colonialism in North America* in which she develops a transnational framework for understanding empire and resistance in North America. Specifically, I look at the transnational exchanges of Sikh knowledges that were brought to the US by Sikh immigrants from Punjab and manifested in the Party's politics. This dissertation examines the socio-political landscape of the early 20th century American west and how discourses on race and religion intersected with debates on South Asian citizenship. Also, this dissertation traces the lasting influences of the Ghadar

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[11] Defined as the logic behind constructions of historical narratives in: David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 7.

[12] This builds on Hayden White's article "The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory," *History and Theory* 23, no. 1 (1984): 1-33.

[13] Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity.*

[14] In his essay "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893) Fredrick Jackson Turner presents the famous "frontier thesis." Turner argues that, "the frontier [was] the outer edge of the wave—the meeting point between savagery and civilization…the line of most effective and rapid Americanization." Identified as the "Turner school," early western historians that followed the "frontier thesis" argued that westward movement had shaped American values and its people.

Party on the socio-political landscape of Punjab. This project will contribute to Western History by navigating the US western landscape as a transnational space, in which decolonial knowledges were both learned and exchanged.

Third, this project engages with the evolving field of Sikh Studies. In their initial introduction to the journal *Sikh Formations,* Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair, Pal Ahluwalia and Gurharpal Singh argue that Sikh Studies thus far has generated work that presupposes what the status of "Sikh" is in its scholarship. Thus, they argue that scholarship should attend to the onto-epistemological question of "*what is* Sikh?" which then leads to the existential question of "what does it mean to be Sikh?"[15] While some may assume that if the field of Sikh Studies ventures into the ontological terrain it will be engrossed by difficult to understand and elitist academic language; however, the question of "what is Sikh?" is at its very root a human question. Thus, the archives of subjugated knowledges must rely on this human question to assert their existence as real, tangible, and experienced by marginalized people. In the discipline of history, a highly secularized space in the Western academy, we see how non-secular knoweldges have been excluded from the normative histories on the Ghadar Party; however, Mandair, Ahluwalia, and Singh's question allows for a re-examination of Ghadar's history, one that would focus on how *Sikhi* may have influenced the Sikh party members, in turn informing their Sikh experiences and lifeworld. Through this project I contribute to Sikh Studies by utilizing a philosophical, onto-epistemological approach in order to challenge the ways in which secularization in the field of history has denied the existence of non-secular knowledges in the Ghadar movement.

A Brief History of Ghadar

The migration of Punjabis to the North American west in the early 1900s occurred for two primary reasons: first, to seek more labor opportunities within the colonial economy, and second, for anticolonial intellectuals to seek refuge in the West. It is important to note that in both cases, these early immigrants were aware and critical of the oppressions they endured at the hands of the British. Dr. Sundar Singh published an article in a Vancouver-based periodical in 1911 called *The Aryan*, in which he stated: "it was not for the sake of pleasure that Hindus go to settle abroad," rather, because of "the sword of famine and plague hanging round his neck most of the time… that the Hindu emigrates to save himself from actual starvation."[16] Colonial systemic issues facing these Sikhs in Punjab included: dispossession of land, high taxation, increasing indebtedness, famine, and poverty.[17] As agriculture was on the decline in Punjab, many men who could garner enough social, political, and economic capital sought to migrate to the western world for more labor opportunities and move away from peasant life.

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[15] Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair, Pal Ahluwalia, and Gurharpal Singh, "The Subject of Sikh Studies," *Sikh Formations* 1, no. 1 (2005).

[16] Seema Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny: Race, Surveillance, and Indian Anti-colonialism in North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 14.

[17] Bhagwan Singh Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab, 1926-1947* (New Delhi: Anupama Publications, 1970).

Many of those that emigrated belonged to small, peasant families from the Doab region of Punjab—about which were ninety percent Sikh. Among these new migrants, half had also previously served within the British Indian military. From 1899 to 1913, an estimated 6,656 South Asians legally entered the United States. This number steadily grew to about 10,000 in 1914.[18] These Punjabi-Sikh laborers first arrived at the ports of Vancouver, British Columbia in Canada and joined the local laborers in lumber mills and railroad companies. Believing they would be given equal opportunities and political agency as the white Canadians considering they were both British subjects, the newly arrived Punjabi laborers faced a rude awakening. Not only did these laborers contend with the brutal racism of their fellow white workers, but they were also subjected to racist immigration exclusionist policies from the Canadian Government.[19] In 1907, the Anti-Oriental Riots in Vancouver, BC and Bellingham, Washington erupted and resulted in stricter immigration policies both in the US and Canada. By 1909, anti-Asian sentiment was being fully channeled through immigration law and actions, as immigration officials excluded approximately fifty percent of South Asians attempting to seek entry into the United States.[20]

While many of these laborers were aware of their colonial oppressions in Punjab, they were quite shocked at the racist hostility they received by both the Canadian and US governments and their citizens. Though they may not have had much in common in Punjab, these Punjabi workers in both mills and farms throughout the North American west coast began living together in labor camps to protect one another from racial violence.[21] All throughout 1912, mill workers in Astoria, Oregon, including Sohan Singh Bhakna, Santokh Singh, and others, met weekly to discuss issues such as racial violence and discrimination, economic exploitation, and racist immigration policies. This group called itself the Pacific Coast Hindi Association (or PCHA).[22] Later, in the early summer of 1913 the group would invite Stanford professor Har Dayal to attend their meetings, establishing the revolutionary Ghadar Party. The members related their daily experiences of racial subjugation to the exploitation of British imperialism and agreed that the only way to achieve freedom would be to eradicate British imperialism and colonialism in its entirety. Within a year of its formation, the Ghadar Party grew in membership by the thousands not only in Canada and the US, but across the world (including Mexico, Panama, England, France, Ireland, Germany, Egypt, Afghanistan, China, Japan, Singapore, and Burma).

By late 1913, leaders moved the Ghadar headquarters to San Francisco, California. Per Har Dayal's suggestion and supervision, the Ghadar Party had purchased a printing press and began publishing various pamphlets and periodicals related to

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[18] Harish Puri, *Ghadar Movement: Ideology, Organization, and Strategy* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1993).
[19] Sarah Isabel Wallace, *Not Fit to Stay: Public Health Panics and South Asian Exclusion* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2017).
[20] Wallace, *Not Fit to Stay.*
[21] "Hindu Invasion," *Colliers,* (photocopy) March 26, 1910, 15. Box 1, Folder 2, South Asians in North America, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
[22] Ogden,"Ghadar Historical Silences."

Ghadar's agenda and distributing it throughout North and South America, Asia, Africa, and Europe. One example of such publications is the *Ghadar di Gunj*, a collection of revolutionary poetry first printed in 1913, overseen by both the editor Har Dayal and young revolutionary Kartar Singh Sarabha. The materials published by the Ghadar Party were heavily surveilled by both US and British intelligence agencies, thus poetry and oral recitation of the Party's agenda worked to spread their message without a paper trail.[23] Aside from poetry, the publications included histories of other revolutionary movements around the world to inspire the South Asian public to fight for their own freedom.

The party created a unique collaboration between the South Asian students studying at UC Berkeley, largely from upper-caste, Hindu backgrounds, and the laborers and farmworkers in California, who were mostly Sikh-Punjabis from peasant families. Specifically, Kartar Singh Sarabha worked towards bridging this gap as both a chemistry student at UC Berkeley and as someone from a Sikh-Punjabi family. During this early period in Ghadar's history, the Party's leaders also made successful connections with other global anti-imperialist and democratic movements within Ireland, China, Russia, and Egypt.[24] Ghadar's ability to create these larger links for global liberation was one of its primary reasons it grew in massive support during its early formative years. On March 25, 1914, caving under the pressure of British surveillance agencies, the US government seized Har Dayal as a key leader in international revolutionary conversations, and he was arrested and charged as an "undesirable alien" with anarchist leanings. Har Dayal argued vehemently that his arrest was not simply an "immigration issue," but rather a "political question." According to Har Dayal, he was arrested due to his role, "as one of the most active and determined leaders of the revolutionary movement in North America."[25] After being released on bail, Dayal fled the country for Europe and Ram Chandra took his place as editor of the *Ghadar* publishing house. In efforts to avoid similar charges of anarchism, Ram Chandra wrote an article titled *India Against Britain* in which he stated, "We are not anarchists, but republicans. That is why the British Government is in such fear of our purely ethical and educational work. Had we been "anarchists" we would have openly said so…We aim at nothing less than the establishment in India of a republic, a government of people, by the people, for the people of India."[26]

However, while the intelligentsia of the movement, such as Har Dayal and Ram Chandra, worked on building these transnational networks, at the local level, Sarabha and others were trying to persuade laborers throughout North America's west coast to return to India for the Mutiny of 1915 to fight the British. Throughout the summer of 1914, the Ghadar Party held meetings in major labor-centers such as Seattle, Astoria, Portland,

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[23] Sohan Singh Josh's *Hindustan Ghadar Party: A Short History* describes how Ghadar members would sit together and recite the poetry published by the press.

[24] Maia Ramnath's *Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire* captures the history of these collaborations.

[25] Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny*, 84.

[26] Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny,* 82. Also, see: Harish Puri, *Ghadar Movement: Ideology, Organization, and Strategy*) & Maia Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire*.

Sacramento, Stockton, Fresno, Oxnard, and Los Angeles, where leaders asked South Asians to return to India to fight off the British and establish a democratic republic. Thousands of members signed and pledged their names as those ready to return to fight.

In the late summer of 1914, a group from the Pacific Northwest travelled to San Francisco by train to join Ghadar leaders Jawala Singh, Mohammed Barkatullah, Ram Chandra, and Bhagwan Singh. The new recruits and revolutionaries were boarded onto the ship named *Korea*, which picked up passengers from ports in Honolulu, Yokohama, and Manila before stopping in Hong Kong. It has been noted by several accounts that along this journey, the party members recited revolutionary poetry from the *Ghadar di Gunj* to keep in high spirits. After a few weeks, and while still under the heavy surveillance of the British, the Ghadarites transferred onto the *Tosa Maru*, which landed in Calcutta on October 29, 1914.

The British Government was well aware of the upcoming mutiny, however, they were still surprised at how many Punjabis were arriving back to South Asian ports. General-Lieutenant-Governor O'Dwyer reported in October of 1914 that, "Thousands of Sikhs from abroad were pouring into the province." In response, security was heavily increased and each incoming Punjabi was interviewed, detained, and/or arrested and then interrogated to determine whether they held "Ghadar views."[27] Former Ghadar members and historians of the movement have argued that inside information must have been leaked causing such an increase in the detention of incoming migrants.[28] This in turn led many Ghadarites to abandon their mission for freedom.

Though many members slipped from the grasp of the British by claiming political passivity, leaders of the Ghadar movement like Sohan Singh Bhakna and Kartar Singh Sarabha were arrested. Subsequently, Bhakna was exiled and Sarabha was given the death penalty.[29] Other members who still wished to remain active attempted to survive by looting British homes and police stations. They also made strong efforts to sneak into military encampments in attempts to persuade Indian military recruits to join the revolution.[30] Despite the persistence of these remaining Ghadarites, what these revolutionary efforts of 1914 demonstrate the general pro-British attitude of many Indians in Punjab and the movement's inability to communicate and garner the support of the Punjabi public.

While the events of 1914 in Punjab delivered a severe blow to the Ghadar movement in Punjab, Ghadar activity on the international level was still strong. The new editor of *Ghadar*, Ram Chandra, had successfully worked with other anticolonial and anti-imperialists in Berlin to secure funding and arms from the German government. Many former and active Ghadarites had formed the Berlin India Committee in Germany,

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[27] Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny: Race,* 103. Also see: Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party: A Short History.*

[28] Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party* & Puri, *Ghadar Movement.*

[29] F.C. Isemonger and James Slattery, *An Account of the Ghadr Conspiracy, 1913-1915* (Lahore: Superintendent Government Printing, 1919) & Malwinder Jit Singh Waraich and Harinder Singh, *Ghadar Movement Original Documents, Lahore Conspiracy Cases I and II, Vol. I & II.* (Chandigarh: Unistar Books, 2008), 3.

[30] Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party*.

which had persuaded German Foreign Minister Alfred Zimmerman and German consuls in San Francisco, Shanghai, and Bangkok to provide funds and arms to the Ghadar Party.[31] Being on the eve of World War One, there were two primary reasons why the German consuls supported the Ghadar Party: for one, they wished to build anti-British sentiment amongst the Indian soldiers in the British military, and second, they wanted the British to be distracted with an armed rebellion in India, weakening their military presence in Europe.

Plans were made in 1915 to send arms to India via ships chartered by German funds. In January of 1915, the German counsel financed two ships, named *Annie Larsen* and the *Maverick*, both to leave the shores of California.[32] *Annie Larsen* was set to leave San Diego in March with over 8000 rifles, four million cartridges, and hundreds of revolvers. The ship would land in the Socorro Islands nearly 300 miles south of California, where it was to transfer its cargo into empty oil tanks on the *Maverick.* Eventually, the *Maverick* was to land in Karachi, India, where native fishing boats would unload the ammunition and two designated Ghadarites were to inform local revolutionaries of its arrival. Finally, *Annie Larson* was to return to California, unless it was intercepted by enemy warships, in which case it was to be sunk. Despite the exchange being planned in great detail, the ships lost communication and did not manage to exchange ammunition at the proper times, causing the operation to fail. Both ships were seized by opposing forces and the revolutionaries were left without ammunition on the shores of Karachi. The revolutionaries still attempted to revolt however, hundreds were arrested and tried at the Lahore Conspiracy Trials of 1915.

Regardless of the efforts to repress the rebellion happening in India during the Lahore Conspiracy Trials, Ghadarites in the US continued their anticolonial organizing until many of their leaders were arrested and tried in the famous Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial in San Francisco, California in 1917. Since the attempted arrest of Har Dayal in 1914, the British authorities were still trying to pressure the US government to deport as many "seditious" and "radical" Indians as they could. The British advocated for deportation as the revolutionaries would then be sent back to India and could be tried for harsher punishments by the British, including exile and death sentences.[33] However, it had been difficult to find just cause for deportation.

On April 7, 1917, one day after the US had entered World War One, assistant attorney-general Charles Warren instructed US district attorney John Preston to have Ram Chandra and twelve other Indians arrested for violating the US' neutrality laws for conspiring to organize a military expedition against a country with which the US had been at peace.[34] The Ghadar headquarters in San Francisco were raided by US authorities and they managed to collect a running list of members of the Ghadar Party from across

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[31] Documents regarding the *Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial, 1917-1918* are housed at National Archives, San Bruno, California.
[32] Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny*, 82. Also, see: Harish Puri, *Ghadar Movement* & Maia Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia.*
[33] Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party.*
[34] Seema Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny.*

the world. Documents were also collected which related the Ghadar Party and the Berlin India Committee's collaboration with the German counsels to overthrow the British Raj.

The trial revealed an interesting imperial collaboration between the US and British empires. It also pointed to the hypocrisy of US as a defender of democracy as the accused Ghadarites claimed they were not conspirators, but rather freedom fighters seeking to establish a democracy. The trial also was of great focus for the American public, as it was the most expensive trial to date. On April 23, 1918, after four and half hours of deliberation, the jury found all but one of the remaining defendants guilty of conspiracy to violate the neutrality laws of the US. As soon as the verdict was announced Ghadarite and defendant Ram Singh stood up and shot fellow defendant Ram Chandra dead in the middle of the courtroom.[35] A court marshal then shot Ram Singh dead and thus two men had died in a matter of moments. The proceedings of the trial took a toll on the Ghadar movement in other ways as well, particularly on its leadership, as it was revealed that Ram Chandra had been stealing money from the Ghadar Party's private funds. Ram Singh's killing of Ram Chandra pointed to the wavering leadership of the party and ultimately fractured the movement to a point where it could not be mended.

The trial thus served to fracture the movement and to generate a warning against further radicalism in the US. After the sentences were delivered, Judge William C. Van Fleet warned the Indian defendants to cease their distributing the "Hindoo publications," as "the public is in a frame of mind not to further tolerate propaganda against the allies of the US." Similarly, US attorney John Preston remarked that the verdict demonstrated that "we must teach the non-assimilable, parasitic organizations in our midst that while this is a land of liberty, it is not a country of mere license."[36]

Over the next 5 years following the trial, the US continued its efforts to suppress what they framed as the racial panics of the "yellow peril" and the "red scare" through various new laws and immigration policies. In 1917 and 1918, Congress passed the Espionage and Sedition Act, as well as the Immigration Acts of 1917 and 1918. While the Espionage and Sedition Acts allowed the federal authorities to punish any appearance of disloyalty to the US government, the Immigration Acts effectively excluded Indian immigration as they came from the now "Barred Zone." The Immigration Act of 1917, also known as the Asiatic Barred Zone Act, issued literacy tests on immigrants, and barred immigration from the Asia and Pacific Zone. The Immigration Act of 1918 also sanctioned guilt by association and lifted the statute of limitations for deportation for post-entry criminal conduct in immigration proceedings. This act both excluded and deported immigrants who were deemed anarchist or radical by practice or association. While anticolonial and anti-imperialist efforts continued in the US, these new legal stipulations made it much more difficult for Ghadarites to organize. Some scholars have considered the Ghadar movement to have ended with the Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial;[37] however, the movement continued to organize on a smaller scale up until the 1930s.

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[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Maia Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia.*

The history of the Ghadar Party has been explored in the past by prominent scholars such as, Sohan Singh Josh, Harish Puri, Seema Sohi, Maia Ramnath, Parambir Singh Gill and many others. This dissertation instead offers an intellectual history of the Ghadar movement that focuses on the political and spiritual subjectivities of its members. This interdisciplinary project is thematically structured to: first, understand secular developments within Ghadar's history and political activity in Punjab; second, to grapple with the ways in which immigration policy, law, and media in the United States has effected Punjabi immigrants in the diasporic space of the American West in the early 1900s; and third, this project contends with the non-secular and its presence in the writings of Sikh laborers through their employment of *Sikhi*.

Methods, Methodologies, and Chapter Breakdown

The primary archival sources for this interdisciplinary project consist of materials published by the Ghadar Party from their printing press in San Francisco, California from 1913-1919. Though known to have been edited by Har Dayal, and later Ram Chandra (both members of the Hindu elite), the publications of Ghadar in Punjabi, Urdu, and Hindi were primarily written by other members of the party, including influential Sikh members like Kartar Singh Sarabha. Along with their editing duties, Dayal and Chandra also contributed to Ghadar publications through their writings in English for a primarily white and Western audience. Pamphlets such as, "An Open Letter to President Wilson"[38] written by Har Dayal, were written to gain sympathy from white Americans for the Indian independence cause. While many documents written in South Asian native languages remain anonymous, this project focuses on these writings to understand the larger political imaginings, organization, and influences of the party. These primary sources remain spread across many archives including: The Ghadar Memorial in San Francisco California, Stockton Sikh Temple, Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley, California, the Desh Bhagat Yadgar Hall and Library in Punjab, and my own personal archive in Merced, CA. As many of these materials still exist within personal familial archives across the US, Canada, and Punjab, this project required research in non-institutional archives as well as institutional ones.

In order to highlight the specific intellectual contributions of Sikh members in the movement, this project also critically examines (auto)biographies written by Ghadar members such as: Nidhan Singh, Gurmukh Singh, Gujar Singh, Prithvi Singh Azad, Bhai Parmanand, and Sohan Singh Bhakna (who was elected as the first president of the Party). I also use the (auto)biographies of those influenced by Ghadar's political ideologies, including editors of *Kirti*, the first communist magazine in Punjab: Santokh Singh and Sohan Singh Josh. While detailed biographies have been written about Har Dayal, there remains to be written any critical study on the Sikh members of the movement like Sohan Singh Bhakna, thus, this project will work towards bringing such contributions to the surface. These (auto)biographies are all housed at the Desh Bhagat Yadgar Hall and Library in Jalandhar, Punjab.

[38] Deol Family Archives, Selma, California, United States.

Even though government documentation of the movement by US, Canadian, and British officials remain the most centered archives in histories of Ghadar, this project uses these materials only to gain insight into the perspectives of the Ghadar Party. This project does not attempt to track the histories of empire and imperial institutions from the state level, but rather focuses on how these documents and reports reproduced renderings of the party's political newspapers and other writings within their case files. Specifically, this project utilizes the first-hand case documents from the Lahore Conspiracy Trials of 1915 and San Francisco Conspiracy Trial of 1917. The Lahore Conspiracy Trial case documents are currently housed at the National Archive of India in New Delhi, while the documents pertaining to the San Francisco Trial are located at the US Archives and Records Service in San Bruno, California. In addition, this dissertation also reads racial formations in print media, laws, and immigration official reports in North America to understand how both the Ghadar Party specifically, and Punjabi-Sikh immigrants as a group, were being racialized in the United States and Canada in the early 1900s.

Finally, in order to understand the larger scope of the political environment during which the Ghadar movement was active, this project utilizes the statements issued by Sikh religious institutions. These statements highlight the sentiments of support or contempt that the Ghadar Party received by the Sikh religious networks both in Punjab and abroad. This work requires carefully going to through the Khalsa Diwan Society's archives in Vancouver, BC in order to track its political history in relationship to the Ghadar movement. The Khalsa Diwan Society was formally established in Vancouver, BC in 1906 as a gurdwara, but also functioned as an advocate society on Sikh-related socio-economic issues in North America. The Society played an important role in not only the politics of Ghadar, but also the development of other Sikh organizations throughout the US and Canada. Similarly, this project offers a comparative archive and history through the role of the Stockton Gurdwara and its function as a Ghadar activist space. The Stockton, California gurdwara was established in 1912 as the primary center for the Ghadar movement in California. While the printing press was located in San Francisco with Har Dayal, majority of Sikh Ghadar activists utilized the gurdwara space for political meetings and military training. Currently, the Stockton gurdwara converted its original building into a Ghadar museum which houses meeting notes from Ghadar's congregations.

Beyond archival research, methodologies for this project include critical textual reading and literary analysis. "Chapter One: Enlightenment Thought, Postcolonial Studies, & Sikh Studies: Interventions in Ghadar Histories" employs historical discourse analysis in order to construct a historiography of Enlightenment thought, postcolonial theories, and histories on Ghadar. Specifically, this chapter utilizes Derrida's notion of double-reading in order to first read these multiple histories as they have been intended to be read and second, to read the texts again to locate the exclusions, contradictions, and incongruences in the concepts and arguments.[39] The objective of this chapter is to critically analyze how these secondary sources have either reproduced or responded to the secularization of Ghadar's history. "Chapter Two: Secular Formations in Punjab:

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[39] Jacques Derrida, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

Responses to Revolution and Post-Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial Ghadar Politics, 1917-1928" traces secular formations in colonial Punjab through the development of Sikh religious institutions. Through this practice of mapping the secular, this chapter also discusses the effects of secularization on two political movements in Punjab that are considered offshoots of the Ghadar Party: the Communist Party of Punjab and the Babbar Akali movement. This chapter relies heavily on postcolonial theory to understand how colonial cultures affected and shaped local traditions in Punjab. It also contributes to Talal Asad's anthropology of secularism—a project in which he conducts a "conceptual analysis" of secularism by theorizing through its development within a political space. [40] Here, an anthropology of secularism in relation to the Ghadar movement allows for a comparative and transnational study of how the secular presents itself in the lives of not only the Ghadarites in Punjab, but also within its diaspora. This chapter uses statements issued by the Khalsa Diwan Society in regards to the Ghadarites[41] along with those issued by various other gurdwaras in Punjab.[42] It also relies upon Sohan Singh Josh's autobiography, which is currently located in the Yugantar Desh Bhagat Memorial, in order to historicize the establishment of the Communist Party of Punjab after the disbanding of the Ghadar Party. I critically examine Bhagat Singh's history of the Babbar Akali movement, which is housed in the Shaheed Bhagat Singh Museum in the village of Khatkar Kalan in Punjab as well. Both of these primary sources have been traditionally left out of histories of Ghadar and therefore I seek to bring forth different narratives of how secularism in Punjab affected both political activity and national imaginings in anticolonial movements.

"Chapter Three: 'Gilded Cages:' Race, Labor, Citizenship, and the Fabrication of the 'Hindu' in the American West" moves into the transnational space of the American west to examine the debates surrounding the question "who is the 'Hindu?'" in the United States in the early 1900s. Here I present the leading discourses in written media, legal and immigration policies, and academic scholarship regarding the racial classification of South Asian (specifically, Punjabi-Sikh) men in the US, also known as "Hindu/Hindoos," from 1906 to 1923. The question posed by these three American sources of discourse was not an ontological one set to explore the essence or being of "Hindu," but rather a brutal effort to place the "Hindu" in a position to fail in American racial politics. I examine the development of the racial category of "Hindu" in labor and immigration discourse and how it became embedded within the American "common sense." Furthermore, I situate the origination of the Ghadar Party within this specific racial-political landscape. Primary sources for chapter include newspaper articles published in both international, national, and local papers in the United States. Also, I look closely at statements issued by immigration officials and legal proceedings. Finally, this chapter ends with an examination of how Ghadar intellectuals such as Bhagat Singh Thind and Har Dayal responded to the anti-"Hindu" rhetoric in the early 1900s.

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[40] Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 17.

[41] Housed in the Khalsa Diwan Society Archives in Vancouver, BC, Canada.

[42] Housed in the Desh Bhagat Yadgar Hall and Library in Jalandhar, Punjab, India.

The final chapter of this project, "Chapter Four: Ghadri Poetry on Trial: Punjabi-Sikh Poetry and the Sikh Tradition" explores the writings of the anticolonial Ghadar Party and the *Ghadar Press.* Appealing to an audience of mostly Punjabi-Sikh laborers in the American West (and other British colonies), the writings published by the *Press* were primarily written in Punjabi in the Gurmukhi script and Urdu in the Indo-Persian script. I choose to focus on the importance of publishing in the Punjabi-Gurmukhi script in this specific political moment. The objective of this chapter is three-fold: (1) to provide a history of the criminalization of the Punjabi-Gurmukhi language during the colonial period; (2) to examine the criminalization of Punjabi-Gurmukhi during the Hindu-German conspiracy trials in 1917 in San Francisco, California; (3) challenging both enterprises of repression, the final section of this chapter interrogates how the poetry written and published by the *Ghadar Press* relied on *Sikhi* as a political and spiritual framework to articulate different understandings of freedom. Archival materials for this chapter can be found at the Yugantar Desh Bhagat Memorial, the Bancroft Library, the Imperial Valley Gurdwara in California, personal and non-institutional archives of the Sikh community members in California, and the various villages in the Doaba region of Punjab, India. The construction of this project not only follows the geographic trajectories of the early immigrants, from Punjab to the diaspora, but also constructs itself around the intentional move from secularism to non-secular knowledges.

The Ghadar Party has left behind an extraordinary history that many scholars have been able to beautifully capture in their work. Through this dissertation I seek to extend this scholarship by providing the beginnings of an intellectual history of the movement and its impact on the socio-political space of Punjab and the American West in the early decades of the 1900s. Ghadar has persisted as a shadow in my life since that pivotal summer of 2002 and now nearly, twenty years later, I hope that this dissertation offers insight, or even merely an echo, into its intellectual legacies.

CHAPTER ONE: Enlightenment Thought, Postcolonial Studies, & Sikh Studies: Interventions in Ghadar Histories

> *In any case, I think that just as we must free ourselves from the intellectual blackmail of being for or against the Enlightenment we must escape the historical and moral confusionism that mixes the theme of humanism with the question of the Enlightenment. An analysis of their complex relations in the course of the last two centuries would be a worthwhile project an important one if we are to bring some measure of clarity to the consciousness that we have of ourselves and of our past.*
> ---Michel Foucault, 1984[43]

> *But for these anchors of Sacred praxis to shake the archives of secularism, they would have to be removed from the category of false consciousness so that they can be accorded the real meaning they make in the lives of practitioners.*
> ---M. Jaqui Alexander, 2005[44]

Introduction

In one of my weekly graduate seminars, we were assigned to read sections from Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit*. It was a tough text to say the least. We picked apart the logic of the text and discussed the lasting impact of the Hegel's work on intellectual studies in the humanities to this day. Since then, I have often considered the influence of Enlightenment era thought and its relationship to my work on anticolonial movements. Like the purpose of the seminar, intellectual history as a field of inquiry encourages the practice of imagining a debate between thinkers. In preparation for my dissertation, I imagined a conversation in which seated at a table are Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Sohan Singh Bhakna, and Kartar Singh Sarabha. The topic is *ghadar*, rebellion. Bhakna and Sarabha consider what it would mean to be free? What does it mean to be Sikh? What does it mean to be? Who are we? As Bhakna poses question after question, Sarabha responds with passionate appeal to become "rebel." Though I could easily picture the fervent exchange between Bhakna and Sarabha, I was stuck how Hegel would respond. I poured over texts, took rigorous notes, and heard lectures from scholars who have studied Hegel's numerous philosophical texts for years. Regardless, he remained silent. I realize now that the silence from Enlightenment thinkers in this instance points to their own understanding of race and the subjectivities of people of color.

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[43] Michel Foucault, "What is the Enlightenment?" *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon, 1984).
[44] M. Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

For instance, Hegel's infamous dialectic of lordship and bondage describes the relationship between a master, who embodies power and subjectivity, and the slave who is viewed as an object or "thing." As the dialectic unfolds, the master becomes aware of his own reliance on the slave for not only life, but also recognition. In turn, the slave too achieves self-consciousness and realizes their own subjectivity. In her seminal article "Hegel and Haiti," Susan Buck-Morss writes, "In *The Phenomenology of the Mind,* Hegel insists that freedom cannot be granted to slaves from above, 'The self-liberation of the slave is required through a 'trial by death': 'And it is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained…The individual, who has not staked his life, may, no doubt be recognized as a Person [the agenda of the abolitionists!]; but he has not attained the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness' (*PM,* p.233).'"[45] Furthermore, in *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel insisted that slaves were responsible for their own enslavement because they allowed themselves to become enslaved.[46]

In her article, Buck-Morss makes two central arguments: first, that Hegel's dialectic of lordship and bondage was directly informed by the Haitian Revolution, and second, that this influence points to the glaring paradox between the Enlightenment discourse of freedom and the practice of slavery. As Hegel's philosophy of history has been used to shape the discipline of history and to justify Eurocentricism in the field, the fact also remains that Hegel's texts have been studied for over two hundred years with relatively little connection to the actual subjectivities of people of color. Here, Buck-Morss' piece pushes Hegel's work to speak and even take accountability. While we cannot deny the influences of Enlightenment thought, including the works of Hegel, on the worlds that anticolonial movements inhabited (and continue to inhabit) and the scholarship on anticolonial movements that followed, I argue that we can choose to center frameworks that speak to the subjectivities of the people in those movements. Hegel's work has remained silent on influence it took from the Haitian revolution and the scholarship emerging in the past few decades has voiced those connections loud and clear. However, I have accepted that in my intellectual history, in this conversation on the subject *ghadar* and freedom, Bhakna and Sarabha, and their fellow revolutionaries spoke fiercely. And while Hegel, though present, was only listening. Thus, the purpose of this chapter, and the dissertation as whole, is to center *Sikhi* in the history of the Ghadar Movement and the lives of its members in Punjab and the American West.

To explain this further, I turn to Kartar Singh Sarabha's poem "Who We Are," published in the *Ghadar di Gunj* to explore how Ghadar members viewed their own political and spiritual subjectivities. The poem reads:

> If anyone asks who we are
> Tell him our name is rebel
> Our duty is to end the tyranny
> Our profession is to launch revolution
> That is our namaz, this is our sandhya
> Our puja, our worship,

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[45] Susan Buck-Morss, "Hegel and Haiti," *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 4 (2000): 849.
[46] Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* trans. T.M. Knox (London, 1967): 239.

This is our religion, our work
This is our only Khuda, our only Rama.[47]

For Ghadar revolutionary and poet, Kartar Singh Sarabha, the mutineer is created through a series of losses—the loss of self, loss of labels, and a loss of title. In the poem we see that the mutineer loses communally divided identities, traditions and practices, and ultimately their name. After going through this process of shedding, does one emerge as "rebel" in name and nature. Ultimately, what this 'rebel' existence offers is freedom. This freedom on the surface-level entails a freedom from the colonial regime and imperialism, but deeper it represents a freedom from a world of ego. The 'rebel' identity exists in a realm beyond communal politics, social control, and colonial and imperial oppression. What 'rebel' offers is the freedom to come together beyond communal divide and exist in oneness. Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair and Christopher Shackle describe a similar struggle of ego-loss in the Sikh tradition between the lure of "worldly attachments" and desire to become One with the Divine, "This is not a battle *against* the world but a battle to exist in a world radically interconnected to others."[48] The reading of "rebel" in both Ghadari poetry and *Sikhi* reveals critical overlap in ideas of freedom and the potentiality of human co-existence. Here, by applying *Sikhi* as a framework I argue that we can dive deeper in our exploration of Sikh subjectivities in their multitudes and complex natures, rather than relying of Enlightenment thinkers to understand Sikh lifeworlds.

This first chapter serves as framing device for the entire project as it relays a historiography of both Enlightenment[49] thought and the responses provided to it by South Asian postcolonial scholars, including Ghadar historians.[50] I argue that this dissertation

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[47] Translation done by Khushwant Singh and Satindra Singh. Khuswant Singh and Satindra Singh, *Ghadar, 1915, India's First Armed Revolution* (New Delhi: R&K Publishing House, 1966), 28. This poem is also housed in the Desh Bhagat Yugantar Hall in Jalandhar, Punjab, India.

[48] Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair and Christopher Shackle, *Teachings of Sikh Gurus: Selections from the Sikh Scriptures* (London: Routledge Press, 2005), 42.

[49] By enlightenment, I mean the many enlightenments, English, Scottish, French, American, that comprise the 17th- and 18th- century generation of scientific, technological, and philosophical ideas that would influence subsequent discourses and notions of rationality, idealism, modernity, and human rights. Jürgen Habermas often refers to modernity as the unfinished project of the Enlightenment. Current United Nations secretary general António Guterres regularly points out that "Europe's greatest gift to the world was the values of enlightenment." My point here is that the narrative of enlightenment continues to have a presence in the world and requires continued interrogation.

[50] Appiah, Buck-Morss, Chatterjee, Jan Mohamed, Mbembe, Mignolo, Palumbo-Liu, Said, Spivak, James C. Scott, Thiong'o and Talal Asad have contributed to discourses on European and North American Enlightenment thought, and in turn, the developments of modernity as a project. In his text *Formations of the Secular*, Talal Asad describes the project as modernity as one which, "aims at institutionalizing a number of (sometimes conflicting, often evolving) principles: constitutionalism, moral autonomy, democracy,

seeks to neither embody Enlightenment thought nor dismiss it entirely, but rather promises to contend with these discourses and their consequences in the framing of anticolonial movements within the western discipline of history.[51] Ending with an analysis of numerous histories written on the Ghadar movement, I place these histories along the spectrum of "blackmail" that Enlightenment discourses and their respondents have generated. I argue that the discipline of history in the Western academy has not made adequate space or the structure to explore non-secular traditions and their influences on communities and the political choices they make. Furthermore, I argue that non-secular traditions, such as *Sikhi*, are not only historical but also deeply political. Thus, I explore other possibilities to contend with anticolonial histories that both add to and extend the efforts of postcolonial thought, particularly borrowing from the frameworks developed by M. Jacqui Alexander in her critical monograph *Pedagogies of Crossing* and Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair's study of "Sikh philosophy" in "Lived Abstractions: 'Sikh Philosophy' as a Practice of Everyday Life."[52] Both Alexander and Mandair offer ways of exploring the histories of people of color beyond the secular logics of mainstream history. Ultimately then, one of the driving questions of this dissertation project is: what would it mean to read *Sikhi* in the Ghadar movement?

This chapter begins with a reference to Immanuel Kant's critical essay published in 1784, "An Answer to the Question: What is the Enlightenment?"[53] Here, I trace how Kant built intimate ties among freedom, reason, and progress all within a mission for universal enlightenment.[54] Kant claims the need to create a universal momentum towards progress. Hegel's idealism takes Kant's reason even further. Through his interest in creating an encyclopedia of world thought and his philosophy of history, Hegel provides a structure through which one can understand the world view of an Enlightenment thinker in his foundational texts *Phenomenology of Spirit*[55] and *Philosophy of History*[56]. Hegel's argument that history is a product of dialectics, and specifically of thesis and antithesis, showcases how history is framed for him in rational and progressive development. According to Hayden White, "for Hegel, the content (or referent) of the specifically

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human rights, civil equality, industry, consumerism, freedom of the market—and secularism."

[51] Hayden White, "The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory."

[52] M. Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005) & "Lived Abstractions: 'Sikh Philosophy' as a Practice of Everyday Life" by Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair, *Sikh Formations* 11, Nos. 1-2 (2012), 174-189.

[53] Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What is the Enlightenment?" *What is the Enlightenment? Eighteenth Century Answers and Twentieth Century Questions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

- [54] See K. Deligiorgi, *Kant and the Culture of Enlightenment*, (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 2005).

[55] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*. (New York: Dover Publications, 2003).

[56] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Philosophy of History*. (New York: Dover Publications, 2012).

historical discourse was not the real *story* of what happened, but the peculiar relation between a public present and a past which a state endowed with a constitution made possible."[57] I argue that it is important to understand how history as a concept has been rationalized through these discourses in order to begin a historical project on anticolonial movements— histories of movements that are both against and immersed within Enlightenment ideas.

I end my discussion on Enlightenment and the workings of the project of modernity with a critical reading of Michel Foucault's essay, "What is the Enlightenment?"[58] in which he responds to Kant's earlier question by interrogating how the project of modernity affected scholarship in the western academy. Foucault argues that modernity is best understood as an attitude, rather than a specific moment in time.[59] As an attitude, modernity does not have the capacity to liberate, but it does compel people to produces themselves within it. This chapter, and this project, builds itself on Foucault's description of the "blackmail of Enlightenment"—a phenomenon in which scholars across academic disciplines have been compelled to either align themselves within its structures (the rationalists) or produce knowledge outside of it (the irrationalists). Foucault argues that we must think beyond the restrictions placed by its blackmail to understand the nuances that modernity has produced.[60]

The Haitian Revolution challenged Enlightenment directly. Negritude thinkers like Aime Cesaire studied and came to their transcendent ideas in Paris, the cradle of Enlightenment. Fidel Castro, a student of Enlightenment thought in Jesuit schools, memorized those ideas and turned to revolution. Liberation theology in Latin America and the Black prophetic tradition in the United States both borrow from and wrestle with enlightenment and modernity. Ghadar Party intellectuals engaged with the philosophes in similar ways and formed their own unique contributions to the postcolonial imaginary. This dissertation serves to highlight the ways in which the Ghadrites avoided the trappings of the "blackmail of the enlightenment" by theorizing and imagining "freedom" not only through an attitude of modernity, but also through traditional Sikh knowledges.

The second section of this chapter contends with South Asian postcolonial thinkers' responses to Enlightenment thought within the disciplines of history and political theory. Here, I turn to South Asian postcolonial studies to examine how the field has studied "peasant" communities in South Asia and responded to the struggles in

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[57] It also important to understand how this is complicated even further by Buck Morss' argument in *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History.* The story Hegel did not tell was that the incidents of the Haitian Revolution influenced his thinking and philosophy.

[58] Foucault, "What is the Enlightenment?"

[59] Foucault defines the Enlightenment as, "I think that the Enlightenment, as a set of political, economic, social, institutional, and cultural events on which we still depend in large part, constitutes a privileged domain for analysis." He then describes modernity as an attitude, "And by 'attitude,' I mean a mode of relating to contemporary reality; a voluntary choice made by certain people; in the end, a way of thinking and feeling; a way, too, of acting and behaving that at one and the same time marks a relation of belonging and presents itself as a task." Modernity is thus a response to Enlightenment.

[60] Ibid.

writing histories on marginalized people. While South Asian postcolonial studies has generated critical scholarship and in many ways challenged the binds of Enlightenment thought, it has been inadequate in exploring the political and spiritual subjectivities of Sikh peoples.[61] Through providing a brief history of South Asian postcolonial studies and its scholarship, I show how secular logics in its history remain unchanged. Instead, I argue that to study Sikh lifeworlds, we must challenge the secular/non-secular divide. I depict how new questions and methods of inquiry are emerging in the field of Sikh Studies over the past two decades that directly address these issues.

In my examination of how South Asian postcolonial literature has thus far engaged with Enlightenment thought, I begin with Ranajit Guha's *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*. Specifically, I explore how Guha responds to Hobsbawm's argument that peasant peoples lack historical consciousness, and thus agency and subjectivity.[62] In his work, Guha studies the histories of early rebellions against the British in colonial South Asia and ultimately argues that they are political movements, and by extension peasants are political people. More specifically, he claims that these rebellions were political in nature because they challenged structures of power (such as *sahukars, Sarkars,* and *zamindars* which were lenders and landowners who were given positions of power by the colonial government within village settings to control labor, land, and debt issues and report back to colonial officials). Guha's main objective here is to prove that the political nature of peasants makes them subjects of history. As a foundational creator of the Subaltern Studies Collective, Guha's relationship with history as a discipline and concept allows for deep insight into how his historical project responds directly to the legacies of Kant and Hegel.

Similarly, Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe* also centers around the field of history and its inadequate engagements with non-secular and peasant histories. Chakrabarty's text is specifically in dialogue with both Marx and Heidegger. He argues that while Marxism is important to him because it provides a valuable frame through which to critique capital, it inevitably leads to historicist frameworks.[63] Thus, Chakrabarty relies on Heidegger's hermeneutic tradition in order to contend with a more comprehensive look at the lives of non-Western peoples and affective histories. For Chakrabarty it is important to use Heidegger's hermeneutic tradition to incorporate the

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[61] While scholarship on South Asia in the United States has been on the rise since the 1960s (due to the United States' particular interest in "third-world" countries during the Cold War era), we see how Punjabi-Sikh scholars have been consistently excluded from South Asian Studies. Instead, scholarship on South Asia has centered the histories of peoples from Bengal and Maharashtra, both states with high economic growth over the past few decades. In response, the sub-field of Sikh Studies also emerged in the 1960s and looked closely at Sikh scriptures and theology. Sikh Studies has since evolved to greatly diversify its field of inquiry, with the number of Sikh Studies programs and departments steadily growing in the United States.

[62] Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 22.

[63] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 4.

non-secular aspects of peasant histories that have not been accounted for by histories solely done in a Marxist framework. While the South Asian Postcolonial Studies and more specifically, the Subaltern Studies Collective have offered valuable critiques to the trappings of Enlightenment thought, I argue more work needs to examine *how* anticolonialists examined both the past and imagined the future through non-secular traditions. The question then arises, if Enlightenment thought offers inadequate frameworks to engage with marginalized peoples, can we employ frameworks from those communities themselves to study their lived political and spiritual realities?

Ultimately, this chapter ends an examination of how scholars have engaged with the history of the Ghadar Movement. Here I utilize Foucault's concept of the "blackmail of Enlightenment" as a spectrum through which one can place various histories in order to understand how they have been shaped through these contentious discourses. Histories of the Ghadar Party have been mostly written by scholars in Punjab and North America and while their historical narratives remain unique to each academic context, there remains a constant tug of war between the historicism of enlightenment thought and the critiques posed to it by postcolonial scholarship. Here, I propose a different way to examine the history of Ghadar—one that avoids the trappings of the Enlightenment that Foucault warned us about. I propose we read *Sikhi* in Ghadar. Here I turn to scholars such as M. Jacqui Alexander and Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair who have challenged the secular/nonsecular divide itself and write history beyond its confines. Here, I argue that a re-examination of Sikh influences on the Ghadar Party reveals intellectual conversations amongst revolutionaries that have not been adequately contended with in the past scholarship.

Is History Secular?: A Brief Overview of Enlightenment Thought

In 1784, Immanuel Kant published a critical essay in response to a question he continuously received in relation to his writing entitled, "An Answer to the Question: What is the Enlightenment?"[64] The effort to define "the Enlightenment," its purpose, methods, intentions, trajectory, and consequences is still strong amongst intellectuals and scholars today and requires one to return to Kant's seminal essay somewhere in one's study. In his piece, Kant builds intimate ties between freedom, reason, and progress, all within a mission for universal enlightenment. While on the macro-level, Kant perceives Enlightenment to have the potential to affect the world as a whole, he also identifies it as a personal process, "Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity."[65] Enlightenment is then the linkage between the use of freedom/reason and progress. For example, in the case of religious institutions, Kant argued that they should (and will) change for the better with the exercise of individual and collective freedom, reason, and will. The "destiny" of humanity for Kant then ultimately lies within this "natural" progression towards Enlightenment.[66]

Not only does Kant's essay define the Enlightenment, but it also outlines the project of European modernity. Specifically, it is this idea that there is a "natural"

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[64] Kant, "An Answer to the Question."
[65] Ibid.,1.
[66] Ibid., 3.

progression of modernity that has served as an influential factor in the writings of other Enlightenment scholars, such as Hegel. However, it is also this idea of "progression" which has stifled the ways in which we understand history and knowledge in relation to the non-secular. If thinking and working within this logic, there is the desire to define and assign everything within the confines of this project because of its all-encompassing and vague nature. But where does this leave the non-secular, the irrational? As Kant argued that religious institutions can and should change upon public will, there arises the need to define "religious institution" in spaces that do not lend themselves to the distinct separation between "public" and "private" reason. From this stems the necessity to violently separate the categories of non-secular from the political for the sake of "progress." For instance, in response to this very issue we see the British colonial government's difficulty in defining the secular and religious in India and their desire to separate non-secular traditions from politics.[67]

Kant's definition of Enlightenment as a natural progression informed by human freedom and reason led many scholars to question the meaning of history—both as a concept and academic discipline. Much of the basis for inquiry into the concept of history from the Enlightenment standpoint rejects the Judeo-Christian interpretation of history and attempted to bring about their own teleology—history driven by progress. In this case "progress" denotes the passage of time and the movement of humanity towards a higher level of civilization. As Kant's efforts were limited to defining the Enlightenment in his essay with specific focus on the individual, Hegel picks up the issues of the Enlightenment on the macro-level and worked to provide a structure to history that encapsulated the entire philosophical world in his texts, *Phenomenology of Spirit*[68] and more specifically in *Philosophy of History*.[69] Hegel's philosophy of history is perhaps the most widely regarded in the western world and has been the most influential on the academic discipline of history in the West.

Building off of Giambattista Vico's efforts to identify the foundations and stages of human civilizations, Hegel also attempted to create an encyclopedia of world thought that could explain the progression of history and the world. For Hegel the concept of history is defined through the unfolding of human freedom. Specifically, in his seminal text, *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, Hegel argues that there is a dialectical progression which links one philosophical moment to another. Hegel's encyclopedia then connects the progression to explicit moments in time to track and measure the development of civilizations across the globe. These various stages in history are placed within a teleology whose end lies in the specific condition of the "realization of human freedom." Thus, while Kant expressed how the Enlightenment and the project of modernity are driven by free will, reason, and freedom, Hegel provides a structure through which one can see the *process* of historicism.

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[67] Arvind Pal Singh Mandair's seminal text *Religion and the Specter of the West* (2009) outlines the transformation of *Sikhi* to *Sikhism*—a religion recognized by the Western world and deeply impacted by the project of European modernity and colonialism.
[68] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*.
[69] Ibid.

This begs the question: what drives each philosophical moment and propels us forward in this teleology? Hegel proposes that there exists a dialectical process which allows for the progression of history and civilization. The Hegelian Dialectic, defined in *Phenomenology of the Spirit,* works through three stages: first, there is the *proposition* or *thesis* which refers to a reaction, second comes an *antithesis* or a conflicting force (negation) to the thesis, finally, there is a *synthesis* or resolution. The best way to understand the Hegelian Dialectic is through action. For example, first there is a seed, which destroys itself to create a bud, and that destroys itself to become the flower. Through this example we can see the progression towards the "absolute" represented through the flower. Many historians and philosophers have worked well with and against this logic to understand time, history, and progression, such as Karl Marx. I argue that this logic has helped center the secular within history.

Understanding what we know about the Hegel's work and the Hegelian dialectic, we must ask, is Hegel's history secular? Also, how does Hegel's teleology affect the discipline of history? Hegel is known for his deep associations with the Christian tradition and his correlations between "absolute truth" and "God" have been widely debated. However, in the context of this chapter, I am primarily concerned with the ways in which his work has affected non-secular traditions in History as a concept and history as an academic discipline. I argue that Hegel's understanding of the highest form of civilization is secular as he so states within *Philosophy of History Lectures*. Hegel states that in "the last stage in History, our world, our own time…Secular life is the positive and definite embodiment of the Spiritual Kingdom," and that "what has happened, and is happening every day, is not only not 'without God,' but is essentially His Work."[70] Therefore, while the end of his teleology is secular, it is through the work and order of God. As an example of the Hegelian Dialectic in action, Hegel argues that there is then not a divide between the secular and non-secular, however, the secular emerges from the non-secular. Hegel's ideas on secular truth caused a radical shift in the western world's understanding of history in terms of the Judeo-Christian tradition. However, this also critically impacted the development of history as a discipline. Building on Enlightenment discourse championed by Kant, Hegel's historicism implores the separation of politics from the non-secular not only within social institutions, but also in our understandings of time and knowledge. This is the only way to progress in his teleology.

Historians and philosophers have since began questioning the lasting legacy of Hegel's work and how it has specifically challenged non-secular knowledges in the academic discipline of history. Modernity's deep influences on the developments of academic disciplines continue to exist today. Scholars such as Mark Juergensmeyer,[71]

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[70] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, T. M Knox, and Arnold V Miller, *Introduction to the Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

[71] Mark Juergensmeyer, "The Imagined War between Secularism and Religion," *The Oxford Handbook of Secularism,* eds. Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook (Oxford: New York, 2017).

Brad S. Gregory,[72] and Hayden White[73] have pointed towards the ways in which history has embodied a secular bias and has been inadequate at contending with non-secular traditions, and, by association the communities that carry those world views. Similarly historian Kathryn Lofton explains the legacies of western Enlightenment thought on the current discipline of history as such:

> …Enlightenment forebears proposed that the historian would play a special role in the defeat of the *ancient regime*. Historians would explain how theologies offered as received truth were strategies of political control; historians would explain how fables of human folly were strategies of social control; and historians would explain magical ceremonies were strategies of epistemological control. The work of historians was to explain how mobs form, fables circulate, and beliefs cement—*how religions endure despite the unreason they may seem to propel.*[74]

Given what we know of the logic of historical progression developed by Enlightenment scholars such as Kant and Hegel and the effects they have on secular and non-secular knowledges, historians have attempted to contend with non-secular traditions in other ways. Specifically, the Subaltern Studies Collective formed out of the larger postcolonial studies movement, attempted to challenge legacies of Enlightenment by writing history on the Indian peasant. The following section, analyzes the work of Ranajit Guha and Dipesh Chakrabarty and how their work attempted to look at Indian history in a way that could challenge Hegel's historicism.

H(h)istory, Postcolonialism, and the Subaltern Studies Collective

In the 1970s, in response to the epistemological violences enacted on peoples in postcolonial nations and the inadequacies present in historical writings, postcolonial scholars attempted to both destroy repressive histories and to generate studies that centered the histories of colonized peoples. Thus, postcolonial studies emerged as an area of study that focuses on the interaction between imperial and colonial cultures and indigenous cultural practices.[75] Post-colonial/postcolonial "theory" critically engages with the experiences of colonized people before and after "independence." Post-colonial/postcolonial studies then also relies on multi-disciplinary approaches to translate and counter the hegemonic narratives formed by early, traditional area studies scholars. Within its multi-disciplinary range, many post-colonial/postcolonial studies scholars

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[72] Brad S. Gregory, "The Other Confessional History: On Secular Bias in the Study of Religion," *History and Theory* 45, no. 4 (2006), 132-149.
[73] White, "The Question."
[74] Kathryn Lofton, "Why Religion is Hard for Historians (And How It Can Be Easier)" *Modern American History* (2019), 1-18.
[75] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, (London: Routledge. 1995), 2.

engage with the field's central question: is colonialism over? Ashcroft argues the terms "post-colonial" and "postcolonial" embody this ongoing debate. He states that while "post-" is often being used by scholars to refer to the period after independence, "post" without the hyphen points to colonialism as an ongoing process, such as neocolonialism.[76] It is then important to note how to contextualize the very space and time that scholars are translating into "post-colonial/postcolonial" experiences. Throughout this chapter, I use "postcolonial" to express the ongoing nature of colonialism.

In this section, we explore the specific ways in which the Subaltern Studies Collective responded to not only the lack of histories of colonized peoples, but also the ways in which Enlightenment thought and its legacies have continued to attack the ontologies and epistemologies of colonized people by denying them access to history and historical subjectivity. Emerging within the field of postcolonial studies in 1982, Subaltern Studies began initially as an annual volume of essays on modern Indian history. The central goal of *Subaltern Studies* was to generate "histories from below" that would marry popular history with analysis of colonial and postcolonial capitalism with a Marxist perspective.[77] Ranajit Guha (founding editor of the journal) along with Dipesh Chakrabarty, Partha Chatterjee, David Hardiman, Sudipta Kaviraj, Gyanendra Pandey, Gyan Prakash, Gayatri Spivak and others formed what is known today as the Subaltern Studies Collective. Together the group wished to re-write history from an anti-elitist perspective which led them to write about the figure of the "subaltern."[78] The use of subaltern itself was borrowed from the writings of Gramsci.[79] In the introduction of the first issue of *Subaltern Studies* Guha writes, "We are indeed opposed to much of the prevailing academic practice in historiography…for its failure to acknowledge the subaltern as the maker of his own destiny. This critique lies at the very heart of our project."[80] Thus it became critical for the collective to center the history of the subaltern. While the majority of the Collective conceived of the subaltern subject as a male peasant figure; in 1985, Gayatri Spivak published her seminal article "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in which she argues that a central subaltern figure is a *dalit* woman. Spivak's piece contributed to the project as it forced the field to contend with gender. Here, I focus on the writings of two central figures in the Collective: Ranajit Guha and Dipesh Chakrabarty. I argue that though Guha attempts to present the peasant as a historical subject and Chakrabarty offers a critique of historicism—both still do not fully contend with secular/non-secular divides in history. I argue that while both have attempted to center the subaltern in history, neither has adequately challenged secular logics in history.

Following the central goal of Subaltern Studies to step outside of elitist nationalist histories, postcolonial and subaltern studies scholar Ranajit Guha attempted to address

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[76] Ibid., 7.
[77] Vivek Chibber, *Post-Colonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (London: Verso, 2012), 3.
[78] Dipesh Chakrabarty. "Subaltern Studies and Postcolonial Historiography," *Nepantla: Views from South* (Duke University Press, 2000), 14.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid., 15.

anticolonial peasant resistance in his texts. In his foundational text *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* Ranajit Guha offers a history of peasant insurgency in India, enveloped within a discourse of power. Guha describes how this history did exist in the form of colonial historiography.[81] These first accounts of insurgency in colonial India documented by the British included counter-insurgency operations, departmental minutes on measures to deal with insurrection reports, and reports of investigations. These state documents of peasant insurgency clearly place it within a discourse of power and require a new reading of the colonial archive. Ultimately Guha argues, "To acknowledge the peasant as the maker of his own rebellion is to attribute, as we had done to this work, a consciousness to him."[82] Guha is thus responding to Hobsbawm's description of peasants as "pre-political people" or people with an absolute absence of political consciousness.[83] Guha instead argues that the peasant subaltern figure has a voice, agency, and is always political.[84] Throughout the text, Guha depicts how peasant consciousness is revealed in its most articulate fashion during rebellion. To understand the political nature of the peasants, we must look at their relationships with those in power: the *zamindar* and *sahukar.* Therefore, there is no doubt that these are political beings, as they constantly build and navigate within relationships built on power. For Guha we must move away from simply looking at the charismatic leaders of insurgent movements and try to ground our study within peasant consciousness itself. These movements and actions are not spontaneous, but rather heavily rooted in multiple knowledges.

Guha here writes directly in response to Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm, who was immensely popular amongst Indian Marxists in the 1970s. Hobsbawm has written two specific texts that centered on South Asian men: *Primitive Rebels*[85] and *Bandits*,[86] which studied the history of Indian mafia men and bandits and their revolutionary capacities. His particular focus on "neglected" non-western people as challenging power garnered international acclaim and even praise from scholars and South Asian Marxists. However, at the core of his argument in both texts, was that peasant and bandit movements their members were "pre-political" in nature. In the larger debate on the "transitional" phases in Marxist theory, Hobsbawm believed Indian bandits and peasants were in the pre-historical stage of feudalism and lacked political and class consciousness. Guha's critique of Hobsbawm shook the intellectual landscape of India by: first, causing young South Asian Marxists to move away from the influences of Hobsbawm and focus on writing their own histories of South Asian peoples; second, by providing the

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[81] Guha states that historiography originated in the 18th century to view "history as politics and of the past as a guide to the future—which they brought with them" (Guha, 5).
[82] Ranajit Guha. *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press), 22.
[83] Ibid., 23.
[84] Ibid., 23.
[85] E.J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Abacus, 2017).
[86] E.J. Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000).

foundation to the Subaltern Studies Collective. Despite his powerful critique, Guha's text is unable to provide an alternative framework to writing histories of the intellectual thought of peasant peoples, because his work primarily focuses on the *political actions* of peasant people to establish their place as historical and political figures. However, this begs the question: through what political frame were these peasants thinking and is the space of Western secular history *useful* to understand their positionality?

Similarly, Dipesh Chakrabarty offers his own response to Enlightenment thought in his seminal text *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Chakrabarty challenges the constant centering of European thought within the discourses on the Third World, so he opts to shift the process of marginalization from the Third World to Europe. He states, "The Europe I seek to provincialize or decenter is an imaginary figure that remains deeply embedded in *clichéd and shorthand forms* in some everyday habits of thought that invariably subtend attempts in the social sciences to address questions of political modernity in South Asia."[87] He argues that the dominance of European political modernity within South Asia has resulted in intellectual traditions from India only being used for historical research, rather than being actively engaged with in contemporary social sciences.[88] Chakrabarty calls for a more critical analysis of the politics of historicism. As we have understood earlier in this essay, historicism, or the "waiting room of history," argues that historical time measures out political distance and notions of "progress," leading the non-West's "progress" to always be measured by that of the West.

Throughout his text, Chakrabarty takes to task leading European Enlightenment thinkers that have through the discourse of historicism pushed non-Western thought into the realm of the "irrational." On Hegel, Chakrabarty writes, "Scholars contemplating the subject called "Indian history" have often relieved, as it were, the old passions of the "struggle of the Enlightenment with superstition" that Hegel writes about in his *Phenomenology*. They have assumed that for India to function as a nation based on the institutions of science, democracy, citizenship, and social justice, "reason" had to prevail over all that was "irrational" and "superstitious" among its citizens."[89] This brings to question how a secular-rational discipline like history, understands and represents the politics and experiences of "irrational and superstitious" peasant peoples? Chakrabarty claims that historians have created a subject-object distinction, a divide which allows the researcher to remain objective and rational even when researching an irrational group. Chakrabarty argues that even educated elite scholars in South Asia have perpetuated this aspect of historicism. Particularly in the 1950s, there was a rising movement amongst Bengali intellectuals which attempted to discuss the nature of modernity in India, or rather the lack there of.[90] Chakrabarty's breakdown of the impact that historicism has had on indigenous knowledges in South Asia proposes the question of how avoiding these pitfalls within our research, especially when he claims that "European modernity in

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[87] Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe,* 4.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid., 237.
[90] Ibid.

countries like India is indispensable and inadequate in helping one engage with life practices in political and historical India."[91]

Returning to Subaltern Studies' initial concerns with the politics of translation, Chakrabarty claims that even contemporary scholars have not been careful with their historical translations:

> Usually, or at least in South Asian studies, the Marxist or secular scholar who is translating the divine is in the place of the student who knows well only one of the two languages he is working with. It is all the more imperative, therefore, that we read our secular universals in such a way as to keep them open to their own finitude, so that the scandalous aspects of our unavoidable translations, instead of being made inaudible, actually reverberate through what we write in Subaltern Studies.[92]

Thus, as a scholar of the non-secular, one must be familiar with the many languages and knowledges of the tradition and community, rather than adhering to the divide between "subject-object." As Chakrabarty states, there is no way to fully escape the legacies of Enlightenment thought and Western modernity; however, that does not necessitate that we must exclude non-Western knoweldges and only contend with European thought.

Chakrabarty's text pushes forward the efforts of Guha from the argument that peasants are historical figures, to questioning the utility of the Marxist historical framework and Hegel's historicism. Specifically, he argues that if the Indian historian solely relies on Marxist theory, she/he will inevitably become entrapped by Hegel's historicism. Instead he urges the reader to turn to works of Martin Heidegger,[93] specifically on hermeneutic practices in history. While looking at history through this approach, one must focus on the contextual meaning found in the everyday of being in the world. Chakrabarty thus argues that one must couple both Marxist theory and Heidegger's hermeneutic approach to fully engage with the histories of non-western people and to make them central figures in history. While Guha's work offers a critique, Chakrabarty's text attempts to provide a framework that avoids the entrapping of historicism and the legacies of Enlightenment thought. However, Chakrabarty himself does not utilize indigenous knowledges in his text and thus the readers are unable to witness his framework in *practice*. But more critically, Chakrabarty does not center any non-western knowledge in his text, the reader is left to rely again upon Western thought to understand history. Is non-secular knowledge merely then a *contextual* or *incidental* phenomenon or can it be the very structure through which to understand non-western peoples history? Turning to the specific case of Ghadar, the following section of this chapter will explore how scholars have thus far approached the history of Ghadar and where they fit within these logics. Not only have South Asian Postcolonial Studies simply marginalized Sikh and Punjabi history, it also has not created space to understand the political and spiritual subjectivities of Sikh peoples.

History and Ghadar

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[91] Ibid., 6.
[92] Ibid., 90.
[93] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (London: SCM Press, 1962).

In 1984, Michel Foucault wrote his own response to Kant's original essay, which he entitled "What is Enlightenment?"[94] While Kant's essay served to introduce the Enlightenment to eighteenth century readers, Foucault's essay expresses the longstanding predicament that it has imposed upon intellectuals today. He maintains that Enlightenment's objective is still to compel one to "produce" oneself, or rather the *obligation* to produce oneself, within its logic. However, rather than reproducing the celebratory rhetoric laced within Kant's original piece, Foucault's essay describes this calling as ominous. He identifies the current dilemma facing intellectuals as the "blackmail of the Enlightenment." Foucault states that currently scholars face a condition in which they are compelled to have either a positive or negative relationship to Enlightenment. Specifically, a scholar can: (1) either accept the enlightenment and remain within the tradition of its rationalism or (2) criticize the enlightenment and then try to escape from its principles of rationality.[95] In either case, within this bind, one must react to the enlightenment. However, Foucault insists that this is a false dichotomy, you can do both. I argue that you can also do neither. Meaning, employing non-secular frameworks to analyze history can aid in avoiding the trappings of Enlightenement secular logics. In the following section, I highlight the ways in which histories on Ghadar have been forced into this "blackmail" thus far and imagine what ways can we push historical discourse on Ghadar outside of this dichotomy.

Beginning in the 1960s, academic discourse on the Ghadar Movement emerged and was heavily informed by the then prominent focus on Marxist theory in histories of social movements. It is important to note that for these early scholars, it was vital to include Ghadar into nationalist histories in order to bring it to the forefront of historical discourse in both India and the US. Parmbir Singh Gill attributes this marginalization to the Indian government's desire to push a secular nationalist narrative in a post-1947 context.[96] In 1969, an early scholar of Ghadar history in Punjab, Gurdev Singh Deol published his text *The Role of the Ghadar Party in the Nationalist Movement* which attempted to situate Ghadar's history in a larger history of the Indian Freedom Movement.[97] Deol argues that while one of the most unique features of the Indian Freedom Movement was its dedication to non-violent tactics, it was in fact the "terrorist" movements like Ghadar that allowed for the Indian Freedom Movement to develop.[98] A substantial goal of this text then becomes to situate this seemingly "failed" movement within a larger history of India's freedom struggle, a space which it has been previously denied. Deol also argues that the rise of extremism within Ghadar was due to an increasing dissatisfaction with Congress' plea for reform, rather than separation from the colonial government. Many of the young men that relocated to the US were then coming from a space of discontent with both the US and Indian colonial government, rather than

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[94] Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?"
[95] Ibid.
[96] Parmbir Singh Gill, "A Different Kind of Dissidence," 28.
[97] The Free India Movement was led by Gandhi and his principles of non-violence.
[98] Gurdev Singh Deol, *The Role of the Ghadar Party in the National Movement* (Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1969), v.

being motivated to imagine a new India. Thus, the Party in this history is both reactionary and nationalist, rather than radical and anticolonial. As we look at later writings by Ghadar scholars, we see how there was a shift in identifying the political origins of Ghadar within the American context and not the Indian one. Deol's early work on Ghadar highlights the development of its political thought within the South Asian historical and political context.

Following a similar line of thought as Deol, Punjabi Ghadar scholar Sohan Singh Josh's *The Hindustan Ghadar Party History Vol I & II*, also locates the intellectual origins of Ghadar within Punjab. As a member of the Communist Party in India, Josh's text was published through the People's Publishing House in New Delhi, a communist publishing house and bookstore. Josh's own communist roots have deeply influenced many central aspects of how he presents Ghadar's history. He begins his text by addressing the many economic reasons why Punjabis migrated to the US, including: poverty, disease and hunger, debt, taxes, and the dominance of *sahukars.*[99] Thus, according to Josh, the deteriorating economic conditions of Punjabi men is what led to the creation of the Ghadar Party. Josh also argued that the Party, and the *Ghadar Gunj,* was a secular one, "The *Ghadar* weekly was the mouthpiece of the Hindustan Ghadar Party and was a secular, non-communal and revolutionary democratic paper."[100] For Josh, then, it is important to highlight the secular aspects of the movement that would allow it to later branch into the Communist Party of India. Josh is also the author of the most detailed biography on the first Ghadar president Sohan Singh Bhakna, titled *Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna: Life of the Founder of the Ghadar Party*. As of today, he is one of the few writers to dedicate a book length text to the Sikh-Punjabi leader of the Ghadar Party, who later went on to be a significant leader in the Communist Party of India as well. Overall, it becomes clear how Josh's own political orientation informed the ways in which he approaches the history of the Ghadar Party.

What we see occurring in the studies by both of these historians is *the desire to historicize* Ghadar, whether it be the effort to place it within nationalist or communist discourses. Though Deol and Josh's histories lie on opposite sides of nationalist and economic debates, they are deeply rooted in the project of modernity and its demand to consume all historical narratives and reiterate them within a secular teleology of historical progression. Both Josh and Deol define Ghadar though a similar logic—which use nationalist and Marxist drives as the overarching factors in Ghadar's emergence. Though Deol and Josh are writing from the Punjabi academy, both scholars attempt to situate Ghadar within pre-existing historical narratives of Western modernity: histories of the nation-state and communist history. As we move forward within this historiography on Ghadar's histories, we see how there is a shift as more scholarship emerges from the US academy, but also how such works attribute the party's birth to the US liberal democracy and imperial politics.

This shift in scholarship from the Punjabi context to the US one began in the 1980s. Indian scholars like Anil Ganguly, who were studying history in the US, began to focus on Ghadar's origins in the US context. In his text *The Ghadar Revolution in*

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[99] Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party*, 32-40.
[100] Ibid., 169.

America, Ganguly constructs a history of the political relationship between the US and India even prior to the arrival of the Punjabi immigrants in the US that would later form the Ghadar Party. For Ganguly, the Ghadar members formulated their party around American liberal democratic ideals of freedom because they were already so familiar with them in the Indian context. He states:

> To the Indians in general, America showed the beacon of light of fighting for freedom…The Ghadarites could, therefore, feel very much at home in America and they know that the soil of America was awfully auspicious for them and the Ghadarites felt that America was the true country that could help them to ventilate their genuine feelings for independence and their love for their celebrated motherland which is India.[101]

Perhaps Ganguly's particularly celebratory narrative of American influences on the Ghadar Party and Indian nationalism had to do with his funding from Columbia University but, whatever the case may be, Ganguly's text chooses not to present the history of racism the Ghadar members faced upon arrival into the US. Ganguly's text also seems to follow the logics of its predecessors as it attributes all the intellectual activity in Ghadar to the influences of American liberal modernity, and more specifically to American democracy.

A few decades later, scholarship on Ghadar does begin to acknowledge racial politics and its effect on the Ghadarites in the US context. For instance, in 2014 US-based scholar Seema Sohi also provides a historical account of Ghadar's history in her text *Echoes of Mutiny: Race, Surveillance and Anticolonialism in North America*. Her text is rooted in locating the Ghadar Party's historical development solely within the political landscape of North America. Using Ghadar's history, Sohi explores the dialectical relationship between increasing radical anti-colonial resistance and increasing immigrant exclusion policies in North America. She argues, "This dialectical relationship of repression and radicalism pushed Indians in North America toward a far more radical position on the meaning of Indian freedom than that being articulated by Indian nationalists in India and drove the US state to exclude migrants from India entirely."[102] Throughout her text, Sohi identifies the multiple moments in which the British empire, through Canada, and the US empire collaborated to repress Indian anti-colonial activities. Her primary intervention within Ghadar and Indian anti-colonial literature is that the transnational anti-colonial movements in North America aided in strengthening the 'special relationship' between the US and Britain empires.[103] Sohi's critical historical approach of navigating Ghadar history differs largely from that of the early Punjabi scholars, as she provides a much more comprehensive look at Ghadar in North America; however, she still does not explore the intellectual motivations behind Ghadar's anticolonial activities and literature.

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[101] Anil Baran Ganguly, *Ghadar Revolution in America* (New Delhi: Metropolitan, 1980). 8.
[102] Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny*, 179.
[103] Ibid., 193

Despite the volume of scholarship that has thus far been produced on Ghadar, there is little work on the intellectual drives of the movement. Most have studied the nationalist, economic, and racial discourses that have shaped the trajectory of the movement, but this does not provide a clear picture of the epistemologies of Ghadar. Because most of the elite Hindu members of the movement have defined themselves, and the movement as secular, many scholars have not broached how Sikh members identified themselves.[104] This dissertation does not delve into the secular ideologies of members such as Har Dayal, instead, here I focus on the intersections of race, religion, and empire in the transnational contexts of the Punjab and the US in the early 1900s. Continuously the pieces published by the Ghadarites provoke the question, what about *Sikhi?* While all scholars have recognized the participation and organizing efforts of Sikh people in the movement, they have either ignored or denied the presence of Sikh thought as a critical framework that had shaped the Party's agenda and ideals. For example in 1977, prominent Sikh Studies scholar Mark Juergensmeyer published his article, "The Ghadar Syndrome: Nationalism in an Immigrant Community." In this article, Juergensmeyer questions why this militant movement formed outside of India. In contrast to Ganguly, Juergensmeyer claims that the Party formed in the US out of conflict with local white workers; however, he argues that this conflict was a class related one and not so much a racial one.[105] Furthermore he identifies the movement as a nationalist and secular movement, "The movement was always political, untainted with the language of faith."[106] Thus, for Juergensmeyer the religious is not political. Juergensmeyer finds this movement to have been simply a vehicle for immigrants to represent their ethnic identities in a competitive labor environment.

Similarly, Maia Ramnath's text *Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire* also takes a contentious view against the non-secular influence on Ghadar. Her text is not focused on Ghadar activities only in the US or Punjab, but rather Ghadar's relationship with other transnational movements around pan-Islamism, Irish republicanism, anarchism, and Bolshevism. Continuing along lines of previous Ghadar scholars, Ramnath too argues that this was an entirely secular movement.[107] In doing so, Ramnath chooses to ignore the largest population of the Ghadar party: the Sikh laborers. Ramnath echoes Juergensmeyer's claim that Ghadar members had never written a single word on religion. However, as we will see later in this dissertation, Ghadar members, particularly the laborers, would write Sikh hymns in the Gurmukhi script, relating the fight for Indian freedom with that of the Sikh nation. Ramnath's own archive for her text on Ghadar relies heavily on scholarship by elites in the movement, causing her scholarship to be one-sided.

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[104] This was primarily done by Har Dayal, the first editor of the Ghadar Press. Dayal published numerous pieces in which he explained his own ideologies and those of Ghadar as secular.

[105] Juergensmeyer, "The Ghadar Syndrome," 3.

[106] Ibid., 11.

[107] Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia,* 5.

Scholarship on the relationship between *Sikhi* and the Ghadar Party published in the past decade has begun to acknowledge the influences of Sikh ideas on the movement. For example, in 2014, Parambir Singh Gill published "A Different Kind of Dissidence: The Ghadar Party, Sikh History, and the Politics of Anticolonial Mobilization" in *Sikh Formation*, in which he argues that identifying the non-secular in the Ghadar party is a worthwhile pursuit. According to Gill, "Ghadar implicated *Sikhi* as both a force and a stake in the struggle to overthrow British rule in India."[108] Gill's article marks a prominent shift in the study of Ghadar. While little work has been done on the non-secular influences on Ghadar since its publication, Gill's article creates an avenue for such work to venture. This dissertation is in direct conversation with the work done by early Ghadar scholars (such as Josh) and the more recent scholarship (such as Gill), and hopes to push the discourse on Ghadar into the exploring its intellectual influences, and more specifically the influence of *Sikhi*.

While recent studies have acknowledged the relevance of *Sikhi* in Ghadar history, none of these histories still have not adequately contended with the "Sikh" experiences of the laborers themselves. This primarily has to do with many historians relying on the writings of Hindu elite within the movement. While Juergensmeyer, Ramnath, and Josh all highlight the challenging economic conditions of laborers that drove the members to create the Ghadar Party, neither has delved more deeply into an interrogation of class dynamics in India and the US. Also, as many have claimed the movement to be secular, none of these scholars have grappled with the spiritual subjectivities or ontological question of being Sikh. Could a "Sikh" exist and also be a Ghadarite? Here, I place "Sikh" within quotations to symbolize the looming question surrounding "Sikh" identity in both the US and British empire. The secularization of the Party through these histories needs to be taken to task, it is only then that we can begin to understand the formation of the party itself.

Using the historiography of the Ghadar Party as a case study, this first chapter seeks to map out not only how histories of Ghadar have been written in multiple academic contexts, but also to understand where they are going. I argue the history of Ghadar has been entrapped within the "blackmail of the Enlightenment," most critically within the binary of secular vs. non-secular/religious. The reoccurring difficulty when writing history on this particular anticolonial movement is how to deal with *Sikhi*, in many ways then *Sikhi* is left out. However, in the following conclusion, I attempt to locate possibilities to read *Sikhi* within Ghadar. As Foucualt's essay states, history does not show us what we cannot do, but a wide variety of what we can do. I argue that looking at history means locating the non-secular and the possible.

Conclusion: Reading the Non-Secular in History

In conclusion, I return to my imagined conversation between Enlightenment scholars and Ghadari revolutionaries, to ask if it is possible to read *Sikhi* in this exchange. Despite the longstanding presence of the secular/non-secular divide within the discipline of history, I believe it is still entirely permeable and I am not alone in my understanding.

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[108] Gill, "A Different Kind of Dissidence," 23-41.

Prominent anthropologist Saba Mahmood described the relationship between the secular and non-secular as such, "…to show how the religious and secular are not so much immutable essences or opposed ideologies as they are concepts that are…interdependent and necessarily linked in their mutual transformation and historical emergence."[109] Mahmood's work has constantly questioned the ways in which we have believed this divide to be concrete and rigid. While Mahmood's studies have explored the secular and non-secular in terms of governance, this dissertation rethinks this binary in the discipline of history.

In his text *Religion and Specter of the West,* Sikh Studies scholar Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair has described how the Sikh tradition has been affected by European modernity. Specifically, his work attempts "to formulate ways of contesting the universality of Western concepts and categories of the dominant Anglophone consciousness, so that Punjabi and South Asian terms or concepts could be enabled to circulate and do their work without being forced to conform to the framing logic of the target language and culture."[110] Mandair's study furthermore complicates the notion of religion/secular, while providing a detailed look at how *Sikhi* became categorized as a "religion."

Similarly, prominent transnational feminist scholar, M. Jacqui Alexander's *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred* ruptures the secular/non-secular divide through feminist praxis in historical work. Alexander asks: "What would it mean to take the Sacred seriously in transnational feminism?[111] In her own work on the trans-Atlantic crossing, Alexander tackles the secular/non-secular divide as she states:

> Put differently, pedagogies that are derived from Crossing fit neither easily nor neatly into those domains that have been imprisoned within modernity's secularized episteme. Thus, they disturb and reassemble the inherited divides of Sacred and secular, that embodied and disembodied, for instance, pushing us to take seriously the dimensions of spiritual labor that make the sacred and the disembodied palpable tangible and, therefore, constitutive of the lived experience of millions of women and men in different parts of the world.[112]

Alexander's text exposes the inadequacies of modernity when attempting to understand the depth of the non-secular in history. She then calls for an examination of the Sacred within experiences of her subjects of study, while she also attempts to embody the Sacred as a way of shedding the "secularized self." What Alexander offers is both a theory and praxis that is fully immersed within the Sacred.

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[109] Saba Mahmood, "Religious Reason and Secular Affect: An Incommensurable Divide?" *Is Critique Secular?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009) 64-100.
[110] Mandair, *Religion and Specter of the West,* 82.
[111] M. Jacqui Alexaneder, *Pedagogies of Crossing.*
[112] Ibid., 332.

What all Mahmood, Mandair, and Alexander point to is the ways in which we can extend our scholarship beyond the secular/non-secular divide and explore the spiritual and political subjectivities of people. What type of study essentially entails is a study of how people are and why they choose to do what they do. To do so, Mandair argues that scholarship must turn to the use of "Sikh philosophy" as a valid mode of inquiry because it allows for the centrality of agency in the lived aspect of Sikh life.[113] Furthermore, Mandair contends that Sikh reasoning and thought inherently "continues to resist the religio-secular distinction," thus our approach to understand Sikh lived realities should account for the subjectivities of Sikh peoples.[114] Using Mandair's approach of "Sikh philosophy" in scholarship has the potential to reveal more about how Sikh(i) is practiced in the constant "making and remaking" and "selfing and deselfing" of Sikh concepts.[115] I argue that this approach should be applied to the literature published by the Ghadar Press, particularly the poetry. Doing so not only bypasses the trappings of the secular/non-secular divide, but also reveals how the Sikh members of the Ghadar Party practiced and embodied *Sikhi* in their struggle for freedom.

Alexander points to an embracing of the uncertainty that does not allow a scholar to sit on either end of the secular/non-secular divide—that the Sacred is found within that feeling. This echoes my initial inability to formulate a conversation between Hegel, Bhakna, and Sarabha. There was a fog of ambiguity that persisted when I attempted to have each individual talk to one another. However, I realized that my questions, rooted in secular history, were hindering my understanding. Thus, I propose that to read *Sikhi* in Ghadar, we must re-formulate the very questions we ask as historians to make space for the non-secular. As historian Brad S. Gregory states, "Instead a study of religion guided not by theories but by the question, 'what does it mean to them?'"[116] In order to explore the non-secular, the very questions we ask must be rooted in examining the onto-epistemology of Ghadar: What does it *mean* to be Sikh and a Ghadarite? Rather than, what did Ghadarites *do*? This means a re-examination of the archive and an unearthing of *Sikhi* embedded within the Punjabi writings, not simply a venture to examine the ways in which capitalism, racism, imperialism, and colonialism oppressed the colonial subject. What would it mean to silence Western modernity and hear solely Ghadarites in a conversation? This paradigm to examine the non-secular is still very much in need of development and it is a project that extends beyond this dissertation. However, the following three chapters are the beginning efforts to answer these questions and to read *Sikhi*.

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[113] Mandair, "Lived Abstractions," 177.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid, 185.
[116] Brad S. Gregory, "The Other Confessional History: On Secular Bias in the Study of Religion." *History and Theory* 45, (2006), 132-149.

CHAPTER TWO: Secular Formations in Punjab: Responses to Revolution and Post-Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial Ghadar Politics, 1917-1928

To fulfill a particular task one should rely upon one's own efforts.
Santokh Singh, *Kirti,* 1926

Proletarians of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains.
Sohan Singh Josh, *Kirti*, 1928

In this chapter, I examine the lasting legacies of the transnational anti-colonial thought of the Ghadar Movement through the major developments within the Babbar Akali Movement and communist movements in Punjab. The objective of this paper is two-fold: for one, it depicts the formations of the secular in Punjab through the development of British-influenced Sikh religious institutions during the colonial period. Second, this chapter briefly discusses two large political sects, the first considered Sikh nationalist and the latter secular, which were heavily influenced by the ideologies of the Ghadar Movement: the Babbar Akali movement and the Kirti-Kisan Party of Punjab. As Ghadar members returned to Punjab after the famous Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial of 1917, many of the leading Sikh institutions, like the Chief Khalsa Diwan and political leaders in Punjab's Congress, disavowed the Ghadri members as not being "true Sikhs."[117] These freedom fighters were in turn characterized as "blasphemous." I argue that here we can see how secularism was conceptualized by religious institutions and political leaders within the Sikh community in the context of colonial Punjab. While the British colonialists aided in the development of state-endorsed religious institutions in the province, the religious institutions formulated the perimeters of secularism. In turn, both anti-colonial organizations challenged the political British influence within "Sikh" institutions. Through a close reading of the statements issued by these institutions, I offer a practical and material reading of the historical creation of the secular within Punjab.

In his text *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity,* Talal Asad defines secularism as a political doctrine which arose in modern Euro-America. It is not simply the absence of religion, but rather it is a presupposition to the concepts of "religion," "ethics," and "politics."[118] Asad describes it as such, "is not simply an intellectual answer to a question about enduring social peace and tolerance. It is an enactment by which a *political medium* (representation of citizenship) redefines and transcends particular and differentiating practices of the self that are articulated through class, gender, and religion."[119] Thus to understand the formations of the religious in

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[117] Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party,* 32-40; Raghbir Singh, *Akali Movement, 1926-1947* (New Delhi: Omsons Publications, 1997), 3-11; Mohinder Singh *The Akali Movement* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 2015), 130-143; Puri, *Ghadar Movement*, 5.
[118] Asad, *Formations of the Secular.*
[119] Ibid, 4.

colonial Punjab, one must also consider how secularism was formulated by the project of modernity. As we know, the historical narratives of the Ghadar Party have been largely divided within the categories of "religious" and "secular"; however, a historical study of the developments of such categories within the colonial space reveals that neither such categories may ascribe themselves neatly to the movement or *Sikhi*, nor are the categories of "religious," "secular," and "*Sikhi*" interchangeable.[120]

While many of the histories of Ghadar end in the US with the Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial of 1917, I have chosen to document the movement's experiences after return to India. Upon arrival, many Ghadarites were met with the fact that a large part of the Punjabi population was still supportive of the British and reformist tactics.[121] The Congress Party of Punjab was well known for its pro-British views and advocated against any rebellious activity. Similarly, as the colonial government actively shaped leadership in the Sikh community through the establishment of religious institutions and employment of temple managers known as *mahants,*[122] the public received equally pro-government teachings from traditional centers like the Chief Khalsa Diwan and the local gurdwaras. The efforts to dissuade the Punjabi public from joining the Ghadar Party had begun at the institutional level before the Ghadarites had even arrived.[123] More specifically, these religious institutions attempted to distance the Ghadarites from *Sikhi* as much as possible so that they could not garner Sikh people's support, "The Ghadarites did not realize that the Akal Takht and the Chief Khalsa Diwan had issued fatwas against them, putting them out of the pale of Sikhism. Therefore, they were not considered patriots by the general mass of people, nor as freedom fighters."[124] In other spaces these religious institutions referred to the members as "looters," "bandits," and "enemies of religion." Through these representations of the Ghadar Party as "secular" and "anti-religious" by state-endorsed religious institutions in Punjab, I attempt to track the formations of secularism within the province.

The final section of this chapter maps the two different sects that grew in membership after the Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial of 1917: The Babbar Akalis and the Kirti-Kisan Party of Punjab. Many members, such as founding member of the Ghadar Party Santokh Singh, went on to establish a stronger presence of communism in northern South Asia, while other members formulated the Sikh nationalist party called the Babbar Akalis. Here, I provide a brief history of both sects, while also analyzing how they have been categorized on either side of the secular/non-secular divide. What the disbanding of the Ghadar Party shows is that first, the formation of secularism must have begun before its disbanding, and second that both of these movements do not easily fit into the binary, as members often worked together and around similar ideas.

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[120] As explored in Chapter 1.
[121] Singh *The Akali Movement*, 131. Josh, *History of the Ghadar Party*.
[122] Raghbir Singh, *Akali Movement, 1926-1947* (New Delhi: Omsons Publications, 1997), 3.
[123] Here, I am referring to both the period of return for Ghadarites in 1915 and after the *Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial* in 1917-18.
[124] Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party,* 32-40.

Ultimately, this chapter captures the processes of secular formations in Punjab, specifically through Ghadar politics. Sources for this paper include a close reading of the autobiography of Ghadar Party and communist leader Sohan Singh Josh and will also rely heavily on Bhagat Singh's in-depth case study of the Babbar Akali movement.[125] Through this chapter I extend the discourses of the Ghadar Movement beyond the Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial of 1917, to include lasting legacies of Ghadar Movement and its influences in a larger transnational context.

History of the Singh Sabha and Subsequent Sikh Movements

Many scholars and political writers in Sikh and Punjab Studies have argued that the downfall of the Ghadar movement (from 1913-1918) was due to the political climate in Punjab.[126] In particular, these scholars state that many Punjabis at the time were either carrying a political air of passivity or were outright pro-British in their sentiments towards colonialism. This chapter interrogates the political climate in Punjab and locates the anticolonial influences the Ghadar Party had on the Babbar Akali Movement and communist movements in Punjab.

During mid-to-late 1800s, the British garnered political control and influence over many Sikh sites and temples through the employment of specific *mahants,* or managers of a locality and religious site. These *mahants* served to influence the Sikh community through issuing statements of support of the British in moments when political support amongst the local communities may be wavering, in particular, through Sikh doctrines like *hukumnamas.*[127] In response to the rising British-funded luxurious life-style of the *mahants,* several political movements sparked to challenge and expel the control of *mahants* in Sikh spaces including: the Nirankari Movement, Namdhari Movement, and the most influential, the Singh Sabha Movement.[128] These socio-religious movements aimed to create a unified Sikh identity, one that would withstand the influences of the British, Christianity, and Hinduism.

At the turn of the century, Punjab experienced an increase in nationalist sentiments. Peasants were distraught over agrarian conditions, while educated and elitist Sikhs demanded more and separate Sikh representation in the Punjab Government, educational committees, and religious spaces. The political situation began to rapidly decline in favor for the British administration in Punjab as the Sikh community grew

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[125] Malwinder Jit Singh Waraich and Gurdev Singh Sidhu, *The Babbar Akali Case Judgment: From Liberation of Gurdwaras to National Liberation* (Chandigarh: Unistar Books, 2007).

[126] including Josh, Sohi, Ramnath, Puri, and Khushwant Singh.

[127] Singh, *Akali Movement,* 3.

[128] For further information on the history of these movements, please refer to: *The Singh Sabha and other Socio-Religious Movements in Punjab, 1850-1925* by Ganda Singh (1997); *The Sikhs* by Khushwant Singh (2006); *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity, and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition* by Harjot Oberoi (1994).

more agitated. On April 13, 1919, Baisakhi Day,[129] thousands of Sikhs gathered at the Golden Temple in Amritsar to celebrate the auspicious holiday. Some Sikh political leaders organized a peaceful meeting regarding the political situation in the Jallianwala Bagh, a public garden located in the Golden Temple complex. As the meeting began, acting British general Reginald Edward Harry Dyer, also known as the Butcher of Amritsar, issued an open-fire on the unarmed Sikhs, killing three hundred and seventy-nine people and wounding two thousand.[130] The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre increased the anti-British feelings of Sikhs in Punjab, as well as turned many apathetic towards state-endorsed Sikh organizations and political leaders. Instead the public supported the formation of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC), an organization that advocated for separate Sikh leadership and Sikh rights in colonial Punjab.[131] The committee managed to garner control over the Golden Temple, as well as other local gurdwaras, removing British supported *mahants.* On November 15, 1920, a *hukumnama* was issued from the Akal Takht[132] summoning an assembly of the Sikh community to elect the members of the committee who would best represent the socio-political interests of the Sikhs in Punjab.[133]

Alongside the establishment of the SGPC, the Shiromani Akali Dal was formed by unifying the separate Akali Jathas (or groups) that were working towards Gurdwara reform around Punjab.[134] The newly unified Shiromani Akali Dal worked to rid Sikh religious spaces of *mahants* and bring them under Sikh leadership. In his autobiography, Sohan Singh Josh notes that the *Akali*, a Punjabi daily newsletter, began circulation on May 21, 1920 and advocated to: end the reign of *mahants*, extend Sikh control over Khalsa College in Amritsar, and force the British Central Government to rebuild the demolished Gurdwara Rakab Ganj.[135] Another major objective of the political group was

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[129] Vaisakhi is a Sikh holiday which celebrates the founding of the Sikh Khalsa, or community. It is also celebrated throughout Punjab by other traditions as it represents the coming of Spring and the harvest.

[130] Singh, *Akali Movement,* 12. Savita Narain, *The Historiography of the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, 1919,* (New Delhi: Spantech and Lancer), 1998. These reported numbers are on behalf of the colonial administration and it has been rumored that the number of causalities was several times higher.

[131] Kashmir Singh, "Shiromani Gurdwara Prarbandhak Committee: An Overview," *The Oxford Handbook of Sikh Studies* ed. Pashaura Singh and Louis E. Fenech (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[132] The Akal Takht, or the throne of the Timeless One, it is a seat of the highest authority in the Sikh Khalsa, or nation.

[133] Singh, *Akali Movement,* 14.

[134] Harjinder Singh Dilgir, *Shiromani Akali Dal, 1920-2000* (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 2000).

[135] Sohan Singh Josh, *My Tryst with Secularism: An Autobiography,* 18. The *Akali* was first issued on May 21, 1920, it expressed critical attitudes towards the British Government and specifically their control over Sikh spaces. This perspective was countered by the pro-British attitude of the *Khalsa Samachar,* Punjabi newsletter circulated at the same time by leaders of the Chief Khalsa Diwan.

to practice the Sikh faith in accordance to the Sikh Gurus and the Sikh religious text, the *Adi Granth.*[136] Through strictly non-violent and peaceful means, in 1925, the Shiromani Akali Dal successfully advocated for the Gurdwara Act which enacted that all Sikh historical religious spaces were to be managed and supervised by the the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabhandhak Committee. In turn, this movement solidified Sikh political representation; however, it also unified and managed what garnered a true "Sikh" identity.[137]

Demands for more Sikh social and political representation also called for the establishment of the Chief Khalsa Diwan (CKD) on October 30, 1902, an organization created to advocate for the Sikh community in the socio-political arena of colonial Punjab. Growing out of the Amritsar Singh Sabha movement, and especially with Tat Khalsa leanings, the CKD believed in lobbying for Sikh interests by retaining good relations with British officials.[138] As a key milestone in the political career of the CKD, in 1909 the organization successfully advocated for the Anand Karaj Act which recognized the legal validity of Sikh marriage rituals. By extension of the Singh Sabha movement, the CKD also served to promote a singular and unified Sikh identity to challenge influences from missionaries and the more politically powerful Hindu and Muslim communities. This newly unified Sikh identity was also to be made digestible to the British Government in exchange for political representation in organizations such as Punjab Government and Congress.[139]

Histories regarding the political legacies of the Chief Khalsa Diwan are largely centered around its alliances with the British Government as well as its efforts to consolidate Sikh factions into a unified Sikh religious identity. However, here I argue that the CKD also worked to solidify a notion of the secular in its efforts to discredit anticolonial movements, such as the Ghadar Party and marked it as "anti-Sikh." The loyalist nature of the CKD's political agenda caused it to label Sikh anticolonial organizations as "seditious."[140] Punjab Studies scholar Harish Puri argues, "When the Ghadarites returned to propagate and launch a rebellion and launch a rebellion against British rule, the Chief Khalsa Diwan assumed the role of a vanguard of the British rule for the suppression of the Ghadarites. The *mahants* and *pujaris* whose own fall from Sikh norms was provoking the community's contempt and anger, condemned the Ghadarites as *patit* Sikhs and enemies of the *panth*, or Sikh nation."[141] Arguably this was done to

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[136] Singh, *Akali Movement*, 15.

[137] Harjot Oberoi, *Constructions of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity, and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[138] Navdeep S. Mandair, "Colonial Formations of Sikhism" *The Oxford Handbook of Sikh Studies* ed. Pashaura Singh and Louis E. Fenech (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 77.

[139] N. Gerald Barrier, "Competing Visions of Sikh Religion and Politics: The Chief Khalsa Diwan and the Panch Khalsa Diwan, 1902-1928" *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 23:2, (2002), 37.

[140] Barrier, "Competing Visions," 42.

[141] Puri, *Ghadar Movement to Bhagat Singh*, 46. Also, in his text *India's Struggle for Independence*, Bipan Chandra writes, "The Chief Khalsa Diwan proclaiming its loyalty

undercut the political reach of other rising Sikh movements; however, it is specifically their allegation that these organizations were "anti-Sikh" which introduces the boundaries of not only the religious, but also the secular within Punjab-Sikh politics.[142] The more political representation the Sikh community gained through organizations like the CKD, the more they had to create an alternative "anti-Sikh" identity, one that did not uphold Sikh values or that of a decent British colonial subject. The processes of creating boundaries around religious identity must also include an introduction of the secular within a socio-political landscape. Within colonial spaces we see the secular/non-secular divide which was introduced by the project of colonial modernity being greatly deepened by religious institutions themselves.

In relationship to the Gurdwara reform movements[143] in Punjab led by the more dominant Singh Sabha Movement, the Chief Khalsa Diwan, and later by the Shiromani Akali Dal, the Babbar Akali Jathas stand out in stark contrast. While the Shrimonai Akali Dal leadership and the S.G.P.C. advocated for peaceful means towards Gurdwara reform, the Babbar Akalis were heavily influenced by the militant tactics of the Ghadar movement.[144] The following section of this chapter focuses on the political trajectory of the Babbar Akali movement and its relationship to the Ghadar movement followed by a history on the rise of communism in Punjab.

Babbar Akali Movement History

Disillusioned and unconvinced of the peaceful protesting tactics of the Shiromani Akali Dal, the Babbar Akali Movement took inspiration from the militant past of the Ghadar Party. In 1921, the Babbar Akali movement broke off of the larger and more mainstream Akali movement in order to adopt more militant tactics to eradicate the physical and political presence of British imperialism in Punjab. The movement also utilized *Sikhi* to garner support from the local Sikh community and argued that they were fighting to reinstate the Sikh empire. In particular, movement garnered heavy support from both former Ghadar Party members and the batches of Sikh soldiers returning from World War I. Over the course of four years, the members killed British informers, loyalists, and British officials; however, the movement eventually came to a halt in 1926, as many of its members had either been arrested or killed in police encounters. The Babbar Akali movement's sudden growth in membership close after the fracturing of the Ghadar Party in 1918, points the direct influences the movement had on this Sikh movement. Even though, Sikh political organizations like the Chief Khalsa Diwan had written off the Ghadar Party as "anti-Sikh," the Ghadar Movement's political influences on an explicitly Sikh organization like the Babbar Akalis allows for the interrogation of

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to the sovereign, declared them [Ghadarites] to be "fallen" Sikhs and criminals, and helped the Government to track them down."

[142] Both N. Gerald Barrier and Sohan Singh Josh write about how the CKD openly advocated against the Ghadar Party revolutionaries. (Barrier, 42). (Josh, *Short History of the Ghadar Party*).

[143] Singh, *Akali Movement,* 3.

[144] Singh *The Akali Movement,* 130.

the formations of secular versus the non-secular in the anticolonial politics of Punjab. The proceeding section will provide a history of the rise of the Babbar Akali movement and its political relations with both the Ghadar movement and with British-endorsed Sikh religious institutions.

On March 19, 1921, and later on May 21, 1921, the Babbar Akali Jatha made its initial introductions to the Punjabi public through meetings at the Sikh Educational Conference in Hoshiarpur. According to a British official Criminal Investigation Department report, these meetings were attended by Master Mota Singh, Kishan Singh, Amar Singh, Tota Singh Peshawari, Gurbachan Singh, Buttan Singh, as well as many other returned immigrants from North America.[145] Thus the meeting not only took inspiration from the Ghadar Movement, but many of its former members were also in the center of the Babbar Akalis political activities. These initial meeting programs depicted how the Babbar Akali movement separated itself from the politics of the Akali Dal and the SGPC as the members came to a consensus and presented the following five points:

1. To create a rising in the Patiala State.
2. To endeavor to get in touch with the Bolsheviks across the Frontier and to arrange an outbreak on the Frontier which should synchronize with the outbreak in Patiala.
3. To foment trouble in Central Punjab.
4. To collect, men, arms, ammunition; and
5. To eliminate certain officials and non-officials condemned as enemies of the Khalsa Panth.[146]

While the Babbar Akalis borrowed several key ideologies from the Ghadar movement, they assessed the factors of its shortcomings, which primarily constituted the Ghadar movement's inability to garner Sikh support within Punjab. To avoid similar pitfalls, the Babbar Akali movement would need to focus heavily on propaganda and taking control of Sikh religious and political spaces of influence. In many ways this is similar to the objectives of the more dominant Shiromani Akali Dal; however, to counter reformist tactics, the Babbar Akalis called for the physical annihilation of the British Raj and its supporters.

Not only were they to eliminate the British administration in power, but also they planned to attack other forms of systems of oppression that profited off the British as well, including *lambadars, zamindars, mahants, patwaris,* and police informers. While their critique of capitalistic systems and the exploitive nature of the colonial economy was not at the center of the Babbar Akali agenda, it was still an issue that was openly challenged. In a speech appearing in the revolutionary journal *Bande Mataram,* Babbar Akali leader Master Mota Singh described the overburdened life of the peasant as being

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[145] Singh *The Akali Movement*, 131.

[146] Criminal Investigation Department Report in File 268/1922, Home-Political, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

rooted within the British system of private property.[147] Mota Singh argued that an abolishment of private property would mean a freedom from the oppressive systems of taxes and rent.[148] Therefore, in order to completely free a nation it should get rid of landlordism and capitalism as well, otherwise the nation would turn into the capitalist United States of America, where oppression simply took another form. In Mota Singh's critique of capitalism, and more specifically landlordism, the Babbar Akali leaders are extending the Ghadar movement's fight for freedom to include more concrete visions of what a "free" space would entail. Alongside it being politically a Sikh space, it would also be critical and unaccepting of Western capitalism as an economic and political system.

Methodologically, the propaganda of the Babbar Akali movement was distributed both through oral and written means. Utilizing the Sikh travelling story-telling medium of *diwans*[149] the movement attempted to branch out of the scope of the Doaba region in Punjab, a space that was central to the Ghadar movement. The movement also distributed leaflets through their journal called *Maghi*[150]. *Maghi* conceptualized revolutionary politics specifically through a Sikh lens and invoked the inherent revolutionary spirit of the Sikh community. In one particular issue the Babbars wrote: "As the Indian movement has subsided, the Tenth Guru has, therefore, in his infinite mercy, sent the Babbar to help the nation out of its critical situation. The Babbar will make his appearance in the Doaba where the Sikh army stands drawn up in battle array. He will expose the secret of the *feringhees* who will shriek in pain."[151] The Babbars also paid homage to Guru Gobind Singh's *Zafarnama*[152] in which he stated that turning to arms was legitimate when

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[147] Giani Gurmukh Singh, *Jiwani Master Mota Singh Ji* (Jalandhar: Desh Sewak Book Agency, 1923).

[148] Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab*, 57. *Inprecorr*, No. 88. (National Archives of India, New Delhi, Home Political File No. 261, KWI, 1924.) Mota Singh's speech: "Self-rule of a dominion is not the whole for India. This type of self-rule is incapable of improving the conditions in India. Under this type of self-rule the horrible conditions and the suppression of the weak and poor will remain the same as before. Similarly, no individual has the right to lord over other individuals, nor one nation, nor one class should rule over other nations or classes. So far as such domination will exist neither in India nor in the World their will be peace…We stand for a republic but not for such a republic as the United States of America. We don't want to build such a state which would decided to usurp the right even of one poor man. Our world does not need capitalism anymore. So long this system is not destroyed their can be nor real freedom."

[149] Singh *The Akali Movement*, 132.

[150] Waraich and Sidhu, *The Babbar Akali Case Judgment*. "Maghi" refers to a celebration of Sikh martyrs.

[151] Singh *The Akali Movement*, 132.

[152] Guru Gobind Singh and Navtej Sarna, *Zafarnama* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2011). The *Zafarnama*, or Epistle of Victory, was a letter written by Guru Gobind Singh, the 10th Guru in the Sikh tradition, to Mughul emperor Aurangzeb in 1705. Written in Persian verse, the letter relays Guru Gobind Singh's thoughts on the nature of battle and spiritual victory.

peaceful means had failed, as a justification for their ideologies. For them, their turn to violence was the already imbedded and validated in *Sikhi*. In other instances, Punjab Studies scholar Mohinder Singh notes that the paper also urged readers to, "bring about anarchy by means of the *khanda* (double-edged sword), cut down the foreigner, and purge the land of sinful deeds."[153] In the following poem, Karam Singh Babbar utilizes the *khanda* to evoke a revolutionary spirit in the Sikhs:

> *Khanda pakro shero akhe Babbar vanger,*
> *Khanda pakar san te lao, tej karo do dhar,*
> *Bin Khande na mile azadi, Kenda Babbar vangar*
> (Catch hold of the double-edged dagger,
> So the Babbar declares,
> Sharpen both its edges on the whetting stone,
> Without the dagger freedom cannot be won)[154]

Contrary to the Ghadar movement's demand that all Indians unite and keep their faith private, the Babbar Akalis urged Hindus and Muslims to join the Khalsa (Sikh nation) and use violence to support their pursuit for freedom.[155] However, as had occurred with the Ghadar Party, the Shiromani Akali Dal and the SGPC sent out public advisements for Sikhs to distance themselves as much as possible from the Babbar Akali movement. As key managers of Sikh identity, these two organizations carried a lot of weight in their alienation of the Babbars from Sikh identity, pushing the movement's reputation more and more into the realm of heretics.

As the Babbar Akali movement gained more traction in the Doab region, Babbar member Kishan Singh brought together several Babbar Jathas on December 25, 1922 in the village of Jassowal.[156] Their rise in popularity over the course of a year called for material action by the Babbars in order to maintain their support thus the committee decided on the following terms: (i) The working committee of the Babbar Akali movement would determine who was to be murdered; (ii) however, only after careful consideration, a Babbar member could kill a British Loyalist if the chance spontaneously arose; (iii) Children and women are not to be harmed and personal belongings and valuables of those killed can not be removed without the approval of the committee; (iv) only those willing to execute British officials and loyalists can remain a Babbar member; (v) earlier notions to cut off noses and ears of loyalists has now been revoked, instead members should aim to kill; (vi) and lastly, those killed will be announced in Babbar Akali publications and any money collected from those killed will be used to collect arms and ammunition. [157] These six new points regarding the Babbar Akali "reform" were

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[153] Singh *The Akali Movement*, 132.
[154] Ibid. Translation by Mohinder Singh.
[155] Ibid., 133.
[156] Ibid., 136. Sundar Singh Makhsuspuri, *Babbar Akali Lehar,* pg 98-99.
[157] Waraich and Sidhu, *The Babbar Akali Case Judgment.* Singh *The Akali Movement,* 136; C.F. Isemonger's Evidence in the Babbar Akali Case, quoted in *The Civil and Military Gazette,* 31 October 1923.

published in the *Babbar Akali Doaba Akhbar* in December of 1922 and the first victim of the movement was a retired official of the Canal Department named Bishan Singh who was killed in February 10, 1923.[158] Shortly proceeding this initial killing, there was a steep rise in fear among the British government for their safety. While many remained loyal and sympathetic to the Babbar cause, wealthy Sikhs created special committees within their villages in support of the British and preached about the "blessings" of British rule for the citizens of Punjab—Mohinder Singh points out that the British were even described as having been blessed by the Sikh Gurus.[159]

Over the next three months, the Babbar Akali members successfully executed numerous British loyalists causing a spur of panic among Punjabi elites and the British administration of Punjab. Greater pressure was placed upon local police forces to arrest Babbar members, including special Criminal Investigation Department (CID) staff. It has even been noted that airplanes with propaganda was flown over the Doaba region which distributed pamphlets expressing loyalist rhetoric in order to counter the rising popularity of the Babbar Akalis and anti-British sentiment.[160] The Babbar Akali groups were declared an "unlawful association" under the Criminal Law Act of 1908, and local communities were offered cash awards for any information that would aid in the capture and arrest of any Babbar affiliates.[161]

Despite the several arrests made of key Babbar Akali leaders during the months of August to November of 1923, the Babbar Akali movement remained strong and continued to kill British supporters and preach anti-British sentiment in Punjab. However, their strength and popularity wavered as the Punjab government advised the police to adopt stricter measures, including raiding suspected Babbar Akali hideouts and homes. By mid-June in 1924, one hundred and eighty-six arrests were made and twenty-five of those arrested were charged with murder. By the early summer of 1924, key members of the Babbar Akali movement had either been arrested or killed in police encounters, successfully suppressing Babbar activity in Punjab.[162]

Nationalist leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and the SGPC each issued statements of disapproval of the Babbar Akali members and their violent tactics. The Punjab Government used such statements of disassociation as encouragement to not only repress the Babbar Akali movement, but to also enforce harsher punishments like execution for its members. At the time, some Babbar Akali leaders argued that the Akali Dal had

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[158] Waraich and Sidhu, *The Babbar Akali Case Judgment.* Singh *The Akali Movement*, 136; File 134/II/1923, Home-Political, National Archives of India, New Delhi (NAI).
[159] Singh *The Akali Movement*, See for details of the addresses presented by these associations to Malcolm Hailey, the Governer of Punjab, G.R. Sethi's *Sikh Struggle for Gurdwara Reform* and the Private Papers of Malcolm Hailey in the India Office Library, London, Nos. Mss. Eur E. 220/41 to 45. And Panjab Government Communique dated 24 April 1923, File 134-11/1923. This account is confirmed by Sundar Singh Maksuspuri's eyewitness account, *Babbar Akali Lehar* as well.
[160] "Notes on measures against the Babbar Akali Movement" in File 134/II/1923. Home-Political, National Archive of India, New Delhi.
[161] Babbar Akali Case, quoted in *The Civil and Military Gazette,* 9 August 1923.
[162] Singh *The Akali Movement,* 142.

bargained with the British Government for the release of its members in exchange for a "free-hand" in the Babbar trials. Thus, Babbar members Master Mota Singh and Naujawan Sabha,[163] charged the SGPC with "giving a green signal to the Panjab Government for the execution of the Babbar Akalis."[164] Even though the Akali Dal attempted to distance itself from the Babbar Akalis, the latter movement allowed for the Akali Dal to gain leveraging power with the Punjab Government, increasing its future likelihood for political negotiations.

Despite the Babbar Akali movement being largely disjointed from anticolonial narratives in Punjab, its case shows the ways in which the transnational nature of the Ghadar movement managed to heavily influence the political climate in Punjab. In particular, it is the movement's relationship with both Ghadar and Sikh religious institutions that is striking. The Babbar case depicts the changing notions of "Sikh" identity within anticolonial thought. Though the movement centered its identity largely around *Sikhi* and Sikh history, the disapproval from Sikh managing committees, forces it into a realm labeled "un-Sikh," while in many instances the British are seen as more truly "Sikh." What the Babbar Akali movement does in Punjab is show how not only are unified community movements, like Ghadar, defined as "secular," explicitly Sikh-based movements, like the Babbar Akalis, are also categorized as "anti-religious."

History of the Communist Movements in Punjab after the 1917 Ghadar Trial

Following the two major political trials that occurred in the US and India, the Lahore Conspiracy Trials of 1915 and the Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial of 1917, many Ghadarites shifted to the landscape of Punjab. As previously discussed, some of these former Ghadar members joined and created the Babbar Akali movement, taking key inspiration in militant tactics from the Ghadar Movement. Though the Babbar Akali movement only remained active from 1921-1923, it created a large impact in the political landscape of rural Punjab. This section discusses the dispersal of communism throughout Punjab during the mid-1920s. In particular, this chapter highlights how communist thought formed an alliance with the Sikh tradition to generate unique ways imagining socialist politics in colonial Punjab. Here, we will look briefly at the histories of the *Kirti* journal and the trajectory of the Kirti-Kisan Party, which ultimately aligned with the Communist Party of Punjab in 1942. Navigating the communist history of Punjab, specifically from the Ghadar Movement as a starting point illuminates how the secularization of Punjabi politics occurs by erasing the legacy of the Sikh tradition within these social, political, and economic movements, in favor of a Euro-centric history of Marxism.

After the success of the October Revolution in Russia in 1917, Ghadar members were inspired to bring such revolution to their own rural homeland. As the Ghadar Party

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[163] The Naujawan Bharat Sabha, was a leftist, anti-colonial organization established in March of 1926 by Bhagat Singh. The collaboration between these two organizations, one heavily based in the Sikh tradition and the other socialist, illuminates how the divide between the secular and non-secular within the political realm of Punjab is not yet clearly defined.

[164] Singh, *The Akali Movement*, 142.

already created valuable networks with Russian revolutionaries in the past,[165] the key moment of the October Revolution was when those seeds of communication came to fruition. Newly appointed Soviet Russian leader Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, also known as Lenin, was highly aware of the rising anti-imperialist activities in the Eastern colonies. In fact, the establishment of the Third International (Comintern) in Moscow in 1920 was motivated to completely annihilate British imperialism.[166] On July 28, 1920 Lenin presented his colonial theses at the Second Comintern Congress in which he argued that this was the specific moment for what he called a "world revolution" to take over.[167] Following Lenin's statement, in September 1920 the Congress of the People of the East met in Baku, Azerbaijan during which Comintern president Grigory Zinoviev conveyed the urgency of Lenin's message as he stated the need for uprisings in the East against the colonial powers. While Zinoviev's call for revolution in the East inspired organizing activity on the ground in Punjab among former Ghadarites and Babbar Akali members,[168] the British officials in India began increasing security and surveillance of Punjabi communication networks in efforts to repress communist activity as soon as possible. However, agrarian militancy struggles in Punjab remained largely unaffected. In fact, the Fourth Comintern Congress in 1922 adopted the "Theses on the Eastern Question" which particularly praised the Sikh militant movements in Punjab:

> The struggle to free the land from the the feudal dues and restrictions thus assumes the character of a national liberation struggle against imperialism and the feudal large landowners. Examples of this were provided by the Moplah rising against feudal landowners and the English in India, in the autumn of 1921, and the Sikh rising in 1922.[169]

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[165] For further reading on the collaborations between Indian and Russian revolutionaries, refer to: Maia Ramnath's *Haj to Utopia* & M.A. Persit's *Revolutionaries of India in Soviet Russia: Mainsprings of the Communist Movement in the East*; and Josh's *Hindustan Ghadar Party.*

[166] Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab,* 43.

[167] Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *Collected Works, Volume 31, April-December 1920* (London: Lawrence &Wishart, 1966). Bhagwan Singh Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab, 1926-1947* (New Delhi: Anupama Publications, 1970), 43.

[168] The Babbar Akali movement was an offshoot movement from the mainstream Akali movement. This was a Sikh-led militant movement which advocated for the use of violence when demanding *gurdwara* reform and freedom from the British Raj. The movement was composed of former Ghadar members and ex-British Indian Army soldiers who did not received the land grants they were promised during their recruitment for World War I.

[169] Jane Degres, *The Communist International: 1919-1943 Documents, Volume I* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1971), 386. Found in section of the "Theses on the Eastern Question" titled "The Agrarian Question." Also mentioned in Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab.*

Communist leaders in India, such as M.N. Roy also found Punjab to be a perfect space for revolution as many Punjabis who trained with the British Army could be convinced to fight in a "proletarian army."[170] This is not the first time a revolutionary movement has considered turning the Punjabi British soldiers against the British Raj itself. The Ghadar Party also attempted to obtain the support of the Indian troops.[171] Therefore, Punjab still remained a space of highest potential for revolution, considering both sectors of its economy: peasantry and military.

While the major economies of the time in the province of Punjab were agriculture and the military, the Ghadar members had returned to India with a wide variety of experiences in different forms of labor abroad. In the United States, considering the racial and labor tensions upon arrival, many Ghadarites created deep connections with the Industrial Workers of the World, a workers trade union organization formed in the USA in 1905.[172] The Ghadar movement's initial association with leftist politics in North America originated through its interactions with the IWW. Thus, at the time, the Ghadar Party remained one of the few Indian anticolonialist movements which also sought to counter labor oppressions, particularly in response to the racial tensions present amongst mill and farmworkers along the North American west-coast. Ghadar's outlook on labor rights also opened them up to create Russian networks. Though the Ghadar Movement's critique of labor oppressions was not as fully formed as their critique of imperialism, they still introduced to the space of Punjab a unique discourse on peasant and labor rights, as many of these men were peasants in Punjab and laborers abroad.

Though, as previously mentioned, Punjab remained largely an agrarian state, there were other forms of industry present within the province as well that depended on agriculture. Industrial employment in 1921 was at twenty-one percent and was dominated by the production of textiles, wood minerals, metal processing, and food production.[173] By the early 1920s, Punjab's economy had become highly complex and diverse. However, there still remained a need to both understand and critique how in the different sectors of labor, peasantry, and the military the colonized people of Punjab were exploited. Thus during this period, the Ghadarites began to communicate more directly with those involved in Russia's revolution.

In the early 1920s the Ghadar Party took interest in the communist agenda and sent two representatives to the Fourth Communist International Congress held in Russia in November of 1922. After their visit to Russia, representatives Santokh and Rattan Singh both recognized that they needed to approach the rising Akali *jathas* (groups) with the communist message. In May 1923, Ghadarite members from the Kabul, Afghanistan

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[170]Ibid., 46; Sir Kaye Cecil, Subodh Roy, and Mahadeva Prasad Saha, *Communism in India* (Calcutta: Editions Indian, 1971), 9.

[171] Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party.*

[172] Ramnath, *Hajj to Utopia,* 64. For further reading on the International Workers of the World, please refer to: Eric Thomas Chester, *The Wobblies in their Heyday: The Rise and Destruction of the Industrial Workers of the World during the World War I Era* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2014).

[173] Gurharpal Singh, *Communism in Punjab: A Study of the Movement up to 1967* (New Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1994), 20-21.

center, Gurmukh Singh and Udham Singh were sent to approach the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) in Amritsar, Punjab with a proposal to create a *Sanjhiwal* (unified) Association, a Sikh-reformist organization that would be officially recognized by the the Comintern Congress in Russia. Specifically, Rattan Singh served as a mediator between the Third International and local Akali *jathas* in Punjab.[174] Ultimately, five Ghadarites from Punjab were sent to the Russia to be trained under communist ideologies at the University for the Toilers of the East.[175] Radicals in Punjab who had associations with the Ghadar Party and the Akali Movement maintained their own separate lines of communication with the Third International, outside the purview of more western-educated, elite communist leaders like M.N. Roy.

Also leading the Punjabi-Russian alliance was Santokh Singh, a founding member of the Ghadar Party in Oregon in 1913. Singh played a vital role in attempting to collect arms from the Indo-China region during the Ghadar revolutionary attempt in 1915. However, amidst its failure in 1916, Singh returned to the United States and continued his activist work with the Ghadar movement. Eventually he was arrested and tried during the famous Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial of 1917 in San Francisco, California and was sentenced to twenty-one months of imprisonment at McNeil Island, off the coast of the state of Washington. Later in *Kirti*, he recalls his friendship with an American communist on the Island who shared communist texts and Marxist ideas, deeply influencing his desire to rally for the working class.[176] Upon his release, Santokh Singh began urging other Ghadar members to study Marxist theory and learn Russian—he became an avid supporter of the Revolution in Russia. As he tried to return from his trip to Russia in May 1923, Singh was arrested during his journey and remained imprisoned in independent territory until December 1923, after which he was sent to serve the remaining two years of his sentence on house-arrest in his village in Punjab.[177] During those two years from 1924-1926 Santokh Singh completely immersed himself in learning about the local political situation and how to best organize a communist revolution in Punjab. In early 1926, he moved to Amritsar with fellow Ghadar members Bhag Singh Canadian and Karam Singh Cheema[178] and collaboratively began the publication of *Kirti*, a monthly magazine written in Punjabi-Gurmukhi which expressed the need for a communist revolution which combined Ghadar's militancy, the Russian revolution's organization, and *Sikhi*'s ideals. The first issue of *Kirti* was published in February 1926.

In January of 1926, Santokh Singh sent out a message announcing the upcoming publication of *Kirti* in which he stated:

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[174] Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab*, 63. Home Political File No. 41, 1926. National Archives of India, New Delhi.

[175] Ibid. The Communist University of the Toilers of the East was established on April 21, 1921 in Moscow by the Comintern. The University trained communist members from across the colonial world.

[176] Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab*, 65. *Kirti*, June 1927.

[177] Ibid., 66.

[178] Mentioned in *Kirti*. (1926), 3. Reel Number MF-17984 r.1, Center for Research Libraries.

> A monthly journal called the *Kirti* will shortly start publication from Amritsar. The journal will be the voice of Indian workers living in America and Canada and will be dedicated to the sacred memory of those heroes and martyrs, who awakened sleeping India at the time when the value of the service was far higher than it is now, and whose ideal was regarded by our own people as well as by outsiders as an absolutely vague dream. The journal will sympathize with the all the workers throughout the world, the entire female sex, subjugated, the weak and oppressed nations and subjugated India.[179]

Created through funding received from Ghadar members and other Indian workers abroad,[180] the new journal *Kirti* would expand the anticolonial sentiment of Ghadar to include worker and labor rights issues. *Kirti* thus served as the first organized labor journal in northern South Asia. British Criminal Investigation Department accounts reported that the first issue of *Kirti* advocated heavily for labor causes, as well as, consistently glorifying the Ghadarites and the Babbar Akalis.[181]

The first issue of *Kirti* was noted to have travelled from Punjab to the US and then to Russia.[182] British officials remained alarmed at how quickly the journal was able to not only reach audiences in Russia, but also how efficiently the Punjabi public were taking influence from its revolutionary message. In 1926, Rashpal Singh from *Desh Sewak-Jalandhar* welcomed *Kirti* to the world—a new leftist newsletter published in Amritsar, Punjab, which tackled peasant and labor issues in Punjab and abroad. In honor of its first publication, Singh wrote:

> It is with honor that I congratulate the creators of *Kirti.* This magazine was born from the efforts of Hindustanis abroad and speaks of the sacrifices made by the courageous martyrs from Canada and America. I pray for the long life of *Kirti* and hope it attains its highest aspirations.[183]

Rashpal Singh, and many other leftist organizers, acknowledged both the novelty and necessity of organizing for peasant and labor rights within Punjab.

What made *Kirti* particularly unique, and subsequently quite popular, among revolutionary and public circles in Punjab was its utilization of *Sikhi*. Since its very first issue, *Kirti*'s editor, Santokh Singh made distinct note of how the preaching of egalitarianism within Sikh thought was very much a leftist agenda; therefore, rather than

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[179] Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab*, 67. Home Political File No. 235/1926, National Archives of India, New Delhi.
[180] *Kirti*. (1926), 3. Reel Number MF-17984 r.1, Center for Research Libraries.
[181] Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab*, 67. Home Political File No. 235/1926, National Archives of India, New Delhi.
[182] Ramnath, *Hajj to Utopia,* 130.
[183] *Kirti*. (1926), 3. Reel Number MF-17984 r.1, Center for Research Libraries. Translated by Amrit Deol.

importing a foreign way of thinking, like Marxism, Punjab should rely upon *Sikhi* to inform their newly rising communist society. The first issue of *Kirti* in February 1926 begins with a *salok*[184] from the *Guru Granth Sahib* which states: "to fulfill a particular task one should rely upon one's own efforts."[185] Also, within this initial issue of *Kirti*, Rashpal Singh writes that *Kirti* is dedicated to fighting for the rights of those who work with honest labor, or as it is phrased within the Sikh tradition *dasan nohan di kirt.*[186] Later in this issue it is also mentioned that writings of this journal are colored with "*panthic prem, quami dard*, and *vattan di mohabbet*."[187] Punjabi historian Bhagwan Josh writes:

> To evaluate the ideas of these individuals, especially those grouped around the *Kirti* magazine, we must understand, firstly, that the lives of these revolutionary nationalists had been shaped by the popular principles of Sikhism; and secondly, that these practical men evolved their ideas more under the influence of the achievements of the Russian Revolution than under the influence of Marxist theory.[188]

Here, Bhagwan Josh refers specifically to the politics of the early contributors to *Kirti*. Later we see how the outlook of *Kirti* changed under the editorship of Sohan Singh Josh.

Over the next five issues of *Kirti* from March to September 1926, Santokh Singh discussed in great detail how land distribution could change the life of the peasant, while also warning how Gandhi's non-cooperation movement would ultimately fail because it did not challenge the oppressive system of capitalism. In his article titled "The Hardworking Peasant" Singh states: "After careful understanding and thinking one has to accept and say that without a change in the existing division of land, the solution to the problem is impossible."[189] Through these publications, Santokh Singh attempted to bring communist ideas into the discourse of the everyday laborer—specifically, so they could imagine another way to freedom outside of the Gandhian movement's agenda. In the August 1926 issue of *Kirti*, Santokh Singh proposes that the solution to the land issue would be to institute large peasant companies that would be co-owned by a small local group, in which profits would be distributed equally and land can not be rented to others outside of the present company.[190]

Singh's answer to the agrarian problem, stimulated quite a discussion amongst revolutionary circles in Punjab, and the larger Indian context. Many wrote in questions to the publishing house in Amritsar asking "Who is a Kirti? What are their objectives?"

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[184] A *Salok* can be defined as the final verse in a Sikh prayer.
[185] *Kirti*. (1926), 3. Reel Number MF-17984 r.1, Center for Research Libraries.
[186] Ibid.
[187] "love for the Sikh nation, the hurt of the community, and adoration of the nation," *Kirti*. (1926), 3. Reel Number MF-17984 r.1, Center for Research Libraries.
[188] Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab*, 76. Josh continues to write about how Santokh Singh would in fact be able to recite quotes from memory from Marx's *Capital* and Sikh passages called *gurbani*.
[189]Ibid., 68; *Kirti*. (1926), 3. Reel Number MF-17984 r.1, Center for Research Libraries.
[190] Ibid.

Santokh Singh proceeded to clarify the definition of "kirti" in an article titled, "Current Confusions" in which he states:

> Anyone who does his work with his own hands and does not exploit others is a Kirti in the true sense of the word…*Kirti* is the exact translation of the word laborer in English, the word *Kirti* and *Kirti Shreni* have specific meanings. *Kirti* is that person who has no capital and means of production and earns his living by working for others. Similarly *Kirti Shreni* is that class of people who have no capital or means of production.[191]

Further into his article, Singh argues that while *kirti* means laborer, in the context of Punjab he also uses it to mean peasant because both are exploited by the capitalists. Singh is attempting then to unify the struggle of the peasants in Punjab and laborers abroad, such as the Ghadarites, into one class called *kirti.* Thinking through the struggles of oppression of Punjabis at home and abroad, Santokh Singh's classification of *kirti* allowed for a political revolution, as well as an economic one. His goal was to extend the view of the Ghadar movement to connect the oppressions of anticolonialism and labor. In his text *My Meetings with Bhagat Singh,* Sohan Singh Josh recalls, "After the failure of the 1915 Ghadar revolution, the Ghadar Party leaders were turning towards Marxism-Leninism and wanted to organize the Punjab peasantry and the amorphous working class in order to carry on the national freedom struggle under new conditions."[192] The question driving Santokh Singh's political activism was: How can we support an egalitarian society after independence?

From May 1926 to August 1926, many of Santokh Singh's writings advocated for an organization of the workers of the world similar to the Industrial Workers of the World. However, during this period, Santokh Singh was bedridden due to tuberculosis causing his writings to be more theoretical, rather than speaking to the material problems of workers and peasants in Punjab. Due to his death on May 19th, 1927, Santokh Singh was never able to fully bring to life an organization built on communist and Sikh ideals. However, as Bhagwan Josh states: "His [Santokh Singh's] contribution lies in establishing an ideological centre, i.e., the first Punjabi magazine with socialist leanings, which for the first time expressed its concern on world politics, economic policy, and proletarian struggle throughout the world."[193] As Santokh Singh neared the end of his life, Sohan Singh Josh took control of the *Kirti* publication as its editor on January 21, 1927.[194]

According to Sohan Singh Josh: "The *Kirti* represented the continuation of the Ghadar movement in a new way. The magazine was oriented towards Marxism."[195]

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[191] Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab,* 68. *Kirti*. (1926), 3. Reel Number MF-17984 r.1, Center for Research Libraries.
[192] Josh, *My Meetings with Bhagat Singh,*11.
[193] Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab, 1926-1947,* 73.
[194] Josh, *My Meetings with Bhagat Singh,* 11; Sohan Singh Josh, *My Tryst with Secularism.*
[195] Josh, *My Meetings with Bhagat Singh,* 11.

Sohan Singh Josh's new position as editor of *Kirti* issued in a new era of communist politics in Punjab. Josh himself had quite an active political trajectory in Punjab. In his early twenties he was heavily involved in the Akali movement and was appointed as General Secretary of the Shiromani Akali Dal.[196] However, finding their politics as dogmatic, Josh moved away from the Akali *jathas* and became the first president of the Kirti-Kisan Party, also known as the Workers and Peasants Party, in Punjab in 1928. He also co-founded the Nawjawan Bharat Sabha in 1928, a socialist organization in which renowned Indian revolutionary Bhagat Singh was heavily involved.[197] In January of 1927, Josh became editor of the *Kirti* newsletter and brought in a much more Marxist agenda. In 1929, Josh was tried and convicted in the Meerut Conspiracy Trial, in which the British tried anyone whom they labeled as "Bolshevik" under Section 121 of the Indian Penal Code, prohibiting anyone from conspiring against the sovereignty of British India.[198] While in prison, Josh continued to organize around communist ideals, and also included prisoner rights within his agenda. Sohan Singh Josh remained a key figure in the communist struggles in Punjab until his death in July of 1982.

This chapter proceeds to focus on Sohan Singh Josh's contribution to *Kirti* and his creation of the Kirti-Kisan Party in 1928. Through his early written contributions to *Kirti* we see how Sohan Singh Josh extended the politics of Ghadar into Marxism. In his autobiography, Sohan Singh Josh recalls a bedridden Santokh Singh advising Josh to "Go cautiously" as he entered his role as the newly appointed editor of the journal.[199] Josh interpreted Singh's advice as he must organize workers and peasants collaboratively and with patience. Though Josh had contributed a few articles to *Kirti* in 1927 while it was still under the editorship of Santokh Singh, they had very little interaction or communication. After he was nominated to be the next editor of the newsletter, Josh studied the writings of Singh order to understand the essence of the magazine. Josh concluded that:

> Comrade Santokh Singh's mission in starting *Kirti*, in my opinion was three-fold: To fight against British imperialism for complete national independence and expose its colonial policies to keep India under its yoke, to keep an eye on international developments and make contacts with other imperialist countries to strengthen our national freedom struggle; To present tenants and principles of communism in a simple and cautious manner in order to create conditions for building up working people's organizations and prepare them to fight both their national and class struggles; and to fight the slanders hurled from time to time by the British

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[196] Ibid.

[197] The Naujawan Bharat Sabha is one of the organizations that critiqued the persecution of the Babbar Akalis and the defamation of their agenda by Sikh organizations like the SGPC.

[198] This law is very similar to the United States Sedition Act of 1918, which forbade the use of "disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language" about the United States government, its flag, or its armed forces.

[199] Josh, *My Meetings with Bhagat Singh*, 104.

> bureaucracy and henchmen against the Ghadar Party and its leaders, to explain and publicize the unprecedented sacrifices they had made for the country and inspire the youth by shedding light on their contribution to the freedom struggle.[200]

For Josh, there were many core elements of Santokh Singh's agenda he wanted to preserve under his new leadership over *Kirti*, including its efforts to spread a communist message across Punjab.

However, he recalls his inability to uphold Santokh Singh's associations with *Sikhi* within the newsletter. His views on the Sikh tradition were that it was dogmatic in the Punjabi political sphere of the time, specifically the ways in which the Akali movement framed and confined what it meant to be Sikh was extremely troubling to him. Josh argued that these Sikh political movements were immensely exclusionary. He recalls the first issue of *Kirti*, in which Santokh Singh had included the Sikh scripture: "We shall fulfill our task with our own hands."[201] For Josh this use of direct references to Sikh scriptures carried a particular bias that he felt would divide the working class and peasants and generate unnecessary communal divide. Making his shift to Marxism quite clear, Josh wrote on the title page of *Kirti* a different scripture from Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto*: "Proletarians of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!"[202] According to Josh, it was after he eliminated traces of the Sikh tradition and turned more towards Marxism that Hindu and Muslim workers and peasants began seeking out the writings of *Kirti*. Josh's aversion to *Sikhi* and other non-secular traditions issues in a new era of politics in the Punjab province which are significantly and overtly defined by the colonial secular and non-secular divide. Josh's leadership of *Kirti*, though grounded in Marxism, offered a strong critique of how local Sikh political leaders and organizations were framing Sikh(i) as a unified and singular identity and tradition. He also highlights how the colonial associations of *Sikhi* with the Punjabi language and Gurmukhi script aided in the confinement of the Sikh identity.[203] Sohan Singh Josh's writings demanded the need to understand how these concepts are being formulated and influenced by colonial powers.

In his efforts to create a political movement for the rights of workers and peasants, Sohan Singh Josh organized the first Kirti-Kisan (Worker-Peasant) Conference in Hoshiarpur, Punjab on October 6-7 in 1927.[204] Supported by a few Akali leaders and

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[200]Ibid., 105-6.

[201] Josh, *My Tryst with Secularism,* 109.

[202] Ibid., 110.

[203] Ibid., 50; N. Gerald Barrier, "Competing Visions of Sikh Religion and Politics: The Chief Khalsa Diwan and the Panch Khalsa Diwan, 1902-1928" he states that CKD was a fervent supporter of Punjabi as a Sikh language.

[204] Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab*, 91. In his autobiography *My Tryst with Secularism: An Autobiography*, Sohan Singh Josh writes: "In fact, the main purpose in starting the magazine was to organize the workers and the peasants around their immediate demands, make them conscious of their ultimate goal and launch their struggles for better living conditions" (page 116).

the Indian National Congress, the Conference adopted resolutions to: organize a party of peasants and workers to fight for India's national freedom; create branches in every district of Punjab; support the Chinese and Russian liberation struggles; create a standard for an eight-hour work-day for factory workers; and create solidarity with other labor movements like the Kanpur millworker strike.[205] The conference gained international attention, as the League Against Imperialism sent in a message of its support.[206] Nearly seven months after the initial conference in April, 1928, the Kirti-Kisan Party officially came into existence. The newly formed Kirti-Kisan Party served to unite the many separated political movements into one organization: peasant, labor, and anti-imperialist movements.

A second Kirti-Kisan Party Conference was held in Lyallpur on September 30, 1928, which addressed issues such as: *begar*,[207] worker pay, lack of irrigation water, reduction in taxes and land revenue. Another major dilemma facing the Party was funding.[208] A call for funding was filled by Ghadar members abroad and in Punjab. Through overseas labor these Ghadar Party members proceeded to fund the printing of the *Kirti* newsletters and the efforts of the Kirti-Kisan Party. In fact, for a few years, the Kirti-Kisan Party remained much better funded than the much smaller group at the time, the Communist Party of Punjab. Sohan Singh Josh's editorship of *Kirti* and his establishment of the Kirti-Kisan Party issued in a new era of communist politics in Punjab. Specifically, his focus on unifying peasant, worker, and prisoner struggles generated new visions of unified organization in Punjab. Also, through the trajectory of Sohan Singh Josh's political career, one can see how secularism is entering the political space of Punjab as a means to critique Sikh religious leadership and state-endorsed institutions. The secular was not always associated with leftist politics in Punjab; however, in late 1920s there is a deepening of the secular and non-secular divide in Punjab.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I demonstrate how the Ghadar Party influenced the political landscape of Punjab in the 1920s. In particular, this chapter challenges the notion that the

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[205] Ibid., 117.

[206] Ibid. Sohan Singh Josh recalls receiving a cable from: "The League Against Imperialism sends you hearty greetings on organizing the Kirti Conference and hopes that workers' and peasants' parties will be organized and affiliated to the League and thus complete freedom will be gained through the united joint efforts of the oppressed people and classes. Send report your decisions by cable—Gibarlic Andolia, Berlin." This quote is also featured in *Kirti*. (1927), 3. Reel Number MF-17984 r.1, Center for Research Libraries.

[207] Forced labor.

[208] Josh, *My Tryst with Secularism*, 120. Josh, *Communist Movement in Punjab*, 93. *Kirti*, November 1928 (Microfilm) states: "The Kirti-Kisan Party has been invited to organize its conferences at many places, but money is the real problem now. What can be done by the party people? If money would have been there, this movement would have spread very fast in the Punjab."

Ghadar Movement was solely received with political passivity, and instead charters the trajectory of the rise of anti-imperialist movements in Punjab after the Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial in San Francisco in 1917. Taking inspiration from the Ghadar Party's militant tactics, from 1921-1926, the Babbar Akali movement attempted a revolution that sought to politically and physically eradicate the British presence in Punjab. Their rise in popularity amongst the Punjabi-Sikh public had to do with their unapologetic use of *Sikhi* within the movement's anticolonial politics. In fact, the Babbar Akali members often used *Sikhi* as a justification towards why they *must* rid Punjab of the British. However, over the course of four years, the Babbar Akali movement was heavily countered by both by the British colonial government and Sikh religious institutions. Both warned the Sikh-Punjabi public against the influences of these "anti-Sikh" men, and instead advocated to the Sikhs of Punjab that to be a loyalist is to be a true Sikh.

From 1926-1928, the early leftist journal *Kirti* under the editorship of Santokh Singh took the Ghadar movement's anticolonial agenda, Russia's revolutionary practices, and *Sikhi*'s ideals to create a message of revolution that was very well received by the Punjabi public. The journal was then not only financially supported by Ghadarites, but also ideologically supportive of Santokh Singh's demand for peasant and workers' rights. From 1928 onwards, Sohan Singh Josh joins *Kirti* as its editor and shifted the agenda from being based in *Sikhi* to being based in Marxist theory. This was quite different from Santokh Singh, as he had advocated for taking inspiration from Russian revolutionary practices and not necessarily calling for an application of Marxist theory. Singh had argued that *Sikhi* should remain the ideological drive. However, for Josh, Marxism came to inform many of the ways in which he envisioned a free state of India and served as a means to critique local Sikh political leadership. The August 1928 issue of *Kirti* stated:

> Communists wish to establish a real democracy, but we think that a real democracy cannot be attained under the capitalistic social system, nay, both these things are contradictory to each other. What equal right can a poor man have as compared to a rich man at present?[209]

Sohan Singh Josh's call for democracy echoes the early meetings when Ghadar was being created in which the local labors along the Pacific Northwest demanded a democracy in which all could participate despite color, religion, caste, or citizenship.

Despite existing in contemporary histories on opposite sides of the non-secular/secular binary, the Babbar Akali movement, *Kirti* and Kirti Kisan Party all challenged and successfully disrupted the binary. Here, we see how in the secular is being formed within 20th century Punjabi politics by both the British colonial authorities and Sikh religious instituions. This chapter revisits the later history of the Ghadar movement in order to understand its larger impact on Punjab and its struggles for freedom in the 1920s. Tracing the trajectory of these early movements in Punjab illuminates how the Punjabi revolutionary was grappling with varying visions of freedom and equality through multiple sets of knowledges. Throughout these histories of the Babbar Akali

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[209] Shalini Sharma, "Communism and 'Democracy': Punjab Radicals and Representative Politics in the 1930s" *South Asian History and Culture* (2013) 4:4, 443-464.

jatha, *Kirti* and the Kirti-Kisan Party we can hear the *gunj*, or echo of Ghadar still radiating.

CHAPTER THREE: "Gilded Cages": Race, Labor, Citizenship, and the Fabrication of the 'Hindu' in the American West

Is life worth living in a gilded cage?
Vaishno Das Bagai, 1928

Image 2: Vaishno Das Bagai at his store Bagai's Bazaar in San Francisco, California, 1923[210]

March 17, 1928—Vaishno Das Bagai, an Indian art dealer living in San Francisco, took his own life in protest against the United States government's decision to revoke his citizenship following the landmark Supreme Court decision made in *Bhagat Singh Thind v. United States, 1923*, in which Justice Sutherland claimed that "Hindus" are non-white according to "common sense" and thus, ineligible for citizenship. Bagai left a letter addressed to "The World" with *The San Francisco Examiner* explaining his actions which was to be published following his death. Bagai came to the United States in the early 1900s and was naturalized in 1921. He was an ardent supporter of the Ghadar Party before his arrival to the US and remained an active member until his death. He

[210] Image of Vaishno Das Bagai in General Store, from South Asian Digital Archive Online, https://www.saada.org/item/20130305-1312.

settled in California's Bay Area with his wife and children and became, as he described, "as Americanized as possible." However, following the *Bhagat Singh Thind* decision in 1923, Bagai's citizenship was revoked, rendering him stateless—unable to return to India or to exercise his civil, political, and social rights as a United States citizen. In his letter Bagai writes:

> But they now come to me and say I am no longer an American citizen. They will not permit me to buy my home and, lo, they even shall not allow me a passport to go home to India. Now what am I? What have I made of myself and my children? We cannot exercise our rights, we cannot leave this country. Humility and insults, who is responsible for all this? Myself and the American government. I do not choose to live the life of an interned person…Is life worth living in a gilded cage? Obstacles this way, blockades that way, and bridges burnt behind.[211]

In his own words, Bagai described his act of suicide as "brave" and "courageous," an action through which he felt in total control of his body. In a moment of economic prosperity in the United States labeled as America's "Gilded Age," Bagai's existence was trapped within a beautiful cage, a "gilded cage." Bagai's life resembled that of many South Asians in the U.S. during the early 1900s who were classified under the ambiguous category of "Hindus," which referred to people from "Hindustan." The early period of South Asian immigration sparked an intense debate surrounding the racial classification of "Hindus" in the United States between the North American media, public, and immigration officials. Bagai's decision to turn to suicide in response to the revocation of his citizenship points to the deeply traumatic effects of these early debates on the lives of South Asians in the US.

This chapter opens with the story of Bagai in order to foreground the dilemma facing "whiteness" as South Asian laborers arrived to the North American West, challenging the Anglo-American claim to "whiteness." Bagai's letter articulates a sense of freedom through escaping the binds of the "Hindu" identity. The act of self-destruction goes beyond nation-states, colonial economies, and imperial regimes, to demand justice by reclaiming the body as one's own. However, Vaishno Das Bagai's story also tells us how effective the racialization of "Hindus" was—so much so that it threatened to eliminate the "Hindu" himself. South Asians posed a unique threat to "whiteness" as European anthropologists argued that high-caste South Asians were of the Aryan and Caucasian race.[212] While these arguments may not have posed a threat to "white

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[211] "Here's a letter to the world from suicide" *The San Francisco Examiner.* March 17, 1928. "South Asians in North America Collection," Box 5 Folder 18. Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley.

[212] For example refer to anthropologist Thomas Huxley's highly regarded text *Man's Place in Nature* [(London: Watt Watts, for the Rationalist Press Association, 1908), 281-82] in which he writes "So far as India is concerned, the internal evidence of the old literature proves that the Aryan Invaders were 'White Men,' and that the high-caste Hindus are what they are in virtue of Aryan blood." Also, US anthropologist Dr. W. Z.

America" in the past, once South Asians began arriving to the shores of the American frontier they threatened to dilute and disrupt "whiteness."

This chapter explores the debates surrounding the question "who is the 'Hindu?'" in the United States in the early 1900s. I depict how the racialized category of "Hindu" was fabricated and constantly curated throughout the early 20th century to protect the Anglo-American claim to whiteness. This challenges the idea that the category of "Hindu" was labeled as "non-white" following the *Thind* decision in 1923 and instead, in this chapter I show how the "Hindu" was always made to be "non-white." Here I present the leading discourses in written media, legal and immigration policies, and academic studies, regarding the racial classification of South Asian men in the US, also known as "Hindu/Hindoos" from 1906 to 1923. The question posed by these three American sources of discourse was not an ontological one set to explore the essence or being of "Hindu," but rather a brutal effort to place the "Hindu" in a position to fail in American racial politics. I examine the development of the racial category of "Hindu" in labor and immigration discourse and how it became embedded within the American "common sense." "Hindu/Hindoo" was a fluid ethno-religious category that included Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs from South Asia during the early 1900s. In fact, nearly ninety percent of "Hindus" in North America were Punjabi-Sikhs of Jatt (the small landowning caste specifically) backgrounds.[213] I argue that prior to the Bhagat Singh Thind decision, riots and "failed" exclusionist immigration bills served as effect means to racialize, exclude, and expel South Asians from white spaces along the US frontier. In Beth Lew-Williams' *The Chinese Must Go: Violence, Exclusion, and the Making of the Alien in America*, she claims that what makes racial violence against Chinese immigrants in the late 1800s unique was its intention to exclude and its principal method being expulsion. Lew-Williams' argues that to fully understand "exclusion" during the late 19th century, we must expand its definitions to include racial violence.[214] I rely upon this logic as I examine how riots were used to exclude South Asian laborers in the early 1900s and build upon this analysis to argue that we must also expand "exclusion" to include "failed" immigration bills.

I argue that each of these three areas of discourse (media, public, and immigration policies) (re)shaped the characterization of "Hindu/Hindoo" to demand: exclusion and expulsion. As a result, United States' public opinions, immigration policies, and academic scholarship racialized the "Hindu" into one category, purposefully obscuring

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Ripley writes in his text *Races of Europe* that Hindus indeed belonged to the same racial classification as Mediterranean European groups, such as the Greeks and Spanish. Similarly, Dr. Max Muller argued in this "Lecture on the Science of Language," that, "There was a time when the first ancestors of the Indians (Hindus), the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Slavs, the Celts and the Germans were living together within the same enclosure, nay, under the same roof…the same blood runs in the veins of the English soldiers as in the veins of the dark Bengalees."

[213] Puri, *Ghadar Movement.*
[214] Beth Lew-Williams, *The Chinese Must Go: Violence, Exclusion, and the Making of the Alien in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018).

any trace of diversity in the group, specifically of Sikh identities. The objective of this chapter is three-fold: (1) this chapter explores the debates surrounding the "Hindu/Hindoo" ethno-religious category in the United States' public, media, and law, beginning in 1906 to 1923; (2) it expands the notions of *restriction* and *exclusion* from legal policy to also include racial violence and failed exclusionist immigration bills; (3) it explores how South Asian intellectuals from the Ghadar Party responded to the category of "Hindu" and their exclusion in its various forms. This chapter utilizes sources from local and national newspapers in the United States and Canada, documents in the legal cases (the *Hindu Immigration Hearings, 1914* and the *United States of America v. Bhagat Singh Thind, 1923*), and the writings of South Asian intellectuals based in the United States including Bhagat Singh Thind and Lala Har Dayal.

The social and economic period between 1880-1923 in the United States, is distinguishable through the dialectical relationship between Jim Crow policies and Progressivist economics. Both existed in a tug-of-war, a struggle in which each end worked to destroy and fuel one another at the same time. Emerging from this political, social, and economic context came the immigration efforts to open the United States' boundaries to more "cheap" labor, while also attempting to close borders to certain ethnic and racial groups. This chapter explores the relationship between the two political and economic paradigms and their direct impacts on race, immigration, and labor in the United States. Manifest Destiny, the drive to the create a new frontier in the ever-expanding "American West," demanded the constant labor of foreigners. However, each step the US took towards the west required a redefining of boundaries, both material and ideological: "What would this new America be? Who would be American?" Legal, written media, and public sources from the early 1900s reveal how the United States, as a collective body of disconnected voices, grappled with these questions.

Roger Daniels' *Not Like Us: Immigrants and Minorities in America, 1890-1924*, takes a comparative approach to understand the various restrictions placed upon Chinese Americans, Native Americans, and Africans Americans during the so-called "Progressive Era."[215] His analysis reveals the limits of progressivism for minorities and immigrants in the US, while simultaneously uplifting the social and economic development of the "common man" or white man in the US. In this chapter, I explore the racial classification of "Hindus" in the US from 1906 to 1923, the post-*Thind* decision period when "Hindus" were legally classified as "non-white." I argue that the "Hindu question" reveals how the United States expanded its global economy, while closing its borders in the Progressive and Jim Crow Era. While Rogers' reveals the "common man" as "white" within the two logics of Jim Crow and Progressivism, this chapter explores the "un-common man"—the "Hindu"—being fabricated during this political, social, economic moment.

The Fabrication and Evolution of Race

As we will witness in this chapter, the process of defining the "Hindu" as a racial category puzzled the public, media, and legal officials in the United States until it was

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[215] Roger Daniels, *Not Like Us: Immigrants and Minorities in America, 1890-1924* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1997).

addressed during the *Bhagat Singh Thind vs. United States* Supreme Court case in 1923, which legally defined the "Hindu" as "non-white." When considering why the early 1920s offers a key moment through which to make the determination so finitely regarding the "Hindu race," it is important to understand how race was conceptualized both prior and after the decision. In sum, during the 1920s, race in the United States was a biologically and culturally defined tool used to include and exclude access to social, political, and economic rights. During the 16th century onwards, otherwise known as the "Scientific Revolution," European understandings of humanity were flooded with works defining race as biological, which in turn informed their respective cultural values. For example, German physician Johann Friedrich Blumenbach published *The Natural Varieties of Mankind* in 1775 which described the five main categories of race: Caucasoid, Negroid, Mongoloid, American Indian, and Malayan.[216] Categorization of people into these groups required analysis of physiological features, along with behavioral attributes. This biological theory of race permeated into North America through European colonialism and became a critical foundation to how the United States government distributed, and/or withheld, civil, social and political rights from peoples from these categories.[217] Thus, Anibal Quijano describes *race* as "a phenomenon and an outcome of modern colonial domination which came to pervade every sphere of global capitalist power."[218] Similarly, Denise Ferreira da Silva's seminal work *Towards a Global Idea of Race,* challenges race as a scientific concept and argues that fields of science, history, and European philosophy have perpetually framed the Racial Other as lacking consciousness, subjectivity, self-determining, and history.[219]

Throughout US history, there have been many cases in the United States legal system which challenged how America categorized racial groups. In some instances, those cases led to further restrictions for immigrants and continued to protect the boundaries of whiteness. One such case occurred in 1854 titled *The People of the State of California vs. George W. Hall*. George Hall, a white man, who had previously been convicted of murdering Chinese miner Ling Sing, appealed the verdict. Hall argued that the ruling was based off the testimony of Chinese witnesses and according to Section 394 of the Act Concerning Civil Cases, no testimony presented by "blacks, mulattos, and Indians" could be used against whites. Hall claimed that this act also included Chinese immigrants because they were "non-white peoples." Chief Justice Hugh Murray, who

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[216] Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, *The Natural Varieties of Mankind* (New York: Bergman Publishers, 1969).

[217] The profoundly racist logic of eugenics to prove the biological basis to race was running strong in the 1910s and 1920s, for example see: Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race* (1918).

[218] Anibal Quijano, "Questioning 'Race,' *Socialism and Democracy* 21:1 (2007): 45-53 & also see Anibal Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality," *Cultural Studies* 21:2-3 (2007): 168-178.

[219] Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Towards a Global Idea of Race* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2007), 23. Also see: Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," *The New Centennial Review* 3:3 (2003): 257-337.

presided over the appeal hearing, decided in the favor of Hall setting precedent which included Chinese immigrants in the category of "black" under Section 394. Just as *People vs. Hall* highlights one moment in United States legal history which in turn furthered the racialization of immigrants in the United States, in this chapter we will see how even failed exclusionist immigration bills and policies further restricted immigrants' access to whiteness.

In the 1920s, we see a shift in the racialization process as intellectual and legal discourse on race in America changed from the biological standpoint to the ethnicity paradigm to justify exclusionary laws. As we move into the 1920s, the population landscape of the United States has changed drastically through the import of labor from various parts of the world. Seemingly the way the United States viewed race and civil, social, and political rights also shifted. Race as a biological category was not only being challenged, but also dismantled and laws that had previously used race and biology as a foundation were being fought. Thus, race was re-evaluated as something beyond genetics and biology. It was then argued by intellectuals that biological race was merely one factor that made people distinct—instead, *ethnicity* is comprised of the biological makeup of race, culture, language, nationality, amongst other factors. The *Bhagat Singh Thind* case which determined Thind and all other "Hindus" as "non-white" did so in defiance to the claim that "Hindus" are genetically of the Caucasian race. Instead, Justice Sutherland based his decision on the social and cultural attributes of Thind, a man who by "common sense" standards was "non-white." Bhagat Singh Thind had based his case for eligibility for citizenship on the basis of his "biological race," however, it is clear that legal authorities in the US needed new ways think about race so foreigners were not so easily allowed access to "whiteness." In Thind's case, Judge Sutherland determined that Thind belonged to a race of people which did not possess the cultural ability to assimilate to "whiteness," making him "non-white."

Scholars and legal authorities in the US sought different "solutions" to the racial problems of the United States. In the 1920s, there were two dominant discourses that surrounded the debate on race-relations in the US: cultural pluralism and assimilationism. Both fell within the popular ethnicity paradigm which acknowledged race as a social category but considered it simply one of many factors that determined ethnicity. Born to a European immigrant family himself, American philosopher Horace Kallen[220] advocated for what he called "cultural pluralism": a concept used to describe when minority groups in a larger society maintain their own unique cultural identities and practices and in turn, these unique cultural features are accepted by mainstream society. This theory is different than multiculturalism as there remained a dominant culture, which allowed space for smaller ethnic groups. On the other hand, led by Robert E. Park[221], the Chicago School of Sociologists developed a counter theory on race-relations which Park termed the "race-

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[220] Horace Kallen *Culture and Democracy in America* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924).

[221] Robert E. Park *Race and Culture* & *The Collected Papers of Robert E. Park* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1950). & "Racial Assimilation in Secondary Groups with Particular Reference to the Negro" *American Journal of Sociology*, 19.5 (1914), 606-623.

relations cycle" as being such: contact, conflict, accommodation, and assimilation.[222] Park argued that cultural assimilation should be considered the end goal for immigrant populations in the US. Full assimilation then occurred when minority ethnic groups completely resembled the dominant group. Ultimately, Park's theory of the race-relations cycle dominated the race and ethnicity debate during this period. It is important to note that both Kallen and Park devised their theories in regards to minority European populations which immigrated to the US in large numbers in the early 1900s. While the ethnicity paradigm allowed for the integration of European immigrants into the American polity, it was still used to challenge not only the assimilation of Asian immigrants in the United States, but as a means to restrict Asian immigration. As the rise of the ethnicity paradigm made European populations assimilable, it made Asian populations "unassimilable."

Considering the case of the "Hindu" in America during the early 1900s, it is important to understand how they were being racialized. What and who is the "Hindu?" Examining the early racial history of "Hindus" in the US both prior and immediately after the *Thind* decision in 1923, I rely on what Ian Haney Lopez has termed "the fabrication of race." Lopez identifies the active, purposeful, and dynamic way through which race is constructed. In his critical article "The Social Construction of Race: Some Observations on Illusion, Fabrication, and Choice" Lopez makes four key claims: (1) Humans produce race rather than abstract social forces; (2) Race constitutes an integral part of a whole social fabric; (3) Meaning-systems surrounding race change quickly rather than slowly; (4) Races are constructed relationally, against one another, rather than in isolation.[223] In the remainder of this chapter, I utilize primary sources to depict how race is fabricated in the case of the "Hindu" in the United States during the early 1900s.

The Early Days: "Hindu" Invasion and Exodus

In this section, I explore the early days of South Asian immigration in Canada and the United States from 1906-1907.[224] Navigating the colonial economy, South Asians first came to British Columbia, Canada in larger groups as laborers. Considered to be

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[222] Michael Omi and Howard Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States*. (New York: Routledge/Taylor and Francis Groups), 2015. 10.

[223] Ian F. Haney Lopez, "The Social Construction of Race: Some Observations on Illusion, Fabrication, and Choice" *Harvard Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Law Review*, 29.1 (1994).

[224] Though South Asians have been immigrating to US much earlier than this, I start from 1906 as that year marks the immigration of larger groups of South Asian laborers (specifically, Punjabi) through labor contracts. See Seema Sohi's *Echoes of Mutiny: Race Surveillance and Indian Anti-colonialism in North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014) & Frank Oliver, Minster of Interior, "Immigration Facts and Figures," (1911), File 51648/7 & 51648/10 Records of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, RG 85, National Archives, San Bruno, California. For further studies of the earlier immigration of South Asians in the US, please refer to the works of Vijay Prashad and Vivek Bald.

"cheap" labor, these early immigrants were initially received positively by mill owners and local politicians in British Columbia however, relations between immigrants and the white Canadian public quickly turned sour. As the following pages show, there was a rise in racial tensions among the new laborers and local white citizens. Many immigrants shifted across the border to Washington in the United States in efforts to secure employment and avoid racial violence. However, the media and immigration officials in the US already received warning of the possibility of a "Hindu invasion" by the Canadian media and fueled the racial divide even prior to their arrival. The culminating racial hostility amongst the white citizens and laborers on both sides of the border led to the anti-Asian racial riots in 1907 in Bellingham, Washington and Vancouver, British Columbia. I argue that the rhetoric of "invasion" led to rioting and the forced expulsion of "Hindus" from North American cities and towns as the only proposed remedy to the growing racial divide and the preservation of "whiteness." This section depicts how the collusion between Canadian and US media and immigration officials sought the expulsion of South Asian laborers from the Pacific Northwest.

Steadily arriving to the shores of Vancouver in 1903, South Asian laborers sought work in British Columbia's lumber mills after being deemed as "reliable workers" in other British colonies (including Trinidad and British Guiana) by the local Canadian politicians and mill owners.[225] While numbers during the early years of immigration were as few as ten South Asian men a year, local media immediately commented on the "Hindu's peculiarities." As South Asian immigration rose in the following years, so did racial tensions. Sarah Isabel Wallace's study of South Asian immigration and Canadian public health discourse, *Not Fit to Stay: Public Health Panics and South Asian Exclusion*, examines how public health investigations of South Asian immigrants led to the restriction of "Hindu" immigration in the early 1900s. South Asians were viewed as threats to public health and carriers of "foreign disease" by public health and immigration officials. Still unable to restrict immigration fully, the Canadian government passed the 1906 Immigration Act which gave immigration officials the ability to deport any immigrants who may be potential carriers of disease. Instead of focusing further on the public health "crisis" and South Asian immigration, this chapter returns to the early assessment of South Asian immigrants as "reliable workers" and how quickly the white public and immigration officials adopt language such as "invaders" and "menace" to advocate for "Hindu" exclusion in Canada and the United States.

This section focuses on the immigration period beginning in 1906, when larger groups of South Asian laborers began immigrating to the Pacific Northwest. I also begin my study here as this year marks the early use of language such as "invasion," "invader," and "menace" in association with South Asian immigrants on both sides of the border. In particular, we see how the rise in South Asian immigration in British Columbia and Washington led to a collusion between United States and Canadian immigration officials and media reports to seemingly warn one another against the threat of "invasion." I argue that the threat of South Asian immigrant laborers was not toward a specific state or nation, but rather to the "white society" of the Pacific Northwest. In this section, I comply

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[225] Sarah Isabel Wallace, *Not Fit to Stay: Public Health Panics and South Asian Exclusion* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), 13.

with Wallace's demand for a Canadian-American study of first-wave South Asian immigration because of the critical and constant overlap between the experiences, policies, and peoples involved in the early South Asian immigration to Canada and the United States. Thus this study considers their migration as one movement and not two distinct migration movements.[226] Here, we will shift back and forth along the US and Canadian border to find similar and contrasting patterns of exclusion and restriction against South Asian laborers.

While notably nearly a thousand South Asian laborers were already present in the Vancouver area in 1906, forty-eight "Hindus" landed in British Columbia by steamship in early August and were initially considered to offer a strong competition to Japanese and Chinese laborers who had been working in the lumber mills.[227] Prominent mill owners and local politicians alike published pieces in the local newspapers highlight the benefits to the cheap and reliable labor provided by South Asians. Interestingly, these early news reports did not see the newly arrived laborers as a threat to white laborers but were thought to conflict with other foreign laborers in the mill houses. However, the rhetoric surrounding South Asian immigration shifted quite drastically and quickly. In a few months, new articles flooded local British Columbian newspapers describing the rising "Hindu menace."

This early immigration of South Asians, while initially considered favorable by mill owners, was seen an "invasion" by the Canadian public. Not only did local newspapers in Canada publish articles on the threat of "Hindu invasion," news sources in nearby US states, such as Washington, also published articles that warned readers that South Asians would become the next "Japanese invasion."[228] For example on August 24, 1906, the *Seattle Star* published a brief article entitled "Hindus for Laborers," which stated that local United States "immigration officials have received word from Vancouver that a Hindu invasion is now on." The article further states that the officials received warning that the "turbaned men" would arrive to Seattle, Washington soon. As the "invasion" was on the rise, the state of Washington was setting itself on the defense. Over the course of the next few years, South Asian laborers met numerous methods to suppress their "invasion," including, calls for exclusion through riots.

Vehemently against the arrival South Asians in Washington, the *Spokane Chronicle* published an article entitled, "East Indians Come in Masses," which described "Hindus" as bad for American society as South Asians "did not possess the qualities necessary for the making of good citizens," and they also argued that these immigrants would cause labor tensions with white workers by driving down wages. Other points made included that South Asians did not invest money in the host country and served as "a serious menace to the health of the community."[229] While South Asian laborers had not yet immigrated in large numbers to Washington, the local news sources were relying heavily on racialized arguments against South Asian immigration made across the border.

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[226] Ibid., 4.
[227] "Invasion by Hindus," *Spokane Chronicle* (Spokane, Washington) August 3, 1906.
[228] Ibid.
[229] "East Indians Come in Masses," *Spokane Chronicle* (Spokane Washington) October 3, 1906.

Most critically, the United States public had already painted the "Hindu" immigrant laborer as both a threat to United States citizen's livelihood and health.

Some British Columbian reporters offered solutions that echoed how Canada had dealt with immigrants in the past. In October 1906, demands were put forth by the public to resolve the "Hindu problem" as British Columbia had already done with the Chinese through the "head tax." Under the Chinese Immigration Act of 1885, Chinese immigrants were required to pay up to five hundred Canadian dollars in tax at the time of landing in Canada. The law remained in place until 1923 and significantly affected Chinese immigration to Canada as many were unable to afford such a high price of admission. Similarly, in 1882 the United States passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, restricting the immigration of Chinese laborers after the completion of the transcontinental railroad. By comparing South Asian immigration to Chinese immigration, news sources in Canada and the United States warned the public and immigration officials of "invasion" while also demanding similar solutions. However, these demands fell onto the deaf ears of Canadian government officials who did not want to risk their relationship with the British.

Along with being considered a threat to the white man laborer in British Columbia and the United States, in this immigration period we also see a rise in fear for the safety of the domestic white woman in the Pacific Northwest. South Asian women were not yet allowed to immigrate individually or alongside their husbands, causing an anxiety amongst white men that "Hindu" men may threaten white women. In aiding the propaganda against "Hindu" immigration, white women made false reports regarding "rape" and home invasion against the hyper-sexualized South Asian immigrant men.[230] In one particularly interesting case in November of 1906, white women are reported to have been arming themselves against the threat of "Hindu vagrants" and the "brown heathens from the orient."[231] The "Hindu invasion" begins with in the "invasion" of the labor force and ends with the "invasion" of the white family. Thus the "Hindu menace" is racialization and hyper-sexualization as a man whose body is considered to be fraught with disease and whose very morality is plagued.

While early on mill owners and politicians in British Columbia encouraged the arrival of "Hindu" immigrants and proclaimed to offer more money than ever imaginable in "Hindustan," the reality of working in the mills and mines of British Columbia was quite different.[232] The laborers recruited by mills, mines, and railways in British Columbia were not provided with any resources to help them acclimate to the harsh winters of the Pacific Northwest. The winter of 1906 served to be a deadly one as it was reported that a number of South Asian laborers died due to exposure and their inability to

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[230] Wallace, *Not Fit to Stay.* Wallace details a story of a "Hindu" man being accused of invading a white home and sexually assaulting a woman present. Upon further interrogation from the police, the family admitted to falsifying the story and claiming they made it up in order to get rid of South Asians living nearby.

[231] "Women Arming Themselves," *The Seattle Star* (Seattle, Washington) November 19, 1906.

[232] "Hindus Suffer from Cold," *Pullman Herald* (Pullman, Washington) December 1, 1906.

afford winter clothing.[233] On December 7, 1906, *The Colfax Gazette* mentioned that another South Asian laborer had died in Grand Forks, BC due to the cold. Furthermore, local authorities seem "puzzled to know what to do with these strange people."[234] Thus, while Canadian articles reported the South Asian laborers as threatening white laborers, there was a dismissal of how these various industries in British Columbia took labor from these immigrants and did not provide the basic means to survive. Nevertheless, South Asian workers continuously demanded better wages and better conditions of living. On January 5, 1907, as the death toll of South Asians workers rose day by day, workers organized a strike at the Comox Mines in Nanaimo, British Columbia, and demanded higher wages.[235] While these strikes were usually mentioned in passing in the local newspapers, they were a frequent occurrence in the mills, mines, and railroads of British Columbia.

The rise in labor tensions among workers and now with South Asian laborers striking back, pressured Canadian officials to make decisions against immigration. On May 7, 1906, the Mayor of Vancouver took matters into his own hands and detained incoming South Asian immigrants in an immigration detention center offshore, not allowing them to land despite their valid labor contracts.[236] Meanwhile he contacted the Canadian Pacific Railway and argued that not one incoming immigrant would be allowed to land until they had been proved of not being at risk of becoming a public charge. The Canadian Pacific Railroad had up until this point recruited workers from Punjab through Hong Kong and brought them over with little restriction. However, with the rise in South Asian led strikes in mines and mills, South Asians increasingly strayed from their label as "reliable workers." The Canadian Pacific Railway offered little protest and complied to the demands of both the Mayor of Vancouver and a "threatened" white public. A few months later, on August 30, 1906, Canadian Parliament Member in Vancouver R.G. MacPherson announced that the Canadian Government will check each arriving "Hindu" member to ensure they do not become a public charge.[237] Soon after there was a steady rise in deportations of South Asians who were perceived to have certain diseases or were unemployed.[238]

Following the newly implemented and successful immigration procedures put in place by M.P. MacPherson, many South Asians travelled across the border into Washington to seek employment. News sources in the Seattle area commented on the "Hindu invasion" in the US. The *Seattle Star* reported on November 15, 1906, that the people of Vancouver tried everything in their power to restrict "Hindus" and failed, and

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[233] Ibid.

[234] *The Colfax Gazette* (Colfax, Washington), December 7, 1906.

[235] "Mining News," *Pullman Herald* (Pullman, Washington) January 5, 1907.

[236] "Hindus Not Wanted: Dominion Police Will Prevent Their Landing," *The Morning Astorian* (Astoria, Oregon) October 17, 1906.

[237] "To Restrict Hindu Immigration," *Aberdeen Herald* (Aberdeen, Washington) August 30, 1906.

[238] These deportations were also common in Washington as well. See "Hindu Student Deported," *The Seattle Star* (Seattle, Washington) June 8, 1906. See also Wallace, *Not Fit to Stay.*

thus "Hindus" would migrate further south into Washington. While the "Hindu" presence was not welcome, the United States could not deny them entry as South Asians were British subjects at the time.[239] By December 10, 1906, *The Seattle Star* considered the "Hindu invasion" to be a full-blown crisis, as described in their article "The Hindu Invasion a Menace." The crisis was not necessarily the arrival of South Asians to Seattle, but rather how normative their presence was becoming. The writer describes the "Hindu" to be as commonly found on the docks of Seattle as would a Chinese or Japanese laborer. The crisis was thus not necessarily the presence, but the threat that their presence would become common.[240] Similarly, *The Evening Statesman* describes the "Hindu invasion" as the "new immigration problem" in the United States.[241] I argue that the solution to this "new immigration problem" became riots and forced expulsion.

Similar to the critics of South Asian immigration in Canada, those in Washington also believed that the "Hindus" were lazy workers, had questionable morality, and carried disease. The "Hindu question" became one debated in all arenas. In Everett, Washington, Reverend W. E. Randall gave a sermon to his congregation in which stated that hiring Hindu laborers was "unpatriotic."[242] Randall's sermon wove together the anti-"Hindu" agenda from the labor and political arena and presented it to the white Christian citizen of the Pacific Northwest. It is interesting to note how seamlessly the characterization of "Hindus" as "menace" fit within the everyday life of the white public. With the "Hindu question" permeating into all aspects of life in the Pacific Northwest, it became a matter of time when long-term solutions were demanded.

Riots as Remedy

The rise in labor and racial tensions along the border of Canada and the United States erupted in the small town of Bellingham, Washington in 1907. In the late night and early morning of September 4th and 5th of 1907, nearly three-hundred local white mill workers in Bellingham, Washington, raided a "Hindu" settlement and issued threats.[243] The South Asian laborers left their beds and ran out of their cabins, described as half-naked, and hid amongst the lumber piles while chased by the white workers. Threatening to use violence, the white workers demanded that if the "Hindus" came out, they would be allowed to gather their belongings, but must agree to leave town. The riots raged on and by 10:00 am nearly two-hundred and fifty police officers were summoned and placed on duty to try and control the uprising. The rioters demanded that not only the "Hindus" be driven out of town, but they also wanted the expulsion of Japanese and Filipino laborers as well. Fearing that these riots would affect the United States' relationship with

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[239] "Hindus Coming to Seattle," *Seattle Star* (Seattle, Washington) November 15, 1906 & "Hindus Coming Here," *The Seattle Star* (Seattle, Washington) November 29, 1906.
[240] "The Hindu Invasion," *The Seattle Star* (Seattle, Washington) December 11, 1906.
[241] *The Evening Statesman* (Walla Walla, Washington) April 25, 1907.
[242] "Preacher Objects to Hindu Labor," *The Seattle Star* (Seattle, Washington) July 23, 1907.
[243] "Race Riots Raging—Bloodshed Feared," *The Seattle Star* (Seattle, Washington) September 5, 1907.

Britain, the mayor of Bellingham, Mayor Black, claimed that he would offer the South Asians full protection, even if it meant calling in federal troops.[244] Though this was considered to the worst race riot to its date in the Pacific Northwest, federal troops were not involved. The riot lasted about three days and ended with over one-hundred and fifty South Asian laborers leaving Bellingham by September 6, 1907. Only one-hundred and twenty-five South Asians remained and issued a statement that they leave once they gathered their belongings.[245] By the following day, there were reports that not a single "Hindu" was left in Bellingham and the riots were "successful."[246] Many South Asian laborers reportedly returned to British Columbia or left to seek employment in Oregon and California.

Reports following the riots argued that the riots were not about race and instead, the central motivation behind the rioting was to loot the South Asian labor camps. This was a class issue, not a "race issue." For example, *The Spokane Chronicle* reported that the chief motive behind the riots was in fact was looting as many South Asian laborers claimed to have their belongings, including money and gold stolen by the rioters.[247] The article, like others published in the aftermath of the riot, attempted to shift the conversation regarding race to simply a labor competition or class issue. In doing so, this singles out the riot as a one-time looting action, rather than a deep-rooted result of the racialization of South Asians over the past few years.

In efforts to retain an amiable relationship with the British Government, the state government of Washington felt compelled to conduct follow-up reports regarding the violent expulsion of South Asians from Bellingham.[248] Expecting a protest by the British Government, the Washington state officials claimed they would treat these riots as they had in other states, like Wyoming, Louisiana, and California. The State's take on it was to attempt to prevent future disturbances.[249] Meanwhile, South Asians were allowed to issue claims against the city's municipal department for reimbursement for damages. South Asian laborers who were beaten badly during the course of the event were given priority, however, it remains uncertain whether they received any compensation at all. The article "Expect Protest over Hindu Mob" published in the *Semi-Weekly Spokesman Review* depicts how though the State government felt that the riots may affect their relationships with the British Government, however, they did not believe it warranted any efforts to re-employ or oversee the re-integration of the South Asians who were driven out. The response, or the lack of response, by the State government points to their belief that this was uncontrollable.

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[244] "Labor Riots in Bellingham: Clearing Town of Hindu and Japanese Laborers," *The Evening Statesman* (Walla Walla, Washington) September 5, 1907.
[245] Ibid.
[246] "Leave Bellingham," *The Seattle Star* (Seattle, Washington) September 7, 1907.
[247] "Robbers loot the Hindus" *The Spokane Chronicle* (Spokane, Washington) September 9, 1907.
[248] "Expect Protest over Hindu Mob," *The Semi-Weekly Spokesman-Review* (Spokane, Washington) September 7, 1907.
[249] Ibid.

Reponses from the public to the riots varied greatly. Some sympathized with the South Asian laborers, including one op-ed writer at *the Seattle Republican* who claimed that white folk are "always ready to riot" and "whether it be North, South, East, or West in the United States, it is always safe to bet that the white man is ever ready to do violence to some class of human beings if they happen to have darker skin than their own."[250] While some supported the South Asian laborers, many of the statements issued in United States news sources following the riots celebrated the expulsion. Writers at the *Washington State Journal* reacted positively to the riots and claimed that hundreds of "Hindus" had taken the place of white men at the sawmills and needed to be outed.[251]The mass of articles and opinion pieces published in the aftermath of the riots commending the rioters reveal how an anti-"Hindu" sentiment extended beyond the city-lines of Bellingham to a wider American audience and also how many US newspapers carried anti-"Hindu" sentiment. Had this simply been a labor or looting issue, there would not have been such a positive reaction to the violent nature of the expulsion. The way in which the riots were reported upon reveal that this was in fact a race *and* class issue and a response to the "new immigration problem" in the American West.

The "successful" expulsion of South Asian laborers from Bellingham, Washington, became inspiration for the development of the Anti-Oriental League by the Everett Trades Council in Everett, Washington where some South Asians were employed in local lumber mills.[252] State Organizer Young of the American Federation of Labor led the union's anti-oriental group towards the abolishment of "Hindu" and Japanese labor.[253] Young passionately argued that rioting was the only way to drive out "oriental" laborers. The labor union at the time had four hundred and fifty white members and Young asserted that each of them would have to make a choice between "the Hindu and the white man."[254] The plan was that once the Anti-Oriental League had enough members, they would approach mill owners and demand the discharge of "Hindu" laborers or else threaten to riot. While the League also attempted to garner the support of Mayor Jones of Everett, they claimed that public opinion would be their best ally.[255]

Local politicians in Everett also took advantage of the rising anti-"Hindu" sentiment and urged white laborers to become politically active. One such local official, known as Mr. Conner claimed, "there is a serious menace confronting this country today. The unjust, the unfair, the un-American spirit of the capitalists in importing into this fair country of ours the illiterate and ignorant off-scourings of Japanese and Hindus laborers

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[250] "Always Ready to Riot," *The Seattle Republican* (Seattle, Washington) September 13, 1907.
[251] "Run out Hindus" *The Washington State Journal* (Ritzville, Washington) September 11, 1907.
[252] "Will work against Hindu Labor," *The Seattle Star* (Seattle, Washington) August 2, 1907.
[253] "Organize Mill Workers" *The Seattle Star* (Seattle, Washington) August 15, 1907.
[254] "Shut out Hindus," *Spokane Chronicle* (Spokane, Washington) August 19, 1907.
[255] "Tell Mayor of Sentiment," *Spokane Chronicle* (Spokane, Washington) September 24, 1907.

to take the places of white men."[256] Mr. Conner passionately continued to urge the "common people" to preserve their government and democracy.[257] Conner's critique did not just center on the "Hindu" laborer, but he also offered a critique against companies that employed such labor as the prime importers of foreigners. Conner's critique of large industry owners was widely appreciated throughout the American West and became quite influential among white labor groups and industrialists. For example, following Conner's widely circulated critique, South Asian laborers were discharged from the Western Pacific Railway in Nevada.[258]

On November 3, 1907, the Everett police arrested thirty-four white union members who were planning out the riot. The police learned about the organizing and took action before the rioters could go through with their agenda. Despite Mayor Jones' warning to them about rioting and in protest to the arrests, two hundred white workers gathered around South Asian labor camps that night. In response, Mayor Jones further warned that he would call the militia if needed. Eventually, the white laborers subsided, and rioting was avoided. In comparison to the two hundred workers ready to riot, there were only forty South Asian laborers in Everett at the time.

The Everett example of a post-Bellingham riot is simply one of many occurrences. Similarly, on October 26, 1907 twenty South Asian laborers were stoned out of the city of Danville, Washington.[259] In the St. Johns suburb of Portland, Oregon in spring of 1910, over two hundred white lumber mill workers at St. Johns' Lumber Co also attempted to expel the three hundred South Asian laborers employed at the mill. Accusing the South Asian laborers of "taking the place of white men," the rioters proceeded to corner and savagely beat several South Asian workers. While the Mayor of St. Johns had initially claimed he would use his influence to get rid of the "Hindus," after the riot on March 21, 1910 he talked the rioters down.[260] Fearing a repetition of the violence that occurred in Bellingham and other small towns, many South Asians left St. Johns to pursue work in the city of Portland or California.

Official legal and immigration responses to the increase in South Asian immigration and the subsequent rise in anti-"Hindu" sentiment amongst white labors in both the United States and Canada was to attempt to ban South Asian laborers, however neither nation was able to fully restrict immigration. In November, 1907, United States Immigration Commissioner J. H. Clark investigated the South Asian immigration issue and reported that "the brown men from the Ganges were becoming a menace to white labor on the coast" and recommended immediate exclusion.[261] Clark's investigation had little effect and was unable to generate any South Asian restriction laws. Meanwhile, following similar riots and racial uprisings in British Columbia, Canadian officials also

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[256] "Laborers should be active" *Spokane Chronicle* (Spokane, Washington) October 5, 1907.
[257] Ibid.
[258] "No more Hindus," *Spokane Press* (Spokane, Washington) October 28, 1907.
[259] *The Seattle Star*, October 26, 1907.
[260] "Hindu laborers attacked by Mob," *The Morning Register* (Eugene, Oregon) March 21, 1910.
[261] "Exclusion for Hindus" *The Seattle Star* (Seattle, Washington) November 18, 1907.

acted to restrict South Asian immigration, however, were unable to do so. Instead, with the help of some British officials in India, measures were taken to deter Punjabis from migrating to Canada. This included a circulation of pamphlets that discouraged immigration in Punjabi districts where many immigrants seemed to be coming from. Other attempts were made to raise the cost of passage.[262] While the Canadian government was unable to explicitly ban South Asians, in 1908 they passed the order-in-council PC 920, which prohibited the entry of any immigrant who had not arrived to Canada through continuous journey from their land of birth, citizenship, or nationality; and subsequently the additional stipulation, PC 926, which mandated a cash requirement for incoming immigrants travelling through continuous journey, making the entry of South Asian immigrants into Canada more difficult and more unlikely.

While rioting seemed to be an extreme method to expel "Hindus" from a given space and community, this section depicts the steady rise in racial tensions and labor disputes in both Canada and the United States leading to the forced exodus of South Asians from Bellingham and other small towns. Media reports and official responses on the aftermath of these riots were indifferent in nature and emphasized the sporadic nature of a riot—a spark of violence that erupts and dies in a moment. However, this section exposes that the riots were far from sporadic, instead it was a steady stream of rhetoric like "invasion" and "menace" that came to define "Hindus" as the "new immigration problem" and rioting became a remedy to this problem. For instance, it was this hostile discourse surrounding the "Hindus'" arrival that led State Organizer Young to demand that all white laborers choose between "the Hindu laborer or the white man." While the efforts surrounding the legal exclusion of South Asians led to some restrictions by the Canadian and US governments, they were still unable to ban South Asian immigration in its entirety in this moment. Thus, the *public* becomes a key player in implementing the exclusion of South Asians, particularly through riots. The Anti-Oriental riot of Bellingham, Washington became an ideal and successful model of exclusion which Trades Council in Everett, Washington attempted to emulate. This section argues that in examining the histories of anti-"Hindu" sentiment, we need to look beyond the laws and policies of nations as methods of exclusion. The media and white public's success in exclusion through riots shows a different way to view restriction, exclusion, and racialization. The next section will show again how the white public, legal officials, and immigration administrators continue to work together to enforce restriction in Oregon, California, and the broader US over the next few years.

The "Hindu" in Legal Terms and the Search for Freedom

While the previous section of this chapter explored the early racial tensions that led to the race-riots across Washington and Oregon, this section will examine how South Asians began to apply for legal protections and citizenship in the United States. As Akhay Kumar Mozumdar became the first South Asian to be granted naturalization in 1914 in the state of Washington, questions regarding the "Hindu's" racial identity were

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[262] "Canada solves Hindu Problem," *The Semi-Weekly Spokesman Review* (Spokane, Washington) April 8, 1908.

heavily debated in the American West. In particular, Californian immigration and political authorities fought "Hindu" naturalization and regarded Washington's decision on the Mozumdar case to be a grave mistake. The success of riots as a remedy to "the new immigration problem" began to falter and became an unstable, short-term solution as more South Asians demanded civil and social rights. Consequently, the call for the total exclusion of "Hindu" immigrants became stronger in areas of American media and US immigration discourse. With the extension of naturalization to South Asians, there became a more immediate need to define the "Hindu" race as non-white.

While the threats of rioting were successful in some small towns, other major railroad companies and labor camps did not cave under the threats from white workers. In December 1908, the Los Angeles Pacific Railroad employed its first batch of "Hindu" laborers. A Los Angeles Pacific Railroad official reported that they would continue to employ "oriental" laborers until much of the rough work on the trolley system was done by "these people."[263] Despite the strong anti-"Hindu" sentiment amongst white laborers across the new frontier, major industries grew immensely in this period and required the steady and "cheap" labor provided by South Asian workers. However, as we see in this section, while South Asian immigration steadily increased, so were the efforts towards restriction and exclusion.

Ghadar in Oregon

Following the riots and the growing threats of anti-"Hindu" violence in Washington and Oregon's lumber mills, in 1913 we see a substantial attempt at political organizing on behalf of South Asian (specifically, Punjabi) laborers across the Pacific Northwest. Specifically, Astoria, Oregon became a center of a rising radical Punjabi labor population. With the strong racial tensions in city centers like Vancouver, (British Columbia), Seattle (Washington), and Portland (Oregon) the remote lumber mill town of Astoria allowed space for Punjabi laborers to freely meet and discuss future political plans.[264] Also, agrarian spaces like Astoria, were away from the heavy surveillance of police, immigration officials, and anti-Asian labor union leaders. In such a way, this particular case of revolutionary development in Astoria points to how rural locations provided means to organize political movements, especially in their early developments. The increasing threats of riots led to the development of more tight-knit South Asian labor communities and the establishment of "Hindoo-towns" and "Hindoo-colonies" across the Pacific Coast.[265] In addition to the advantages provided by rural landscapes to revolutionary movements, the state of Oregon also attempted to repress riots much more ardently and efficiently than Washington officials had been able to do so. This may have to do with there being less South Asians in Oregon at the time and it being more distant from the heavily surveyed Canadian border, but there was a stronger anti-violence stance

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[263] "Hire Hindus for Harriman," *The Spokane Chronicle* (Spokane, Washington) December 10, 1908.
[264] Most were employed at Humes Lumber Mill in Astoria, Oregon (Ogden, 176).
[265] "Hindu Invasion," *Colliers,* 155 p. 15. (photocopy) SANA 52. Box 1, Folder 2. March 26, 1910.

taken by the public and media outlets, than in Washington.[266] While this did not exclude anti-Asian sentiment from rising amongst Oregon's white citizens, Astoria was a unique town in that there was no reported anti-Asian communal violence up to 1913. Johanna Ogden argues that this may have resulted from the particularly diverse population of the small lumber mill town. By 1910, nearly half of Astoria's 9,600 residents were foreign-born, with a mix of folks who were South Asian, Chinese, and Finnish.[267]

Astoria's own unique political history ranges earlier than the origin of the Ghadar movement and began with the Finnish community. In 1904, a group of Finnish laborers formed the Astoria Finnish Socialist Club. A mix between local Finnish men and women, the organization created a meeting hall and established a socialist newspaper which circulated issues bi-weekly.[268] Ogden argues that the Finnish Socialist Club in Astoria had two primary influences on the development of the Ghadar movement. First, their hall served as center to the movement and was quite similar to the Stockton Gurdwara in California that was established in 1913. Second, the Finnish Club would rely heavily on their printing press to publish and circulate their message amongst Finnish laborers.[269] The newsletters described their objective as fighting for national independence with the support of the working-class. Though the only connection documented between the Ghadar Party and the Finnish Socialist Club in Astoria is that the first ever Ghadar meeting was held in the Finnish Socialist Hall, we can assume that they had some political and ideological overlaps.

While the political and historical trajectory of the Ghadar Movement is discussed in depth in the "Introduction" of this dissertation, in the context of this chapter it is important to reiterate the initial motivations that led to the establishment of the Ghadar Party. Returning to the geography of the Pacific Northwest as a point of reference, not only did this space provide the necessary rural areas for revolutionary developments and practice, it was also in close proximity to three major colonial and imperial metropoles: Vancouver, Seattle, and Portland.[270] Dorothy Fujita-Rony's text *American Workers, Colonial Power: Philippine Seattle and the Transpacific West*, explores the history of Filipino immigrants in the American West in the early 20th century and specifically argues that Seattle served as a critical "colonial metropole" used to stretch the American Empire and its colonial expansion into Asia and the Pacific. Considering the geography of the Pacific Northwest, along with active colonial and imperial empires in the Pacific, exposes the exchange of labor, ideas, and surveillance, between the British and United States empires in the early 20th century. This early history of the formation of the Ghadar

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[266] Johanna Ogden (2012) "Ghadar, Historical Silences, and Notions of Belonging: Early 1900s Punjabis of the Columbia River" *Oregon Historical Quarterly*. 113 (2).
[267] Ibid., 176. The South Asian population in Oregon was mostly the same as before, including a majority of Sikh-Punjabi men, from the *jatt* caste, whose ages ranged from early 20s to late 40s.
[268] Ibid., 181.
[269] John Enders, "Town's Heritage is a Fight to the Finnish; Oregon's Astoria Tries to Preserve its Cultural Roots," *The Washington Post* (March 17, 2002).
[270] Dorothy Fujita-Rony, *American Workers, Colonial Power: Philippine Seattle and the Transpacific West, 1919-1941* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

Party depicts how the ports all along the Pacific Northwest provided a space where South Asian activists came together to exchange ideas on revolution.

The discussions that caused the establishment of the Ghadar Party were led by Punjabi laborers and activists that had prior experience with the economic and social oppressions imposed by the British Raj and the racial discrimination that South Asians faced in the United States and Canada. Co-founder of the Ghadar Party Sohan Singh Bhakna was one such activist who in 1912, while working at the Monarch Lumber Mill in Portland, wanted to confront the oppressions South Asians were facing in a transnational context. As a laborer, Bhakna was quite familiar with the rising threat of riots along the west coast as he had been in St. Johns, Oregon during the anti-"Hindu" riot of 1910.[271] Another important organizer in the area was Kanshi Ram, who worked as a labor contractor in Northern Oregon's lumber mills. Ram was also present during the St. Johns riot near Portland and had advocated for the South Asian laborers to the mill owners.[272] Finally, G.D. Kumar, a Seattle-based South Asian anticolonist and co-editor of the radical periodical *Free Hindustan*, was a central figure in the founding of the Ghadar Party. Recognizing their aligning interests, Ram, Bhakna, and Kumar met in March of 1912 in Portland to establish an organization that would meet every Sunday to discuss the economic, social, and racial issues South Asians faced in the United States, Canada, and India. The organization would publish a newspaper that outlined these issues and spread an anticolonial message to other South Asians. The organization would further collect funds from South Asian laborers and sponsor young South Asian students to the US for education and import local newspapers from India. They called themselves the Hindustani Association of America. A second branch of the Association was opened in Astoria later that year.

The organization received interest and positive responses from other South Asians in the area and the group wished to meet to come up with a concrete identity and plan for more active measures to fight imperialism and its affects. Nearly a year after their initial meeting, the Hindustani Association of America met again in St. Johns and invited Har Dayal, a philosophy professor at Stanford and South Asian activist to participate. After a heavy debate, which I discuss in more detail in the "Introduction," the group of activists and laborers decided to take on a more radical anticolonial agenda and work towards freeing India of the British Raj. They collectively decided to establish *Ghadar* (mutiny), a new press that would publish their anticolonial message which they planned to spread all over the British colonies and the United States. Over the next few weeks, the leaders of the new Party organized meetings across mill towns in Washington and Oregon letting folks know of their agenda. With a significant backing from Punjabi laborers in the Pacific Northwest, the Party met on May 30, 1913 in the Finnish Socialist Hall in Astoria. The meeting covered the new proposed agenda to overthrow British rule in India and Har Dayal proved a special keynote speech. As shared in early sections of this dissertation, we know that the Ghadar Party and *Press* moved to San Francisco and Stockton in late 1913.

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[271] Sohan Singh Bhakna, *Meri Ram Kahani* (Samana: Sangam Publications, 2012).
[272] Ogden, "Ghadar."

While the early motivations for Ghadar are deeply rooted in establishing home rule in India, I argue that it was also in response to the rising threats of riots and specifically to how effective riots became to the restriction and exclusion of South Asians in the Pacific Northwest. In choosing to meet in St. Johns, a space of immense racial hatred and violence, the Punjabi labor community found possibility of freedom in a space of precarity. In conjunction, I also argue that the riots were an effect of the colonial and imperial politics of the time and the rhetoric surrounding the "Hindu invasion" was pushed forth by immigration officials in Canada and the United States, along with the race-making project curated by the North American media, immigration officials, and its white public. One of the most compelling aspects of the establishment of the Ghadar Party was its search and demand for freedom. However, to fully understand what the Movement meant by freedom, we also need to expand the boundaries of restriction and exclusion. Thus, to contextualize the history of Ghadar, we must recognize its response to a broad range of restrictions and exclusions that were in practice during the early 20th century.

Racial Ambiguities and New Restrictions

As the Ghadar Party had taken off in 1913 to fight colonialism and imperialism in British India, other South Asians in the United States were slowing edging towards civil and social rights through other means. In 1913, Akhay Kumar Mozumdar[273] applied for naturalization in the state of Washington and received it, sparking outrage all along the west coast. As South Asians in the United States became more organized and vocal regarding the lack of rights granted to them as laborers and immigrants, the calls to further exclude and restrict "Hindus" rose concurrently. In particular, the outrage shared by immigration officials and the US media in regard to the "Hindu" edging towards "whiteness" was made apparent in the debates surrounding the "Hindu's" racial classification. This section proceeds to outline how labor exclusion became a critical means through which to exclude South Asians from civil and social rights and also to aid in the racialization of the "Hindu." Here we will examine how Commissioner General of Immigration A.J. Caminetti builds his prospects towards the California Governorship on the platform of excluding "Hindus." I argue that though Caminetti's "Hindu" exclusion immigration bill failed, his anti-"Hindu" campaign was successful in imposing new forms of restriction and exclusion.

While in May of 1913, the South Asian community in Oregon was busy establishing the Ghadar Party, there was a different brand of organizing occurring in Seattle, Washington. A high-caste, Hindu-Bengali spiritual leader and member of the New Thought Movement, Akhay Kumar Mozumdar, presented his case for citizenship to United States District Judge Frank H. Rudkin in Seattle, Washington on the grounds that he was a "free white person." Mozumdar had applied for citizenship for the past two years and was denied the right once before. However, in this case, Mozumdar argued that his "high-caste" background ensured the purity of his "Aryan blood" and prevented any

[273] Later became popularly known as the "father of Christian Yoga."

mixing, making him a "white person."[274] Judge Rudkin agreed and claimed that certain peoples of India were in fact of the Caucasian race and made Mozumdar the first "Hindu" American citizen in the nation.[275] By setting a new precedent, Mozumdar's case provided South Asians in the United States with the opportunity to apply for citizenship. However, his case also complicated the means through which citizenship rights are achieved, by bringing caste dynamics into the racial system and immigration policy of the United States. Though the true intentions behind Judge Rudkin's decision may never be known, a reporter at the *Los Angeles Times* considered his decision to be a "public service," as the legal determination of "Hindus" as white may prevent any further violent instances in the "Hindu war scare."[276] Following Mozumdar's success, by September of 1913 there are nearly one hundred and seventeen South Asian applicants for citizenship and sixty-three were passed.[277]

Though Mozumdar's case provided a window of opportunity of South Asians in the United States, immigration and government officials saw the decision as an immediate threat to "whiteness." Following the case, media reports questioned the decision on the grounds of *The People of the State of California vs. George W. Hall, 1854*, which determined "Indian" peoples to be "non-white." However, Judge Rudkin argued that the decision categorized: "blacks, mulattos, and Indians" as non-white and in that case, "Indian" had referred to "the Native Americans as found by Christopher Columbus." Instead, "Indians" from India were in fact Caucasian.[278] Other instances of questioning what future lie for "whites" in the United States arose. Articles with titles such as: "Who are White People?" and "Hindus Seek to be Declared White: It's Not Hereditary, Its Tan" took over the front pages of California newspapers. The questions surrounding the "Hindu" now also included questions of "whiteness."

While the uncertainty surrounding whiteness was important, a more critical question was posed by a small newspaper publisher in Pendleton, Oregon. On August 8, 1913 the *East Oregonian*, published an article entitled, "Can Hindus as a Race be Barred from the US?"[279] The article briefly surveys the actions of Immigration Commissioner General A. J. Caminetti of California, who was working to deport twenty-five South Asian men held at Angel Island. The question of whether or not US immigration and government officials could officially bar "Hindus" as a specific and distinct racial group was first brought forth by this rather small, but important publisher in Oregon. Soon,

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[274] "Federal Judge Grants to Hindu Yogi Citizenship," *Oakland Tribune* (Oakland, California) May 3, 1913.
[275] "Hindu is made an American," *The Coos Bay Times* (Marshfield, Oregon), May 3, 1913.
[276] *The Los Angeles Times* May 27, 1913.
[277] "Will be a precedent," *The Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, California), September 19, 1913.
[278] "Racial Antagonisms," *The Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, California) May 7, 1913 & "Some Wild Justice," *The San Francisco Call* (San Francisco, California) August 24, 1913.
[279] "Can Hindus as a race be barred from the US?" *The East Oregonian*, (Pendleton, Oregon) August 8, 1913.

other papers across the United States' Pacific Coast picked up this headline along with detailed accounts on the actions of Caminetti, aiding in the development of a new campaign to exclude South Asian immigration. The *San Bernardino County Sun* also saw Caminetti's deportation actions as a way to help the Pacific Coast avoid furthering the racial complications that Mozumdar's citizenship decision had sparked.[280] At this time the white public looked to exclude Japanese immigrants, however, the US government was keen to maintain good relations with Japan. Caminetti argued that "special-relations" need not be maintained in the case of "Hindus" and they should be excluded. Caminetti gained both traction and a popular following for his anti-"Hindu" agenda.

As noted by the *County Sun*, the racial landscape in 1913 was highly complicated and exclusion on the basis of race would not have been easily granted, even against South Asians. For example, if taking the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 as a framework through which to pass a "Hindu" exclusion law, it would have to be done through a *discourse of labor*, not race. Representatives of California were aware of this issue and had previously attempted to go this track before while advocating for "Hindu" exclusion with little success. The propaganda against the "Hindu laborer" was generated primarily in three types of industry: farming, mills, and railroads. For example, the Alien Land Law of California, 1913 had been passed earlier that year primarily targeting the rising success of Japanese farmers in California, and Representative of California Sisson appeared before Congress in defense of the Law on May 23, 1913.[281] Sisson made the case that the unrestricted admission of aliens would ruin the "American farmer." Fully aware that at that moment, the United States Government would not administer a bar on Japanese immigrants, Sisson argued that cheap "Hindu" labor was affecting the independent "American" farmer and could potentially drive "Americans" out of farming. The Representative's seemingly sensationalist argument for barring "Hindus" based on race was not positively received by the Congressional committee, nor was his argument that cheap labor was hurting the US economy appreciated by industrial leaders.

It has been noted in numerous accounts that South Asians were in fact receiving less wages per day in relation to both White and Spanish (Mexican American) laborers.[282] Many industrialists and employers were not yet willing to pay more for labor, regardless of the rising racial tensions in the Pacific Coast. In fact, a few employers actually published the benefits of hiring "Hindus" in their workforce in comparison to other laborers. One employer in California commented that "Hindu" laborers excelled all other foreign nationalities in learning English and another commented on their cleanliness.[283] While the efforts by California Representatives like Sisson insisted to the public and other government officials to bar the "Hindu laborer," they failed to convince the owners of mills, railroads, and farms to break contracts with South Asian laborers.

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[280] "Caminetti Seeks to Exclude Hindus" *The San Bernardino County Sun* (San Bernardino, Ca) June 20, 1913.
[281] "Admitting Aliens would Ruin Farmer" *The Capital Journal* (Salem, Oregon) May 23, 1913.
[282] "Free Fare" *The San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, California) May 23, 1913.
[283] "Hindu Laborers" *The San Bernardino County Sun* (San Bernardino, California) May 3, 1913.

Meanwhile Caminetti's successful efforts to deport twenty-five South Asian men off Angel Island became highly popular and Caminetti toured across the Pacific Coast, and built upon his anti-"Hindu" platform. Caminetti's popularity amongst other California Representatives (including Democrat John. E Raker) and white communities throughout the Pacific Coast as a "man of action" was tremendous. I argue that his success, particularly of his anti-"Hindu" platform, was due to the following four reasons: (1) Caminetti worked towards establishing the "Hindus" as a distinct *class* in immigration policy, not as a race; (2) he advocated for the extension of the pre-existing Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which excluded Chinese laborers, to also exclude "Hindu" laborers; (3) sought the support of railroad owners, one of the leading employers and contractors of South Asian laborers; (4) advocated for union support, whom had already established anti-"Hindu" leagues and had a track-record of organizing riots. Commissioner Caminetti's anti-"Hindu" campaign reached multiple platforms and while racially motivated, it utilized the discourse of labor as means to exclude and restrict South Asian immigration. Caminetti's propaganda furthered the fabrication of the "Hindu" in the United States as now an "undesirable" *laborer*.

As Caminetti continued to deny the admission of "Hindus" by borrowing rhetoric utilized in the past, including "invasion," "menace," "public health risk," "coolies," at the immigration ports of Seattle and California, his proposal to exclude South Asians gained traction through the discussion of labor.[284] For one, Commissioner Caminetti argued that in immigration policy, "Hindus" should be categorized as separate "class" of laborers. This would then ensure that any action taken towards the exclusion of South Asians would be done on this distinct "class" and furthermore would categorize any new immigration policy against a labor group, rather than a racial group.[285] In particular, since Mozumdar's citizenship now placed high-caste "Hindus" in the category of Caucasian, if Caminetti advocated to exclude South Asians on the basis of race, it would mean he was advocating against the immigration of whites. Therefore, exclusion of a specific labor class would seemingly avoid the racial debate. Secondly, granting South Asian laborers the status of a distinct labor class would allow for them to be included in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 which was based on the exclusion of Chinese laborers.[286] Throughout his tours of the Pacific Coast, Caminetti reminded both the public and government officials that there was already this framework through which they could bar "Hindu" labor immigration. Third, Commissioner Caminetti's propaganda against "Hindus" as "undesirable" laborers managed to persuade many large employers from central to southern California from hiring any more "Hindu" workers until an exclusion bill is passed. For example, in support of Caminetti's arguments, the head of construction from a railroad tributary in Sacramento claimed that, "Hindu workmen are the least competent of all foreigners employed in construction work and that the only times he

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[284] "Invasion of Hindus is Considered Menace" *Weekly Rogue River Courier* (Grants Pass, Oregon) December 12, 1913.
[285] "Coast Menaced by Hindus" *The Capital Journal* (Salem, Oregon) December 9, 1913.
[286] "Invasion of Hindus is Considered Menace" *Weekly Rogue River Courier* (Grants Pass, Oregon) December 12, 1913.

ever has pressed them into service has been in the occasion of emergencies caused by the scarcity of other laborers."[287]

Finally, Caminetti reached out to labor unions that already had anti-"Hindu" leagues established and encouraged the protest of South Asian labor. Not only did Caminetti connect with unions that had previously rioted against South Asians, he also encouraged other unions to take similar action. In one such instance, influenced by Caminetti's anti-"Hindu" stance, the Fresno Labor Council in Central California sent delegates to Commissioner General Caminetti's office to inform him of their resolutions on excluding "Hindu" laborers.[288] Similarly, the State Federation of Labor in California urged government officials in Washington, DC to stop the immigration of South Asian laborers as they were affecting the "American" wage-earners by accepting cheap wages.[289] Influenced by Caminetti and in response to the affidavits of support for South Asian laborers sent by employers to the Bureau of Immigration, the Federation organized a protest against "Hindu" laborers in the fall of 1913.[290] The Federation argued that while the employers may support South Asian immigration due to their desire to retain cheap foreign labor, "Hindu" immigration was driving down their own wages and they would not be tolerated. Therefore, even in cases where Caminetti was unable to garner the support of employers, the risk of white workers protesting and rioting was great enough to pressure some employers into rescinding their support of South Asian immigration. Therefore, we can see how Caminetti's approach towards his anti-"Hindu" immigration agenda on basis of labor instead of race led to the restriction of economic opportunity and furthered the cause of racializing the "Hindu" in the Pacific Coast.

By mid-December of 1913, Caminetti's propaganda to convert the entire Pacific Coast into "exclusion societies" had garnered a tremendous amount of support from State Representatives and the white public.[291] California Representative Raker proposed a new immigration bill which sought to exclude all laborers from the "Asiatic" region.[292] This of course would include South Asians, however after considerable debate the bill made sure to remove any discussion of Japanese immigrants as to not challenge the Gentleman's Agreement of 1907 between the United States and Japan. As the United States entered 1914, the Asiatic Exclusion Bill received full support from both white labor and government leaders. One keen supporter of the bill was Secretary of Labor William Wilson. Secretary Wilson argued that the Bill should more forcefully highlight the exclusion of "Hindus" as a distinct class to avoid any conflict with other Asiatic

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[287] "Hindu Laborers," *The Statesman Journal* (Salem, Oregon) December 10, 1913.
[288] "Oppose Hindu Importation" *Visalia Times-Delta* (Visalia, California) September 14, 1913.
[289] "Unions object to Hindu labor" *The San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, California) September 25, 1913.
[290] "Organized Labor's Protest Against the Hindu" *The Californian* (Salinas, California) September 24, 1913.
[291] "Fight on Yellow Races in State of Washington" *The Capital Journal* (Salem, Oregon) January 22, 1914.
[292] "Exclude Asiatics by New Amendment to Federal Bill," *The Evening Herald* (Klamath Falls, Oregon) December 13, 1913.

nations.[293] Wilson worked to convince other political leaders in Washington D.C. to support "Hindu" exclusion based on the fear that the Northern Pacific Railroad was planning to set up the "Hindu" workers as farmers alongside the railroad once it was completed.[294] His argument continued the logic that the "Hindu" laborer was increasingly becoming a threat to the "American" or white laborer.[295]

Though Secretary Wilson was fully supportive of "Hindu" exclusion, discussions in Washington did bring forth questions regarding what an exclusion bill would mean for United States' relations with England. During the 1914 *Hindu Immigration Hearings* before the House, Caminetti issued statements explaining that England would not protest the exclusion of "Hindu" laborers as it had not yet protested restrictions established in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, which were its own colonies.[296] Wilson also reminded the government officials of the immigration restriction laws established placed by Canada in 1907 in relation to South Asian immigrants. *The Capital Journal* from Salem, Oregon, advocated for the exclusion of South Asians by bringing attention to the "Anglo-American Treaty of 1815," which declared it would favor no specific nation in regards to immigration and would not be persuaded by the demands of other countries.[297] Furthermore the *Journal* reiterated that England's own colonies had even more stringent laws against "Hindu" immigration than the one proposed by California Representative Raker and Representative Everis A Hayes.[298]

While it was generally determined that the United States relationship with England would not be disturbed by the Hindu Exclusion Bill, South Asians put up a fight against the bill. Dr. Sudhindra Bose, a professor at the University of Iowa was brought forth to argue against the passage of the bill. Bose presented two points: first, he urged the officials to establish a "Gentleman's Agreement" with Great Britain, similar to the one with Japan and second, he argued that "Hindus" are indeed Aryans, and thus "white" and should be provided with the right to naturalize. The chairman of the Standing House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization and Alabama Democrat John L. Burnett, an avid supporter of the Bill, reiterated that other British colonies had adopted similar laws, to which Dr. Bose responded, "the central government in England has not endorsed such actions."[299] Bose further warned the committee, that "the fiercest revolution the world has ever known" will ensue if the British Government approves of the "Hindu"

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[293] "Hindus as a Distinct Class," *The Eugene Guard* (Eugene, Oregon) January 23, 1914.
[294] "Japanese Policy in Mexico is Surprise to Secretary Bryan," *The Oregon Daily Journal* (Portland, Oregon) January 23, 1914.
[295] "Exclusion of Hindus Asked by Secretary" *Statesman Journal* (Salem, Oregon), January 24, 1914.
[296] "England would not be angered by Hindu restriction, belief" *The Oregon Daily Journal,* (Portland, Oregon) January 24, 1914.
[297] Ibid.
[298] Ibid.
[299] *Hindu Immigration Hearings Before the Committee on Immigration House of Representatives: Restriction of Immigration of Hindu Laborers,* Government Printing Office, Washington DC, 1914 (SAADA) & "Dr. Bose defends Hindus" *The Eugene Guard* (Eugene, Oregon) February 13, 1914.

exclusion to the United States.[300] Unnamed in the article, another South Asian man was called forth to testify to the immigration committee who argued that the United States government should allow "Hindus" to settle "upon the desert lands of the country between Nebraska and the Sierra Nevadas and they would make it blossom like a rose."[301] Playing on the United States' capitalist desire to retain cheap labor, this South Asian broker from New York "with a name that looks like a pie line from the linotype"[302] argued that South Asians could help turning spaces that are agriculturally barren into prosperous landscapes. Though the South Asians that testified in the *Hindu Immigration Hearings* presented their cases passionately, they were generally dismissed by the Immigration Committee.

After a considerable debate between the months of March and April of 1914, the "Hindu" Exclusion Bill was defeated. Though the bipartisan Immigration Committee was sympathetic to Caminetti and Raker's arguments, the bill still seemed closely linked to the sensitive immigration agreement between the United States and Japan. Through a close-reading of the transcript of the "Hindu Immigration Hearings Before the Committee on Immigration," the question of the Japanese situation arose quite consistently.[303] In the end, President Wilson did not support any anti-"Hindu" legislation as it put his relationship with Japan at risk. Though these trials have been written on briefly in the past by scholars, such as Sarah Isabel Wallace in her text *Not Fit to Stay: Public Health Panics and South Asian Exclusion*, the trajectory of Caminetti's immigration and political career and the outcomes of the hearings have not yet been explored as a means to further the project of racializing the "Hindu" in the US prior to the *Thind* decision. Caminetti's play on racial politics and labor tensions led not only to the Hindu Exclusion hearings, but also had drastic consequences for South Asians in the United States. Therefore, I argue that we must expand our scope beyond the defeat of the bill to locate the other ways in which Caminetti's actions furthered restrictions and exclusions for South Asians in the US.

Almost immediately following the defeat of the anti-"Hindu" immigration bill, Ganesh Pandit becomes the first South Asian in California to become naturalized on May 6, 1914.[304] The article "Blondes Are Not Given Preference" published in the *Capital Journal* chronicles Pandit's efforts to attain naturalization. Pandit had the monumental task ahead of him to prove his "whiteness," however, Judge Morrison declared "the brief he [Pandit] filed to be the most comprehensive and enlightened he had ever seen."[305] Despite Pandit's success at his immigration hearing, South Asians faced new forms of

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[300] Ibid.
[301] *The Capital Journal* (Salem, Oregon) May 2, 1914.
[302] Ibid.
[303] *Hindu Immigration Hearings Before the Committee on Immigration House of Representatives: Restriction of Immigration of Hindu Laborers,* Government Printing Office, Washington DC, 1914 (SAADA).
[304] "To Naturalize Hindu: Ganesh Pandit to be California's First Indian Citizen," *Statesman Journal* (Salem, Oregon) May 7, 1914.
[305] "Blondes are not Given Preference," *The Capital Journal* (Salem, Oregon) May 7, 1914.

restrictions and exclusions following Caminetti's hearings. The new restrictions that faced South Asians in the United States were centered around both labor and employment, and immigration policies. Following the defeat of the bill, industries began to close their doors to "Hindu" workers. For example, in St. Johns, Oregon (the site of the anti-"Hindu" riot of 1910), a new cooperage factory was being built and the owners promised local white workers that they would not be hiring any "Hindu" laborers.[306] Other articles were published which outlined how "Hindu" labor across the border in British Columbia, was destroying mill towns. The argument was that while mill owners assumed cheap labor would leave more money in their pockets, in turn the laborers destroyed the towns as white laborers would leave and settle elsewhere.[307] Therefore, in order to sustain and support white workers and their families, mills in the United States should refuse employment to South Asian workers. Such arguments had a significant impact on South Asians finding work in the US. The second outcome of the *Hindu Immigration Hearings*, was the rise of new politicians along the Pacific Coast also adapting a similar anti-"Hindu" agendas to garner public support. While Ghadar historian Johanna Ogden had described Astoria as free of anti-Asian riots in early 1913, by late 1914 anti-"Hindu" sentiment was on the rise. Dr. C. J. Smith a rising political leader in Astoria, Oregon delivered a speech to local white laborers in which he declared that he was vehemently against South Asian immigration. He further stated before a crowd of "hundreds" of white laborers that, "I would rather have Oregon in that primaveral state than to have its development due to that class of people."[308] Caminetti's argument that "Hindus" were the most undesirable laborers did not work to achieve an immigration ban in 1914; however, it was successful in convincing employers to terminate their contracts with South Asian laborers and deterred them from establishing new ones.

While the *Hindu Immigration Hearings* were still in process in February of 1914, A.J. Caminetti issued a statement through the press, in which he expressed his desire to run for Governor of California. He immediately followed his statement with a strong claim to restrict "Hindu" immigration.[309] Though he did not run for Governor in California, perhaps due to the defeat of his bill, he continued to work as the Commissioner of Immigration following the *Hearings*. Despite the outright exclusion of "Hindus" in the US no longer being on the table, Caminetti worked towards improving the methods of deportation to ensure the United States Immigration Service could deport more individuals, more efficiently. In the past, immigrants who were deemed to be "undesirable" were to be sent to the nearest immigration port accompanied by an immigration official to be deported. With the new method set in place in June of 1914, an immigration official was sent to collect several immigrants during one trip and who then brought them to the port together to be deported. This method saved money on individual

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[306] "A Big Industry" *St. Johns Review* (Portland, Oregon) May 29, 1914.
[307] "Canadian Mills Close, US Plants Running" *Albany Democrat* (Albany, Oregon) October 27, 1914.
[308] "C.J. Smith Leaves no one in doubt to where he stands," *The Oregon Daily Journal* (Portland, Oregon) October 27, 1914.
[309] "Caminetti May Seek Governorship He Admits in Interview" *The Capital Journal Salem* (Salem, Oregon) February 17, 1914.

train tickets and allowed for a quicker process for deportation. The article "New System Saves Money: Government Deports Undesirables in Carload Lots," discusses the success of the new system and how the Immigration Service had been able to deport more and more immigrants.[310] In order to fully understand the racialization process of the "Hindu" during 1913-1914, one must expand the scope of restriction and exclusion beyond immigration exclusion. While Caminetti's early motions towards "Hindu" exclusion did not pan out in the form of an immigration exclusion bill, it did set the stage for both the immigration bar of all "Asiatics" in 1917 and the *Bhagat Singh Thind* decision in 1923. Championing the anti-"Hindu" agenda as one of his life's passions, Caminetti died in November of 1923, nearly nine months after the *Thind* decision had declared all "Hindus" non-white.

The Case of Bhagat Singh Thind and the Triumph of "American Common Sense"

Following the defeat of the Hindu Exclusion Bill in 1914, the next three years offered South Asians across the Pacific Coast the opportunity to apply for naturalization. In 1916, Judge Franklin J. Cole of El Centro, Imperial County ruled that "Hindus" were eligible for US citizenship if they can prove they are of high-caste.[311] Concurrently, the District Court of Washington and Federal Judge M. T. Dooling of San Francisco both made similar rulings. Each ruling argued that if the "Hindu" applicant can prove that he is high-caste, then he shall be recognized as "white" and is thus eligible for citizenship. According to Judge Dooling, "Ethnologically, all the upper classes of India are Aryan and therefore eligible to American citizenship."[312] It is particularly interesting to note the ways in which the caste-system becomes a logical ground through which to grant naturalization in the US. Caste is both a concerning and a non-assimilable quality for some,[313] while within the legal system it is being translated as a hierarchical system which relates to "whiteness."

Because the high-caste "Hindu" was now eligible for citizenship, the majority of Sikhs migrating from Punjab who were *jatt* applied for citizenship, only to be met with further concern surrounding assimilation. Upon swearing into citizenship, turban-wearing Indians (most of whom were Sikh) were now required to shave their beards, remove their turbans, and cut their hair. The turban was believed to be a continuing roadblock for Sikhs on the path towards assimilation. However, while some agreed to this demand in

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[310] "New System Saves Money: Government Deports Undesirables in Carload Lots," *The Oregon Daily Journal* (Portland, Oregon) June 4, 1914.

[311] "Five Thousand Hindus Win Right to Citizenship in Court." *San Francisco Call and Post*, SANA 320. Box 1, Folder 31. October 16, 1916; Also published in the *Journal*, Portland Oregon with the same name.

[312] "Five Thousand Hindus Win Right to Citizenship in Court." *San Francisco Call and Post*, SANA 320. Box 1, Folder 31. October 16, 1916; Also published in the *Journal*, Portland Oregon with the same name.

[313] In her text *Making Ethnic Choices: California's Punjabi Mexican Americans*, Karen Leonard notes how local white citizens in the Imperial Valley criticized the "caste-system" and deemed it odd.

order to retain citizenship, others refused.[314] One source states, "It was the same son of India, who wishing to become a citizen of the United States, refused to remove his turban while taking the oath and so remained a British subject. Always the turban remains, the badge and symbol of their native land, their native customs and religion."[315] It is interesting to note, that the author of this newspaper article concludes that the Sikh man had chosen to keep his turban, and thus his status as a British subject, however, he does not acknowledge that the man is choosing to retain his Sikh identity. While there are many Sikhs who do not wear the turban, this man obviously felt compelled to keep it, even if his chance at US citizenship is revoked.

Based on the memoirs of her grandmother Kartar Kaur Dhillon (1915-2008), filmmaker Erika Surat Anderson's film *Turbans* (year) follows the experiences of the Dhillon family and the pressures to assimilate into the Pacific North-West. The Dhillons were one of the early Sikh families to migrate to the US from Punjab in the early 1900s, in fact Kartar Kaur and her siblings were born in the US.[316] The brief film highlights a critical moment in the early life of Kartar's brothers in Astoria, Oregon in 1918, when they are pressured to remove their turbans in order to be accepted in school. Anderson captures the sense of extreme conflict rising in each member of the family as they have to seemingly choose between their faith and acceptance and safety in the US. Though there are not many sources on how Sikhs were responding the legal and cultural pressures to assimilate, Anderson's film touches upon the issue of cultural and religious assimilation in a critical way.

Though the path to citizenship was bittersweet for some Sikhs in the United States, it was still a possibility that was greatly desired. The protections offered by the United States, specifically against the clutches of Great Britain, were immensely valuable for anticolonial organizers. The United States offered a space from which they could criticize the British Raj without the severe consequences they would have faced in British India. However, the sense of safety the Ghadar Party organizers felt in the United States proved to be an illusion. The Ghadar Party had worked closely with the German Consulate in both San Francisco and Germany throughout 1914 and attained German support in the form of weapons and funding for a Ghadar revolt against the British Raj. Mutineers had left the United States in massive numbers[317] to fight against the British in India. The Germans had agreed to send arms and ammunition on a ship, which was to meet with the revolutionaries off the coast of Karachi (in present day Pakistan). However, the German ships were intercepted and the Ghadarites landed without any weaponry. Meanwhile plans for the revolution had been leaked to British officials and the

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[314] Leonard, *Making Ethnic Choices,* 48.

[315] "Tide of Turbans," *The Forum* (New York), 43, pp. 616-618. (photocopy) SANA 108. Box 1, Folder 6. June 1910.

[316] Andersen, Erika Surat. 2001. *Turbans*. New York, NY: Filmmakers Library. http://www.aspresolver.com/aspresolver.asp?FLON;1641534

[317] See the works of Harish Puri, Seema Sohi, and Maia Ramnath.

Ghadarites were arrested as soon as they landed. Those captured in 1914, were tried in the Lahore Conspiracy Trial of 1914.[318]

Consequently, one day after the United States entered the First World War, on April 7, 1917, assistant attorney-general Charles Warren instructed US district attorney John Preston to have Ram Chandra and twelve other Indians arrested for violating the US' neutrality laws for conspiring to organize a military expedition against a country with which the US had been at peace.[319] The Ghadar headquarters in San Francisco were raided by US authorities and they managed to collect a running list of members of the Ghadar Party from across the world. Documents were also collected which related to the Ghadar Party and the Berlin India Committee's collaboration with the German counsels to overthrow the British Raj.

The trial revealed an interesting collaboration between the US and British empires. It also pointed to the hypocrisy of US as a defender of democracy as the accused Ghadarites claimed they were not conspirators, but rather freedom fighters seeking to establish a democracy. The trial was of great focus for the American public, as it was the most expensive trial to date. On April 23, 1918, after four and half hours of deliberation, the jury found all but one of the remaining defendants guilty of conspiracy to violate the neutrality laws of the US. As soon as the verdict was announced Ghadarite and defendant Ram Singh stood up and shot fellow defendant Ram Chandra dead in the middle of the courtroom. A court marshal then shot Ram Singh dead and thus two men had died in a matter of moments. The proceedings of the trial took a toll on the Ghadar movement in other ways as well, particularly on its leadership, as it was revealed that Ram Chandra had been stealing money from the Ghadar Party's private funds. Ram Singh's killing of Ram Chandra pointed to the wavering leadership of the party and ultimately fractured the movement to a point where it could not be completely mended.

The trial both served to fraction the movement, and also to generate a warning against further radicalism in the US. After the sentences were delivered, Judge William C. Van Fleet warned the Indian defendants to cease their distributing their "Hindu publications," as "the public is in a frame of mind not to further tolerate propaganda against the allies of the US."[320] Similarly, US attorney John Preston remarked that the verdict demonstrated that "we must teach the non-assimilable, parasitic organizations in our midst that while this is a land of liberty, it is not a country of mere license."[321] Here, we see the "Hindu" as undesirable due to their political nature.

Immediately following the trial, the US continued its efforts to suppress both the "yellow peril" and the "red scare" through various new laws and immigration policies. In 1917 and 1918, Congress passed the Espionage and Sedition Act, as well as the Immigration Acts of 1917 and 1918. While the Espionage and Sedition Acts allowed the federal authorities to punish any appearance of disloyalty to the US government, the

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[318] A more detailed overview of the revolution and Lahore Conspiracy Trial and the Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial will be provided in "Chapter One."

[319] Archival materials relating to the case are present at National Archives in San Bruno, California.

[320] Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny*.

[321] Ibid.

Immigration Acts effectively excluded Indian immigration as they came from the now "Barred Zone." The Immigration Act of 1917, also known as the Asiatic Barred Zone Act, issued literacy tests on immigrants, and barred immigration from the Asia and Pacific Zone. The Immigration Act of 1918 also sanctioned guilt by association and lifted the statute of limitations for deportation for post-entry criminal conduct in immigration proceedings. This act both excluded and expelled immigrants who were deemed anarchist by practice or association. While anticolonial and anti-imperialist efforts continued in the US, these new legal stipulations made it much more difficult for Ghadarites to organize. The brief period between 1914-1918 was one of immense precarity and possibility for the "Hindu" in the United States, while many were naturalized and provided with the social, economic, and political rights that accompany citizenship in the United States on paper, the political outcomes of the *Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial*, 1917 established strong restrictions on immigration and political freedom.

Despite the new restrictions and exclusions placed on South Asian immigration, those in the United States still applied for citizenship rights as the "Hindu" was considered "white" within the racial spectrum in the United States. One such individual was Bhagat Singh Thind, a Sikh man from the Amritsar district of Punjab, British India. Thind at twenty years of age, arrived at the shores of Seattle, Washington on July 4, 1913. After working in Seattle as a dishwasher and a laborer in local lumber mills, Thind eventually settled in the small town of Astoria, Oregon in the neighborhood known as "Hindoo Alley." For the next three years, Thind worked in the Hammond Lumber Mill in Astoria, alongside other South Asian immigrants. He was a founding member of the Ghadar Party and an avid supporter of the fight against British imperialism. He was appointed the secretary general of the Ghadar Party for the state of Oregon and delivered passionate speeches throughout the state advocating for India's independence. Thind's radicalism did not go unnoticed as he was quickly placed under the surveillance of the British Intelligence agency known as MI5 and labeled "a dangerous extremist."[322] In the surveillance file dated June 1916, Thind is reportedly described as "the soul of the revolutionary movement in Astoria."[323] As the movement fractured after the *Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial of 1918*, Thind attempted to take control of the *Ghadar Press* and moved to San Francisco. However, seeing the severe divide that followed the aftermath of the trial, Thind disengaged and returned to Oregon to become the first Sikh to be inducted into the US Army when he enlisted on July 22, 1918 (just as World War One was ending).

Based on the previous cases that granted citizenship to South Asians, in July of 1918 Thind applied for citizenship and served in the army as he awaited the decision of the state of Washington. Thind served in the Army at Camp Lewis in Clatsop County, Washington and though he was only in the military for a few months, he managed to be promoted to the rank of acting sergeant. Thind convinced army officials to allow him to retain his turban and beard throughout his service. As the war ended in December of 1918, he received an honorable discharge for his service the same month. Following his

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[322] Amanda De la Garza, *Doctorji: The Life, Teachings, and Legacy of Dr. Bhagat Singh Thind* (Malibu: David Bhagat Singh Thind, 2010), 12.
[323] Ibid., 13.

discharge, Thind reached out to his fellow Ghadarites who were being held at in a prison on McNeill's Island off the coast of Tacoma, Washington. Thind provided translation services to those who needed it, however, refused his comrades' requests that he run the *Ghadar Press.* Thind claimed he could not afford the work and suggested they find a replacement.

Upon leaving the army, Thind was informed that he was granted citizenship and he went to receive his citizenship certificate in full-dress military uniform on December 9, 1918. Soon after, Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) Examiner Thomlinson disagreed with the court's decision and revoked Thind's citizenship on December 13, 1918 on the grounds that was not "a free white man." While disheartened, Thind returned to Oregon and took up a job with the Western Oregon Lumber Company and reapplied for citizenship with the state of Oregon on May 6, 1919. Thomlinson was still serving with the INS and requested to argue against Thind's case in court before Judge Wolverton. Thomlinson presented evidence of Thind's involvement with the Ghadar Party as reason to decline rights to citizenship. Judge Wolverton looked over the evidence and claimed, "He [Thind] is not a subversive…he [Thind] stoutly denies that he was in any way connected with the alleged propaganda of the Ghadar Press to violate neutrality laws of this country, or that he was in sympathy with such a course. He frankly admits, nevertheless, that he is an advocate of the principle of India for Indians, and would like to see India rid of British rule, but not that he favors an armed revolution for the accomplishment of this purpose."[324] Deciding in his favor, Thind received citizenship for a second time on November 18, 1920.

While Thind celebrated the decision, the INS had appealed to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, which sent the case to the United States Supreme Court on October 17, 1921, for a ruling on the following two questions:

1. Is a high caste Hindu of full Indian blood, born at Amritsar, Punjab, India, a white person within the meaning of section 2169, Revised Statutes?
2. Does the act of February 5, 1917 (39 Stat. L. 875 Section 3) disqualify form naturalization as citizens those Hindus, now barred by the act, who had lawfully entered the United States prior to the passage of said act?[325]

The INS demanded the Supreme Court evaluate the "Hindu" in terms of his/her relationship to "whiteness" and to rescind the right toward citizenship under the (Asiatic Exclusion) Immigration Act of 1917. Thind's attorney argued that the Immigration Act of 1917 was "prospective and not retroactive" thus not applicable to the case of Thind.

However, the issue of "whiteness" generated a considerable debate. Thind had made the case that he was a "high-caste Aryan" and therefore eligible for citizenship under the Naturalization Act of 1890, which granted citizenship rights to "free white

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[324] Ibid., 17.

[325] Sutherland, George, and Supreme Court of The United States. U.S. Reports: *United States v. Thind, 261 U.S. 204*. 1922, 207.

persons" and "aliens of African nativity and to persons of African descent." Also, Thind argued that previous anthropological studies had claimed high-caste "Hindus" to be Caucasian due to the linguistic similarities between Indo-Aryan speakers. However, Justice Sutherland, who presided over the case, argued that linguistic similarity was not enough to prove racial denomination, rather physical characteristics should be given priority in proving common racial origin. Specifically, the court stated: "'Free white persons,' as used in that section, are words of common speech, to be interpreted in accordance with the understanding of the common man, synonymous with the word 'Caucasian.'"[326] Furthermore the court claimed that the term "race" must be applied to a group of living persons *now*, rather than groups having a similar ancestry. Thus, in response to the first question presented by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, the Supreme Court decided that though not an issue of racial superiority or inferiority, the "Hindu" is simply non-white in terms of common sense due to the color of his skin. In relation to the second question posed by the Court of Appeals, the Supreme Court agreed through the passage of the Immigration Act of 1917, Congress obviously viewed "Hindus" to be "Asian" and they would never accept a class of persons as citizens, whom it rejects as immigrants.[327] The *Thind* decision thus not only determined Bhagat Singh Thind to be non-white within common sense, but also declared that all South Asian citizens have their citizenship immediately revoked.

A.K. Mozumdar, who had been the first South Asian immigrant to be granted citizenship in 1913, was the first to have it revoked. Hundreds of others were also affected. Also, the decision now placed South Asians in the United States under the purview of the California Alien Land Law of 1920, because of their status now as a class of immigrants who cannot apply for naturalization. Many media outlets celebrated the *Thind* verdict. In particular, agricultural centers like Sacramento, Fresno, and Imperial, California approved of the decision as many South Asian farmers would have to forfeit their land. According to the *Sacramento Bee*, "The decision of the United States Supreme Court, that Hindus are not eligible to American citizenship, is most welcome to California…There must be no more leasing or sale of land to such immigrants from India."[328] Thus, the *Thind* decision not only revoked South Asians' access to US citizenship, but also placed them within the provisions of the California Alien Land Law of 1920,[329] which prohibited all "aliens ineligible for citizenship" from owing agricultural land or possessing long-term leases over three years. While the law affected primarily Chinese, Japanese and Korean immigrant farmers, it made South Asians once again ineligible for landownership in 1923. Though the statistics are debatable, news sources state that in 1919, while there were 2,600 "Hindus" residing in California and they owned approximately 2,099 acres of land in the state and leased up to 86,340 acres of land.[330]

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[326] Ibid., 204.
[327] Ibid., 215.
[328] "Hindus Too Brunette to Vote Here," *The Literary Digest* (New York), 76, pp. 13. (photocopy) SANA 54. Box 1, Folder 3. March, 1923.
[329] The California Alien Land Law of 1920 is a revised version of the California Alien Land Law of 1913, also known as the Webb-Haney Act.
[330] Ibid.

After the *Thind* decision, efforts were made for "Hindu" landowners and leasers to escheat their property to the State of California. Attorney General of California, Ulysses S. Webb, states in an interview with the *San Francisco Chronicle* that "Hindus" will be forbidden from farming their land upon leaseholds or contracts. He further stated, "This will affect large tracts of land in the interior valleys, 'where the menacing spread of Hindus holding our lands will cease.'"[331] The *Thind* case then effectively halted the economic advancement of South Asians in California through farming by placing them back within the perimeters of the California Alien Land Law of 1920.

Conclusion: Other Imaginings of the Belonging by Bhagat Singh Thind and Har Dayal

The decision made by Justice Sutherland in the *Bhagat Singh Thind vs. the United States, 1923*, not only restricted the access of South Asians to the economic, social, and political rights granted through US citizenship, it also solidified the racialization of "Hindus" as non-white—a racialization project that had begun in as early as 1906 before the riots of Bellingham, Washington. This chapter has so far depicted how the development of the category of "Hindu" through the rhetoric of "invasion" and the labor tensions fueled by Caminetti's campaign, had always sought to prevent the "Hindu" from aligning with "whiteness." The crude politics of race in the United States championed by the media and immigration officials had worked towards ensuring that the South Asian laborer does not fall into the category of "white" and passionately protected the claim to "whiteness." In conclusion, I briefly examine the careers and works of two South Asian intellectuals, Bhagat Singh Thind and Har Dayal and explore their articulations of belonging that extend beyond the scope of the State.

Following the *Bhagat Singh Thind vs. The United States,1923* trial, Thind began travelling throughout the United States delivering lectures on philosophy and spirituality, with a specific focus on the Sikh tradition. Though Thind's lectures was geared towards Christian audiences, he frequently taught the writings of the Vedas, Guru Nanak, Kabir and Buddha.[332] Thind's lectures were often advertised in local newspapers and he focused on both small towns and large cities, garnering a diverse following including South Asians, but majority of his followers were white Americans. While there had previously been "Hindu" spiritual leaders lecturing in the US prior to Thind, Thind was the first to introduce the Sikh tradition to the United States' white public. He lecturers focused on two primary objectives: to teach the public about Sikhs and to teach the public about the Sikh tradition. Appealing to a sense of the universal in those spiritually inclined in the white American public, Thind often referred to the Sikh peoples as a group who were a unique "race." In one of his informational booklets entitled "A Sikh and Sikhism," Thind wrote, "Sikhs were intended to be a race of men divinely fashioned, beautiful, envied, and life-inspiring, like no other race hitherto."[333] Furthermore he stated, "Every human being is a Sikh, a learner…"[334] As an individual who had just recently been

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[331] Ibid.
[332] De la Garza, *Doctorji,* 22.
[333] Ibid., 33.
[334] Ibid.

declined access to citizenship, Thind focused his teachings to look beyond the State for belonging. For him spirituality, and specifically *Sikhi*, offered a resolution to statelessness—it was a way to see beyond the current boundaries between individuals and nations, to something that united peoples. Ironically, Thind's own body was not accepted by United States' common sense, however, his teachings on belonging were immensely popular. No longer considered an immediate threat to whiteness, on one hand, the United States rejected the racialized "Hindu" laborer and on the other it embraced the "Sikh" philosopher. Thind continued to lecture until the 1950s and had a strong following in the United States.

Another individual who similar to Thind, attempted to explore other alternatives of belonging after the United States rescinded the right to citizenship was Ghadar Party intellectual, Har Dayal. After Har Dayal had left the United States and the Ghadar Movement in 1914, he carried on his career as a philosopher and writer in Europe. Har Dayal's self-proclaimed identity as a cosmopolitan inspired much of his intellectual history, specifically as he advocated for the construction of a cosmopolitan space that he termed as the "World-State." While Dayal's claim to cosmopolitanism alludes to his self-assimilation to the West in both thought and culture, in this section I locate how Dayal theorizes a space in which all Indians (including the peasant and laborer) can assimilate into a cosmopolitan world. Like Horace Kallen's theory of "cultural pluralism," which is seemingly inclusive to a variety of cultures, traditions, and bodies, Har Dayal's ideas on cosmopolitanism are deeply rooted in the intellectual traditions of the West. Thus, rather than promoting decolonial politics, Dayal proposed the precarious journey towards cultural and religious assimilation to the Indian laborer. In the following pages, I provide a critical reading of Dayal's *Hints for Self-Culture,* to look closely at the relationships between Kantian cosmopolitanism and that as imagined by Har Dayal. Both intellectuals rely on a moral imperative within the citizens of this new global landscape.

In the text *Hints for Self-Culture,* Dayal begins his section on history with an ode to Kant's proposition for a "Universal History," borrowing from Kant's piece "The Idea of a Universal History on a Cosmo-Political Plan" (1784).[335] Dayal argues that history being torn into nationalist pieces is detrimental to our understanding of our history as a collective, "Many scholars have cruelly cut up History into 'national' fragments and written learned tomes on the history of England, France, Germany, Albania, Armenia, Iraq, etc. They are the brutal butchers of History."[336] He argues that history is unintelligible if it is divided, it fails to tell us anything at all about ourselves. Kant had argued the same in terms of whatever difference we might have in our ideas of freedom of will—through the evidence of human actions, they are under the control of universal laws of nature. History, then narrates these manifestations of actions. It reveals and conceals, contemplates agency of human will on a global scale, and works toward depicting a "regular stream of tendency" in the course of events; so that events that seem incoherent are viewed through connections between human beings and not just of individual beings, which leads to (though slow, but steady) continuous development of

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[335] Immanuel Kant, *The Idea of a Universal History in a Cosmo-Political Plan.* (Hanover: Sociological Press), 1927.
[336] Har Dayal. *Hints for Self-Culture*. (London: Watts & Co, 1934) 43.

the species.[337] Dayal continues to argue the need for a history that is "cosmopolitan in spirit," "A 'national' historian cannot explain the origin of the religious, political, and intellectual movements that suddenly appear in the history of his own beloved country."[338] Both Kant and Dayal then attempt to begin the construction of the Cosmopolitan World with the development of a Universal History. Ultimately, Dayal proposes that all should align themselves with Kant and his argument that, "World-history should enable us to realize the unity of the human race."[339] This does not negate the racially exclusionary comments made by Kant in other texts, however, Dayal is using this particular concept of "Universal History" as a necessary factor in the construction of his own World-State.

Dayal is theorizing within a teleology of history informed by European early Modern Thought, specifically here in relation to work of Immanuel Kant. But, it becomes crucial for Har Dayal to include the Indian laborer and peasant[340] within this linear teleology of history, whose end goal is the "World-State." "World-Citizens" living in this new world would be driven by rationalism and fully assimilated into a dominant Western world-culture. For Dayal, the Ghadar movement was then in part created as a means to not only rid India from British colonialism, but also to generate a sense of consciousness and rationality within the Indian peasant. Despite the rising racial tensions in the US against Sikh laborers, Dayal completely ignores the question of race and points to generating a cosmopolitan spirit within the peasant as the solution. Specifically, through his intellectual reliance on Kant while theorizing "universal history" Har Dayal generates an imagining of a world in which not only the South Asian subject, but the entire global population is fully assimilated into a world governed by the ideals of Modern European philosophy, "Cosmopolitanism will then become a potent spiritual force in every citizen's life."[341]

Though the driving forces for finding belonging for Thind and Dayal are different—for Thind it is *Sikhi* and for Dayal it is cosmopolitanism—both are clearly looking beyond the nation-state for acceptance, and most importantly both ignore the issue of race. This chapter explores the debates surrounding "who is the 'Hindu?'" in the United States in the early 1900s. Here I present the leading discourses in written media, legal and immigration policies, and intellectual studies, surrounding the racial classification of Indian men in the US, also known as "Hindu/Hindoos," from 1906 to 1923. I argue that we must extend the definitions of restriction and exclusion to include racial violence and labor tensions in order to fully understand the violent processes of racialization of the "Hindu" in the early 20th century. While the case of Vaishno Das

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[337] Kant, *The Idea of Universal History.*
[338] Dayal. *Hints.*
[339] Ibid., 49.
[340] In his publications through the Ghadar Press from 1913-1914, Dayal has focused heavily on the need to educate and modernize the Indian peasant. In many cases, the figure of the "Indian peasant" is most often aligned with his views on Sikhs in both the US and Punjab.
[341] Dayal. *Hints,* 304.

Bagai is left buried in an archive as an odd story of one man's suicide, it speaks to a larger systemic violence that was inflicted on him by the American common sense.

CHAPTER FOUR: Ghadri Poetry on Trial: Punjabi-Sikh Poetry and the Sikh Tradition

If anyone asks who we are, tell him our name is rebel.
Kartar Singh Sarabha

My father only shared one memory with me regarding the Partition of India in 1947. He was born and raised in a small village in the Ludhiana district in colonial Punjab that was majority Sikh. Thirteen-years-old at the time, my father awoke to the news of independence and separation. Still unaware of the gravity of what this meant, he got ready for school. Just like every morning before, he tied his turban, a bit too large for his face and just off center, grabbed his bag, and set off. It seemed that day everyone was talking, all at the same time, but he had nothing to say on the matter. The school looked the same as it did the day before with young men eager to do anything but learn. However, as class began the teacher approached the board and wrote out the daily lesson, the class fell silent. Instead of writing in the usual Shahmukhi script, the teacher had written in Gurmukhi. No one spoke for a while, perhaps out of shock but mostly out of the confusion. One class fellow questioned why the lesson was in Gurmukhi as the students were unfamiliar with the script. The teacher said this is the script they will use from now on out: for every day, for every class. "Copy the lesson." My father said his hands shook as he copied the script on his paper. He said he felt like a child, imitating the unfamiliar lines with an uncertain hand and at the same time pretending to know what it said. Every day after that in school, they only wrote in Gurmukhi. It was never officially taught, instead it was assumed that they know it. Gurmukhi was their script now, Shahmukhi belonged to Pakistan.

When questioned about the Partition, I had assumed my father would tell me about the extreme physical violence that tore Punjab apart as it is one of the most violent forced migrations in human history. Nearly two million people lost their lives and millions of others were displaced. Instead, my father's story points to the epistemological violence and the power of language. Nearly fifty-years after the partition, he told the story with just as much outrage and shock at the absurdity of nation-building. He said he was not allowed to say he did not know Gurmukhi in school without getting reprimanded, so instead he went home and practiced on his own. I never asked him about the Partition again and he never mentioned it. The story told me more than the experience of a frustrated young man in school—it told me of how language forced him to accept the separation. That language is liberating, but it is also extremely violent. That he was left unguided in a new, but torn Punjab.

This chapter follows the power in language and its role in nationalism. Here I explore the writings of the anticolonial Ghadar Party and the *Ghadar Press* in the early 1900s. Appealing to an audience of mostly Punjabi-Sikh laborers in the American West (and other British colonies), the writings published by the *Press* were primarily written in Punjabi in the Gurmukhi script and Urdu in the Indo-Persian script, or Shahmukhi. For the purpose of this chapter, I focus on the ways in which the use of Punjabi-Gurmukhi challenged both the British colonial and United States imperial authorities. The objective of this chapter is three-fold: (1) to provide a history of the criminalization of the Punjabi-

Gurmukhi language during the colonial period; (2) it examines the criminalization of Punjabi-Gurmukhi during the Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial in 1917 in San Francisco, California; (3) by challenging both enterprises of repression, the final section of this chapter interrogates how the poetry written and published by the *Ghadar Press* relied on Sikh scriptures and histories of Sikh rebellion to articulate different understandings of rebellion and freedom. At its core, this chapter exposes the complex relationship between the Punjabi language and its power in both the colonial space of Punjab and its diaspora.

Punjabi is primarily written in two scripts and these two have come to embody a divide between communities, ideologies, and language that still exists today as a legacy of colonialism in both Eastern and Western Punjab. Gurmukhi is written in Indian Punjab, or East Punjab, and though it has a longer history, its popularity is due to its use in early Sikh literature. Shahmukhi, also known as the Indo-Persian script, is utilized in Pakistan Punjab, or West Punjab, and it is also used to write Urdu.[342] While the British colonial government attempted to suppress the use of Punjabi, the Indo-Persian script was encouraged but only if used to write Urdu. Though the languages themselves are common and shared, the scripts have become identity markers and highly politicized. Today Gurmukhi has come to represent *sikhness*, while Shahmukhi represents *muslimness* across the Punjab border and in its diaspora; however, here I will not be exploring the communal ownership debates over Punjabi. Nor does this chapter explore the linguistics or complexities of Punjabi, instead it examines the ways in which Punjabi-Gurmukhi specifically has been politicized in both Punjab and its diaspora in the colonial period.

The Repression of Punjabi-Gurmukhi in Colonial Punjab

This section locates the ways in which Punjabi-Gurmukhi was targeted by the British colonial government and exposes the specific efforts made to repress its use by Punjab's Sikh population; however, despite these efforts the Punjabi language has a rich history in literature. This chapter then builds off on Farina Mir's *The Social Space of Language: Vernacular Culture in British Colonial Punjab*, which argues that the Punjabi language remained "resilient" through the colonial repression by producing *qisse* (literary entertainment). According to Mir, because Punjabi literary culture operated at considerable remove from colonial institutions, it embodied a creativity and resilience that was its own.[343] I argue that as Punjabi-Gurmukhi was continually utilized despite of British colonial repressive tactics, this points to its nature not only as "resilient," but also as *rebellious*. In this section, I rely heavily on British linguist G.W. Leitner's *History of Indigenous Education in the Panjab: Since Annexation and in 1882*, which offers a close look at educational systems in Punjab during the colonial moment.

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[342] Anne Murphy, "Writing Punjabi Across Borders" *South Asian History and Culture* 9 no. 1 (2018): 68-91.

[343] Farina Mir *The Social Space of Language: Vernacular Culture in British Colonial Punjab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 4.

In 1798, the Sikh empire, also known as the *Sarkar-i-Khalsa*, began under the leadership of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.[344] Prior to its establishment, the Punjab province was broken into thirteen distinct warrior bands, known as *misls*, twelve of which were run by Sikhs and one by a Muslim ruler.[345] The *misls* were spread throughout northern South Asia, including: the Khyber Pass, the current Punjab states in India and Pakistan, and upwards to the Kashmir Valley, Ladakh, and parts of Western Tibet. From the late 1700s to the early 1800s, a leader of one such *misl*, Ranjit Singh, worked to unite all *misls* and ultimately formed what we consider to be the Sikh Empire. While Ranjit Singh himself was formally inaugurated as the *maharaja* of a unified Punjab, he was also considered the leader of the *Khalsa*, or Sikh nation. For the next century and half, the Sikh empire functioned as both the center of the *Khalsa*, while also refraining to impose the *Khalsa* on peoples from non-Sikh faiths.[346] After losing the Second Anglo-Sikh War against the British East India Company in 1849, the Sikh Empire dissolved and was taken over by the British Crown. While the history of the Sikh Empire is vast and of great importance, this chapter focuses on the ways the British empire attempted to repress the use of Punjabi-Gurmukhi in the early history of colonial Punjab.

Following the fall of the Sikh empire, in 1862, celebrated British linguist Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner arrived to a recently created colonial Punjab to study and report on the indigenous educational systems in the region. Leitner became greatly interested in the linguist histories and practices of many communities in Punjab and advocated for the development of universities in the province that would uphold local languages and literary traditions. Over the next few decades, Leitner served as president and principal of the Government College University and Punjab University in Lahore. Though they have been understudied in academia, the texts and reports Leitner left behind provide the most extensive view on educational institutions and practices in pre-colonial and colonial Punjab, Perhaps, most importantly, Leitner made great efforts to advocate for the protection of Punjabi as a central aspect of Punjabi culture and identity. In his text *History of Indigenous Education in the Panjab: Since Annexation and in 1882*, Leitner outlines how indigenous educational systems have steadily suffered under the colonial control and the biases of colonial officials against Punjabi. Leitner begins his text by stating:

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[344] For more in-depth studies on the history of the Sikh Empire refer to: Piara Singh Data *The Sikh Empire: 1708-1849* (New Delhi: National Book Shop, 1986); Henry Steinbach *Sikh Empire, Culture, & Thought* (Ambala: Bhagi, 1972); Sohan Singh Seetal *The Sikh Empire and Maharaja Ranjit Singh* (Ludhiana: Lahore Book Shop, 1982); Sam Grant *Sikh Empire: Banda Singh Bahadur* (New York: Tritech Digital Media, 2018).

[345] Purnima Dhavan "Sikhism in the Eighteenth Century" *The Oxford Handbook of Sikh Studies*, ed. Pashaura Singh and Louis E. Fenech (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 53.

[346] Purnima Dhavan, *When Sparrows Became Hawks: The Making of the Sikh Warrior Tradition 1699-1799*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) & J. S. Grewal *History, Literature, and Identity: Four Centuries of Sikh Tradition* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011).

> I am about to relate—I hope without extenuation or malice— the history of the contact of a form of European with one of Asiatic civilization; how, in spite of the best intentions, the most public-spirited officers, and a generous Government that had the benefit of the traditions of other provinces, the true education of the Panjab was crippled, checked, and is nearly destroyed how opportunities for its healthy revival and development were either neglected or perverted; and how far, beyond the blame attaching to individuals, our system stands convicted of worse than official failure.[347]

For Leitner, he was not simply writing a history of education, but rather shedding light onto the ways in which the British colonial government had led to the purposeful demise of Punjabi schools and the language itself.

Leitner goes on to describe how Government schools, meaning those run by the colonial government, preferred the use of Urdu and English, rather than Punjabi. Despite thousands of schools in pre-colonial Punjab being integrated, a space where Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs studied together, colonial authorities sought to get rid of any teachings they thought to be associated with "religion." Leitner states, "Gurus still continue to teach the sacred *Granth* to thousands of Sikh boys in the character which commits to writing the words which came from the mouth of the founder of their religion, in "Gurmukhi"; but then, as now, the alphabet and the language—Panjabi—which it [the colonial government] renders were considered to barbarous, and were not used by us for purposes of elementary secular instruction."[348] Therefore, as the colonial authorities considered Punjabi, and more specifically Gurmukhi, as being too closely associated with *Sikhi*, that it was "un-teachable" in a secular school setting.[349] In substitution, colonial authorities pushed for schools to teach Urdu and English, which Leitner said many indigenous peoples learned in order to progress in their careers.[350] It is interesting to note that Punjabi-Gurmukhi is classified as "barbarous" in educational reports over and over again (copies of which are provided in Leitner's appendix), signifying both its association with uncivility and its impossibility to conform.

Leitner continues to show in detail how Sikh schools taught language through Sikh scripture and literature. He insists on Gurmukhi's sophistication and perhaps, more significantly its importance to Sikh people. He was concerned that by promoting the use of Urdu and Hindi, rather than Punjabi, the language risked extinction.[351] Leitner's text does not only revealed the colonial government's bias for Urdu and Hindi, but also

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[347] G. W. Leitner, *History of Indigenous Education in the Panjab: Since Annexation and in 1882* (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1882), i.
[348] Ibid, ii.
[349] Farina Mir's *The Social Space of Language* also touches upon how the colonial government associate certain scripts to be related to particular religions. Through colonial efforts to categorize language and people, much of the fluidity between scripts and language has been lost in the social and political space of Punjab.
[350] Ibid, ii.
[351] Leitner, *History of Indigenous Education in the Panjab,* 29.

exposes the deliberate efforts to kill Punjabi-Gurmukhi. Following the political unrest of the 1857 rebellion in Meerut, Colonial officials took it upon themselves to speed up the process of eliminating Gurmukhi in Punjab, by burning *qaidas*, or language lesson books, in Punjab. Leinter argues that in nearly two decades, Punjabi-Gurmukhi classes were down by fifty percent.[352] Leinter's objective behind writing this text is not to simply relay a history of education in Punjab, but rather to write about the epistemological violence inflicted on Punjabi-Gurmukhi speakers and the tremendous loss Punjab has suffered. He states:

> My object in referring to past and present Sikh authors is merely to show that the Gurmukhi language and literature is not the contemptible and barbarous idiom which Educational reports and the interested statements of Hindu and Muhammadan underlings make it out to be, but that it is still living with a glorious tradition, and with the possibility of development to a still more glorious future, if it be cultivated and encouraged as the national language of the Panjab…[353]

I argue that in order to further understand the history of Punjab and its people during the colonial period, we must recognize the power of language. As Leinter's text depicts, colonial powers have manipulated the use of language to take and re-distribute power. As Leitner had predicted in the following decades since the publication of his text in 1882, revivalist movements had begun to emerge and worked to re-build the Sikh identity through language. In particular, the Singh Sabha movement garnered the most political support and thus greatly influenced Punjabi literature in early 20th century.

Singh Sabha leaders, driven by the objective to establish a distinct Sikh political-social-religious identity, published immensely in the late 1800s to early 1900s. By 1911, the Khalsa Tract Society, run by Singh Sabha organizers, published over one million copies of Gurmukhi-Punjabi and Sikh-centeric texts. Other literary organizations that had similar motivations included: the Sikh Book Club, the Panch Khalsa Agency, and the Sikh Handbill Society.[354] Though today Punjabi-Gurmukhi is popularly considered to be associated with the Sikh population, the early efforts to make these connections can be attributed to the Singh Sabha movement.[355] While attempting to solidify and curate a unique Sikh identity that would stand up against the Muslim, Hindu, and Christian communities, the movement attempted to establish Punjabi-Gurmukhi as a pillar of Sikh identity. We can see this in the writings of Punjabi Sikh poets such as Bhai Vir Singh, whose works were not only in Punjabi-Gurmukhi, but more significantly on Sikh themes. Scholars such as Harinder Singh, and most recently Arti Minocha, have explored how

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[352] Ibid.
[353] Ibid, 39.
[354] Ibid, 21.
[355] For more information on the history of the Singh Sabha movement refer to Harjot Oberoi's *The Construction of Religious Boundaries.*

Bhai Vir Singh's writings in Gurmukhi-Punjabi helped consolidate a distinct Sikh and *Khalsa* identity.[356]

Despite colonial efforts to repress the use of Punjabi, Punjabi literature grew to be quite popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, so much so that questions arose on what should and should not be considered "Punjabi literature." Scholarship on Punjabi literary culture extends back to the 1930s, with the work of Mohan Singh Uberoi, whose critical text *A History of Panjabi Literature, 1100-1932*, argued that Sikh scriptures should be considered a part of Punjabi literature.[357] With the Singh Sabha's influence on the rise, other historians echoed Uberoi's argument that Sikh literature and Punjabi literature should be categorized as one. In the 1980s, Christopher Shackle's work has argued that Punjabi literature should be defined linguistically, and because Sikh scriptures are diverse in language, it can not necessarily count as "Old Punjabi."[358] More recently, Farina Mir's *The Social Space of Language: Vernacular Culture in British Colonial Punjab*, explores the popularity of the Punjabi *qissa*, or literary entertainment, in colonial Punjab in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Her work follows the trajectory of Urdu becoming the official patronized language of Punjab and the subsequent repression of Punjabi.[359] However, by showcasing the popularity of the Punjabi *qissa* during this period, Mir highlights the "resilient" history of Punjabi during the colonial period. Through this critical insight into the *qissa*, we further understand what the production and reception of Punjabi literature was like during the colonial moment. This chapter does not intend to dive into the debates of what constitutes Punjabi literature, but rather extends the work of these scholars by arguing that literature published by the *Ghadar Press* was also distinctly Punjabi, and Sikh, literature. Though I do not find these categories to be interchangeable, I do find them deeply intertwined. More so, I argue that not only was the Punjabi literature produced by Ghadar resilient, but also *rebellious*. In the following section, I expose how the British colonial government and US imperial government criminalized the use of Punjabi-Gurmukhi during the Lahore Conspiracy Trial of 1915 and the Hindu-German Conspiracy Trials in 1917-18 in San Francisco, California against Ghadar Party members.

Ghadar Literature on Trial

In 1914, as Ghadarites left the shores of the American West for India determined to fight the British colonial presence in their homeland, they were unaware that their

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[356] Arti Minocha "Bhai Vir Singh and the Public Sphere in Colonial Punjab," *Sikh Formations* (Spring 2020), 1-14 & Anshu Malhotra and Anne Murphy, "Bhai Vir Singh (1872-1957): Rethinking Literary Modernity in Colonial Punjab" *Sikh Formations* (2020) 16.2: 1-13.

[357] Mohan Singh Uberoi, *A History of Panjabi Literature, 1100-1932* (Jalandhar: Bharat Prakashan, 1971/1933), 20-28.

[358] Christopher Shackle, "Some Observations of the Evolution of Modern Standard Punjabi," *Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Joseph O'Connell et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 105.

[359] Mir, *The Social Space of Language*.

plans had been leaked and British officers waited to arrest them in Karachi. As the ship carrying the Ghadar members landed without the weaponry they were promised by the German government, Ghadarites were unarmed and immediately detained. All were interviewed to see if they had held any "Ghadar views" and those who seemed too radical were tried at the Lahore Conspiracy Trial in 1915.[360] Under the provisions of the Defense of India Act, from 1914 to 1915, eighty-one men were arrested and tried within the First Lahore Conspiracy Trial of 1915 in Lahore, British India.[361] The Defense Against India Act, 1915 was issued to challenge the rise in anti-British sentiment in India and was first applied to the Lahore Conspiracy Trial of 1915.[362] While these eighty-one men were from a variety of castes, religious backgrounds, and ages, most were listed as Sikh-Jat men in their mid 20s.[363] Men who were captured also came from all different regions in the Punjab province: thirty-three men were from the Mahja region of Punjab; twenty-eight were from Malwa; and ten were from the Doaba region.[364] All men were arrested for their alleged affiliation with the Ghadar Party and the charges included, but were not limited to: dacoity in British territory; action against British India; offences committed inside and outside British India "in pursuance of conspiracy."[365] The trial opened on April 26th, 1915 and the judgement was delivered on September 13, 1915.

Under the Defense of India Act, guilt was assumed unless the defense could successfully prove the innocence of the accused, placing the onus on the defense to provide substantial evidence to acquit those charged. For this trial, the Crown was represented by Government Advocate Mr. C. Bevan Petman and Pleader, Mr. Taj-ud-Din Kureshi. The accused were represented by Mr. Rauf Ali, Mr. Ragunath Sahai, Mr. Hakumat Rai, and Mr. Bakhshi Gokal Chand.[366] While many of the accused had no counsel to represent them, accused Jagat Ram argued his own case before the Court and both Vishnu Ganesh Pingle and Kartar Singh Sarabha refused to argue for themselves or allow representation.[367] Mr. Petman took the initial twenty days of the trial to open the

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[360] Sohi. *Echoes of Mutiny*.

[361] 18 men had absconded, or avoided arrested, at the start of the trial. Somewhere caught as the trial proceeded and later included.

[362] In 1915, enacted by the Governor-General of India, The Defense of India Act, 1915 was an emergency criminal law used to counter the rise of Indian revolutionary activity during and after World War I. It allowed for: speedy trials against those accused of sedition, preventative detention, internment without trial, and restriction of writing, speech, and of movement. The Lahore Conspiracy Trial of 1915 was the first case which fell under the Defense of India Act. In the contemporary context, the Indian Constitution retains many aspects of the Defense of India Act and these extreme measures have been used during the 1971 Indo-Pak War and during the Punjab Insurgency period from 1984-1995.

[363] Ages of those on trial ranged from 16-62.

[364] Waraich and Singh. *Ghadar Movement,* 3.

[365] Specifically, the accused were charged under, Sections 121, 123, 396, the Explosives Act, and others. Waraich and Singh. *Ghadar Movement,* 5.

[366] Waraich and Singh. *Ghadar Movement,* 7.

[367] Ibid., 9

case and present evidence to the court, during which the defense was asked to present nearly fifty witnesses from abroad in order to defend themselves, knowing that it was nearly impossible to do so.

The prosecution presented: proofs and argued for the relevancy of conspiracy; addressed the liability of the dacoits under Section 396 of the Indian Penal Code; presented confessions and statements issued by the accused to the police; presented the spy's evidence; the testimonies of accomplices; and documents from the San Francisco *Ghadar Press* found with the accused, and their support in "waging war" against the Crown. After the presentation of evidence from the prosecution, the defense arguments went on for about a fortnight. Defense attorney Ragunath Sahai took the lead in making many of the key arguments. Sahai argued that much of the evidence and argument presented by the prosecution was from activity in the United States, making the evidence not relevant to the trial in British India. Further, citing *Halsbury's Laws of England*, Sahai argued that after their arrest, the accused person is not responsible for any activity that continues with the conspiracy—it is beyond his control and his responsibility.[368] Also, he argued that under Section 25 of the Indian Penal Code, no confession made to a police officer can be used against the accused for any offense.[369] While Sahai's arguments were heard by the Counsel, they were all dismissed.

The most critical point of contention between the defense and the prosecution during the trial was the definition of "waging war" under Section 121 of the Indian Penal Code. While the defense argued that since most of the evidence presented by the prosecution was from activity in the United States and thus could be used to convict those now in British India. The prosecution argued that Section 121 clearly held all thoughts and actions of conspiracy against the Crown accountable, regardless of location or material evidence of that conspiracy. The question then became how to prove an intent to "wage war," especially when weapons are not found on the accused? How does the prosecution prove intent? The prosecution's evidence included Ghadar Party meeting notes from: Berkeley, Stockton, Sacramento, San Francisco, Astoria, Alesandro, Fresno, Upland, Oxnard, Wina, Aberdeen, Seattle, Portland, Elton, and Jersey.[370] However, *most importantly*, verses from *Ghadar* poems were read and translated for the Court, arguing that they contained hatred for the British Government and violent plans to kill all British and "whites" in India.[371] It is interesting to note here that it's not the individuals that are then on trial in this moment, but rather it was the *literature*. The literature, and specifically Punjabi literature, becomes an even more vital aspect in determining the fate of Ghadarites in the Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial in the US. All evidence presented by the prosecution was enough to prove the guilt of all but six accused on trial. On September 13, 1915, of the 81 charged: five absconded, six were discharged/acquitted, thirty-three received the death penalty, and thirty-seven received transportation from two

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[368] Ibid., 22.

[369] Ibid., 24. The Court later addressed this claim by arguing that while confessions are not legal evidence, details provided on a crime during the confession are legal evidence.

[370] Ibid., 112-115.

[371] Irvine, A. A., Thomas Peter Ellis, Sheo Narain. *Ghadr Party's Lahore Conspiracy Case: 1915 Judgement*. Meerut: Archana Publications, 2006. 74-99.

years to life imprisonment. All property and assets were seized for those granted the death penalty or life-imprisonment.

Though one can argue that the case and court proceedings were already biased against those on trial, it is critical to note that the public reading of the Punjabi *Ghadar* poems caused outrage, fear, and alarm amongst British colonial officials in the room. The issue was not necessarily that these men carried anti-British sentiment, but rather the act of writing out that sentiment in a language that had been categorized as "barbarous" and "savage" for decades prior that was threatening. We see a similar reaction to the Ghadar literature published in Punjabi occur during the Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial in 1917 in the US context.

The consequences of this early interpretation and implementation of Section 121 had tremendous effects both in the United States and Punjab. As anticolonial sentiment was rising amongst the Indian emigrants in the United States, the Indian Colonial Government urged the US government to take action against the editors of anticolonial newsletters, like Taraknath Das of *Free Hindustan*. Das began *Free Hindustan*, an English-language journal, in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada in 1907—the journal was one of the first journals in North America to advocate for the social, political, and religious freedom of India from the British. The journal had widespread influence in the United States, especially in Seattle amongst Indian railway and mill workers. In 1910, sensing the threat of anticolonial sentiment and organizing in the US, British official Sir H.E. Charles E. Hughes, reached out to District Attorney of New York, Charles S. Whitman and requested that strict measures be taken against Indian Revolutionaries who both publish and subscribe to *Free Hindustan.*

In a detailed response from D.A. Whitman, he states, "After careful examination of the copy of *Free Hindustan* hereto annexed, I am of the opinion, that the publishers are not guilty of any violation of the penal law of the State of New York."[372] Whitman further states that since the journal is solely "devoted to the cause of freeing India from British Rule," it is not breaking any US or state laws. The only section of the Penal Law of New York that could be considered was 160 or 161 under the head of Anarchy. Whitman remarks that while "criminal anarchy" means the substitution of a state of anarchy (no government), the section does not include the advocacy for rebellion or revolution—thus, "anarchy" cannot be used to describe these Indian revolutionaries.[373] While later in 1914, we see that Har Dayal is charged with anarchy and is forced to flee the United States, up until 1914, the US did not see a legal means to charge or deport Indians for their revolutionary ideas.

However, all this changes on April 7, 1917, one day after the United States enters World War I. Assistant Attorney-General Charles Warren orders that Ram Chandra and twelve other Indians be arrested for violating the nation's Neutrality Laws and for conspiring to organize a military expedition against a country within which the United States had been at peace.[374] The Ghadar headquarters in San Francisco were raided by US authorities and they managed to collect a running list of members of the Ghadar Party

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[372] Waraich and Singh, *Ghadar Movement,* 318-320

[373] Ibid.

[374] Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny*, 184.

from across the world. Documents were also collected which related the Ghadar Party and the Berlin India Committee's collaboration with the German counsels to overthrow the British Raj. According to an article published by the *San Francisco Examiner* on November 20, 1917, "Thousands of seized letters and documents will be presented as evidence by United States Attorney John W. Preston…"[375] Not only did the United States use material that they had collected during their surveillance of Ghadar activity in the US, they also relied quite heavily on the evidence used against Ghadarites in the First Lahore Conspiracy Trial of 1915, particular the issues of Punjabi poetry that had been presented in the Lahore court. Therefore, as the British Colonial Government had charged Ghadar members for activity outside of British territory, the United States government had colluded with the British Government to utilize the same evidence to frame Ghadar members once again.[376] Here, I would like to focus on how the US government responded to the Punjabi literature on trial. The Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial ran lasted from November 20, 1917 to April 24, 1918 and was described by media sources at the time as "the most important conspiracy trial to be held in this country since the war began…"[377]

After the Ghadar Press had been raided and materials had been collected, the prosecution had difficulty in not only translating the Punjabi materials, but also in figuring out who had written them. The British colonial officials had sent the prosecution some translations of materials they had used in their own case, however this did not prove which Ghadarite on trial had written which documents. Seemingly stumped by what to do with the arguably the most critical evidence on trial, the prosecution looked into a then relatively new field of study, criminology, and hired Edward Oscar Heinrich, also known as "America's Sherlock Holmes."[378] Heinrich is considered to be not only the "Father of Criminology" but also takes credit for our modern usage of forensic sciences in solving criminal cases.

Edward Oscar Heinrich began his career as a criminologist and consultant in 1910 when he opened the nation's first private crime lab in Tacoma, Washington.[379] Heinrich helped solve over two thousand cases in his more than forty-year career and was known to work between thirty to forty cases a month. While he had a slow start to his early CSI career, after solving critical cases in the late 1910s, Heinrich was considered a legend among local police and federal investigators in the US. In particular, he pioneered numerous forensics methods that are still in practice today, including blood splatter-analysis, ballistics, and latent fingerprint retrieval. Most importantly, Heinrich was the leading expert in handwriting analysis in the US at the time and was thus sought out by

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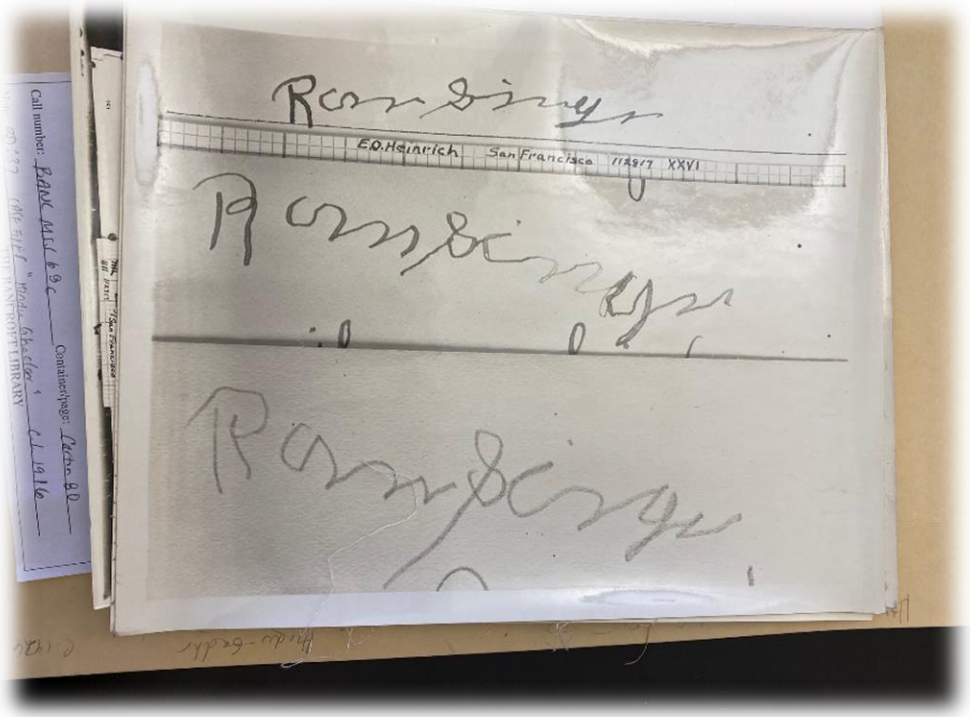
[375] "Hindu Plot Cases Go on Trial To-Day" *The San Francisco Examiner,* November 20, 1917.
[376] Ibid.
[377] "Conspiracy Trial Opened Today" *The Winfield Daily Free Press* (Winfield, Kansas) Nov 20, 1917.
[378] Heinrich (Edward Oscar) Papers, BANC MSS 68/34 c, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, California.
[379] Kate Winkler Dawson. *American Sherlock: Murder, Forensics, and the Birth of American CSI*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2020.

the prosecution team in the Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial to match the handwriting of those accused with the documents and letters that were presented as evidence in the case.

In 2019, the UC Berkeley's Bancroft Library officially opened access to the "Edward Oscar Heinrich Papers" collection, which holds Heinrich's diaries, notes, evidence, and much more from his career. This collection also includes the notes from his analysis of Ghadar members handwriting and provides insight into his process.



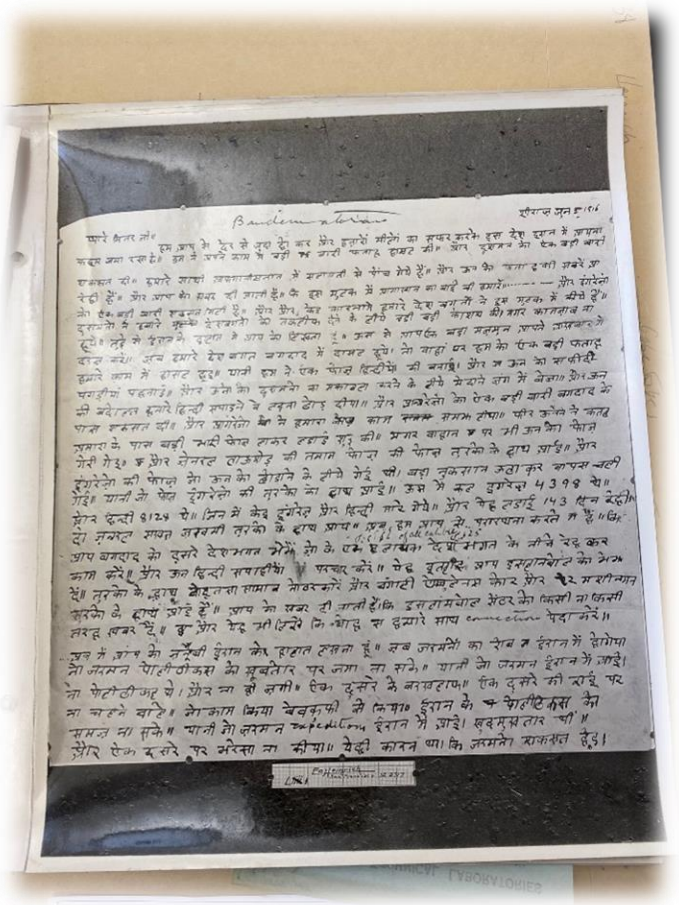


Image 3: Images from "Edward Oscar Heinrich Papers" Collection at the Bancroft Library. In the first image Heinrich is assessing the signature of Ghadar member Ram Singh and the second image is of a letter written in Punjabi-Gurmukhi.[380]

In her book A*merican Sherlock: Murder, Forensics, and the Birth of American CSI*, Kate Winkler Dawson follows the life and legacy of Edward Oscar Heinrich. While most of the book centers around Heinrichs cases from 1921 to 1933, she writes briefly about his work on the Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial as well. Dawson documents how throughout 1916 (even before the Ghadarites were arrested or put on trial), Heinrich was called upon to analyze and match the handwriting from pieces in the Ghadar Headquarters to those accused. Heinrich is said to have spent months with tutors, attempting to learn the "three distinct Hindu dialects."[381] However, Heinrich did not merely hope to translate the writings and codes literally, instead he meant to learn the nuances of the languages and prove authorship by identifying patterns of word choice and

[380] "Edward Oscar Heinrich Papers" Collection Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, BANC MSS 68c, carton 80, Case Files: 'Hindu-Ghadar' C.L. 1916
[381] Dawson, *American Sherlock,* 40.

writing styling—something he called "profiling."[382] Over the course of a year, Heinrich worked closely with US government officials and federal officers and Scotland Yard to analyze handwriting and ink and profile alleged conspirators. By April 1918, the US government had closed the case and Heinrich was granted the rank of captain in the U.S. Engineers' Reserves Corps for his service on the case.[383] Following his success in the Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial, Heinrich gained both notoriety and the trust of state and federal institutions. He settled in Berkeley, California and both worked and taught the first course on Criminology at the University of California, Berkeley.

On April 24, 1918, all but one member on trial during the Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial was convicted and sentenced to imprisonment in US territory, followed by deportation to British India, where members were once again charged, put on trial, and convicted for under Section 121.[384] In direct consequence to the verdict made during the trial, in 1917 and 1918, Congress passed the Espionage and Sedition Act, as well as the Immigration Acts of 1917 and 1918.[385] While the Espionage and Sedition Acts allowed the federal authorities to punish any appearance of disloyalty to the US government, the Immigration Acts effectively excluded Indian immigration as they came from the now "Barred Zone." The Immigration Act of 1917, also known as the Asiatic Barred Zone Act, issued literacy tests on immigrants, and barred immigration from the Asia and Pacific Zone. The Immigration Act of 1918 also sanctioned guilt by association and lifted the statute of limitations for deportation for post-entry criminal conduct in immigration proceedings. This act both excluded and expelled immigrants who were deemed anarchist by practice or association.[386]

In both the Lahore Conspiracy Trial and the Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial, Punjabi literature served as the primary evidence of sedition and conspiracy, resulting in the death and incarceration of dozens of individuals across the British and US empire. While the early reports by G.W. Leinter reveal the British colonial government's contentious relationship with Punjabi, the San Francisco trial also places the Punjabi language in a realm of criminality. Seemingly providing the foundation and attention needed for the early development of the field of forensics, Punjabi becomes a marker of "unlawfulness." A re-reading of these two cases allows insight into how language was used by two empires to both exert state control and define criminality. In contrast, the following section examines the poetry published by the *Ghadar Press* and how the writers utilized Punjabi-Gurmukhi to rebel.

Onto-Epistemological Examinations of Ghadari Poetry

The Ghadar Press was established in 1913 after the Ghadar headquarters had moved to San Francisco. Har Dayal was initially appointed as editor of the Press and later this position was taken up by Ram Chandra. The Press aimed to publish literature (in

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[382] Ibid.
[383] Ibid.
[384] Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party.*
[385] Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny.*
[386] Ibid.

Urdu-Shahmukhi, Punjabi-Gurmukhi, and Hindi-Sanskrit) which: (1) defined the movement's motivations and goals, (2) represented a collective identity to Ghadar members and encouraged membership, (3) provided updates on the ongoings of anti-colonial organizing in India and its diaspora, as well as relay the anti-imperialist efforts of those from other communities and countries including the Irish, Mexican, Russian, and Egyptian. While these newsletters were published quite frequently, the Press also occasionally published special issues dedicated to Ghadar poetry. These literary pamphlets were titled *Ghadar di Gunj*, or Echoes of Mutiny, and other poems were also occasionally published in the general editions of the *Hindustan Ghadar* as well. While Dayal and Chandra were the primary editors of the Ghadar Press, much of the poetry was written through anonymous submissions by members, many of whom were laborers in California. In this section, I focus on the poetry written by such laborers in the Punjabi-Gurmukhi language and script. I argue that these poems reveal a deep relationship between the Ghadar Party members and the Sikh tradition. By asking onto-epistemologically rooted questions such as "what is Sikh?" and "what does it mean to be Sikh?" in the context of Ghadar poetry, we can see how Ghadar members wrote through Sikh frameworks. Not only do these poems directly reference Sikh history, but they also create new possibilities in a Sikh lifeworld.[387]

Here, I build upon the work of Sikh Studies scholar Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair. In his article "Lived Abstractions: 'Sikh Philosophy' as a Practice of Everyday Life," Mandair argues that scholarship must turn to the use of "Sikh philosophy" as a valid mode of inquiry because it allows for the centrality of agency in the lived aspect of Sikh life.[388] Furthermore, Mandair contends that Sikh reasoning and thought inherently "continues to resist the religio-secular distinction," thus our approach to understand Sikh lived realities should account for the subjectivities of Sikh peoples.[389] However, this leads to the question of what then makes something (an action, thought, figure, moment, etc…) "Sikh?" Mandair claims:

> In order to count their activity as Sikh, at some minimal level one must have some interpretive ability to explain why one does what one does, and this interpretative ability must involve some minimal access to Sikh concepts, categories, etc. and the ability to operationalize them in a wider world. But although the average Sikh manages to retain this core interpretative ability at some minimal level, it is also the case that his or her ability to actually enunciate Sikh concepts is limited to a private sphere of existence.[390]

Thus, "what is Sikh" is defined through everyday enunciations of Sikh concepts. These enunciations are always in flux changing with each historical moment and in response to

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[387] Here, I am referring to Mandair's understanding the "Sikh lifeworld" as rooted both within the Sikh tradition and also the current socio-political moment.
[388] Mandair, "Lived Abstractions," 177.
[389] Ibid.
[390] Ibid, 186.

the current world they inhabit. Taking Mandair's approach of "Sikh philosophy" in scholarship has the potential to reveal more about how Sikh(i) is practiced in the constant "making and remaking" and "selfing and deselfing" of Sikh concepts.[391] I argue that this approach should be applied to the literature published by the Ghadar Press, particularly the poetry. Doing so not only bypasses the trappings of the secular/non-secular divide, but also reveals how the Sikh members of the Ghadar Party practiced and embodied *Sikhi* in their struggle for freedom.

I was first introduced to the physical copies of the literature published by the Ghadar Press as a child in the Imperial Valley. Colored light-brown with age, the documents were pamphlets often adorned with an image on the cover of a woman centered in an outline of a British India map and this was the only image I could read at the time. Some of the copies of issues were left sealed and needed to be torn apart by a blade to access the pages within. There was always a sense of mystery surrounding the documents and perhaps my own inability to read Punjabi in the early years of my life made the documents seem even more obscure. Revisiting the Ghadar literature for my graduate research caused a sort of literary awakening that I had not yet experienced before. I spent most of my undergraduate education as an English major studying literary works in the English language mostly written by white, western writers. I had only encountered Punjabi-Gurmukhi in the prayer books my mother had me practice on. So, these Ghadari texts offered a look into the past, as well as defining my future relationship to the Punjabi language. In this section, I have attempted to offer my own translations to the poetry written by the Ghadar Party in issues of the *Ghadar di Gunj* and the *Hindustan Ghadar*, both published by the Ghadar Press. These materials are housed in archives across the world, including the Desh Bhagat Yugantar Hall in Jalandhar, Punjab, the Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley, and my own personal archive. While doing this research, I have also relied on Kesar Singh's *Ghadar Lehar Di Kavita,* an anthology that has brought together many of the poems published by the Ghadar Press into one text.[392] While I have done the translations myself, I often turned to my mother to have her recite the poetry for me. Her pronunciations, theatrics, and often unsolicited commentary solidified for me the idea that these poems were meant to be read aloud. My mother's oral recitation of the literature allowed me to experience how Ghadarites may have heard the call of revolution long ago.

The poetry published by the Ghadar Press not only embodies Sikh ideas and knowledges, but is also written in both form and style that are uniquely tied to Sikh scriptures. The relevance of Sikh influence on Ghadari literature can thus be found in its choice of language, form, and style. Because the poetry published by the Press was from a variety of authors who remain largely anonymous to this day, there are distinctions between each poem (particularly, in voice). However, overall, the poetry follows the elements present in Sikh and Punjabi literature. First, like Sikh scriptures, many of poems are written in the Gurmukhi script. Earlier in this chapter, I discussed how the Gurmukhi script is unique to Sikh scripture and literature. As the British colonial government attempted to repress the usage of Gurmukhi in the Punjab context, the Singh Sabha

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[391] Ibid, 185.

[392] Kesar Singh, *Ghadar Lehar di Kavita* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1995).

Movement responded by pushing the Sikh community to publish more using the Gurmukhi script—arguing the Gurmukhi and *Sikhi* are tied to one another. Thus, the usage of Gurmukhi-Punjabi in Ghadar's literature constitutes a political act. While the British officials limited Gurmukhi publications in Punjab, in the diasporic space of the American West it was flourishing. With hundreds of pamphlets printed each week on a Gurmukhi-Punjabi printing press, the usage of the script and language were well beyond the control of the British Raj.

Image 4: *Original Printing Press from the Ghadar Office in San Francisco. Now currently housed in the Stockton Gurdwara, Stockton, CA.*

Ghadari poetry also took influence from Sikh scriptures in its form and style. Some of the poems offer direct references to Sikh scripture by using *dohra* (a form of couplets found in Sikh scriptures) in the beginning and end of poems. In Sikh scripture, the *dohra* serves to cause a break and delineate that a poem is both ending and beginning. The *dohra* is also self-standing as it can be read as poem uniquely on its own and not merely a transition. One example of the usage of *dohra* is present in an issue of the *Ghadar di Gunj* is titled "Bitter Truth":

> Raised in slavery, you know nothing outside of it
> Ghadarites cut through oceans, and you still drown half-way
> -Bitter truth[393]

[393] "Bitter Truth" anonymous *Ghadar di Gunj*. Deol Family Archive, Selma, California, United States.

While the *dohra* breaks two poems, it also stands on its own with a beginning, middle, and end and thus can be recited as a standalone poem. Thus, we can see how the Ghadari poets looked to Sikh scriptures as influences on their own poetry. Given that Sikh scriptures were the type of poetry that laborers were most familiar with the connections between religious literature and their poetry should be expected.

Another aspect from Sikh religious literary traditions that influenced Ghadar poetry is the practice of oral recitation. Sikh scriptures, including the Adi Granth and Dhasam Granth were meant to read aloud, either alone or in community. The poetry is written in a way that makes space for taking a breath. For example, the *Guru Granth Sahib* is divided into different *ragas* or rhythms. Each *raga* then defines the sound, mood, even the points of breathing as the section is recited. Oral recitation in Punjabi literary and poetic tradition is quite prominent in other forms as well, such as in the *dhadi* tradition, which refers to a group of ballad singers who play an hourglass shaped instrument called the *dhadd. Dhadi* poetry has a long history that has early references in the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Usually, *dhadi jathas* (or groups) travel from village to village telling heroic tales from Sikh history. I argue in the case of Ghadari poetry we can see direct influences from the *dhadi* tradition.

In their article "Cultural, Linguistic And Political Translations Dhadi 'urban' music" Virinder S. Kalra and Michael Nijhawan depict how *dhadi's* diasporic history can be traced to the early 1900s in the American West. Amongst the earliest Sikh immigrants to the Canadian west coast was a four-person *dhadi jatha* (pictured below) that participated within the rising anti-colonist activities in Canada.[394] This then places poetic traditions, such as *dhadi*, within the center of political activity, rather than at the outskirts as an obscure, artistic expression.

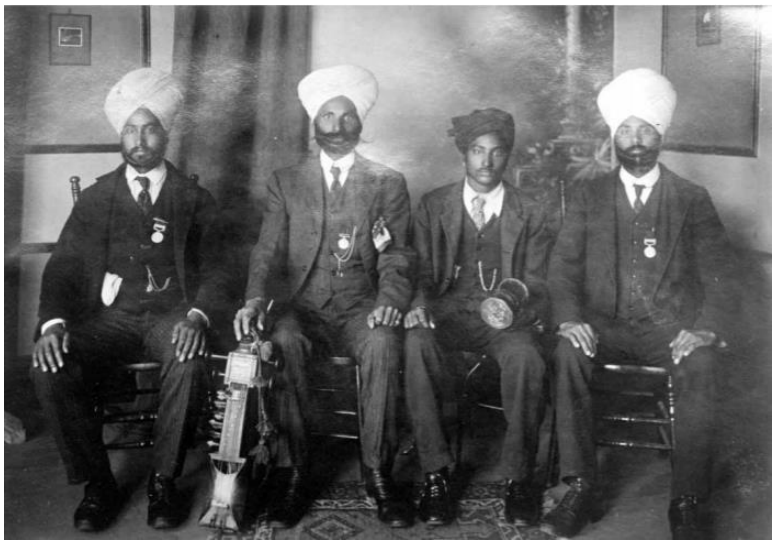

Image 5: *Dhadi Musicians in Vancouver, Canada c. 1905*[395]

[394] Virinder S. Kalra & Michael Nijhawan "Cultural, Linguistic and Political Translations," *Sikh Formations* 3, no. 1 (2007) 67-80.
[395] Ibid, 74.

Like *dhadi,* Ghadari poetry was also meant to be performed. As Sohan Singh Josh mentions in his history of Ghadar, the poems were even read aloud on the ship *Annie Larson* on the way to fight against the British.[396] While Har Dayal claimed that the Ghadar Press should publish poetry "as propaganda for 'our peasants'"[397] the poetry reveals a deep history of Sikh tradition and knowledges. Here, we can see how in language, form, and style Ghadar poetry took influence from Sikh scriptures and literary traditions.

Beyond the language, form, and style of Ghadari poetry, we can also see the influences of Sikh knowledges in the content of the poetry itself. To interrogate the presence of Sikh influences in Ghadari literature it is important to center Sikh frameworks in points of inquiry. As the Ghadar Press began printing newsletters more frequently and reached wider audiences, the question arose "who is the mutineer?" Who is Ghadar supposed to appeal to and why should one participate? Kartar Singh Sarabha, a nineteen-year-old chemistry student at UC Berkeley and part-time farm laborer began contributing poetry to the Ghadar Press in attempts to connect with other Sikh laborers. Sarabha translated the works of other contributors into Punjabi-Gurmukhi and submitted his own pieces. In one issue of the *Ghadar Gunj*, Sarabha contributed a poem entitled "Who We Are." This poem became immensely popular and served as a sort of anthem for the movement because it offered a description of who a Ghadar mutineer was and what they represented:

> If anyone asks who we are
> Tell him our name is rebel
> Our duty is to end the tyranny
> Our profession is to launch revolution
> That is our namaz, this is our sandhya
> Our puja, our worship,
> This is our religion, our work
> This is our only Khuda, our only Rama.[398]

"Who We Are" by Sarabha to this day remains the most popularly recited poem from Ghadri literature and exemplifies the complicated relationship between religion and Punjabi anticolonialism. Sarabha outlines the basic principles of the party by highlighting that there is no hierarchy given to any belief system in the group, they all worship "freedom," and their sole identity should be based on rebellion. However, a discussion of

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[396] Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party*.
[397] Darshan Singh Tatla, "A Sikh Manifesto? A Reading of Ghadar Poetry," *Panjab Past and Present* 44, no. 1 (2013): 15.
[398] Translation done by Khushwant Singh and Satindra Singh. Singh and Singh, *Ghadar,* 28. This poem is also housed in the Desh Bhagat Yugantar Hall in Jalandhar, Punjab, India.

the religious is not excluded here either; despite coming from different communities these individuals are united under a common cause. As a collective, they do not adhere to one specific religious faith, instead they adhere to freedom. The revelations of Sikh knowledges can be seen quite evidently within the poetry. This specific poem speaks back to the famous narrative of the founder of the Sikh tradition, Guru Nanak as a young man was seen drowning in a river near his village. He is said to have emerged out of the water three days later and uttered the words, "There is no Hindu. There is no Muslim."[399] For Nanak, there is only the Divine. Christopher Shackle and Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair define the political nature of this moment in Sikh narratives by stating, "Although nowhere recorded in the scriptures, this statement not only gave a glimpse of the political implications of Nanak's religious experience vis-à-vis the idea of a religiosity beyond social and cultural boundaries, but also indicated the futility of a way of thinking based on the construction of the 'other' in opposition to the 'self.' Exemplified in his own day by the tendency to define oneself as 'Hindu' in opposition to 'Muslim' and vice versa, the process of 'othering' was fundamentally opposed to Nanak's understanding of Oneness."[400] Then, in an attempt to define who the "Ghadarite" or "mutineer" is, the poem does not rely on Western understandings of the revolutionary as "anarchist," "Marxist," or "socialist." Instead Ghadar's mutineer is beyond divide. Here, I argue that Sarabha's mutineer is formed within a Sikh lifeworld and through a Sikh framework of Oneness, rather than through western secular logics.

Similarly, we see references to Sikh figures as "mutineers" in other Ghadar poems as well. An example of this is present in a poem title "A Plea to the Panth" published in January, 1914 in the *Hindustan Ghadar*

> If Subeg Singh was here today,
> He would have punished those deserving,
> If Deep Singh, the warrior, was here today,
> He would have surely grabbed the sword and shield [401]

In this poem, the author references Baba Deep Singh, a prominent heroic figure in Sikh history who is considered to have fought alongside Guru Gobind Singh in battles against the Mughal armies.[402] Not only was Deep Singh considered to be a strong warrior, but he was also an early Sikh scholar. It is said that Baba Deep Singh learned Gurmukhi from Bhai Mani Singh and later helped Mani Singh reproduce copies of the Sikh scriptures. Thus reference to Deep Singh in this poem by anonymous Ghadar writer serves to create a bridge between the Sikh past and the potentiality of the Sikh lifeworld in the future. The purpose extends beyond urging Sikh youth to become another Baba Deep Singh, but

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[399] Shackle, Christopher, and Mandair, Arvind, *Teachings of the Sikh Gurus : Selections from the Sikh Scriptures* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), xiv.
[400] Ibid.
[401] "A Plea to the Panth," *Hindustan Ghadar*, January 1914. Deol Family Archive, Selma, California and BANC MSS 2002/78cz, SANA, Box 7, Folder 20 (1913-1917), Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
[402] Ibid.

rather it politicizes the Sikh past and its applicability in the present. As Mandair discussed "Sikh concepts" as constantly in motion, we see this here through the looking at the Sikh mutineer as a historical and political subject in the colonial context.

While Ghadari poetry made strides in placing Sikh frameworks in the political realm, it also brought to the surface new questions regarding the role of knowledge itself in political activity. How does one think through political moments in a Sikh way? Here, we see the poetry continuously relying on Sikh knowledges through: *Gurmat* and *Gurbani. Gurbani* refers to various compositions by Sikh Gurus and other prominent figures in Sikh history, whereas *Gurmat* refers to focusing the mind to the teachings of the Gurus, this includes taking guidance from Sikh texts, ideas, and institutions into your everyday life. The emphasis on "taking guidance" from Sikh Gurus is seen present in some Ghadar poems. For example, in a poem published in the *Hindustan Ghadar* titled "Bainthi: Suno Ghadar Premiyo" we see references to the importance of practicing *Gurmat*:

> Listen members of the Khalsa named after lions,
> Do not be disheartened from the barks of hyenas,
> The men of the true Guru never forget their history,
> And the purpose for which the Panth was established…
> Remember the teachings of our Guru,
> Do not let yourself be fooled once your belly is full. [403]

"Bainthi" then urges the reader to take heed from the teachings of Sikh scriptures and implement them into their current anticolonial struggles. What is critical here is the process of defining which political frameworks to adopt in the Ghadar movement. While literature published by the Ghadar Press mentions the anti-imperialist struggles in nations such as Mexico, Ireland, Egypt, and Russia, it also advocates that Sikh peoples turn inward to their community and adopt political practices of rebellion from Sikh scripture and Sikh history. Similarly, later in the poem the author states:

> We do not need a master's diploma,
> You cannot heal an open wound with degrees,
> We do not need those who are disloyal to their community[404]

These lines respond to the claims, like those presented by Har Dayal at the early Ghadar meetings, that one should first seek western education, then return to India to fight.[405] Instead, "Bainthi" argues that the political education needed to fight colonialism is already present within the Sikh community. In answering the epistemological question of what is knowledge? This poem responds with *Sikhi.*

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[403] "Bainthi: Suno Ghadar Premiyo" *Hindustan Ghadar,* February 16, 1916, Deol Family Archive, Selma, California.
[404] Ibid.
[405] Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party,* 158.

What then is the role of faith within Ghadar literature? I argue that poetry published by the Ghadar Press adopted Sikh views on ego and ego-loss in their literature. In an untitled poem published within the *Hindustan Ghadar*, an anonymous poet writes:

> Egocentrism is an illness,
> Once in it you can not think beyond your enjoyment…
> People rot in their own selfishness,
> They have no *Granth* nor a *Quran*,
> We now have freedom as our aim[406]

In this poem, the author connects self-centered behavior as an illness that not only affects the mind, but also has the potential of destroying the movement. The author explains that those that are "faithless" or do not follow religious teachings, fall into individualism. A similar theme is found within Sikh scripture, specifically the *Shalok Sahaskriti*:

> Ego is given man as his disease,
> The rutting elephant is sick with lust,
> The illness in its vision burns the moth,
> Its fevered sense of sound destroys the deer,
> Disease afflicts all creatures that appear,
> Except my guru, who remains detached.[407]

Within the Sikh faith, ego-loss, or the ability to detach from worldly attachments, is what brings one closest to the Divine. In the case of the "Untitled" poem, ego-loss would bring one closest to freedom and the success of the movement. While the contexts vary quite drastically, the logics behind the need for ego-loss are centered in both poems.

Through rooting my research questions within onto-epistemological frameworks, in this chapter I argue that Ghadar poetry relied heavily on Sikh knowledges to create new imaginaries of freedom outside of colonial oppression. Turning to the practical elements of Sikh scriptural literature in language, form, and style Ghadar poets were able to write poems that were deeply rooted the Sikh literary tradition. By presenting themes commonly found in scripture, the Ghadari poetry spoke to ideas that Sikh laborers were already quite familiar with. I argue that we must continue to read Ghadar literature outside of a secular lens in order to see how the movement spoke to so many Sikh peoples.

Following the trajectory of Punjabi-Gurmukhi in the space of colonial Punjab to the American West, we can see how the language and script were always rooted in the political. The usage of Punjabi-Gurmukhi in each political and social moment was an act of political and spiritual agency which was highly impactful on Sikh subjectivities. After analyzing the complex history of language and script in the Punjabi life, I understand how my father's story of language and the Partition speaks to ways in which language

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[406] "Untitled," anonymous *Hindustan Ghadar*, Deol Family Archive, Selma, California.
[407] Shackle and Mandair. *Teachings of the Sikh Gurus*, 48-49. Translated by Christopher Shackle and Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair.

can impact an entire lifeworld. While it brought about pain and loss in the case of my father, in the story of Ghadar it offered freedom and rebellion from colonial rule.

EPILOGUE: Waves in the Twenty-First Century

At ninety-eight years old, Ghadarite Bhagat Singh Bilga interviewed with the Desh Bhagat Yadhgar Hall and provided a history of the Ghadar Party.[408] In describing the origin of Ghadar, Bilga chooses to define the movement as a *lehar*, or wave. He states, "*Lehraan ekh din nein shuru hondiya, ohna nu time lagda,"* meaning: "waves do not begin in a day, they take time." For Bilga, the efforts to define Ghadar's beginning to one date is fruitless, instead, it is necessary to place its history in a wider context of resistance. In this dissertation, I view Ghadar through Bilga's frame as a *lehar*, a wave of rebellion that has no clear origin nor a clear end. A *lehar* has the capacity to crash and break down massive foundations, while also carrying the ability to lull one to sleep. This dissertation maps a history of the peoples whose lives were greatly affected by Ghadar. It explores the political and spiritual subjectivities of Sikh peoples involved in anticolonial activities in Punjab and the American West during the early twentieth century.

The waves of rebellion continue into the twenty-first century, as farmers in India began protesting the repressive agricultural laws proposed by Prime Minister Modi and his cabinet. This protest began in August 2020 in several states across the nation, including Punjab and Haryana. Protesters faced police brutality and suppression as they spoke out against the laws that attempt to deregulate the sale of crops and allow private buyers freer rein in the marketplace that has long been dominated by government subsidies.[409] The world's largest protest then begins in late November 2020, as protesters began their march to Delhi, the nation's capital, and faced tear gas, water canons, and police brutality along the way. Since then, protesters are still occupying Delhi in hopes of repealing the agricultural laws, while across the globe solidarity protests have erupted as well. As a pandemic devastates the world, protesters have been arrested, beaten, and nearly five hundred farmers have died since August 2020. Despite the atrocities committed by the Indian government at the protest sites, protesters have continued to provide relief to local citizens through food (which they themselves farmed and brought with them to the site), healthcare (with doctors and nurses donating their time during the pandemic), and education (there have been small classroom pop-ups for children who do not have access to education in the city). Thus, many Sikh protesters are continuing to practice *seva*, or service, while fighting for their livelihood.

The Modi administration has made deliberate attempts to suppress the release of information about the ongoing protests through the censorship of media, the arrests of numerous journalists, and the internet blackouts in New Delhi in December 2020 and January 2021. Because popular media channels/papers are either inaccessible or providing misinformation, many have resorted to hearing updates on the protest on social media sites. Folks on the ground and in the diaspora have posted videos of speeches, offered news and updates, and presented paintings, poems, songs, all providing insight

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[408] Interview is located at the Desh Bhagat Yadhgar Hall in Jalandhar, Punjab, India and is also available on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRxVSmafxTY

[409] Billy Perrigo, "India's Farmers are Leading One of the Largest Protests Yet Against Modi's Government. Here's What They're Fighting For" *Time Magazine* (December 8, 2020).

into what is happening with the protest. People have even posted “a day in the life at the protest” videos, showing how folks are spending a usual day at the sites. Social media has opened doors for communication in some contexts; however, one must not forget the looming threat that it also poses to exchanges of knowledge, ideas, and information.

Almost immediately after posts regarding the Farmers Protest began to gain traction on sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Youtube, all have participated in censorship. From censoring #Sikh, to images/videos of political speeches, to music videos, social media sites have always maintained ways to monitor and disrupt exchanges of political content. Here, the role of protest art becomes vital to the adaptability of a movement or protest. While photographs were being censored, many started drawing or painting the same images and sites were taking longer to censor those. Similarly, #hastags are being continuously updated in case of censorship. And perhaps most critically, the publication of the *Trolley Times* has offered on the ground news and updates that exist beyond the shadows of big social media sites.

ਟਰਾਲੀ ਟਾਈਮਜ਼

NEWS FROM TROLLEYS

ਅੰਦੋਲਨ ਦੀ ਆਪਣੀ ਆਵਾਜ਼

VOICE OF KISAN PROTEST 2020 | TROLLEY TIMES | VOL 1. edition No.: 2 | TUESDAY , DECEMBER 22, 2020

WHERE DO WE STAND NOW?

Harjeshwar Pal Singh, Historian, Patiala

The stakes continue to rise as the farmers' agitation has entered the next stage after the farmers rejected the government proposals and announced a slew of measures to escalate the agitation including blockade of Delhi, and nationwide protests outside the offices of BJP leaders.

In the game of political chess, the farmers continue to hold the advantages and remain steadfast in their demand to repeal the three laws while the ground becomes shaky under the government's feet. This is due to a number of reasons:

1. The determination and steadfastness of farmers' agitation, and their fight for dignity, survival, self respect and identity has garnered unprecedented response nationally and internationally.
2. The peaceful nature of the agitation has ensured that the narrative continues to remain in the favor of farmers.
3. The protesters are undeterred at the Delhi borders despite the chilly nights. The number of people joining the border camps is rising on an everyday basis.
4. International diplomatic pressure, unmatched support from the diaspora, and unbiased section of the media has put the government on a hook.
5. The protesters have left the BJP troll army far behind in the "battle of narratives". Bollywood remained mute throughout. State sponsored troll attempt to portray "Annadaata" as "Khalistani", "Tukde-Tukde Gang" etc. has backfired.
6. RSS's traditional instinct to retreat under pressure seems to be bulldozing the spirits within BJP ranks.
7. Economic agenda remains peripheral to BJP as compared to "Hindutva". It is noteworthy that they were swadesis once and catered to small traders, and even supported Indira's license permit raj in the early 70s.
8. There is real discontent in agriculture dominated, core BJP states - Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra.
9. Security concerns at Indo-Pak and Indo-China borders are rising because 80% of the Indian army has an agrarian background. The participation of army veterans has highlighted the much needed fact.
10. Opposition parties are now aggressively focusing their agendas against BJP and are threatening to join the agitation.
11. The agitation has gained tremendous support from the trade unions and transporters. This makes the base to escalate the agitation further.
12. In case the government resorts to large scale violent measures, the foreign investors will become wary of entering Indian shores thus hurting the corporate agenda for a longer time.

On the other hand, if Modi government is still holding onto the shaky ground, it is because of the following reasons:

1. BJP doesn't want to risk the "strongman" and "pro-corporate" image of the PM.
2. Corporate pressure remains strong on the government to allow them into the lucrative farming sector.
3. The government hopes that ultimately, divisions, exhaustion or violence would help them to tide over this issue.
4. Pro-corporate media analysts are provoking Modi to do a "Thatcher" on the farmers.
5. A section of BJP thinks that they remain electorally invincible, and expects to recover the lost ground in the long run.
6. The government has started a large scale campaign to convince people that the laws are lucrative to only the farmers, the PM is the star campaigner as usual.
7. The government is trying to detour the issue via the Supreme Court to find a compromise.

The next few days are going to be pivotal in this long and drawn "war of the titans" between the "state" and the "people".

O Martyrs, to fulfill your cherished dreams, We will give our heart and soul

kisanekta.in

EDITORIAL

We observed the martyrdom of Hind Di Chadar - Saviour of India - Guru Teg Bahadur on December 20. During the current times, while following the footsteps of Guru Sahib, farmers and farmworkers are showing up as the saviours of India. Sant Ram Singh martyred himself "against the state oppression and in solidarity with farmers and farmworkers." On the same day, we paid tributes to our departed compatriots in villages, towns and cities all over India.

The government is heartless, but the love for the protest and respect for the protesters among the masses is ever increasing. Cronies and moneybags of BJP government, corporates like Adani and Reliance are falsely advertising that the farm laws are in the favour of farmers. On the one hand, prime minister Narender Modi sends pamphlets and organizes video conferences to perform the lip-service that he cares about the farmers and Sikhs, on the other, he condemns and labels the people's movement a conspiracy by the opposition parties.

Bhai Kaahoo Ko Dhaeth Nehi Nehi Bhai Maanath Aan ||
Kahu Naanak Sun Rae Manaa Giaanee Thaahi Bakhaan ||

O mind, one who does not intimidate others and does not cower before the tormentors, consider him a sapient human.

- Salok Guru Teg Bahadar ji

Homage to the martyrs of the farmers protest.

Kahan Singh, Dhaner, Barnala, 65
Dhanna Singh, Khali, Mansa, 45
Janak Raj, Dhanaula, Barnala, 60
Gajan Singh, Bhangu, Ludhiana, 55
Gurdev Singh, Atar Singh Wala
Baljinder Singh, Jhamat, 32
Gurjant Singh, Bachoana, 60
Gurbachan, Bhinder Khurd, 80
Lakhbir Singh, Lallianna, 57
Rajinder Kaur, Ganghor
Karnail Singh, Sherpur
Gurmail Kaur, Chand Patti, 70
Ajay More, Sonipat
Sanjay Singh, Sonipat
Kitab Singh Chahal, Ujhana, 60
Mewa Singh, Khote, 48
Lakhvir Singh, JharhoN
Bhag Singh, Bhadowal
Ram Mehar Singh, Channo
Makhan Khan, Bhinder Kala, 45
Gurmeet Singh, Kundala, 67
Labh Singh, Safera, 68
Gurpreet Singh, Safera, 22
Sukhdev Singh, Dhandh Aana
Deep Singh, Fopna
Baba Ram Singh, Karnal, 65
Jatinder Singh, Fatta Malooka, 25
Surinder Singh, Nawan Shehar
Krishan Lal Gupta, Sangroor
Balvir Singh, Amritsar
Jasvir Singh, Karnal, 60

This list is incomplete

The PM went to Gurudwara Rakab Ganj Sahib pulling a mere public relations stunt. The kathavachak - the priest - was narrating the thesis of one of Guru Teg Bahadur Saloks: "If you don't work for the betterment of mankind, nothing can save you, not the pilgrimages and nor the holy books, nothing at all can save you. Kaal will find you."

It felt as if the Divine Word was reprimanding the PM. Ignoring the sacrifices of protesters in this historic struggle, the PM and the central government are trying all kinds of tricks to not accept the farmers' demands. The commission agents are being subjected to income tax raids, the donations to the farmer unions were curtailed; farmers from other states were arrested on their way to participate in protests; official 'KisanEktaMorcha' Facebook page was blocked but resumed after internet outage. However, protesters are aware of such foxy moves by the corporates, and they would not be deterred by the government's threats.

Image 6: Second edition of the Trolley Times, published in English on December 22, 2020.

The *Trolley Times* is a newsletter published online and in print (distributed at the protest sites) that details the ongoings at the protest sites, while providing insight from

scholars, activists, and artists. The newsletter pays tribute to the ninety-five thousand trollies that line the Delhi borders protesting the farm bills. The *Trolley Times* is currently printed in Punjabi-Gurmukhi, Hindi-Sanskrit, and English. As described in "Chapter Four" of this dissertation, the *Trolley Times* follows a long line of protest traditions in Punjab and its diaspora. During the British colonial period, printing presses were brought to Punjab to: (1) promote the use of the state supported Urdu language in the Indo-Persian script, and (2) to suppress the use of Punjabi-Gurmukhi which was too closely tied to the Sikh community. So, while the modern technology of the printing press worked as a tool of colonial oppression, in the US Ghadarites bought one of their own and used it as a tool of rebellion. Together Ghadar Party members published newsletters in both Punjabi-Gurmukhi and Urdu-Shahmukhi and distributed the pamphlets themselves across the globe. Today we can see similar techniques being employed by protestors and activists as well, depicting the power in self-publication.

As the protest continues to unfold, it is difficult to assess what will happen in the future; however, its linkages to the past are quite apparent. This dissertation has chartered the histories of rebellion of Sikh peoples in Punjab and the American West from the early 1900s to the current socio-political moment. The journey that began for me as an eleven-year-old while finding an archive I did not understand has led me here, to relying on this very archive to understand what it means to be "Sikh" in the twenty-first century. Writing this dissertation while holding the knowledges of my community close, has led me to echo the words of Ghadarite Kartar Singh Sarabha, "If anyone asks who we are, tell him our name is Rebel."

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Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, United States.

Hoover Library and Archives, Stanford University, California, United States.

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