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5

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Pioneer Voices from California

Reflections on Race, Religion, & Ethnicity

It has become common to talk of the Sikh diaspora, but there is some question whether or not "Sikh" is the most appropriate category for analysis of these emigrants from South Asia. While the overwhelming majority of the Punjabi pioneers in early twentieth century California were indeed Sikhs, my research indicates that religion was less salient than other characteristics for these men. It was in fact a Punjabi diaspora, and to go back and emphasize Sikhs and Sikhism does violence to the historical experiences of the immigrants and their descendants.

Most research on the Punjabi immigrants has focused on their public life. It is clear that these pioneers in the American West contended with racial, religious, and ethnic prejudices all their lives in the U.S. They battled for citizenship and lost; losing that, they fell prey to the Alien Land Laws of California and Arizona and could continue farming only in ways that put them at the mercy of non-Indians; their Ghadar party activities and conflicts with each other were magnified and misinterpreted in the press. Scholars have recently clarified, corrected, and enlarged upon the early materials about the public life of the men from the Punjab (Barrier, this volume; Jacoby, 1978; Puri, 1980).

It is equally important to look at the immigrants' private lives, at family life, where U.S. immigration prohibitions and California miscegenation laws dictated an overwhelmingly non-Punjabi and, indeed, an Hispanic origin for the women with whom most Punjabi men formed families.¹ Men and women applying to the County Clerk for a marriage license had to be of the same race, had to look alike, and most often it was Hispanic women who satisfied that requirement. Many a license application has "brown" and "brown" in the blanks for "race," so we know how both the Punjabi and Mexican immigrants looked to the Anglo county clerks in the early twentieth century.

But how did Punjabi pioneers see themselves, and how did their wives, children, and neighbors see them, particularly with respect to race, religion, and ethnicity? Most of the early immigrants are dead now, but we can look to the few survivors, and to the widows and children from the families founded in California, for pioneer reflections on race, religion, and ethnicity. To reconstruct an ethnosociological view of the immigrants, I have drawn heavily on interviews; the interview data will be used in a "collective biography" fashion (Bertaux, 1981; Ferraroti, 1981). The interview citations in the bibliography, organized by sex, generation, kinship, and ethnicity, show the range of informants; the names alone give one a feel for the community. Some 65 informants provided substantial interviews, substantial in length and/or quality.² The informants include a few members of the dominant Anglo culture and Punjabi men, their Hispanic and other non-Punjabi wives, and their sons and daughters, most of whom were called "Mexican-Hindus."

The traditional name for the community of Punjabi-Hispanic couples and children, the community which includes most of the Punjabis who married and settled in California early in this century, is Mexican-Hindu. It was a significant community, not in terms of numbers--there were some 380 couples--but in terms of its systematic biethnic composition and its centrality in the lives of the Punjabi immigrants. One could argue that the Punjabi men who founded families in California were a deviant minority, not characteristic of the immigrants; but in fact they

were a large minority, from 20 to 46% of the men from India resident in California from the late 1920's to 1950.³ Furthermore, the Imperial Valley, located along California's southern border with Mexico and site of the western hemisphere's largest irrigation system, was a major center for Punjabi immigrants in California until the 1960's⁴ and that was where Mexican-Hindu family life began and thrived. Especially in the Imperial Valley but throughout the state wherever they resided, these Mexican-Hindu families were central to the Punjabi immigrant community. The families employed other Punjabi workers or worked with them; they often provided lodging and food for Punjabi men travelling through. Those Punjabi men who stayed bachelors in the U.S. spent considerable time in the company of the married men and served as uncles or godparents to the many children in these families.

The chart below shows the regional concentration of family life and the ethnicity of spouses for the Punjabi immigrants. In southern California, where the great majority of married Punjabis settled, 93% of the wives were of Hispanic origin, and the percentage of Hispanic wives elsewhere in the state, while lower, was always above 50%; only 74 of the 378 wives were non-Hispanic in origin. The first recorded marriage I found was in Imperial County in 1916; most Punjabi-Hispanic marriages took place in the 1920's. There was a certain degree of arrangement to these marriages—one sister married a Punjabi and then her sisters and perhaps her mother married Punjabis too. Sisters often married partners in farming and these couples lived in joint households out on the land they were leasing or purchasing. These couples constituted a distinctive biethnic community in the Imperial Valley.

First, let us see how friends and neighbors, members of the dominant Anglo culture in the Imperial Valley, viewed these Punjabi immigrants. As many contemporary sources tell us, the men were termed Hindus and initial prejudice against them was strong. The Sikhs' turbans, in particular, drew derogatory comm-

Spouses of Asian Indians in California, 1913-1949

Types of Spouses

Counties	Hispanic		Anglo		Black		Indian		American Indian		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Yuba												
Sutter	45	50.6	25	28.1	9	10.1	8	9.0	2	2.3	89	23.6
Sacramento												
San Joaquin												
Fresno												
Tulare	38	76.0	11	22.0	0	0	1	2.0	0	0	50	13.2
Kings												
Imperial												
Los Angeles	221	92.5	12	5.0	6	2.5	0	0	0	0	239	63.2
San Diego												
TOTALS	304	80.4	48	12.7	15	4.0	9	2.4	2	.5	378	100

Source: Karen Leonard, family reconstitution from county records (vital statistics, civil and criminal records) and interviews with informants.

ents and provoked incidents. Thus a novel about the Imperial Valley describes the hot season: "It begins when the first raghead is found laying face-down in some culvert. A heat-suicide, the paper'll say, but likely the poor slob only walked down the street in a squeaky pair of shoes. At a hundred and twenty, he could even have been knocked off for not squeaking..." (Sanford, 1953:41). The prevalence of the term raghead led almost all of the early immigrants to take off their turbans;⁵ also, many wives preferred them turbanless (Sekhon, 1983; Garewal, 1982; Shine, 1983). Only one Anglo informant referred to the old

practice of wearing "rags on their heads" (Wheat, 1981), but the term Hindu continues to be used in the Imperial Valley. Now, the anecdotes recounted tend to be fond ones, noting, for example, the mens' linguistic abilities. Thus the head of the Chevrolet agency from which many of the men bought trucks said "Those Hindus learned—one of them stood there and talked Hindu to his brother, Mexican to his wife, and English to me—I liked that" (Womack, 1981). The men were also noted for their hard work and generally good farming, although their lack of concern with the appearance of field and yard led to local expressions like "Hindu farming" and "Well, I'd call that a Hindu job; do it over" (Anderholt, 1982; Savage, 1982). The point here is that no Anglo informant ever used the term Sikh to describe the immigrants.⁶

The oldtimers I interviewed accepted the term Hindu—at least they certainly used it for themselves. They talked about the world they came into in terms of white, colored, Hindu, and Mexican; less often they talked of the Japanese, the "China people," the Filipinos, Swiss, and Germans. One man said, "the Singhs came here, they're all one." When talking about legal problems and court cases some men used the term Aryan; one man, less well educated, said "India people, Hindus, Punjab, come from the white race." Some labels aroused opposition—one man talked about the need to reject the label "Oriental" when people tried to apply it to the Hindus. But none of the "old Hindus" whom I interviewed talked specifically about Sikhs; some of them did differentiate Muslims from the "other" Hindus.⁷

It is striking that almost all of the relationships developed by the Punjabi men in California crossed religious lines. The significant relationships were: villagemates, shipmates, partners (in farming in the U.S.), *compadres* (godfathers to each other's children in the Catholic-based *compadrazgo* system), in-laws through their wives here, members of the Ghadar party. None of these relationships were determined by religion. In many instances Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus were co-members of one of the above groupings.⁸ Similarly with institutions—the Sikh temple at Stockton, the Hindu stores in California's rural towns, and the Hindu labor camps around the state were used by all

Punjabis regardless of religion. (It may be true that work gangs, with one cook each, were usually composed of members of one religion). The Stockton Sikh temple, undoubtedly the central institution for the Punjabis in California, just as undoubtedly featured political, social, and religious events attended by Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus (Wood 1966: 96). Mexican-Hindu and other wives and children also attended events at the Stockton temple.⁹ Even a Hispanic woman divorced from a Sikh was welcome to stay and eat at the temple, her daughter (Lucy Singh Abdulla, 1984) remembers. There was a Hindustani Welfare and Reform Association in the Imperial Valley with Sikh, Muslim, and Hindu members.¹⁰ Less formally, all Hindus met in the late afternoon in places like the Holtville Park or the curbside in Calipatria to rest and talk. Many Anglos remember the excited voices and high energy of these Hindu group meetings.

Most of the relationships above were new; some resulted from coincidence (shipmates) or farming arrangements in California (partners). The Ghadar party was founded in California and drew in most men as contributors. They also sent money back to their villages for schools but not, in my data, for religious institutions. Other new relationships were a consequence of family life. Most of the wives were Mexican immigrants or Mexican-Americans, and many were sets of sisters or related women. Hence Punjabi men became relatives by marriage, husbands attached to female, Spanish-speaking kin groups. The language of the home, of the women and children, was Spanish; only the older boys who worked in the fields with Hindu crews learned some Punjabi (and some of these boys were Mexican stepsons).¹¹ The childrens' names, on birth certificates and certainly their nicknames, were Hispanic with few exceptions.¹² Punjabi men sometimes had Hispanic names themselves, for example Andreas for Inder Singh, and Miguel for Maghyar Singh.

Most of the women the Punjabis married were Catholic. The men participated in the *compadrazgo* (ritual kinship) system of the Catholic church—this meant appearance in a church and registration in its official books on the occasion of the child's baptism or marriage. Since these godparent relationships linked Mexican-Hindu couples almost entirely to each other (only a few

Mexican couples were called upon, usually relatives of the wife), and men of one religion stood as godfather to the children of men of another religion, these relationships are best understood as helping to constitute the Punjabi-Hispanic community.¹³ They did not integrate Punjabi men into the Catholic church any more than attendance at the Stockton temple events integrated non-Sikhs into Sikhism; in both cases, an ostensible religious institution was being used by and for the community.¹⁴ Few if any men converted to Catholicism; in the one case where conversion is claimed, the man "also remained a Sikh and was cremated when he died" (Sanga, 1981). But Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus who stayed in marriages with Catholic women frequently consented to a Catholic wedding (usually years after their initial civil marriage). The wives, with a single exception, did not convert to the religions of their husbands.¹⁵ The children were encouraged by their fathers to take an interest in Sikhism, Islam, or Hinduism, but few fathers were able to teach systematically or well about their religions. Most of the men were not well educated; there were few, perhaps no, religious specialists among them. Also, they worked long hours, had little time to instruct their children in Punjabi or in religious matters, and left religious training up to their wives.

Almost all of the men allowed or actively encouraged their children to be brought up as Christians, and they viewed this very positively. As Susanna Mesa Rodriguez Singh said, "Well, God gives a lot of different languages, you know, but I don't think so many Gods," and her husband Moola Singh affirmed, "Only one God." Moola Singh expounded on this when asked if he hadn't wanted his children brought up in his religion: "No, I didn't, I don't care. The church here may be Catholic, that's OK; the story of Jesus Christ is OK; you go your church, I go my church; one God. To make their living, people make different churches, different ways. Not different religions. Make different names... believe God, only one God" (1982).

The interviews with wives and children of the Punjabis let us see how these family members identified the immigrant men. Was Sikhism (or Islam or Hinduism) a major feature of the immigrants' identity? Here we need to distinguish among the

couples on the basis of residence and the wife's ethnicity, because where the Mexican-Hindu wives were less concentrated there was greater emphasis on the men's religious heritages. In the northern and central valleys, where Anglo and Black wives diluted the Hispanic domestic culture characteristic of family life in the Imperial Valley, and where the few real Indian wives lived, one heard slightly more about Indian beliefs and practices.¹⁶ And in the Imperial Valley, too, those few pioneers who married white women or who later brought over wives from India (after 1946, when the law changed) looked down on those who married Hispanic women and on their children; they differentiated themselves from the Mexican-Hindus in many ways, including an emphasis on the men's religious affiliation.¹⁷

But despite such stratification, there are generalizations about the men which one heard from all of the wives and children. The men were discussed primarily in terms of the relationships that crossed religion and in terms of personal characteristics thought to apply to all Punjabis--the children gave them nicknames in Spanish, English, or Punjabi emphasizing these Punjabi characteristics.¹⁸ That is, the women these men married learned more about village, ship and partnership groupings than they did about Indian religions or castes, and this is true for the children as well. The one exception to this generalization, and it is an important exception, comes with the end of the life cycle, when the old men died (this will be discussed at the end).

Most wives and widows talked knowledgeably about their husbands' villages. They could name the other men who came from those villages; and, from observation of these groups of men, they opined that some villages were noted for cleanliness, others for good cooking, and so on (Shine & Resendez, 1982). They could name their husbands' shipmates; they could reconstruct partnerships over the years. The sons and daughters knew these things too. These groupings included Muslims and Hindus as well as Sikhs, and such inclusion occasioned no comment; but when the godparent and in-law relationships came up, inclusion of men of different religions was sometimes remarked upon.

The women and children were certainly conscious of religious, caste, and regional differences stemming from the Punjab

and spoke about them. Often, however, I had to elicit such information by direct questions; and they could not name people in those categories readily. Most wives seemed to know less about Punjabi society than did the children. Many wives, securely based in female kin groups here, had little curiosity about the Punjab; the knowledge they gained was superficial and often came from other wives or their husbands' bachelor partners. Some statements from wives follow to illustrate this: "When we opened the door and saw him in that turban, we thought he was a Turk, but we asked him in anyway" (Lala Garewal, 1981). "My husband was a member of the Singh religion...he was 20-21 years older than me but this race does not look old....My husband's partner told me that if a Muslim came to the door, the Hindu would not let him in but would talk to him outside" (Teresa Garewal, 1981). "Oh, yes, we ate beef, but there was another kind of Hindu, called Mohammedan, and they didn't eat pork" (Lucy Sekhon, 1982). "Her three husbands were all Mohameds, though I'm not sure, one couldn't eat beef and another pork..." (Emma Smiley & Verdie Abdullia Montgomery, 1982). "My husband told me the Hindus and the Pakistanis do not like each other in India, but here they are all united" (Sophia Din, 1981). And finally, one mother trying to help her daughter marry another Mexican-Hindu to whom the father objected: "We're all Americans here, what is this caste thing?" (Elizabeth Deen Hernandez quoting her mother, 1981). This last was a theme voiced by many wives and widows, their role as socializers of their husbands in America.¹⁹ They deliberately downplayed what they did know of Punjabi society since they judged it dysfunctional (a view shared by some husbands).

In contrast to their mothers, most sons and daughters were intensely curious about their Indian heritage and remember vividly what their fathers told them. And they learned things in a negative way in the course of growing up; that is, as they socialized with other children, and particularly as they began dating, their fathers' opinions about those of different caste and religious background were loudly voiced. Some statements from children about distinctions among the Punjabi men follow: "The Rams and Singhs were different castes" (Ram, 1983). "The Kathris (Khatris) were the most educated and wealthy, there were some

called Bohmans (Brahmans), and most were workers, low-class Juts (Jats)" (Puri, 1984). "Our Dad was liberal, he was one who associated with Mohammedans, and we did too, and with Mexicans; (another Mexican-Hindu) made our life miserable, she kept telling us we were Hindus and shouldn't associate with Mexicans" (Resendez, 1982). "Dad didn't care who we married so long as they were working men" (Sidhu Villasenor, 1982). "Dad didn't really care who married, but when my sister Carmelita picked him, he said, 'Why a Khan?" (Sidhu, 1982) "Dad didn't want me to marry him, we were Rajputs and his family were Raes (Arain)" (Hernandez, 1981). "Dad didn't want me to marry a Doaba but I did anyway" (Rai, 1981). "There were two who were Chuhras, you know, untouchable, and they came to the park too but the other men made fun of them" (Garewal Gill, 1981). "My Dad was a Hindu" (Din, 1981). "When there were too many people to get on the bus, us darkies had to get off, and I went home with Sarah Mohamed, there I saw a hookah for the first time, only the Mohammedans had them" (Garewal Gill, 1982). "And there were other Muslims, villager or Okie types we called Chachis, and those Khans' from the frontier" (Mallobox, 1982). "We were Pathan; there were Rajaput (Rajput) Muslims and other converts" (Abdulla, 1983). "My Dad turned Mexican. He brought us up, six or seven boys and one girl, after mother died. He didn't teach us much about India, when he said things we all just laughed at him, six or seven boys, not much chance..." (Francisco Singh, 1983). "Oh yes, the Stockton temple -- that's where we met the Khan kids every year, coming over from Phoenix to pick peaches" (Garcia, 1983). As these quotes show, there was certainly some social distance between the Sikh, Muslim, and Hindu men and their families,²⁰ but I found equally or more significant divisions by class within the Mexican-Hindu community,²¹ which some of the quotes above also indicate.

Most of the remarks above about Indian categories had to be elicited by direct questions, but the wives, widows, and children spoke freely and frequently of characteristics they felt were shared by all Punjabis. Hard work was something all Punjabis did: the men "worked all the time," "they worked too hard." "People were poor then, we had no money; the Hindus worked hard, they made good husbands," "the Hindus were farming cotton there,

and when Lupe's parents saw that, saw that they were bossmen, they didn't object to the marriage after that." Hindus "worked harder than Mexican men and didn't go out drinking; they drank at home, at least they were home." "They bought clothes and shoes for their stepchildren, unlike Mexican men who wouldn't take care of those children." Despite this last statement, most testified that the men spent money reluctantly. They kept the household money and doled it out as they saw fit. Some called them frugal, many called them stingy and worse: "tightwads," "mean bastards." "X starved his family, kept them poor;" "Y gave his wife and kids a hard time, kept them down;" "Z wanted to use his money for land, Mom had to wait until he went to sleep and then she went through his pockets to get us money for schoolbooks." One woman "got fed up and left;" another "got tired of cabbage and left him;" and so on. The men also had strict ideas about the proper behavior of their wives and many women deserted or divorced because of restrictions on their dress, their attendance at dances, or visits to relatives and friends. Lest we think that the men failed to share any recreational activities with their wives, one should note that many bought Victrolas or gramophones; one widow fondly recalled teaching her second Sikh husband to dance, just the two of them at home (Sekhon, 1982). But it was generally agreed that the mens' favorite recreations were politics and drinking, and most engaged in plenty of both. They also fought (chiefly with each other, anything from litigation to murder), though it is hard to separate their violence from that around them in California's farm towns. One woman, twice married to Sikhs and twice widowed (and not from fights), moved from the Imperial Valley rather than remarry again there because "I was always afraid."

The Punjabi men got mixed reviews as fathers, but even affectionate children who inherited property made remarks like "he was hard, he didn't talk a lot to me," or "he was a grouch, all Punjabis are grouchy." The childrens' views of their parents are complicated—much of the interview material shows the ways the children of Punjabis changed their views of their ethnic identity over the life cycle, their "ambiguous ethnicity" (Benson, 1981: 134-144; Leonard, 1988). But that is another topic; here the focus must be kept on the men.

As the men aged, their religious identities received added emphasis. This occurred partly because of important changes in the political context (Brass, 1985) and partly because of life cycle changes (Wolf, 1984). A major external impetus to strengthened religious identity was the independence and partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. These developments brought tremendous pride and pleasure to the old Punjabis in the U.S., men so long deprived of meaningful citizenship in any country. These developments also resulted in a new name, Spanish-Pakistani, for the families of the Punjabi Muslim men who had married Hispanic women. This was a sharp new differentiation within the pioneer community, one accentuated by the arrival of many new South Asian immigrants after the 1965 liberalization of U.S. immigration law. An influx of Punjabis brought up in a very different, highly politicized Punjab brought a new consciousness of religious boundaries to the aging pioneers (LaBrack, 1988; Leonard, 1988).

As for life cycle effects on religious identities, many quotations cited earlier showed that both regional and religious affiliations were made explicit as the children began dating and getting married. Other occasions on which religious identity received emphasis arose as the old men tried to impose food preferences and prohibitions upon their grandchildren.²² But the most significant strengthening of religious identity came in a very private way and because of impending death.

At the end of the old men's lives, their concerns about death mounted. The old men who had property liked to be driven around it and worried about its disposal;²³ the propertied and those without property worried alike about the proper disposal of their bodies. Here again the wives and widows took a position different from the children. Over the years, many wives had viewed donations to the Ghadar party and the Stockton temple as diversions of the family resources, and as men approached the end of life, temple officers sometimes approached them for final large bequests. The wives resented this. And there was an even more personal matter. The widows often wanted to bury their husbands in the Mexican-Catholic section of the local cemetery, where they themselves would be buried and where infants and children already had been buried (including Sikh-fathered

children). The husbands' Punjabi friends and the children knew what was religiously required and desired by the dead man. In the case of Sikhs and Hindus, it was cremation, with a dinner some time later; in the case of Muslims, burial in a "Hindu" plot, with Punjabi Muslim pallbearers and proper preparation of the body. The biethnic nature of the community, the Catholicism of the wives which condemned cremation, made one's fate uncertain, and a death often brought heartbreak for some family members.²⁴ The goddaughter of an Hispanic widow told of the traumatic seizure of her godfather's body from his widow's house by Hindu (Sikh) countrymen after his death (Brinkman, 1981); other people told me which Sikhs had been buried by their ignorant or willful widows.

Perhaps most poignant were the tales three Mexican-Hindu sons told of their fathers' fears and their own concerns about the proper observances after death. One son, ignorant of much about his father's culture but aware of the old man's desire for a proper cremation and ceremony, desperately tried to get back on the mailing list for the "Seeki" temple he had not attended or contributed to for decades (Rudolfo Singh, 1981). Another told of attending, with his father, the funeral of a fellow Muslim whose ignorant wife and sons had not made the proper arrangements; his father took over, insisted upon helping to carry the coffin himself, and afterwards suffered nightmares that the same thing might happen to him (Niaz Mohamed Jr., 1981).

The third son had a story of conflict with the older Sikh men who ran the El Centro temple. When his father died, he knew what had to be done. His father had told him: "Two things, cremation and the dinner thing, that's all I care about, not the rest of it, but do those things and do them soon." He tried, approaching the Sikh men and requesting that arrangements be made, but he was put off repeatedly. When a *granthi* was finally brought down from Stockton, they wanted to hold a committee meeting to see who should pay the fare. Protesting that his father had given money all his life to the temple and that he would rather pay himself than have a committee debate the issue, the son paid immediately. But then the dinner was put off in a similar fashion, and finally the son contacted the Stockton temple directly and offered \$500 for

someone to "come down and hold that dinner". So the *granthi* came and the Mexican-Hindu son paid, bypassing and humiliating the old Sikh men in the Imperial Valley by doing so. The son has enjoyed turning down their requests for temple donations since: "Whenever they come for money, I throw that in their faces" (Chell, 1983).

These tales make two points. First, note the isolated, private nature of this religious identity at the end of life, the fear of the old men and the intensity with which they communicated it to their children. In these three cases, the sons resolved to carry out their fathers' wishes despite considerable personal ignorance of what was required. Second, the three tales also reveal that, whatever solidarity had existed earlier among the men who bought plots together or arranged for cremations and ceremonies, the men had not built religious institutions which were ongoing, which included their descendants.²⁵ Their religious beliefs had remained private, their own; they had not persuaded their wives to conform to them or transmitted them to their children. To some extent, their religious beliefs affected the social behavior of family members, but primarily in a negative fashion—what should not be eaten, who should not be eaten with or dated or married. The men could attempt to enforce prohibitions but they had no training, teaching materials, or time, and even more important, their children did not know Punjabi (or Arabic) sufficiently to learn from them and their texts.²⁶ The institutions they founded in California, Sikh and Muslim, have required fresh blood from India and Pakistan to continue functioning. (Khan, 1981; Chakravorti, 1968).

One must conclude that Punjabi, not Sikh, Muslim, or Hindu, was the identity most meaningful to these pioneers in the United States. It may be that Mexican-Hindu family life was largely responsible for this, since it was such a dominant force in the life of the immigrant men. Its systematically biethnic nature directed attention to differences of language and national origin, not religion. But even among the bachelor men in the north, the group least affected by the family society, religious divisions were relatively unimportant for the first decades here. In this case, it seems that more recent political events in South Asia and the

perceptions we and the immigrants have formed of them have colored our ideas of the past.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

NOTES

- 1 Miscegenation laws remained on the books in California until 1951. Their application depended on county clerks, but usually the Punjabi men found it difficult to get a marriage license with a white woman.
- 2 I took notes during informal, unstructured interviews and typed the notes afterward; only one long interview, a life history effort which extended over several days, was taped (Moola Singh, 1982).
- 3 California's South Asian population was 1,873 in the 1930 Census, 1,476 in 1940, and 815 in 1950—thus the 378 couples I found, probably a low figure, meant that between 20% and 46% of the men in the state were married here. I use the term married for all couples for whom I have data indicating an acknowledged relationship or one which produced children; marriage licenses could not always be found.
- 4 Littleton, who did field work in 1959, states that the Imperial Valley Sikhs formed the wealthiest community of Punjabis in California then. He believed that there were some 80 men there, 15 Muslims and 65 Sikhs, and that all but three or four owned land ranging from 40 to several thousand acres: pp. 109-110.
- 5 Thus when Allan Miller studied the Yuba City Sikhs in the 1940's the turban marked an excessively orthodox Sikh: "An Ethnographic Report on the Sikh (East) Indians of Sacramento Valley," unpublished manuscript, 1950, South/Southeast Asia Library, UC Berkeley, pp. 153-54.
- 6 A few Anglo informants used the term Sikh when designating the present-day Sikh temple in El Centro (purchased in 1946 from the Japanese by the Sikhs in the Imperial Valley), and one used the name Mohammedan Club when designating the organization his father allowed to use the Swiss Club premises before the Italian Swiss were allowed in (Anderholt, 1981). But most are still unaware of such distinctions. One introduced me to a new "Hindu" member of Brawley's Rotary Club, saying he could tell by the name; the man proved to be an Egyptian.
- 7 Some men put Afghanistan for their birthplace in county records. Salim Khan, who came only in the 1950's, contends that many who did this

were not from Afghanistan but wanted to differentiate themselves from the "Hindus" (1982).

- 8 The immigrants may simply have reflected the relatively weak religious boundaries of the turn of the century Punjab, before the development of clearly differentiated religious identities.
- 9 Wives and children sometimes attended temple events; sometimes they went for ice cream together in the town while the men met at the temple. Informants here included most sons and daughters cited in the bibliography, the children of Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs.
- 10 The officers were of all three religions; a few Imperial County court cases list Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh members from this association who were called upon by the court to adjudicate farming disputes. I am aware of the Doaba and Malwa associations established in Stockton in the 1920's, evidence of conflict between Sikhs from the different regions (no Muslim descendants could recall those terms being used in their families).
- 11 Janie Diwan Poonian recalls her father giving them lessons in Punjabi and talking about the Punjab, but one day he abruptly announced he would do it no longer, as there was no reason for them to know these things in America (1982).
- 12 A few sons had Indian names, either on their birth certificates or on affidavits of correction filed later by their fathers, but these were rarely used; only two daughters had Kaur (or Kore) on their birth certificates.
- 13 Yusuf Dadabhay proposed that "the rural Hindustanis" were being assimilated into American culture via the Mexican-American subculture; he could have used the *compadrazgo* evidence for his thesis (which I find unsupported for the Punjabi men and even for their children in some important ways).
- 14 Of course the definition of "the community" changed over time--here I am talking of the 1920's, 30's, and 40's.
- 15 The exception, Julia Villa Deen, is buried in the "Hindu (actually Muslim, of course) plot" in the Sacramento City Cemetery. Jenny Chavez Abdulla is buried in the Hindu plot in Evergreen Cemetery by El Centro, but she did not convert to Islam.
- 16 Most of those who married black women in the north were Muslims; people remarked on the women as "good wives, hard-working, their houses always clean." The names of the children are distinctive and few (none?) have remained in farming.
- 17 Ironically, given the stories of discrimination related by Mexican-Hindu children, these men thought that all privileges and opportunities were theirs by birth (Sunga, 1981).

- 18 I heard only one nickname based on a Sikh reference, and that from a white woman married into one of the few all-Indian families: Joan Dillon, 1984.
- 19 This might seem to support Dadabhai's notion of socialization into Mexican-American society (1954), but it was viewed more generally as socialization into American society.
- 20 Although some Sikhs and Muslims were brothers-in-law (through wives who were sisters), I found no instance of a joint household involving men of different religions—there were many joint households involving partners of the same religion married to sisters. Most Mexican-Hindu children felt that association with descendants of the other religions was "liberal" and desirable, and the sons and daughters founded a Club (known as the Hindustani Club or the East Indian American Club) to promote group identity in the 1950's. Membership was limited to those under 40 in order to prevent interference from the fathers.
- 21 The poorer families had to go on the migratory labor circuit and kept their children working in the fields. The mother of such a family, discriminated against by a landowning Mexican-Hindu family in the vicinity, renounced all connections with Hindus when her husband died and urged her children to look to the Mexican community for their identities instead (Kakar, 1982).
- 22 When Niaz and Sally Mohamed were young and struggling economically, Niaz Mohamed Sr. came to visit and threw out all the baby food jars of strained beans with ham; from then on they took food to the neighbors when he was about to visit (1981).
- 23 Problems of inheritance present yet another rich source of material on identity. Some old men, finally able to become citizens of the U.S., put their land in their own names and bring over South Asian relatives, chose to reassert their Punjabi connections and cut out, partially or completely, Mexican-Hindu family members. In other cases, less than complete attention to the niceties of American divorce and remarriage law resulted in several wives competing for an inheritance; if a first wife from India could be produced by the dead man's countrymen, she won such a competition.
- 24 One widow related: "When my husband died his race arranged with his brother and with their ranch mate, and not with me, for the cremation of his body. We didn't want that cremation. Although he said after he died he would not know if he were cremated or thrown in the land, so that did not matter to him. And then he said, 'If they want to bury my body, do it, nobody can usurp the right of my sons to bury me.' But you know how they are, in their race. So they did the cremation... But the ashes we buried in a case in the cemetery.... But we don't admit that we buried the ashes of my husband."
- 25 This was as true for the Muslims and Sikhs in the north as for those in the south: Verdie Abdullia Montgomery, 1982; Olga Dad Khan, 1982;

Elizabeth Deen Hernandez, 1982. Chakravorti makes the point for the El Centro Sikhs back in the late 1960's: he found the old men intended to turn the temple management over to Amritsar because they thought the local sons unprepared or unfit to manage it (1968).

- 26 Most had no texts, in any case.

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INTERVIEWS

Punjabi Men	Spouses
Nika S. Gill. 1981.	Mary Garewal Gill.* 1981-84.
Charn S. Sandhu and — — —	Anna Singh Sandhu.* 1981, '82; '84, '86.
Purn S. Sedoo and — — —	Laura Sedoo. 1982.
Moola Singh and — — —	Susanna Mesa Rodriguez Singh. 1982, '83.
Chenchel Rai, Narajjan S. Atwal. 1983.	Sophia Din. 1981. Lola Martinez Dominguez
Harman Singh. 1981.	Dhillon & Celia Dominguez. 1981
Munsha Singh. 1981.	Lala Garewal & Silveria Chell.

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|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Savarn Singh. 1984. | 1981. |
| Bagga S. Sunga. 1981, '82, '84. | Teresa Garewal. 1981. |
| | Lucy Sekhon. 1982. |
| | Hortencia Singh. 1981. |
| | Nellie Soto Shine & Caroline |
| | Shine Sunghera Resendez.* 1982. |

Sons

Daughters

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Ali Abdulla and ___ ___ ___ ___ | Lucy Singh Abdulla. 1983. |
| Teja Dillon and ___ ___ ___ ___ | Kay Sighera Dillon. 1982. |
| Bob Mohamed and his sister ___ — | Lillian. 1983. |
| Ray Sidhu and his sister ___ — | Isabel Sidhu Villasenor. 1982. |
| Harry Chand. 1982. | Isabel Singh Garcia. 1982, '83. |
| Bob (& Carmen) Chell. 1981, '83. | Karmelita Kakar. 1982. |
| Robert Deol. 1981:- | Olga Dad Khan* (& Salim). 1982. |
| Kishen S. Deol. 1981. | Elizabeth Deen Hernandez. 1981. |
| Raymond Din. 1981. | Fatima Mia. 1983. |
| Joe Mallobox. 1982. | Verdie Abdullia Montgomery (& |
| Niaz Mohamed Jr. (& Sally). | Emma Smiley). 1982. |
| 1981 | Rose Perry. 1983. |
| George Puri. 1984. | Janie Diwan Poonian.* 1982, '83. |
| Raymond Ram. 1983. | Mary Singh Rai.* 1981, '83. |
| Fernando Sanga. 1981. | Norma Saikhon. 1981. |
| Alfred Sidhu. 1982. | Jane Singh. 1981. |
| Francisco Singh. 1983. | |
| Oscar Singh. 1981. | *daughters married to Punjabi men |
| Rudolfo Singh. 1981. | |

Sons-in-law

Judge Lehnert. 1981.

Daughters-in-law

Bernice Sidhu. 1981.

Joan Dillon. 1983.

Anglo Friends, Neighbors and Business Men

Joe and — — — — — Dorothy Anderholt. 1981, '82,
'83.

Carl and — — — — — Lorelei Griffin Jacobson.
1981.

Jim Bailey. 1981. Irene Brinkman. 1981.

Danny Dannenberg. 1981. Betty Harris. 1981.

Bill Ewing. 1981. Mrs. Wheat. 1981.

Herbert Hughes. 1981.

Keith Savage. 1981.

Sherman Smith. 1981.

Bill Thornburg. 1982.

Roy Womack. 1981.

The interview citations are structured with reference to the Punjabi men and are in two columns by sex : men on the left and women on the right. I have placed wives and sisters across from their husbands or brothers, and a dotted line indicates that they were interviewed together.