British colonial expansion through the Indian diaspora: the pattern of Indian overseas migration

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Abstract: Historically, India played a crucial role in the establishment and maintenance of the British Empire overseas. Through the conquest of India, the British not only acquired great material wealth and secured the accumulation of industrial capital, but also obtained a sizeable pool of skilled human resources to facilitate its colonial expansion. At present, the total number of overseas Indians has exceeded 30 million, making up the second largest Diaspora after that of China. This massive immigrant group and its overseas distribution were inseparable from the British conquest of India and its borrowing and export of human resources to India. Through conscription, the recruitment of service personnel, the exile of criminals and the utilization of indentured labour, the British colonial rulers transferred Indian manpower to other colonies to serve their colonialist interests. This expansion was also accompanied by the movement of a large number of Indian businessmen, and all these Indian immigrants would lay the basic foundation and structure of today's global Indian Diaspora.

Keywords: British Empire, Indian Diaspora, colonial expansion

Hint diasporası ile İngiliz sömürgeci yayılması: Hint denizaşırı göçü örneği

Öz: Tarihsel olarak Hindistan denizaşırı Britanya İmparatorluğu'nun kurulması ve sürdürülmesinde çok önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Hindistan'ın fethi aracılığıyla İngilizler sadece büyük maddi zenginlik elde etmek ve sanayi

sermayesi birikimini tamamlamakla kalmamış, aynı zamanda sömürgeci yayılmasını kolaylaştırmak için büyük bir yetenekli insan kaynağı havuzu da temin etmiştir. Günümüzde, Çin diasporasının ardından en büyük ikinci diasporayı oluşturan denizaşırı Hintlilerin toplam sayısı 30 milyonu aşmış durumdadır. Bu muazzam göçmen grubu ve denizaşırı dağılımı, İngilizlerin Hindistan'ı fethi ve insan kaynaklarının temini ile Hindistan'a ihracatından ayrılmazdı. İngiliz sömürge yöneticileri, askere alma, hizmet personelinin işe alımı, suçluların sürgün edilmesi ve senetli kölelik yoluyla, Hint insan gücünü sömürgeci çıkarlarına hizmet etmek için diğer kolonilere aktarmıştır. Bu yayılmaya çok sayıda Hintli iş adamı da eşlik etmiştir. Bütün bu Hintli göçmenler bugünkü Hint diasporasının temelini ve yapısını küresel ölçekte ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Britanya İmparatorluğu, Hint diasporası, sömürgeci yayılma

Introduction

According to the latest official statistics from the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA), Indian migrants number 30 million across 208 countries, making them the second largest group of immigrants in the world, second only to the Chinese (MEA). This large-scale immigration and its overseas settlement pattern is closely related to the British Empire's conquest of the Indian continent and its leverage of the nation's human resources. It should be noted that the massive Indian overseas emigration phenomenon from post-independent India is quite different from that of the colonial time. In the British colonial era, the Indian migration coincided with the expansion of British colonialism and the Empire's maintenance of order in the newly-acquired territories, which shaped the current population distribution of overseas Indians across the globe (except for the case in the United States). The British rulers deployed Indian manpower to other colonies through of conscription, as service personnel, as convicts and as indentured laborers to serve colonial interests. This was a large-scale organization, aside from being a colonial conquest. Of course, this expansion saw the movement of a large number of Indian businessmen. In short, the above-mentioned immigration groups laid the basic foundation and structure of today's global Indian Diaspora. In this regard, studying the phenomenon of overseas Indian immigrants from the perspective of British colonial rule and the utilization of manpower in India will both provide an understanding of the world of overseas Indian immigrants, and serve as a necessary research foundation. Based

on a discussion of British colonial conquest and overseas dominance, this paper introduces how the large-scale and organized Indian migration occurred, and then analyses the different immigration patterns and categories of overseas Indians respectively. Finally, the paper discusses the contemporary influence of these immigrant groups.

The status of India and its overseas immigrants in the British colonial system

To some extent, the history of mankind is also a history of migration. The global immigration has been a continuous phenomenon since ancient times, although it was the "Age of Discovery" that truly kicked off a cascading series of migration that linked the Old and New Worlds. There were two great waves of colonial expansion and exploitation initiated by the Europeans: the first lasted from the end of the 15th century to the end of the 18th century, and was driven primarily by the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, Italian, English and French; while the second wave was marked by the rise of Germany in 1870, and ended with the outbreak of World War I in 1914. Global travel and migration developed at an astonishing pace during the period of European colonial expansion (Kegley and Wittkopf 1997, 103–105). Simultaneously, the Russian Empire was embarking on its own imperialistic conquest along the borders of the steppe that ran roughly from Eastern Europe, passing through Central Asia and continuing to Mongolia and China (including Russia's invasion and annexation of more than 1.5 million square kilometres of land from China), as well as into Siberia, the Kamchatka peninsula, Sakhalin and the vast area of Alaska. The result was a vast empire that stretched from the Baltic Sea in the west to the Pacific Ocean in the east, and from the Arctic Ocean to the north to the Black Sea, Caspian Sea and Lake Baikal to the South. Countries such as Germany, Japan and the United States joined the club of imperialist powers, with Germany and Japan obtaining large areas of foreign territory through aggressive wars, while the United States expanded its territory in North America through constant invasions, acquiring certain colonies abroad (the largest of which was the Philippines, which was captured from Spain).

Over nearly four centuries of colonial expansion, aside from countries like China, Thailand (Siam), Japan, Turkey, and Persia (Iran), the continents of America, Africa, Asia and Oceania were almost completely colonized by Europeans. Although China, Turkey, Persia, and other countries were not completely colonized, they were carved up by foreign powers competing for "spheres of influence", and therefore lost their independence and sovereign integrity. Japan has its own unique story, being transformed through the Meiji Restoration under the slogan "Fukoku Kyohei" (rich country; strong army), setting a course toward military might and conquest that eventually brought

Japan into the troubling arena of colonialism and imperialism by wreaking disaster on neighbouring countries. Through colonial expansion, the European colonialists and their descendants took control of the entire world, aside from the Japanese Empire. The colonies of the Americas gained independence in late 18th century and the early 19th century, although these new countries were controlled entirely by European immigrants and their descendants, rather than by the natives. Thus, the newly established American countries should actually be considered European settlements. Japan also emerged as a notorious imperialist country due to its immense greed and brutal, sadistic treatment of the indigenous peoples in its colonies. Considering the combination of Japanese colonies in the Asia-Pacific region with colonies founded by other imperialist countries, almost the entire world fell under the grip of colonial rulers or imperialist aggressors.

The end of World War I opened a door on new era, witnessing the gradual disintegration of the global colonial system and the collapse of the German, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian Empires. The basic structure of the imperialist colonial system and its hegemonic system remained unchanged in the aftermath of the war, while the political landscape and power structure had been changed forever in Europe. During that time, several new independent countries were formed in Europe, while European colonial rule on other continents remained almost intact. The declaration of self-determination and independence seemed to apply only to Europe, while in the colonies of the Europeans, it was nothing but empty promises.

The dismantling of the colonial system actually began with the victory of the anti-fascist alliance in World War II. Although viewed as a negative concept, the Cold War era actually witnessed and contributed to the total collapse of the colonial structure. In the 1980s there were still individual movements against the colonial empire, and the white minority rule in South Africa was not completed overthrown until 1994. That said, one cannot claim that colonial rule did not end until the 1980s, as the demise of the apartheid system and its institutionalized racial segregation was rich only in symbolic meaning, as the white supremacist regime in South Africa had long abandoned the concept of "suzerain" (whether it be British or Dutch). Perhaps the resumption of sovereignty over Hong Kong and Macau by the People's Republic of China can also be held up as a symbol of the ultimate dissolution of overseas European empires. Of course, some European countries and the United States still possess enclaves and pocket colonies around the world (mainly islands in the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian Oceans), although this situation is no longer comparable to that of colonial rule. In fact, European countries started to withdraw from their former colonies in the

1980s, and so most former colonies have achieved autonomy or outright independence from their colonial rulers.

Etymologically speaking, the word "colony" originated from Latin language, referring specifically to the ancient Roman overseas settlements within the conquered territories of the Empire (Srinivasan 2001, 52–67). In fact, the original expression "colonization" embraced the meaning of immigration. The process of colonial expansion was actually the same process in the intercontinental migrations of the European colonialists, and the European imperialists and colonialists were themselves immigrants. For Europeans, colonization and immigration were synonymous. Even the non-European immigration activities wholly served the colonial interests of the conquerors. During the process of European colonial conquest over more than 400 years, global migration was mainly initiated and dominated by Europeans. For example, millions of enslaved Africans were transported to the American colonies as a cheaper and more plentiful labour source; and later, as substitutes for slave labour, Europeans imported Asian indentured laborers (especially Chinese and Indians) under force or deception in the infamous "coolie trade" to colonies around the globe. Although these two kinds of migration activities were part of the global migration phenomenon of this period, they could not be compared with the other types of invasion and colonization carried out by European colonizers around the world. Both black African slaves and indentured laborers from China or India suffered physical and psychological torture and lived in misery due to the passive, organized and manipulated migration process controlled by the European colonial rulers. From the Age of Discovery to the end of the World War I, global migration flowed mainly from the European centre to other parts of the world, which led to a reshaping and expansion of geographic boundaries, and an increasing exploitation of human and natural resources by Europe. By the early 19th century, one-third of the world's lands were in the hands of Europeans, and by the end of the 19th century, this proportion had grown to two-thirds. At the outbreak of World War I, the ration had risen to a peak of four-fifths (Kegley and Wittkopf 1997, 104). Britain was definitely the most "successful" country in this regard, being the empire on which the sun never sets. By the early 19th century, Britain had captured one-fifth of the world's land and controlled a quarter of the global population (Kegley and Wittkopf 1997, 105).

The Age of Discovery and the prevalence of mercantilism thinking in the late 15th and early 16th centuries provided Britain with unprecedented opportunities, fuelling its overseas trade and colonial expansion. At that time, the overseas markets were highly attractive to British businessmen:

Europe was the traditional market for the UK's overseas trade of textiles in exports, re-exports and imports; while the American market represented huge potential, being able to provide Britain with sugar, cotton, tobacco and other goods that could not be produced in Europe, thus becoming an important raw material base for Britain. The development of the African market was closely related to the development of the American market. With the rise of the transatlantic slave trade, the triangular trade system carrying slaves, cash crops and manufactured goods between Europe, America and Africa was gradually established (Qineng 2007, 35).

The British development of overseas trade was accompanied by all forms of violence to exploit economic and labour resources of the indigenous people. The British colonialists then began to look to the East, launching the start of colonial expansion into Asia, with India becoming one of its most important destinations.

Portuguese explorer Vasco Da Gama rounded Africa's Cape of Good Hope and anchored off Calicut, India on May 20, 1498, becoming the first European colonizer to reach India by sea (Jian et al. 2004, 438). The Portuguese came first as explorers, but stayed as conquerors, gaining control of the sea lanes and setting up onshore assets along the coast of India, ultimately dominating colonial trade in the Indian Ocean. Then came the Dutch, the British and the French who fought for colonial hegemony in India, with Great Britain emerging as the biggest winner. The Portuguese, the Dutch and the French were once very powerful on the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent, with control of large colonies, but in the later phases of the struggle for domination and interests, the Portuguese, the Dutch and the French were successively defeated. The Portuguese had been operating in India for almost a century before the arrival of the Dutch, British and French, but were constantly defeated by the Dutch and the Indians. By the 1640s, almost all of the former Portuguese colonies in India had fallen into the hands of the Dutch, with only three remaining pocket colonies on India's west coast (along the Arabian Sea), being Goa, Daman and Diu (Jian et al. 2004, 439). The British then drove out the Dutch who, after losing territory to the British, completely withdrew from the subcontinent in 1781 (Jian et al. 2004, 440). After being defeated and expelled by the British, the French gave up any further power struggles with the British on the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent but retained four small colonies in southern India: Pondicherry, Karikal, Yanam and Mahe. After Britain defeated France in South Asia, it later restored to the ownership of these four colonies to France in order to secure peace between the two nations in India under the terms of the Treaty of Paris signed in 1763 (Jian et al. 2004, 443). After India gained its independence, the Indian government recovered these pocket colonies from the French and the Portuguese in 1954 and 1961, respectively, either by diplomatic means or by force. Among them, Goa became a state (almost

the smallest) in its own right, while the four former French colonies, including Pondicherry, became a Union Territory called Pondicherry, while Daman and Diu became another Union Territory, separate from Pondicherry. Consequently, Britain no longer had any difficulty in consolidating and expanding its colonial rule in India (Shihai and Weijun 2003, 99).

The British did not colonize India from the very beginning, first establishing a foothold through trade and then building up their colonial empire by force. The East India Company, a British trading concern, was incorporated by Royal Charter in 1600, but changed gradually from a commercial trading enterprise into a mighty entity of commercial, political, military and judicial power, encroaching into the subcontinent and finally taking full control of India. As observed by renowned German historian and Indologist Hermann Kulke, "The acquisition of a vast empire by a trading company was certainly a rather strange phenomenon" (Kulke and Rothermund 2004, 244). The East India Company first established settlements in Madras, Bombay and Calcutta, then then expanded its territory and gained control through limited wars, gradually subjugated the local governments and the Mughal Empire, thus becoming the ultimate political master on the subcontinent. Originally, the East India Company's goal was primarily profit rather than territory. Greedy in their nature, the British soon got involved in constant frictions with the local Indians that escalated into massive conflicts. In the end, military conquest became an inevitable option, and the acquisition and expansion of territory became an unlimited target (Peers 2016). From the Battle of Plassey in 1757 which marked as the beginning of British rule in India, to the British annexation of Punjab in 1849, it took the British colonialists nearly a century to complete the conquest of India and to form the vast British Raj. In the wake of the Revolt of 1857 (the mutiny of the sepoys in the Company's army), control of India was transferred from the EIC to the British Crown, ushering in a period of high imperialism in India, epitomized by the British Raj in India that endured until 1947.

The British colonialists accelerated the process of the Industrial Revolution and promoted the comprehensive development and upgrading of various industries, such as commerce, maritime trade, finance, etc. to the detriment of India through the draining of its wealth. At that time, India was Britain's largest overseas blood bank, serving to nourish the British economy. As Lin Chenjie summarizes:

> During British colonization in India, India was firstly regarded as the ideal object of economic exploitation and a crucial source of the primitive accumulation of capital; and then as an object of Industrial capital exploitation, and a sales market and country of origin of raw

materials for Britain. Finally, it became the victim of capital export and monopoly for the Empire (Chengjie 1995, 113).

Historically speaking, India played a significant role in the maintenance of overseas colonial rule for the British Empire. As once pointed out by a renowned English writer Lawrence James, "reliance on India marked the innovation of British governance" (James 1997, 30). As a matter of fact, Britain's native industrial development and overseas colonial plundering, as well as the expansion of the colonial map, would not have succeeded without the support of India. The British conquest of India not only brought great material wealth (which was converted into important capital for the development of British industry), but also created a huge pool of human resources. Britain's dependence on India for financial capital, military resources, raw materials, and labour was enormous. As an early stage centre of British colonization, the Bengal region indeed abounded in natural resources of various kinds and fertile lands for cultivation, supporting a vast population of over 40 million people, roughly four times the size of that on the British mainland (James 1997, 30). The contribution of India in terms of natural and human resources was critical to the British conquest and dominion of the Indian sub-continent and its colonial expansion into other areas. In the Eastern Hemisphere, the British relied on India for its colonial expansion and annexation, and gradually established political dominance in Southeast Asia, Africa, Oceania, Central Asia and the Middle East, which helped create an advantageous position from which to threaten China. As Chinese scholars Liu Jian regularly points out:

> After the conquest of India and the establishment of the vast British Raj, Britain regarded India as a stepping stone in the East for its colonial aggression. During the invasion of China, Southeast Asia, Iran and Afghanistan, the Indian colony played a highly supporting role in replenishing manpower and material resources. Even the notorious British opium trade, which poisoned and devastated the Chinese people, was based in India (Jian et al. 2004, 455).

The British utilized India as an important foundation from which to invade China, and India granted its master access to the infiltration, encroachment and invasion of China's Xizang (Tibet), Yunnan, Guizhou and other major cities, smuggling opium into China by sea routes, initiating two Opium Wars in Chinese coastal cities and taking subsequent control of China. It is safe to state that the contribution of India remained high for British colonial expansion in China and the neighbouring countries to India in terms of finance and manpower. A large number of Indian sepoys were recruited into the British colonial army, and the fidelity of the Indian troops was an important factor in the

establishment and consolidation of British rule in India, as well as its colonial dominance and expansion outside of it. It was the exploitation and utilization of Indian soldiers that kept the British Empire strong, and that allowed it to gain full control over India within a few decades. In particular, the fertile plains of the Punjab that had come under direct British rule had "become the granary of British India and the chief recruiting ground for the British Indian army" (Kulke and Rothermund 2004, 241). The British invasions of China, whether by land or by sea, were largely facilitated by Indian sepoys, who were the principal protagonists on several bloody battlefields, in the two Opium Wars, in the looting and burning of the original Summer Palace, and in the Eight-Power Allied Forces War of aggression against China. The Indians stood alongside the Imperial masters and committed atrocities against innocent Chinese people. As the famous scholar K. N. Vaid once wrote: "The hoisting of the Union Jackflag at possession point in Hong Kong on January 1841 was witnessed by 2,700 Indian troops and 4 Indian merchants" (Vaid 1972, 15).

Indians were fully engaged in the Anglo-Chinese Opium Wars from the very outset. In addition to their high involvement in the opium trade and as soldiers fighting in wars, Indians would subsequently also be recruited as police officers, employees and businessmen involved in the trade of opium and cotton in the British-occupied territories, and in Concessions in Shanghai, Wuhan, Guangzhou and Hong Kong. In the International Concessions in Shanghai, Wuhan and Guangzhou, Indians were once ubiquitous, and became known among the local Chinese by their derogatory nickname of "Hong-Tou-A-san" (turbaned number three) (Saran and Ke 2018, 105). As once noted by Indian scholars Brij V. Lal et al., "by the early 1930s, the total number of Indians (in China) was estimated to be about 10,000, including 5,000 in Hong Kong, 3,000–4,000 in Shanghai and other cities in Eastern China, and 1,000 in Xinjiang" (Lal et al. 2007, 211). In this period, it was estimated that a number of Indians were also residing in Tibet, and especially Lhasa, although accurate figures in this regard are hard to obtain. Most foreigners (including Indians) left China in the years leading up to and following the Communist victory in 1949, but there still existed a long-standing Indian community in Hong Kong. At present, there are roughly around 50,000 Indians residing in Hong Kong.[1] This is a conservative estimate, but if you include the illegal overstayers and refugees, the total number may be much higher, being mainly a product of the immigration phenomenon brought

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[1] According to the authors' interviews with Sir Sita K Motwani, a Hong Kong industrialist, publisher and social worker, and Deepak Kaul, the former consul of Indian culture in Hong Kong, and the data collected by the Indian consulate in Hong Kong in 2011.

about by British colonial rule in Hong Kong. From the very beginning, Indian immigrants in Hong Kong were intertwined with the colonial interests of the British Empire. As political and military instruments of the British colonial rulers, they gradually accumulated huge social and economic resources and shared the vested interests of the colonialist. They were always the most loyal subjects and accomplices of the British Empire, and became defenders and beneficiaries of colonial interests.

The overseas expansion of the British Empire and Indian overseas immigration

The British Empire was involved in almost all major wars in modern times, in which the contributions and sacrifices of Indian soldiers and the Indian homeland were of great importance. The British exploitation of Indian manpower can be best exemplified by its utilization of Indian sepoys and the export of Indian labour abroad. Historically, India has provided the largest number of international indentured workers, who are also the most widely distributed around the world. It is safe to point out that the support provided to the British Empire by India's human resources was on par with its material and financial support. Influenced by the Portuguese, who sold Chinese indentured labour (commonly known as "piglets") to places like Cuba, the British quickly followed the example and began exporting Indians under contract to their colonies in the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, Africa and the Indian Ocean islands in support of their plantation economy (Kadekar). However, the policies implemented by the British colonialists to strengthen their rule and exploitation further disrupted India's feudal natural economy, in which agriculture and handicrafts were closely integrated, crushing traditional handicrafts and manufacturing industries with a certain level of development, destroying the original productive forces and depriving countless handicraft workers of their means of livelihood. Coupled with the frequent famines, many people were dislocated and were unable to make a living, and so began to look overseas for alternative employment (Chengjie 2004, 11). This, along with other factors, compelled them to leave the subcontinent, thus launching a large-scale Indian overseas emigration. This was also the basis for the massive expropriation of indentured labour. Of course, joining the army and police of the British colonial institutions seemed like a better choice for most people. The above-mentioned immigration types will be further elaborated in the following sections.

Indian soldiers and policemen

From its very beginning, the East India Company employed indigenous Indians (including the armies of the princely states) to serve its colonial conquest, and "enslaved India with the army of its own people" (CTBCPC 1961, 246). The Indian armies of the princely states were, in effect, subordinated to the European officers and served British interests. The British marched along the Ganges and reached an unprecedented level of control over the subcontinent with the help of Indian sepoys, clearing the way in the process. Later, the British set up its own standing army, known officially as the British Indian army, which gradually expanded in scale and developed its own military police and administrative management systems. It was through this army that the British maintained their colonial rule in India for more than 200 years and fought in bloody battles elsewhere for colonial expansion. During this process, Indian immigrants successfully established a strong presence overseas as solders, policemen and lower-ranking clerks, along with their relatives.

Examples of the overseas conquests of the sepoys of the British East Indian Company are briefly enumerated here for reference: In 1795, it assisted Britain in monopolizing the lucrative spice trade and the occupation of Maluku Island, known as the Spice Islands; it played an important role in the British invasion of Egypt from 1800–1801; then, in 1810, with the help of thousands of sepoys, the British invaded and took possession of Mauritius, and then invaded Java in 1811 (Lal et al. 2007, 44). The British Indian Army was one of the largest armed forces involved in World War II, numbering 2.5 million. The Army fought the three major Axis powers (Japan, Italy and Germany) from Hong Kong in the east, to Italy in the west. It fought on varying terrains, from the swamps and jungles of Malaya and Burma to the rocky terrain of Eritrea; and from the sandy desert of North Africa, to the mountains of central Italy (Roy 2017). At the height of India's struggle for independence, these Indian soldiers fought for the British rulers and protected the interests of the Empire.

After experiencing the brutal wars in the British colonies in Asia and Africa, a number of the surviving soldiers chose to settle locally after the military forces had been disbanded or withdrawn. For instance, Dean Mohammed, born in the city of Patna, Bihar, emigrated to Ireland in the late 18th century after serving 15 years in the Bengal Army, being an Indian traveller, surgeon and entrepreneur who was one of the most notable early non-European immigrants to the Western World. Mohammed opened his first Indian restaurant in the UK, facilitating the promotion of curry-based Indian cuisine locally; and was also the first Indian to publish a travel book in English, entitled The Travels of Dean Mahomet.

Mohammed was also a practitioner in the introduction of the Indian medicated vapor bath, with royalty among his clients, including King George IV and King William IV (Lal et al. 2007, 57). He was thus regarded as a successful role model as a retired Indian soldier who migrated to Ireland and Britain.

Sikh policemen were an inseparable part of the landscape of Shanghai in the first few decades of the 20th century, as a largely forgotten chapter in the story of the ties between China and India. In a foreign concession like Shanghai, the police served as "the most visible public symbol of colonial rule, in daily interaction with the local population and enforcing the codes of law that maintain colonial authority" (Anderson and Killingray 1991, 1–2). The Sikhs, a deemed martial race by the British colonialists, were "recruited from Punjab in India as a part of Shanghai Municipal Police (SMP) to patrol the traffic in the International Concessions under the supervision of the Shanghai Municipal Council, its governing body" (Vathyam 2016). By 1898, a mounted police detachment composed completely of Sikhs was established, and by 1900, the number of Sikh police in Shanghai had reached 159. This number continued to increase, and by the time of the Second Sino-Japanese War, there were a total of roughly 700 Sikh police in Shanghai, constituting the largest proportion of the foreign police in service within Shanghai's International Concessions (Saran and Ke 2018, 101-102). In a negative portrayal of Sikhs, they were referred to as "Hongtou Asan", describing their status in Chinese eyes as "vicious lackeys of their British masters" (Jackson 2012, 1675). Due to the differences in the language and culture from the local Chinese, the Sikhs in Shanghai remained a relatively closed community and established their own networks, gurdwaras, schools and entertainment clubs, while very few married local women. By the late 1930s and early 1940s, as the rising Japanese threat against the International Concessions intensified, an exodus of Sikhs occurred, most of whom headed to Punjab. By 1945, the Shanghai Municipal Police had been disbanded and the Shanghai Sikh police passed into history. While some Sikhs left Shanghai for Hong Kong after the founding of the People's Republic of China, others chose to stay in Shanghai, even after the 1950s, with the last Sikhs leaving Shanghai in 1973 (Vathyam 2016).

Indian convicts

Another little-known element in the history of Indian immigration occurred in the late 18th to mid-20th centuries when British India began transferring convicts to its overseas colonies in Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean. As Anderson stated in her book:

The first convict settlements established overseas by the East India Company was located in Bengkulu, along the southwest coast of Sumatra (1787–1825); and the Andaman Islands (1793–1796, 1858–1945), Penang in the British Straights Settlements (1790–1860), Singapore and Malacca (1825–73), British Mauritius (1815–53), and parts of Myanmar and Tenasserim (1828–62) were later made penal colonies respectively (Anderson 2007, 200).

It is believed that as many as six ships set out from Madras, Bombay and Bengal each year carrying prisoners in numbers thought to range from 12 to 200 (Anderson 2005, 144). However, due to the lack of historical records, the total number of prisoners transported over the Indian Ocean is difficult to quantify. Based on the limited official statistics, a rough calculation can be made as follows:

Before 1825, the East India Company sent a minimum of 2,000 and perhaps as many as 4,000 to 6,000 to the province of Bengkulu; Between 1815 and 1837, another 1,500 or so convicts set off from the ports of the Bengal and Bombay Presidencies to Mauritius for the long voyage of exile; moreover, the Bengal and Madras authorities transported at least 5,000 and maybe as many as 7,000 convicts to Burma from 1828 to 1862 (Allen 2012a, 9).

The remote Andaman Islands was turned into a fully-fledged penal colony in the wake of the Indian Mutiny of 1857, and the transportation of Indian convicts continued until the Japanese occupation of the islands during World War II. Anderson estimated that between 1858 and 1939, British India transported around 83,000 prisoners to the penal settlement of the Andamans, making the Andamans the largest penal colony in the entire British Empire in terms of the total number of incarcerated convicts (Anderson 2018, 25–26).

Stephen Nicholas and Peter R. Shergold estimated that the Straits Settlements together received on an average of 200 arrivals per year from the three Presidencies in India, amounting to 15,000 convicts (Nicholas and Shergold 1988, 30–32). However, Anderson deemed this an underestimate, and cited a number for Singapore of 16,000 convicts by 1858 (Anderson 2005, 144-145). On the whole, the British authorities transported at least 74,800 and perhaps as many as 100,000 South Asian convicts overseas between 1787 and 1943 (Yang 2003, 180; Anderson 2007, 188; Rediker et al. 2007, 9).

It has been reported that almost all of the deported criminals were men who had been sentenced to life in prison for murder and robbery etc. Women, charged with murder or infanticide, made up less than 10 percent of the total. Indian sepoys or other political convicts who participated in the 1857 Mutiny were also jailed here, coming from different parts of India and from different

socioeconomic backgrounds, although most were poor Hindus from the Bengal area (Lal et al. 2007, 45).

In the eyes of most British colonial rulers, exile was a harsher punishment than the death penalty. Indian society in general was isolated from the outside world, and according to their beliefs and customs, crossing the Kalapani (the Black Water) to foreign lands was a major taboo, resulting in the loss of one's social respectability and even caste. Consequently, exile was seen by British as a powerful deterrent as a punishment for crime among Indian people. The benefits of transportation were two-fold: on the one hand, it solved the ongoing problem of prison overcrowding in British India due to the increasing crime rate, while on the other hand, it created a cheap and controllable workforce to counter the labour shortage in the development of the newly conquered territories. As such, the transported convicts were used by the British rulers to build new colonies and the associated infrastructure works. Furthermore, it was also economically sensible to engage convicts in tasks that ordinary workers refused to undertake. "Generally well behaved and hardworking, the convicts initially carried out such works as clearing land and rubbish, reclaiming swamps, laying the early public roads, and erecting buildings and bridges" (McNair 2013; Turnbull 1972, 50–51), and it has been   suggested that it was convicts who built the early Singapore (McNair 2013, 11, 109–110), and many of their contributions are still in existence today, including the Church of St Andrew and the Presidential Palace.

However, after the Indian uprising of 1857, the practice became unpopular as convicts started to be considered a threat to security. Consequently, Singapore refused to accept any more mutineers. In response to the opening of new penal colonies in the Andaman Islands, the forced migration of Indian convicts to Southeast Asia came to an end. In March 1858, a group of 1,000 convicts were sent to the Andaman Islands, which "ushered a new chapter in the history of transportation in colonial South Asia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" (Yang 2003, 207).

"Before 1859, while the time-expired convicts may have been released, no provision was made for their repatriate at government expense" (Turnbull 1970, 43), and they generally lacked the resources to return to India. Most chose to integrate into the local community, to marry local women and to settle permanently. For example, intermarriages with the Malay communities created the Jawi Peranakan, and some achieved prominence. For instance, "one Brahman convict was released in 1839 and later acted as a respected priest for the Singapore Hindu community for twenty five years; another former convict, who died in 1865, was reputed to have left 50,000 dollars" (Turnbull 1970, 43-44).

Nowadays, the Jawi Peranakan boast substantial wealth and social standing, and have a profound impact on local society.

Today, a large number of Indian convict descendants live in places like Myanmar (Burma), Malaysia, Singapore and Mauritius, although they don't share a separated and unique memory. Marriage and family life were two approaches to redemption that realized the social rebirth of convicts and helped them merge into local societies, meaning that the identity of the convict descendants simply diminished. The situation in Andamans, however, is somewhat different, where indigenous islanders were not settled cultivators. Today the Islands are home to a self-acknowledged convict-descended community known as the "Pre-42s"or the "Local-born" (Vaidik 2010; Anderson 2011; Anderson 2015; Sen 2000).

Indentured labour

The largest group of Indian overseas immigrants resulted from the export of labour services, with indentured labour emerging as a leading example in this regard. The proliferation of the indentured system was driven mainly by two forces – first and foremost, in the face of strong condemnation on moral grounds from various parties, the Slavery Abolition Act 1833 brought about the abolition of the slave trade throughout the vast British Empire, with some exceptions (Blackburn 1988, 420), which resulted in a labour shortage in the plantation economy of the British overseas colonies. For instance, since the beginning of the 16th century, an era of imperialism brought about the successive annexation of many Southeast Asian countries by British colonialists. These early colonies were generally sparsely populated, leading the British to set their eyes on India – as a populous neighbouring country, where an abundant labour force with high skills and qualifications prevailed. Moreover, considering the British colonial hegemony in India at that time, it was easier to control and manipulate the Indian immigrants than Chinese or Japanese workers from other non-British colonies. Transporting labour from British India to the British settlements in Southeast Asia served two purposes, alleviating the population pressure, as well as the domestic class and ethnic conflict in India, and serving as a source of labour for the colonies in Southeast Asia. An apprenticeship system was adopted with the emancipation of slaves that required all enslaved persons to be transformed into "apprentices", and to continue labouring for their former masters for a period of four to six years in exchange for provisions. It was essentially slavery by another name (Burn 1937; Green 1976), although this new system came with some inherent flaws that led to its later abandonment. The former slaves had a stronger sense of legal and self-protection, and so refused to do their work, protesting the

system of gradual emancipation, and demanding immediate and full liberation. To fill the labour "vacuum", Hugh Tinker noted,

> The British Empire recruited nearly 15 million Indians from inland cities in northern India and the coastal cities of Eastern India and shipped them to the overseas British colonies as far away as Natal, Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad, Suriname and Fiji to replace the former slaves on the sugar plantations. Nearby were places like Malaysia and Sri Lanka in southeast Asia where Indians were forced to grow tea, pepper, coffee, rubber and palm oil, and to work in tin mining and logging for roads (Tinker 1974, 77).

In nature, they were indentured labour, known more commonly as Coolies or Piglets, and served as cheap labour, subject to the interests of the British colonialists, and with the typical characteristics of colonial subjects.

Concerning the source of indentured labour, the early immigrants were Tamils from the Madras region of India, or Eastern Indians from the present-day Bangladesh. In the later period, the majority of immigrants were farmers from the north, such as from the Gangetic plain in Uttar Pradesh. In other words, the indentured laborers came mainly from the coastal areas of south India from the very beginning but were later replaced by Indian laborers from the north. They were sent to the British colonies of South Africa, Mauritius, Fiji, Trinidad, Guyana, and Jamaica to ease the labour local crises. Large numbers of workers also travelled to Guadeloupe and the Martini Islands of the French colonies, and to Suriname in the Dutch colonies (Ramsaran 2018).

The indentured system was a large-scale labour practice with intrinsic defects, and which differed from all other forms of contractual labour in the 17th and 18th centuries. Initially, indentured labour was completely monopolized and regulated by the British Indian government:

> Most applicants were young men aged 20 to 25, who then entered into an indentured contract for a minimum five-year period. The contract explicitly defined the general living conditions, such as base salary, working hours, compensation (laborers worked five and half days a week. Adult men earned 12 pence, compared to 9 pence earned by adult women), as well as the type of work, housing, hygiene and medical facilities. (Lal et al. 2007, 46).

The government reiterated that Indian workers were to enjoy the same rights as the local population, and that all colonies were required to submit annual reports to the British Indian government. When any unequal treatment of the laborers was exposed, the Indian side would directly intervene in mediation. In addition, the contract promised repatriation by providing free passage home

for Indian laborers who worked in the colonies for more than 10 years. Those who did not return, as a persuasive method, were given ownership of land once their term was over. Those who had worked for more than 5 years were permitted to return to India at their own expense. "In Fiji, nearly two-thirds chose to settle after completing their contracts in the hope of finding a new life and new opportunities" (Lal et al. 2007).

Another feature of the indenture system was that in order to prevent a perpetuated gender imbalance in society, the government of India applied no restrictions on the immigration of women and children in its foreign policy. After 1870, India fixed the ratio of men to women at 100 to 40 (Lal et al. 2007). Although the colonial authorities complained about the extra cost of the accompanying female labour, the British Indian government remained decisive. In fact, the influx of female laborers helped create a more culturally and ethnically stable Indian community in the British Empire's overseas colonies.

Despite the British Government's introduction of labour regulations to protect the Indian immigrants, the law was not always strictly enforced. As a result, the indentured system was in essence a "modern system of slavery"(Allen 2012b, 225) that incorporated many of the inhumane aspects of the old system of slave labour, and both the signing contracts and the provisions of rights and obligations were highly unreasonable and deceptive. Any breach of contract was regarded as a criminal offence rather than a civil matter. For example, laborers may be thrown in prison for making an impolite gesture or comment toward their master, forcing them subsequently into more laborious, but unpaid work. In any case, the advantage always lay with the employer in labour disputes. As such, the position of Indian laborers under the indentured system was miserable, being worked like machines. These Indians suffered from a variety of diseases on their journeys to the colonies, and while many people died *en route*, the survivors migrated in hope of a bright future, but were exploited to the extreme by the recruiting agent and the employer, forced to live in harsh conditions, with low wages and long working hours. Under British colonial rule, these indentured Indian laborers seemed unable to escape the cycle of destiny (Wong 2002, 78). In general, indentured workers were treated only slightly better than the trafficked African slaves. As victims of exploitation and oppression, it can be seen as one of the most infamous chapters in the history of Indian immigration. However, the descendants of the indentured laborers who chose to stay were fully integrated into local society, and their personal achievements and social status are quite different from those of their grandparents.

Free immigrants

Apart from indentured labour, there was also a group of free Indians who travelled to British settlements around the globe who hoped to improve their living and working conditions, being mostly small vendors, artisans, shop owners, clerks, merchants and other professionals whose immigration and social conditions were slightly better than those under the indentured system. As free immigrants, they came equipped with abundant information and sufficient start-up capital and utilized their social connections to take full advantage of market opportunities, gradually accumulating wealth and consolidating their own economic power.

> Based in Hong Kong, Burma, East Africa, South Africa, Aden and the coastal areas of Western Asia, they established their own business network, carried out a variety of commercial activities, and expanded their business circle to many countries in Europe and the United States (Satyanarayana 2001).

Consequently, the overseas Indian immigrants in the colonial times not only greatly influenced the current global distribution pattern of Indian immigrants, but also formed a comprehensive global business network that would ultimately lay the necessary foundation for the strengthening of the economic power of today's overseas Indians.

According to the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA), although overseas Indians can be found on all five continents, their distribution across them is uneven, with "Asia having the largest number of Indian immigrants" (Singh 2014). This is mainly due to the large number of indentured laborers transported to Southeast Asia during the colonial period and the massive labour migration from India to the Gulf countries, post-independence. For instance, China and India are linked by mountains and waters, have enjoyed an overwhelming volume of friendly cultural exchanges over 2,000 years. As early as the first century AD, Indian traders settled in the Yunnan province of Southern China. In the 1930s and 1940s, China was plagued by internal and external conflicts and wars, and almost all Indian immigrants left mainland China, while a large long-standing community of Indians remained in Hong Kong. In recent years, as the cultural and commercial exchanges between the two countries have deepened, a growing population of Indian students, tourists, traders, and employees have headed to Mainland China. That said, there has been no significant increase in the number of Indians settling down locally, and the few settlers are concentrated in such coastal cities as Guangzhou, while the number of Indians in Hong Kong keeps rising.

One of the most notable free-immigration groups were the Chettiars (money lenders) from Tamil Nadu, India, a well-known historical trading caste in south India who moved to Malaya, Burma, the British Straits Settlements, Siam, Java, Indo-China and northern Sumatra in their masses, starting from 1826 onward (Markovits 1999, 902). The Chettiars were financial intermediaries who developed an extensive financial network throughout Southeast Asia during the colonial era and played an active role in the provision of credits. In the early 19th century, before the advent of modern banks or rural cooperatives, only a few European Banks made selective business loans to ensure capital flow, which limited the development of some economic entities. Consequently, the Chettiars started lending money to small- and medium-sized businesses who had neither capital nor collateral, boasting particular expertise in agricultural credits.

> The Chettiars credit network was heavily dependent on British-Indian banks; indeed it could be argued that the Chettiars, acting as intermediaries for Western capital in the expansion of commodity production, were essentially complementary to the interests of Western financial and commercial interests" (Brown 1993, 254).

At that time, agricultural development in the Irrawaddy Delta led to an expansion of the area given over to paddy fields in lower Burma, from 0.933 million acres in 1855 to 9.9 million acres in 1930 (Wang 2014, 37). Shrewd Chettiars obtained low-interest loans from British banks, and then made loans to Burmese farmers at exorbitant interest rates, being long vilified by Burmese nationalists and even Europeans as "rapacious and usurious moneylenders" (Schrader 1996). Over the decades, the loans made by Chettiars to all agriculturists in the main rice-producing districts amounted to 450–500 million rupees. As a result, the Chettiars seized the opportunity to monopolize the paddy fields in southern Burma, leaving them with well over one-quarter of the prime delta land by 1936 (Adas 1974, 391). With the rapid development and increasingly close interconnection of Southeast Asia's economy, the Chettiars also financed farmers in areas such as Burma, Malaya and Ceylon, etc., being involved manly in the agriculture and commodity trade of rice and tea of Sikkim, under the jurisdiction of the Madras Presidency, thus quickly gaining a foothold in the emerging plantation economy. In the 1880s, the Chettiars leveraged their relationship with the European banks, the Chettiar-managed Indian imperial bank and the Indian overseas banks to finance land transactions in some Southeast Asian countries. Besides credits and loans, the Chettiars were also active in import and export trade on the Indian Ocean. For instance, the Chettiars in Burma were specialized in the trade of rice and timber (Shaofeng 1986, 99).

Over time, the extensive and complex financial and trading networks established by the Chettiars in Southeast Asia gradually matured.

The Muslim communities of Khojas and Bohras from Gujarat in India had wielded huge influence in the local economy of Southeast Asia in the textile, rice, diamond, and home appliance sectors, among others. Prior to the Great Depression of 1930, Bohras traders had secures a near-monopoly in raw sugar exports from Burma and Indonesia, while in Singapore, the Bohras mainly lived in the Arab areas. At first, they used Singapore only as a transit point for trade between Gujarat and Indo-China peninsula, trading soap, liquid butter, cotton, etc. from India for Chinese spices, gold, porcelain, silk, and so on. Over time, the Bohras merchants began to settle in Singapore to engaged in the trade of textiles, jewellery, spices and other import and export goods (Kaur 2008, 28).

The Sindhis from India were another successful group of born businessmen and frequent world travellers. Only limited numbers of Sindhis had migrated by the end of the 19th century, but they gained momentum after the mid-20th century, with partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 serving as a direct driving force. They were actively involved in the competitive textile industry in Southeast Asia, being mainly responsible for the re-export of textiles from China, India and Japan to Indonesia, Malaysia, and Indochina (Markovits 1999, 891). They enjoyed an overall dominant status in the textile market in the key commercial centres of the region.

When compared to the previously mentioned indentured labour, these free immigrants of Indian origin were equipped with professional skills and ample capital, which paved to the way for their overseas success. Having inherited their ancestors' business success, most of their descendants are capable of maintaining a stable and good-quality middle class life.

Of course, Indian immigrants were a heterogeneous group with astonishing internal diversity and differences. While economy remains as the main reason for migration, many elements need to be taken into consideration when choosing a destination country, including passage cost, likelihood of reemployment in one's previous career, distance from home, the caste and origin of the existing Indian immigrants, the amount of information of the destination country, etc. Globally speaking, most of the indentured laborers who migrated to the British Strait Settlements and South Africa were landless farmers from Tamil Nadu and Gujarat, respectively. Having been displaced from the land they had cultivated for generations, the farmers from the immediate vicinity of Nowsari and Gujarat settled in Fiji and New Zealand in the hope of regaining land ownership, while Punjabis, on the other hand, dispersed all over the world. Those with technical skills migrated to Southeast Asia, Central Africa and West Africa, and found

employment as craftsmen or artisans, while those without headed for the British Strait Settlements and the major treaty ports on China's coast to work as laborers or in other low-paid jobs, for example, as security guards. People from the fertile lands of Punjab moved to such economically developed countries as Canada and the United States, while the Chettiars focused their operations in Burma and Malaya. In addition, some landless farmers from the states of Orissa, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh, etc. started to migrate to Burma, while other farmers worked on the local farms in such Caribbean island countries as Mauritius with government support. Last but not least, a trading group composed of Parsees, Ismaili Muslims and Sindhis, etc. who were well known to possess a good business acumen, also roamed far and wide under the cover of the Union flag in search of undiscovered business opportunities (Vaid 1972, 3; Singh and Singh 2003, 5; Sandhu and Mani 1993, 12).

One intriguing fact was that as British colonial subjects, Muslims made up a very high proportion of the migrating businessmen and technicians, as prior to the arrival of the British to India, it was the Muslims who ruled the country, and the Hindus were in awe of them. However, in a stroke of misfortune brought by the British colonizers after the demise of the Mughal Empire, the Muslims who had held high positions and who had accumulated considerable wealth were forced to abdicate their positions, and were gradually ousted from their lands and offices, while the Hindus rose under the Raj (Majumdar 2015, 295). The creation and perpetuation of Hindu-Muslim antagonism was the one of the most tragic legacies of British colonial rule.

Another issue worth mentioning is the age-old social stratification known as the caste system – a deeply-rooted practice in Indian society – in which those at the lowest level, known as the untouchables, led a miserable life of humiliation, discrimination, prejudice and violence at the hands of the cultural elite. The "untouchables" also joined the massive migration, escaping their humiliated identity overseas. After returning home, they expressed their abhorrence of the discredited caste system and played an important role in breaking the shackles of caste discrimination and torture in India. Colonial-era Indian officials have also admitted the positive impact of this type of immigration on the lower castes. After years of hard work overseas, the marginalized castes from India had not only accumulated a certain amount of wealth that facilitated property purchases in India, but had also cultivated their sense of equality and independence and greatly improved their self-esteem, all of which were beneficial in the destabilizing of caste restrictions in India. This valuable immigrant experience had equipped this group with industrialized work practices and vocational training, motivating their self-initiation and creativity. This gave rise to the

emergence of modern labour force that had contributed greatly to the development of industry and commerce in India since the end of the 19th century. Moreover, during the colonial period, Indian immigrants also served as promoters of Indian culture and defenders of Indian national interests. The former was embodied in the fact that as the number of Indian immigrants grew, so did their symbols of identity – their temples. Nowadays, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh temples can be found in many corners of the globe, standing for ritualistic worship and cultural incubation. Of these, the latter was due to the fact that before India's independence, overseas Indian immigrants once advocated for and became the backbone of the national liberation movement. Considering the case of South Africa, in 1893, Gandhi arrived in British former colony of South Africa and lived there for 21 years between 1893 and 1914, and this was where he developed his political views and philosophies.

> It was in South Africa that Gandhi realized his vocation in life. It was there that he invented and practiced satyagraha, and where not only his philosophy of life, but also his attitude to the social problems of India crystallized (Reddy and Gandhi 1993, 3).

In South Africa, Gandhi ultimately became the man who inspired the non-violent resistance on the African continent and led India to its independence, initiating a global movement of decolonization. To some extent, the traditional friendship between India and South Africa has continued and strengthened over time, and this has become an important driving force in the development of bilateral relations between the two countries.

Conclusion

During British colonial rule, Indian manpower was deployed to every corner of the globe, resulting in mass Indian migration accompanying the expansion and conquests of the British Empire. This served as the basis of current population distribution of overseas Indians around the world. The major immigration types comprise four groups, being soldiers and policemen; convicts; indentured labour; and free immigrants, who together constitute the immigration groups both in the colonial period and in the present day. With India and Pakistan claiming independence, and the disintegration of the British colonial system, large numbers of Indians living abroad returned to their homeland to start a new life. Others, however, chose to remain abroad, relying on the legacy of British colonialism, and included the Indians in Hong Kong. The Indian Diaspora, as an independent presence, is growing in strength and is becoming a key factor in the wealth and resources of India today. As pointed by Ning Mingfeng: "The 30

million colonial-era immigrants have been distributed all over the world. This represents an unmeasurable overseas asset, both for the colonial authorities at that time, and for post-independence India" (Minfeng 2012, 53). In recent years, the number and influence of India's overseas immigrants have been increasing, and its economic power and international influence have become been comparable to those of the overseas Chinese, and in some ways even surpassing them. India holds high expectations for its overseas immigrants in terms of capital, skills and talents, and has developed a reliance on them, and a number of new measures have been adopted by the Indian government to leverage the strength of the overseas Indians, alongside the new breakthroughs being made in policies and laws that are both powerful and effective. In the near future, the role of Indians abroad in determining India's development and global rise will become increasingly apparent.

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