

**‘Discontinuous interruptions’: bodiliness and
pluralities in histories of the Indian Army, 1914-1918**

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ABSTRACT

Existing histories of soldiers in the Indian Army during the First World War offer limited sustained engagement with material culture. This is due in part to the value placed by scholars of the Indian Army on first-hand, written testimony, and on other primary sources treated as textual repositories of voice and agency. This thesis considers what might be learned instead from exploring the materialities of primary sources, and poses the research question: How can the study of material culture add to the histories of the men that served in the Indian Army during the First World War? The result is an extensive study of bodiliness, both as a subject matter and as a method of historical enquiry. By examining the bodily materialities of soldiers and their associated practices, this thesis draws on an entanglement of plural critical lenses and worldviews to offer new insights into the experiences of Indian Army soldiers during this period. Moreover, this thesis looks to decolonial and Black feminist scholarships in developing original methodologies of bodiliness, which form a key part of this thesis's objective to research and write histories *otherwise*.

This thesis explores how an interrogation of bodily materialities and bodily methodologies might bring new insights into sources located firmly within the imperial archive(s). These include photographs, film, sound, objects, existing archival oral histories, and the well-known series of Censor of Indian Mails reports, housed variously across the sound archive at the Berlin Humboldt-Universität, the British Library's India Office Records and British Newspaper Archive, the Horniman Museum, and the Imperial War Museum, amongst others. It is not the aim of this thesis to expand the repository of primary materials available to historians of the Indian Army; rather, it considers how historians might reimagine these existing sources by using them in otherwise ways. In doing so, definitions of material culture grounded in objecthood also become unstable, and as such this thesis considers what it means for design historians to research material cultures inflected with non-human and non-object agencies.

This thesis is structured across three chapters. Chapter 1 examines the material cultures of that which is worn 'with' the body, including miniaturised Qur'ans, mala beads, pagri head wrappings, and hair itself. It considers what might be learned from the material dimensions of how soldiers lived in *relation* to others, including non-human and immaterial agencies, and their peers. Chapter 2 examines the materialities of sound and sounding, and explores the enunciations of bodiliness across different registers of sound(ing). This chapter attends to the shifting nature of both sonic sources and bodiliness, and opens the thesis's wider enquiry into how the historian's own bodiliness can play an intentional methodological role in encountering the archive. Chapter 3 considers the materialities of movement, specifically relating to kushti, comic entertainment, prayer, and devotional theatre. The chapter explores how bringing Indian cosmologies from the period to bear on primary sources, and how encountering sources through the bodily methodologies, might offer new conclusions on soldiers' lived experiences.

SIGNED DECLARATION

This thesis represents partial submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Royal College of Art. I confirm that the work presented here is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis. During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Irani', with a stylized, cursive script.

Katherine Irani

Date: 30 August 2023

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¹ Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Duke University Press, 2017), pp. 15-16.

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GLOSSARY AND A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

When referring to cities during the period of British rule, I have retained the official names used at the time for historical and contextual accuracy.

I have chosen across this thesis not to italicise non-English words. For a detailed explanation of the rationale behind this, see the discussion on pages 60.

Amuletalism (also amuletalism)

Contraction of the terms amulet and talisman, as proposed in Chapter 1, to refer to objects that capture both the auspicious and apotropaic functions typically assigned separately to amulets and talismans

Crown British governance of India

Dangal A public kushti or jori swinging competition

India India during the period of British rule

Indian Army The army of recruits from India, organised and administered by the British

Panth The Sikh community

Ranks *See below.*

Table of Indian Army ranks and their approximate British Army equivalent in the First World War²

Indian Infantry Rank (in ascending seniority)	Indian Cavalry (in ascending seniority)	Equivalent Rank in the British Infantry*
Sepoy	Sowar	Private/Trooper
Lance Naik (most junior Non-Commissioned Officer rank)	Acting Lance Dafadar (most junior Non-Commissioned Officer rank)	Lance Corporal
Naik (Non-Commissioned Officer)	Lance Dafadar (Non-Commissioned Officer)	Corporal
Havildar (Non-Commissioned Officer)	Dafadar (Non-Commissioned Officer)	Sergeant
Havildar Major (Non-Commissioned Officer)	Kot Dafadar (Non-Commissioned Officer)	Sergeant Major
Jemadar (most junior Viceroy's Commissioned Officer rank)	Jemadar (most junior Viceroy's Commissioned Officer rank)	Lieutenant
Subedar (Viceroy's Commissioned Officer)	Risaldar (Viceroy's Commissioned Officer)	Captain
Subedar Major (senior Viceroy's Commissioned Officer)	Risaldar Major (Viceroy's Commissioned Officer)	Major

* Caution should be taken when drawing strict equivalences between Indian Army and British Army ranks, however. Due to the commissioning officer

² 'A Guide To Indian Army Ranks: A Basic Glossary to the Most Common Ranks of the Indian Army', Empire, Faith & War, 2016 <<http://www.empirefaithwar.com/tell-their-story/research-your-soldier/helpful-guides/indian-army-ranks>>.

system, even the most senior VCO was subordinate to the lowest ranked British officer.

Sipahi Indian Army soldier

Vahana The vehicle or mount used by a Hindu deity

ABBREVIATIONS

AFPU Army Film and Photographic Unit

BL British Library

CSL Central Sikh League

GGS Guru Granth Sahib

IBPO Indian Base Post Office

IOR India Office Records (British Library)

ISF Indian Soldiers' Fund

IWM Imperial War Museum

NfO Nachrichtenstelle für den Orent (trans. Intelligence Bureau for the Orient)

MEK Museum Europäischer Kulturen

POW Prisoner of war

RHS Royal Historical Society

INTRODUCTION

On Sunday 14 November 2021, I visited the Standing with Giants installation at Hampton Court Palace in Surrey. The installation marked a partnership between the palace and the Standing with Giants community-based art project that creates large-scale pieces to 'commemorate and remember those who lost their lives' in historic and present-day conflicts.³ Standing with Giants had shortly beforehand extended their practice to create colourful life-size, hand-painted aluminium composite figures of NHS staff, to mark their work during the Covid-19 pandemic, but the project had previously focused on creating a mobile memorial installation of 100 silhouetted British soldiers in a standard issue 1914 service uniform (Figure 1). The Hampton Court Palace installation included a commission of 25 new silhouettes 'representing the Indian soldiers' who fought on behalf of the British during the course of the war and later camped at Hampton Court Palace for a Victory Parade that was specifically hosted for late-returning Indian Army soldiers in August 1919 (Figure 2).⁴ The full collection of Tommy and Indian Army figures were arranged on the East Front Gardens, but I was stopped on my walk there by crowds of other early visitors, pausing to watch the procession of Remembrance Sunday musicians and service attendees exiting the chapel. The fading echoes of the brass instruments accompanied me as I wound my way past and out into the gardens, framing the installation against the practice of stoic, unspeaking (if not silent) remembering that characterises much organised, public World War commemoration in the United Kingdom.

The installation at Hampton Court Palace was one of many First World War centenary events that sought to increase public awareness of the scale of the Indian Army's involvement in the conflict. Over 1.4 million men were recruited voluntarily or by force across India between 1914 and 1919.⁵ Initially two infantry divisions and two cavalry brigades were sent to France in August 1914, while other smaller Expeditionary Forces were

³ Historic Royal Palaces and Standing with Giants, "'Standing with Giants at Hampton Court Palace" Official Pamphlet', 2021.

⁴ 'Installations (Hampton Court Palace, November 2021)', *Standing with Giants* <<https://www.standingwithgiants.co.uk/november-2021-hampton-court-palace>> [accessed 27 March 2023].

⁵ Gajendra Singh, *The Testimonies of Indian Soldiers and the Two World Wars: Between Self and Sepoy* (Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 254.



Figure 1.

Standing with Giants: British Tommy Silhouette, at Hampton Court Palace Installation, November 2021 (photo author's own).



Figure 2.

Standing with Giants: Indian Army Soldier Silhouette, at Hampton Court Palace Installation, November 2021 (photo author's own).

initially dispatched to Basra, Egypt and East Africa.⁶ The infantry divisions on the Western Front were later redeployed to Mesopotamia in December 1915, while the outstanding cavalry brigades remained in Europe to fulfil largely manual labouring roles before they too were dispatched to Egypt in March 1918.⁷ Indian Army troops played pivotal roles in some of the most well-known battles of the war, including those at Neuve Chapelle, Ypres (including the 1917 battle at Passchendaele), the Somme, and the siege of Kut-al-Amara; as of April 1920, over 61,000 Indian men were recorded as killed, over 67,000 injured and over 1,200 missing.⁸ Recruitment for the Indian Army was marked across the war by the elastic concept of martial races, and the view that North Indian men were inherently fighters. This was grounded partly in the distrust of Bengali men, who had played a major role in agitating for change in the 1857 Indian Army Rebellion, and marked a policy decision to keep recruitment to those ethno-religious communities who had not rebelled in 1857. As a worldview, martial race theory also weaponized indigenous martial identities, especially amongst Punjabi Sikh communities. Despite the collapse in the internal logic of martial race theory across the war, as casualties soared and recruitment from anywhere in India with available men was paramount, the interweaving of localised and imperial notions of racial martiality continued to shape Indian Army culture long after Armistice and into the Second World War.⁹

This doctorate emerged in part out of ongoing conversations with colleagues and friends around decolonial praxis in history writing, particularly regarding the extent to which histories and lived experiences could be researched and written 'otherwise' within the structures of academia.¹⁰ The idea of 'otherwise' is rooted in decolonial scholarship, and the

⁶ David Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War: Soldiers' Letters, 1914-18* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), pp. 2-4; Claude Markovits and Heike Liebau, 'Indian Expeditionary Force', *International Encyclopaedia of the First World War*, 2018 <https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/indian_expeditionary_force> [accessed 29 March 2023].

⁷ Markovits and Liebau, 'Indian Expeditionary Force', 2018.

⁸ Singh, *Between Self and Sepoy* (2015), p. 255.

⁹ Tarak Barkawi, *Soldiers of Empire: Indian and British Armies in World War II* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 45.

¹⁰ For example, my work as part of the research collective OPEN was a critical site for the intellectual development underpinning this thesis. Across 2018 and 2019 we organised multiple workshops and forums and curated an online exhibition, all foregrounding emotion as a form of collective and polyvocal research. In 2023 we published an article that began as a co-creational experiment in the midst of the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic, exploring how otherwise methods of writing might create new forms of design history: Sarah Cheang, Katie Irani, Livia Rezende, and Shehnaz Suterwalla, 'In Between Breaths: Memories, Stories, and Otherwise Design Histories', *Journal of Design History*, 2023 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/jdh/epac038>>.

effort by decolonial scholars to 'move toward "an other logic" [...] to change the terms, not just the content' of conversation and scholarly discourse.¹¹ It has its roots partly in Chicana feminisms, and especially Gloria Anzaldúa's metaphors of the border and border thinking. Where Anzaldúa spoke of crossing between and inhabiting both the 'domain[s] of coloniality' and its borderlands, decolonial scholars began thinking about the prospect of border thinking as a strategy to 'move beyond the categories created and imposed by Western epistemology.'¹² To think and practice otherwise is therefore to imagine different 'modes of being, thinking, knowing, sensing and living' – not as an alternative approach to existing methods, but to exist in plurality with them.¹³

My Masters research had explored the materialities of First World War Indian Army uniforms, and made extensive use of canonical postcolonial scholars, including members of the Subaltern Studies Group and Homi Bhabha.¹⁴ However, the research presented here marks a significant development in my theoretical framework. Otherwise approaches mark one of the key differentiators between postcolonial and decolonial approaches, and by exploring the possibility of otherwise history research and writing in this doctorate project, I have been able to draw on both bodies of scholarship in ways that complement and expand each other. Postcolonial theorists have typically used ideas of the subaltern (the politically and socially oppressed) as a way of accessing an experience that could not be imagined or written by the historian, who was typically positioned within the colonial project. For example, in the 1980s, the Subaltern Studies Group initiated a project of revisionist historiography, exploring how the histories of (post)colonial India might be re-written from the perspective of the subaltern. In doing so, postcolonial scholars speak of the Other, and of Othering, but not of otherwise logics or methodologies. Decolonial scholars also engage with that which is beyond capture, beyond the imaginary of the coloniser, but use otherwise

¹¹ Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*, Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History (Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 69.

¹² Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: The New Mestiza* (Aunt Lute Books, 1987); Arturo Escobar, 'WORLDS AND KNOWLEDGES OTHERWISE', *Cultural Studies*, 21.2–3 (2007), 179–210 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162506>>, p. 187.

¹³ Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Duke University Press Books, 2018), p. 76.

¹⁴ Katherine Dean, "'The Only Properly Dressed Troops in India": An Exploration of Design Intention and Subaltern Agency in First World War Sepoy Service Uniforms' (unpublished MA Thesis, Royal College of Art/Victoria & Albert Museum, 2018), Royal College of Art.

methods rather than the idea of the subaltern as the means of accessing these histories. Catherine Walsh has emphasised that otherwise approaches to history, for example, are '[m]ore than a simple renewal, restoration or revival (of knowledges, life practices, and re-existences)'; rather, to act otherwise is an act of insurgency.¹⁵ To act otherwise is a commitment to 'act-action[s] of creation, construction, and intervention' that focus on relational and collective ways of being, thinking, feeling, doing and living.¹⁶ This became a key point of development in my thinking on the histories of the Indian Army; as a newly-enrolled PhD student, embedded within the Design History department of the Royal College of Art and the London Victoria & Albert Museum, I therefore posed the research question: How can the study of material culture add to the histories of the men that served in the Indian Army during the First World War? What has emerged is an analytical framework that comprises an entanglement of plural critical lenses, worldviews and methodological approaches.

My experience of the Standing with Giants installation served as a reminder of how the histories of the Indian Army tend to be produced and reproduced in ways that bring these histories within a canon of commemoration practice or academic methodologies. A minute's silence, a brass rendition of *The Last Post*, public art comprising plain silhouettes of unidentified soldiers, and efforts, for example, to address, re-write and re-right representations within the colonial archive. The canon is expanded; room is thus made for othered, rather than otherwise, histories. As outlined in detail below, the examination of material culture has long been limited in histories of the Indian Army, and in that regard this thesis could be seen as simply filling a gap in the academic canon of First World War histories. However, my attempt to research and write otherwise rests in an effort to reconfigure research categories themselves, rather than bring my research within existing ones or to expand the archive of primary materials available. By focusing on enunciations of bodiliness as a lens for discussions of material culture, this thesis investigates how design histories and material culture studies might introduce pluralities into history research and writing, and offers new perspectives on well-used archival sources. This is one of the aims of

¹⁵ Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality* (2018), p. 36.

¹⁶ Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality* (2018), pp. 36 and 40.

this project: to resist approaches to narratives of the Indian Army experiences across the war that prioritise linearity and neat conclusions, and instead to provoke, rupture and interrupt ways of encountering these histories. This thesis does not claim to overcome this, but rather sits with the discomfort and challenges these aims pose to my methodology in researching and writing with decolonial objectives. In this way, the work becomes as much a meditation on the nature of decolonial praxis in design history as a research project with decolonial objectives.

This thesis presents research conducted primarily within public, imperial archives using a combination of methodologies. The Imperial War Museum (IWM) and British Library (BL) were critical sites of object and visual analysis; exploring bodiliness through encounters there with miniature holy texts, mala beads, pagris, the events and (un)built environments captured in film footage and photographs, oral histories, and the extracts of letters that survive in India Office mail censorship records was a dominant path of enquiry for my work. Indeed, I made a deliberate decision to make use of first-hand testimonies only to the extent that they exist within the colonial archive; the research presented in this thesis was not about expanding the available materials with which to write histories, but to reimagine how the existing materials (often steeped in colonial discourse and administration) might be used with decolonial objectives. The audio recordings of Indian men detained as German prisoners of war, held in the Lautarchiv at Berlin's Humboldt-Universität, were also key resources, especially for Chapter 2. Indeed, what began as sources of textual analysis transformed over the course of this doctorate into a key part of my efforts to research and write history otherwise. By prompting me to think about the bodily materialities of sound and sounding, the recordings acted as a provocation to consider the role and presence of the historian, and the potential for autobiography as a mode of encountering both the (imperial) archive and the experiences of the men the archive records.

Research in this area thus became an exercise in resisting the dominant apparatus of academic history, with its emphasis on objectivity and impulse towards empirical methods that can be scrutinized for bias, such that the historian is trained to sublimate one's positionality rather than make it an intentional part of their methodology. Such apparatus is

evident through prominent academic publishers and peer-reviewed journals, who continue to publish works on research methodologies that aspire to limit the historian's positionality in favour of '*rational* standards of historical inquiry.'¹⁷ Indeed, even those texts recommended by the Royal Historical Society's (RHS) statement on good practice at times either present history as 'perfectly susceptible of scientific investigation', or recognise that a belief in the 'the requirements of scholarly objectivity' continues to have 'wide currency among academic historians.'¹⁸ Ludmilla Jordanova, for example, begins the introduction to *History in Practice* with 'my own vantage points' – not, she emphasises, out of 'any autobiographical urge', but rather as an extension of her practice of 'self-aware history'.¹⁹ In doing so, Jordanova offers a helpful contextualisation for her disciplinary background and influences over her conceptualisation of historical studies methods and practice. However, she also reflects a belief that the historian's positionality ought to be recognised by practitioner and reader, such that it can be navigated and side-stepped, or at least acknowledged, in an effort to create 'balanced [...] history'.²⁰ There is limited engagement with the possibility that positionality – including emotion, feeling and personhood – might form a critical part of the historian's methodology. Joan Wallach Scott has separately suggested that it is academic history's proximity to and comparison with other disciplinary fields that has 'protected' the 'the orthodox idea of [academic] history's objectivity.'²¹ Indeed, this reputation of history as a proximate "'empirical" science' echoes amongst the RHS-endorsed texts on historical studies practice.²² Marc Bloch, for example, derides commentators who consider recent history as 'unsuitable for all really *objective* research', and describes questions of the historian's 'impartiality' as a matter of one's 'honest

¹⁷ C. Behan McCullagh, 'Bias in Historical Description, Interpretation, and Explanation', *History and Theory*, 39.1 (2000), 39–66 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2677997>> [accessed 3 August 2023], p. 41 (emphasis added).

¹⁸ The Royal Historical Society, 'Statement on Good Practice for Historians', *RHS Advocacy & Policy* <<https://royalhistsoc.org/policy/position-papers/statement-on-good-practice/>> [accessed 3 August 2023]; Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (Manchester University Press, 1954), p. 32; J. Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of History* (Taylor & Francis, 2015), p. 39. The Bloch and Tosh texts are both listed on the RHS Statement on Good Practice for Historians.

¹⁹ Ludmilla Jordanova, *History in Practice* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), p. 1.

²⁰ Jordanova, *History in Practice* (2019), p. 5.

²¹ Joan Wallach Scott, 'Finding Critical History', in *Becoming Historians*, ed. by J.M. Banner and John R. Gillis (University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 26–53 (p. 45).

²² J.M. Banner, *Being a Historian: An Introduction to the Professional World of History* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 11; this is another text that appears in the RHS Statement on Good Practice for Historians, although Banner's point is to observe this impression of History as a discipline rather than endorsing it himself.

submission to the *truth*.²³ Bloch qualifies that he understands 'impartiality' as essentially a metric of scholarly integrity, rather than an empirical removal of all variables, biases or analytical frameworks. However, his comments – and the endorsement of his work by the RHS – nonetheless point to the lingering sense amongst scholars that history research and writing is, at least in part, an exercise in fact, accuracy and some degree of distanced truth-seeking.²⁴

This exposition of the historical and present framing of academic history helps explain why and how I have introduced subjectivity and positionality – in the form of the bodiliness of the historian – as a critical juncture for historians. I have explored this possibility in Chapter 2 of this thesis especially, and doing so has two key aims. Firstly, it begins to challenge the colonialities of knowledge entangled in these varied conceptualisations of history research and writing that privilege – to different degrees – the sense that history ought to and can be treated as a form of empirical science. Secondly, it sits alongside the work of such scholars as Saidiya Hartman, Christina Sharpe and Tina Campt, whose work deliberately uses subjectivity, fiction and feeling as a mode of reaching out and connecting with the people about whom their histories are written.²⁵ As explained in more detail in Chapter 2, these authors use positionality to explain the relationship between writer and the so-called historical 'subject'; my own use of positionality and bodiliness as an intentional methodological choice echoes this, and explores the extent to which my proposed mode of engaging empathetically with the subjects of my research may offer another mode of taking up the 'decolonial option' in historical studies.²⁶

²³ Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (1954), pp. 31 and 114 (emphases added).

²⁴ See also scholars like Michael Mark and C. Behan McCullagh. Mark wrote of 'the taming of subjectives' as 'the ideal' in historical inquiry, and repeatedly positioned objectivity as the ultimate end goal of history writing; McCullagh described the 'complete detachment' of the historian as an aspirational 'pipedream', and wrote extensively on the lengths to which historians should go to avoid bias (which he appears to treat as a synonym for positionality) through a 'rational assessment' of historical data based on 'reason'. See Michael Mark, 'Qualitative Aspects of Historical Research', *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, 130, 1996, 38–43 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40318809>> [accessed 3 August 2023], pp. 39, and 41-42; McCullagh, 'Bias in Historical Description, Interpretation, and Explanation' (2000), pp. 41, 55, and 57.

²⁵ Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (Serpent's Tail, 2021); Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Duke University Press, 2016); Tina M. Campt, *Listening to Images* (Duke University Press, 2017).

²⁶ On the decolonial 'option', see *Globalization and the Decolonial Option*, ed. by Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar (Routledge, 2010), p. 15.

In conversation with these otherwise ways of history research, I was conscious too of how history is written – in the sense of how the research has been literally presented on the page. As a result, deliberate syntactical and formal choices have been made around terminology and the presentation of languages. This is explained in detail in the section titled Entangled Methodologies, below; what follows first is an overview of the existing relevant literature, including work both on bodiliness and related concepts, and on critical analytical frameworks with which historians have approached the archive. I also offer an explanation of how this thesis positions itself in relation to this pre-existing work.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Decolonial perspectives in design history and material culture studies

This thesis draws on the decolonial framework put forward by scholars predominantly within the 'modernity/coloniality' school of decolonial theory. It is helpful to provide here an overview of the scholarship in this field, both to understand how the framework shapes my research, and also to contextualise the discussion that follows on work being conducted in design history and material culture studies from a decolonial perspective.

Common to the foundational writing on modernity/coloniality enunciations of decoloniality is an understanding that a paradigmatic 'world order' exists and has been in development since the fifteenth century. Enrique Dussel, Ramon Grosfoguel, María Lugones, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, and Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh all speak about 'totalities': beliefs stemming from various Eurocentric philosophical traditions, which have been held out as universal norms by colonial forces.²⁷ Such norms are a core mechanism of the 'coloniality of power', a term used by Anibal Quijano to describe the matrices of power that

²⁷ Ramon Grosfoguel, 'Decolonizing Post-Colonial Studies and Paradigms of Political-Economy' (2011), p. 13; María Lugones, 'Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System', *Hypatia*, 22.1 (2007), 186–209 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2007.tb01156.x>> [accessed 1 October 2019], p. 186; Nelson Maldonado-Torres, 'On the Coloniality of Being', *Cultural Studies*, 21.2–3 (2007), 240–70 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162548>> [accessed 1 October 2019], pp. 242–243; Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Duke University Press Books, 2018), pp.136–140, 196 and 207.

emerged with the invasion of the Americas, but that continue to define culture, labour, intersubjective relations, knowledge production, and the very nature of being (colonial 'global designs') long after the formal presence of colonial administrations ceased.²⁸ Coloniality and its normative power have since been described as bearing an irreducible tie with the concept of modernity (the fiction of Europe, and its norms, as the apex of a linear civilizational development). Modernity and coloniality are thus two sides of the same coin; modernity is the epistemological frame through which the European colonial project cultivates normative standards that govern what it is to 'be' human, or to produce 'valid' knowledge.²⁹ With this in mind, María Lugones has written, in the context of gender politics, that decolonisation is a necessarily 'praxical' [sic] task.³⁰ She describes it as enacting a 'critique of racialized, colonial, and capitalist heterosexualist gender oppression as a lived transformation of the social', which come down to recognising colonial difference where it exists and 'emphatically resisting [one's] epistemological habit of erasing it.'³¹ As noted in the section of this introduction titled 'Encountering the Archive', the description of decolonisation and decoloniality as a praxis is echoed across decolonial scholarship.³² Mignolo and Walsh, for example, similarly speak of decoloniality as an active process. Where Lugones speaks of emphatically resisting epistemological erasure, Mignolo and Walsh call for 'the recognition *and undoing* of the hierarchical structures of race, gender, heteropatriarchy, and class', describing it as a praxis that 'interrupts and cracks the modern/colonial/capitalist/heteropatriarchal matrices of power and advances other ways of

²⁸ Nelson Maldonado-Torres, 'On the Coloniality of Being', *Cultural Studies*, 21.2–3 (2007), pp. 240–70, doi:[10.1080/09502380601162548](https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162548), p. 243.

²⁹ Walter Mignolo, 'The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 101.1 (2002), 57–96 <http://www.unice.fr/crookall-cours/iup_geopoli/docs/Geopolitics.pdf> [accessed 27 November 2019], pp. 58–59; Ramon Grosfoguel, 'Decolonizing Post-Colonial Studies and Paradigms of Political-Economy: Transmodernity, Decolonial Thinking and Global Coloniality', *Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*, 1.1 (2011), pp. 1–37 <<http://www.dialogoglobal.com/barcelona/texts/grosfoguel/Grosfoguel-Decolonizing-Pol-Econ-and-Postcolonial.pdf>> [accessed 25 September 2019], p. 11; Nelson Maldonado-Torres, 'On the Coloniality of Being', *Cultural Studies*, 21.2–3 (2007), pp. 240–70, doi:[10.1080/09502380601162548](https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162548), p. 248; Lucy Mayblin, 'Modernity / Coloniality', *Global Social Theory* <<https://globalsocialtheory.org/concepts/colonialitymodernity/>> [accessed 18 December 2019].

³⁰ María Lugones, 'Toward a Decolonial Feminism', *Hypatia*, 25.4 (2010), pp. 742–59, doi:10.1111/j.1527-2001.2010.01137.x, p. 746.

³¹ María Lugones, 'Toward a Decolonial Feminism', *Hypatia*, 25.4 (2010), pp. 742–59, doi:10.1111/j.1527-2001.2010.01137.x, p. 746–7. See also Gurminder K. Bhambra, *Postcolonial and Decolonial Reconstructions in Connected Sociologies* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2014) <<https://www.bloomsbury.com/in/connected-sociologies-9781780931586/>> [accessed 30 September 2019], p. 149.

³² See pages 74–75 of this thesis.

being, thinking, knowing, theorizing, analysing, feeling, acting and living for us all.³³ One of the contributions this thesis makes is its exploration of original 'entangled' methodologies – including methods of opacity, unknowability and tentativeness – as a praxis for conducting this undoing, interruption and cracking. If historians are to reckon with the impact of the coloniality of knowledge, including knowledge production, then it stands that the tools and methods used to produce historical scholarship must also be interrogated.

Existing work being done in the field of design history and material culture studies from a decolonial perspective tends to adopt one of several common positions. Scholars like Claire Wintle have written about the history of decolonisation in the *context* of design; in charting the role of decolonisation in curatorial histories, Wintle explores how cultures of decolonisation shaped practices of institutional collection and display across historical periods.³⁴ Other scholars adopt an explicitly restitutive approach, researching and writing design histories that have not yet been published within the English-speaking canon, in an exercise that diversifies the available scholarship but also runs the risk of failing to challenge the epistemological hegemonies that shore up the colonialities of knowledge. Quijano and Mignolo have both written of the need for a 'de-colonial epistemic shift' – termed *desprenderse*, by Quijano, translated by Mignolo as *delinking* – that 'brings to the foreground other epistemologies, other principles of knowledge and understanding and, consequently, other economy, other politics, other ethics.'³⁵ Through *delinking*, Mignolo and Quijano propose, politics of knowledge can be pluralised, moving away from singular universalised forms of acceptable knowledge and knowledge production ('pluri-versality').³⁶ Achieving this in practice however can be difficult. In his keynote lecture to the September 2021 Design History Conference, Ahmed Ansari warned of care needed to conduct

³³ Walter Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Duke University Press Books, 2018), pp. 9-10 and 17 (emphasis added).

³⁴ See for example, *Cultures of Decolonisation: Transnational Productions and Practices, 1945-70*, ed. by Ruth Craggs and Claire Wintle (Manchester University Press, 2016) <<https://doi.org/10.7228/manchester/9780719096525.001.0001>>, and Claire Wintle, 'Decolonising UK World Art Institutions, 1945-1980 (Decolonizing Art Institutions Special Issue)', *OnCurating*, 35, 2017 <<https://www.on-curating.org/issue-35-reader/decolonising-uk-world-art-institutions-1945-1980-371.html>>.

³⁵ Walter Mignolo, 'Delinking: The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of de-Coloniality', *Cultural Studies*, 21.2 (2007), pp. 449–514 (p.453), quoting Quijano in A. Quijano, 'Modernidad, Colonialidad y America Latina', *Nepantla. Views from South*, 1.3, pp. 533–80.

³⁶ Walter Mignolo, 'Delinking: The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of de-Coloniality', *Cultural Studies*, 21.2 (2007), pp. 449–514 (p.453).

decolonial work that integrated indigenous knowledges, observing that academics must work so as not to 'bring in [...] 'other' knowledges while simultaneously translating them into terms that can render them palatable to Anglo-European knowledge systems', with the result that otherwise epistemologies are flattened and the colonialities of power remain unchallenged and insidiously present.³⁷ Nicola St John offers an example of how design historians might heed Ansari's warning.³⁸ In her work on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communication design, St John claims to adopt a "'decolonizing" historical lens (which focuses on undoing the effects of colonialism and regenerating Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing,' in part by recognising how visual culture has become an arena for indigenous lived experience in Australia to be 'confronted, politicised and recognized' as part of an accepted "'decolonised" paradigm.'³⁹ St John takes her lead from Linda Tuhiwai Smith, who argues for the inherently colonial and oppressive nature of research, and Terri Janke, who emphasises the need for researchers to move away from paradigms of empirical objectivity and towards Aboriginal and indigenous perspectives and worldviews, when working with communities that would identify themselves as such.⁴⁰ In this way, St John conducts a restitutive exercise in that she offers up new perspectives on the histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander visual culture – but she does so with a focus on the methodologies and frameworks historical researchers might use to achieve this. In doing so, she avoids the pitfalls of merely expanding the existing canon. Primarily she argues for a reconceptualization of communication design, writing that the posters at the core of her research 'form the basis of communicating identity through design', allowing for 'the public expression of Aboriginal voices [...] [and] positive declarations of Aboriginal identity, activity, and possibility.'⁴¹ By creating space within design historical scholarship for communities to 'practice visual sovereignty in their work by using the visual language that is unique to their specific cultural heritage,' St John makes the case for a shift in how historians approach

³⁷ Ahmed Ansari, 'Decolonisation, the History of Design, and the Designs of History', in *Keynote Lecture*, 2021.

³⁸ Nicola St John, 'Australian Communication Design History: An Indigenous Retelling', *Journal of Design History*, 31.3 (2018), pp. 255–73, doi:[10.1093/jdh/epy014](https://doi.org/10.1093/jdh/epy014) (emphasis added).

³⁹ Nicola St John, 'Australian Communication Design History: An Indigenous Retelling', *Journal of Design History*, 31.3 (2018), pp. 255–73, doi:[10.1093/jdh/epy014](https://doi.org/10.1093/jdh/epy014), pp. 256-257.

⁴⁰ Nicola St John, 'Australian Communication Design History: An Indigenous Retelling', *Journal of Design History*, 31.3 (2018), pp. 255–73, doi:[10.1093/jdh/epy014](https://doi.org/10.1093/jdh/epy014), p. 257.

⁴¹ Nicola St John, 'Australian Communication Design History: An Indigenous Retelling', *Journal of Design History*, 31.3 (2018), pp. 255–73, doi:[10.1093/jdh/epy014](https://doi.org/10.1093/jdh/epy014), p. 268.

archival research in order to interrupt histories of visual culture that rest on Eurocentric models of communication.⁴² This does not *denounce* the existing scholarship on the history of communication design, rather – looking to Quijano and Mignolo – it pluralises it, by delinking from the idea of a singular hegemonic canon. This resonates with the argument advanced in this thesis: that to achieve decolonial outcomes in their work, historians must reconfigure the nature of their research and communication practices, and engage with methodologies that have delinked from universal, colonial ways of knowing.

This effort to pluralise methodologies in design history has been taken up more recently by design history scholars and creative practitioners working with history as a subject matter. At the 2024 Design History Conference, Grazia Tona and Dirim Dinçer presented work informed by Tona's doctoral research on the militarisation of Hungary's Southern border, which proposed 'weaving visual matter and personal exchanges' to 'develop an indexical methodology.'⁴³ This methodology was effected in its 'approach to materiality that multiplies the possibilities of meaning and interpretation,' including carving out space for 'ambiguity [and] doubt.'⁴⁴ Their indexical methodology aims to:

[engage] with perception without claiming to confer clarity, truth, or definitions. Understanding material traces and objects as indices of experience allows tracing multiple lines of interaction and acknowledging openness in the materiality of formation.⁴⁵

Tona and Dinçer went on to present work that foregrounded 'indices that stimulate the attunement of senses, using doubt and reflection as tools of analysis,' in ways that are closely attuned with the work presented in this thesis. As unpacked further in the section

⁴² Nicola St John, 'Australian Communication Design History: An Indigenous Retelling', *Journal of Design History*, 31.3 (2018), pp. 255–73, doi:[10.1093/jdh/epy014](https://doi.org/10.1093/jdh/epy014), p. 269.

⁴³ Grazia Tona and Dirim Dinçer, "'Is That It?': Doubt, Dialogue, and Discomfort on/at Borders', Design History Society Annual Conference (presented at the Border Control: Excursion, Incursion and Exclusion, 2024) <<https://uca.assetbank-server.com/assetbank-uca/assetfile/69616.pdf>>, p. 144, referencing Grazia Tona, 'Border Formation: The Becoming Multiple of Space', A+BE | *Architecture and the Built Environment*, 13.8 (2023), pp. 1–308 <https://doi.org/10.7480/abe.2023.08.7052>.

⁴⁴ Grazia Tona, 'Border Formation: The Becoming Multiple of Space', A+BE | *Architecture and the Built Environment*, 13.8 (2023), pp. 1–308 (pp. 236 and 255) <https://doi.org/10.7480/abe.2023.08.7052>.

⁴⁵ Grazia Tona, 'Border Formation: The Becoming Multiple of Space', A+BE | *Architecture and the Built Environment*, 13.8 (2023), pp. 1–308 (p. 236) <https://doi.org/10.7480/abe.2023.08.7052>.

below titled 'Entangled Methodologies', this thesis makes an original contribution through the development of methodologies of opacity.⁴⁶ These harness unknowability as a radical entry point to the archive, and are used to reckon with the problematic rhetoric of 'recovering' or 'unearthing' voices of marginalised communities whose histories are underrepresented in scholarship. Just as Tona and Dinçer approach the materiality of borders and border formation, I similarly approach the materiality of bodiliness with ambiguity, doubt, and unknowing, in order to capture the shifting and fluid nature of bodily materialities discussed across the thesis.

In their interrogation of sustainable fashion through a case study of Hoing Kong-based NGO Redress, Anne Peirson-Smith and Jennifer Craik work from a decolonial perspective to highlight the inherently colonial forces underpinning fashion sustainability discourse in the Global North. They argue that efforts to identify sustainable solutions tend to be defined by and located within the existing fashion system that is rooted in a deeply colonial construction of resource allocation.⁴⁷ They observe that:

A consistent theme underlying most sustainability narratives in the Global North, in attempting to make sense of human/nature dyadic relationships, is often located in discussing them as separate entities, rather than in their holistic interchange, interdependency and co-existence. This approach is firmly framed within Anthropocentric, neo-colonial thinking that views the environment as an enabling, unlimited resource for future human-centered and human-driven development.⁴⁸

In calling for a reconfiguration of the terms of the debate over sustainable fashion, Peirson-Smith and Craik quite literally echo Mignolo's call for 'changing the terms of the conversations' (in this context, around sustainability in the fashion industry) 'and making

⁴⁶ See pages 89-92 of this thesis.

⁴⁷ Anne Peirson-Smith and Jennifer Craik, 'Transforming Sustainable Fashion in a Decolonial Context: The Case of Redress in Hong Kong', *Fashion Theory*, 24.6 (2020), pp. 921-46, (p. 925) doi:[10.1080/1362704X.2020.1800985](https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2020.1800985).

⁴⁸ Anne Peirson-Smith and Jennifer Craik, 'Transforming Sustainable Fashion in a Decolonial Context: The Case of Redress in Hong Kong', *Fashion Theory*, 24.6 (2020), pp. 921-46, (p. 925) doi:[10.1080/1362704X.2020.1800985](https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2020.1800985).

visible the tricks and designs of the puppeteer' (in this context, exposing the colonial infrastructure that underpins and upholds the fashion industry).⁴⁹

Bringing together Peirson-Smith and Craik's reckoning with the coloniality of the terms and conditions in which scholarship and practice are produced with the proposition of new delinking methodologies, Sarah Cheang has published recently on how decolonial transformation might be realised in the context of fashion photography and spaces of its display. Cheang points to the British *Vogue* to draw out the colonial terms of the publication's imagery in service to her broader argument that 'fashion magazines, as well as the study of fashion, are all about relationality,' often in intensely personal ways.⁵⁰ Cheang notes, for example, that questions related to relationality 'activate both emotional and epistemic working'.⁵¹ By asking 'Who am I and who are you? How do I come to this situation? What do I bring? How does this offering affect what is happening here?', scholars move towards an 'embodied/transformational practice' that acknowledges a 'plurality of relations to the image and to image-making'.⁵² Cheang's point is to hold space for epistemic shifts that foreground flux and uncertainty, but also the embodied experience of the researcher. A politics of relation invariably produces contradiction and messiness as a result; a shift toward relation as an underlying framework for fashion and fashion studies will 'involve the presence of contradiction and ambiguity that is not the result of faulty intentions or mistaken acts, but a sign that pressure is being applied to the cogs and wheels of the race/power/coloniality social machinery.'⁵³ To try and resolve these, Cheang argues, or 'is to treat decolonial endeavours as something finite,' which is to fundamentally

⁴⁹ Walter Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Duke University Press Books, 2018), pp. 144-145

⁵⁰ Sarah Cheang, 'Pausing for Thought: Lost and Found', *International Journal of Fashion Studies* (Intellect, 2022), 429-37, doi:https://doi.org/10.1386/inf_00081_7, pp. 431-433. Examples include 'a simultaneous racialization and de-racialization of "fashion"' and the process by which 'the *Vogue* fashion frame deferred and transformed awareness of coloniality to a separate time (the past) and a separate place (fantasy).'

⁵¹ Sarah Cheang, 'Pausing for Thought: Lost and Found', *International Journal of Fashion Studies* (Intellect, 2022), 429-37, doi:https://doi.org/10.1386/inf_00081_7, p. 433.

⁵² Sarah Cheang, 'Pausing for Thought: Lost and Found', *International Journal of Fashion Studies* (Intellect, 2022), 429-37, doi:https://doi.org/10.1386/inf_00081_7, p. 433.

⁵³ Sarah Cheang, 'Pausing for Thought: Lost and Found', *International Journal of Fashion Studies* (Intellect, 2022), 429-37, doi:https://doi.org/10.1386/inf_00081_7, p. 433.

misunderstand the decolonial imperative of pluriversality.⁵⁴ The research presented in this thesis aligns itself closely with this call for ambiguity, and for resisting the impulse to resolve contradiction and opacity. As noted above in the context of my discussion of Tona and Dincer's work, methodologies of unknowing are appropriate for interrogating the materialities of bodiliness that are themselves fugitive and shifting.

The final example of work in the fields of design history and material culture studies being done from a decolonial perspective is the focus on decolonial praxis as a pedagogical method. Ahmed Ansari and Matthew Kiem, Sarah Cheang and Shehnaz Suterwalla, and Tanveer Ahmed are just a few of the many examples of scholars working through and with transformational methodologies in their teaching and practice.⁵⁵ In Claudia Mareis and Nina Paim's text *Design Struggles: Intersecting Histories, Pedagogies, and Perspectives*, Ansari and Kiem outline the complexity of working within universities and teaching institutions that operate 'within established networks of colonial power.'⁵⁶ Ansari and Kiem, like St John, interrogate how design as a concept, and as an individual and collective practice must be reconfigured to be able to point to design as a decolonial agent. Kiem focuses especially on the proximity of design and decoloniality to social conflict; arguing (looking to Angela Mitropolous) that 'change, conflict and movement are not external to theoretical practice but are part of it,' Kiem nonetheless expresses concern that 'design theorists assume that design can be decolonized on the cheap, that is to say, within a prescribed and minimally disruptive set of parameters.'⁵⁷ Indeed, this concern was identified by Linda Tuhiwai Smith

⁵⁴ Sarah Cheang, 'Pausing for Thought: Lost and Found', *International Journal of Fashion Studies* (Intellect, 2022), 429–37, doi:https://doi.org/10.1386/inf.00081_7, p. 436.

⁵⁵ Ahmed Ansari and Matthew Kiem, 'What Is Needed for Change? Two Perspectives on Decolonization and the Academy', in *Design Struggles: Intersecting Histories, Pedagogies, and Perspectives*, ed. by Claudia Mareis and Nina Paim, Plural (Valiz, 2021), pp. 155–67 <https://valiz.nl/images/DesignStruggles-DEF_978-94-92095-88-6single-28September22-VALIZ-def.pdf>; Sarah Cheang and Shehnaz Suterwalla, 'Decolonizing the Curriculum? Transformation, Emotion, and Positionality in Teaching', *Fashion Theory*, 24.6 (2020), pp. 879–900 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2020.1800989>>; Tanveer Ahmed, 'Decolonizing the Mannequin', in *Fashion Education: The Systemic Revolution*, ed. by Ben Barry and Deborah A. Christel (Intellect, 2023).

⁵⁶ Ahmed Ansari and Matthew Kiem, 'What Is Needed for Change? Two Perspectives on Decolonization and the Academy', in *Design Struggles: Intersecting Histories, Pedagogies, and Perspectives*, ed. by Claudia Mareis and Nina Paim, Plural (Valiz, 2021), pp. 155–67 <https://valiz.nl/images/DesignStruggles-DEF_978-94-92095-88-6single-28September22-VALIZ-def.pdf>, p. 156.

⁵⁷ Ahmed Ansari and Matthew Kiem, 'What Is Needed for Change? Two Perspectives on Decolonization and the Academy', in *Design Struggles: Intersecting Histories, Pedagogies, and Perspectives*, ed. by Claudia Mareis and Nina Paim, Plural (Valiz, 2021), pp. 155–67 <https://valiz.nl/images/DesignStruggles-DEF_978-94-92095-88-6single-28September22-VALIZ-def.pdf>, pp. 158-159.

in her work on decolonising methodologies, where she notes the 'sneaking suspicion' of indigenous academics that 'the fashion of post-colonialism has become a strategy for reinscribing or reauthorizing the privileges of non-indigenous academics,' such that postcolonial discourse 'has been defined in ways which can still leave out indigenous peoples, our way of knowing and our current concerns.'⁵⁸ Ansari echoes Keim and Smith in his accompanying section to the chapter, pointing to the co-opting and neutralisation of decolonial objectives within the university system: in mainstreaming 'the term "decolonization",' he argues, the radical politics of decoloniality have been

subsumed under longstanding liberal Anglo-European approaches to social justice for underrepresented groups that emphasize "inclusivity," "diversity," and "pluralization." What we are now seeing is that the mainstreaming of decolonization has meant its interpellation into "business-as-usual".⁵⁹

In a call resonant of both St John's proposal to reconfigure how historians understand the field of visual communication and its history, and Cheang's proposal that fashion and fashion history studies should be examined through a lens of relational politics rather than representational politics, Kiem similarly advocates for pedagogical transformation in order to 'match the imperatives of decolonial movements.'⁶⁰ He argues that:

[T]he constituency of interest and accountability for decolonizing design is something other than what the field of design studies is configured to serve. Taken to the limit, decolonizing design implies a transformation of the very conditions – political, economic, institutional, etc. – by which design theorists make sense of what design is. As such, if the notion of decolonizing design is to match the imperatives of

⁵⁸ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd edn (Zed Books, 2012), p. 25.

⁵⁹ Ahmed Ansari and Matthew Kiem, 'What Is Needed for Change? Two Perspectives on Decolonization and the Academy', in *Design Struggles: Intersecting Histories, Pedagogies, and Perspectives*, ed. by Claudia Mareis and Nina Paim, Plural (Valiz, 2021), pp. 155–67 <https://valiz.nl/images/DesignStruggles-DEF_978-94-92095-88-6single-28September22-VALIZ-def.pdf>, pp. 161-162.

⁶⁰ Ahmed Ansari and Matthew Kiem, 'What Is Needed for Change? Two Perspectives on Decolonization and the Academy', in *Design Struggles: Intersecting Histories, Pedagogies, and Perspectives*, ed. by Claudia Mareis and Nina Paim, Plural (Valiz, 2021), pp. 155–67 <https://valiz.nl/images/DesignStruggles-DEF_978-94-92095-88-6single-28September22-VALIZ-def.pdf>, p. 159.

decolonial movements, at some level this must imply a willingness to put the very coherence of design (as “we” know it) at stake.⁶¹

Ansari and Kiem’s position echoed the position of Sarah Cheang and Shehnaz Suterwalla in their article on decolonisation in the context of teaching fashion histories.⁶² Like Ansari, they argue that ‘[d]ecolonizing the curriculum involves more than broadening the canon and revising reading lists,’ but rather demands ‘shifts in consciousness’, and an ‘active reconceptualization’ and ‘carefully negotiated resistance to and compliance with the expected structures of teaching and writing’ where they rest on epistemological structures that uphold the colonialities of knowledge defined by Mignolo and Quijano.⁶³ Cheang and Suterwalla’s resist proposing a universal strategy for achieving the required level of transformation, but outline their own ‘guiding strategy toward decolonial practice.’⁶⁴ This comprises embracing ‘an *and-and* model’ and leaning into the ‘crucial role of emotion and position’ in ‘designing decolonial pedagogies.’⁶⁵ The interlacing of both these positions mounts ‘a critical challenge to empiricist methods that present binary either-or ways of thinking’, and moves toward the ‘the pluriversal [...] pulling together ideas to generate multivalent knowing, without compromising emotional, positional, and relational knowledge.’⁶⁶ This is echoed in the urgent work of Tanveer Ahmed, who has written extensively on decolonial feminist approaches to fashion pedagogies, and who similarly argues for students and teachers to use ‘personal everyday experience’ as a mode of

⁶¹ Ahmed Ansari and Matthew Kiem, ‘What Is Needed for Change? Two Perspectives on Decolonization and the Academy’, in *Design Struggles: Intersecting Histories, Pedagogies, and Perspectives*, ed. by Claudia Mareis and Nina Paim, Plural (Valiz, 2021), pp. 155–67 <https://valiz.nl/images/DesignStruggles-DEF_978-94-92095-88-6single-28September22-VALIZ-def.pdf>, p. 159.

⁶² Sarah Cheang and Shehnaz Suterwalla, ‘Decolonizing the Curriculum? Transformation, Emotion, and Positionality in Teaching’, *Fashion Theory*, 24.6 (2020), pp. 879–900 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2020.1800989>>.

⁶³ Sarah Cheang and Shehnaz Suterwalla, ‘Decolonizing the Curriculum? Transformation, Emotion, and Positionality in Teaching’, *Fashion Theory*, 24.6 (2020), pp. 879–900 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2020.1800989>>, pp. 879–880.

⁶⁴ Sarah Cheang and Shehnaz Suterwalla, ‘Decolonizing the Curriculum? Transformation, Emotion, and Positionality in Teaching’, *Fashion Theory*, 24.6 (2020), pp. 879–900 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2020.1800989>>, p. 882.

⁶⁵ Sarah Cheang and Shehnaz Suterwalla, ‘Decolonizing the Curriculum? Transformation, Emotion, and Positionality in Teaching’, *Fashion Theory*, 24.6 (2020), pp. 879–900 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2020.1800989>>, pp. 881–882 (emphasis in original).

⁶⁶ Sarah Cheang and Shehnaz Suterwalla, ‘Decolonizing the Curriculum? Transformation, Emotion, and Positionality in Teaching’, *Fashion Theory*, 24.6 (2020), pp. 879–900 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2020.1800989>>, p. 882.

disrupting the reproduction of 'Eurocentric narratives', and models of learning and knowing.⁶⁷

The research presented in this thesis is closely aligned not only with this call for reconfiguring the terms of existing research categories (rather than broadening the existing canon) as a form of decolonial research praxis, but also with what might be termed the tentativeness of some of the proposed strategies. As Cheang and Suterwalla have touched on, pluriversality demands unfixity; its nature is undefined, ever expanding and relational, it operates in constellation with the emotional positions of others. This thesis therefore sits with the particular, rather than the universal or the general, with unknowing and unfixity in both the archive and the conclusions that can be drawn from it. Through the use of situated, bodily research methodologies drawn from Black feminist scholarships that forefront my own sensorial experience of the archive and emotional response to the primary material, I offer a strategy of working towards the decolonial imperative of unfixing established modes of encountering the archive that are rooted in visual and textual analysis. As unpacked further in Chapter 2, Livia Rezende has used a similar methodology that foregrounds the personal in journaling her encounter with the archives of the Rio de Janeiro Escola Superior de Desenho Industrial. As with my own work, Rezende draws on positionality and the particular to resist the disciplinary impulse towards researcher objectivity.

Bodiliness thus becomes a form of decolonial insurgency – but so too does tentativeness.⁶⁸ Tentativeness here operates as a resistance to drawing general conclusions about the lived experiences of the historical subjects – the men serving in the Indian Army during the First World War – in favour of using the above methodologies to propose new ways of encountering these men in the archive. This is not to suggest that tentativeness is a 'better' method than the research already conducted by scholars of the Indian Army during this period; rather, in the spirit of working toward the decolonial imperative of pluriversal worldviews and interpretations, it offers an otherwise method.

⁶⁷ Tanveer Ahmed, 'Antiracist Design: A Decolonial Feminist Approach to Fashion Pedagogy', in *Design Struggles: Intersecting Histories, Pedagogies, and Perspectives*, ed. by Claudia Mareis and Nina Paim, Plural (Valiz, 2021), pp. 189–203 <https://valiz.nl/images/DesignStruggles-DEF_978-94-92095-88-6single-28September22-VALIZ-def.pdf>, p. 201.

⁶⁸ For a detailed discussion of decolonial insurgency, see page 75 of this thesis.

Contextualising the Indian Army and its soldiers

This section offers some historical context and further details on the cultural background of the soldiers in the Indian Army during the First World War. Particularly important for this thesis is the shifting ideological and strategic registers that dictated military recruitment practices, and the ongoing negotiation of nationalist sentiments across different regional and cultural communities in India. Debates and discourse around recruitment, anti-British imperialism and self-rule were not limited to organised political arenas in the imperial metropole, but operated on a ground level with direct impact on the material conditions of serving in and the organisation of the Indian Army. How this impacted the men themselves however varied, depending on their regional, ethno-linguistic, religious and socio-economic positioning. This section goes on then to consider the methodological dilemma of trying to insert soldiers into my overview of the historical context and cultural background, and offers a view to how methodologies of tentativeness and opacity can help historians to trace the men's articulations of individual agency without imposing overly generalised commonalities, or what Heather Streets calls 'illusory solidarity' between the men and the myriad 'heterogenous groups' of which they were part outside of their military service.⁶⁹

Streets has written at length of the recruitment practices at play in the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the First World War. She offers a detailed investigation into how recruitment strategy was shaped by the 1857 Indian Rebellion and the ways in which 'scientific' theories of race, martial personhood, and Victorian values of masculinity were marshalled to 'disguise a policy that sought to limit armed service to only those Indians who could be trusted with unfailing loyalty.'⁷⁰ The 1857 Rebellion saw regiments of the Bengal Army lead a more widespread military – and accompanying civil – revolt against East India Company rule.⁷¹ In administrative terms, the events of 1857 resulted in the disbandment of

⁶⁹ Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 201.

⁷⁰ Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 178.

⁷¹ See Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 29–30, for details of the accompanying 'all-out popular revolt' amongst civilian populations, 'which enveloped all classes of the population.'

the three presidency armies of Madras, Bombay and Bengal and the reorganisation of the Indian Army, as well as the dissolution of the East India Company and the transfer of its powers and territories to the British Crown in 1859.⁷² More broadly however, the Rebellion heralded a shift in military organisation 'built on historical memory of loyalty.'⁷³ The Bengal Army had hitherto been the 'showpiece' of the Indian Army: its recruits were drawn from the high-caste Brahmin and Rajput communities of northern India, whose physical attributes as the 'largest, handsomest, and cleanest looking men' contributed to their being privileged by British administrators as the 'most 'desirable soldiers.'⁷⁴ Streets traces how, after the Rebellion and the reorganisation of the military in India, British military leaders and recruiting officers sought deliberately to exclude those communities who had comprised the recruiting base of the Bengal Army for their role in the uprising, characterising Brahmin and south Indian communities especially as 'treacherous, faithless and easily induced to passion,' such that not only were they ill-suited to bear arms in support of British imperialism but they were also 'at odds with contemporary British conceptions of manliness.'⁷⁵ What emerged was what Gajendra Singh terms a 'colonial fantasy' of biologically-determined martial masculinities, whereby Indian soldierly suitability was measured along a 'martial-unmartial axis' underpinned by essentialist rhetoric around biological physicality and character, that leveraged existing indigenous identities and pivoted military recruitment to the Punjab.⁷⁶ Punjabi Muslims and Sikh soldiers were disproportionately targeted for their inherent martiality, their "'love [of] fighting for fighting's sake", and recruitment figures demonstrate the dramatic shift this had in material terms; by 1914, 75 per cent of the Indian Army soldiers came from a 'martial race', and from

⁷² Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 31.

⁷³ Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 178.

⁷⁴ Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 8 and 26.

⁷⁵ Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 11.

⁷⁶ Gajendra Singh, *The Testimonies of Indian Soldiers and the Two World Wars: Between Self and Sepoy* (Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 17.

Punjabi Muslim and Sikh communities alone, 136,126 and 88,925 were recruited respectively across the War (out of a total of 657,739 recruits).⁷⁷

Using the Recruitment Handbooks that were commissioned by the Army to reinscribe the assigned martial qualities of different Indian communities, Singh describes their negotiation of martial race discourse as a 'colonial negative' to account for how they could be formed, reformed, dropped and discarded as military and political need required.⁷⁸ Martial race theory was therefore inherently mutable, bound to a concept of 'race' that was itself in flux and 'fictitious', allowing Handbooks and their racial metrics to be rewritten and policy to be reshaped quietly over the course of the First World War, and interwar period, to bend to recruiting priorities and broader global concerns about imperial ambitions.⁷⁹ Indeed, Streets tracks the broadening of military administrators' colonial anxieties in India, and argues that concerns over internal nationalist revolt was amplified by the belief that Britain was facing an equally devastating imperial threat from an external European power, and particularly the 'threat from Russia on India's northwest frontier'.⁸⁰ Streets argues that this external threat catalysed the implementation of martial race theories that 'disparaged' the quality of soldiers from areas other than the north and northwestern regions of India, from where it was believed the most 'martial' soldiers of a standard fit to fight a competing imperial power could be recruited.⁸¹

Anti-British Empire and nationalist calls for a self-determined Indian nation state were already in motion at the turn of the twentieth century, and reflected the different political, social and economic grievances and objectives of agitating groups. Given the foundational importance of the 1857 Rebellion to ideas of martial race and their adoption as military

⁷⁷ Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 100-101; Gajendra Singh, *The Testimonies of Indian Soldiers and the Two World Wars: Between Self and Sepoy* (Bloomsbury, 2015), Appendix I (pp. 253-354). Using Sing

⁷⁸ Gajendra Singh, *The Testimonies of Indian Soldiers and the Two World Wars: Between Self and Sepoy* (Bloomsbury, 2015), especially pp. 12-13.

⁷⁹ Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 10.

⁸⁰ Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 87-89 and 93.

⁸¹ Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 93 and 98.

policy, it is unsurprising that a key fault line along this martial-unmartial axis was the uptake of nationalist sentiments amongst Indian communities. Streets draws parallels between Irish and Indian nationalisms during this period, describing martial race ideology as the 'imperial antidote' to both, where the 'the spectre of Indian agitation in an Irish model' fuelled British administrative concerns to prioritise loyalty within military recruitment.⁸² British officers weaponised the language of martial masculinities to discredit nationalist sympathisers as effeminate, creating a dichotomous British construction of Indian subjecthood divided between the educated, middle-class, 'effeminate *babu*' in favour of Home Rule, and the manly martial soldier, whose loyalty was with the Crown.⁸³

Nationalist unrest within the Indian Army was tangible, but was also not evenly taken up by soldiers; regional and religious grievances against the Crown were not always shared across regiments. Kate Imy, for examples, tracks the 1907 and 1908 protests in agricultural regions of the Punjab, following years of famine and plague, and the opposition amongst Sikh communities to British regulations over the size of kirpans.⁸⁴ I extend this discussion in the section titled 'Pagri and Head Wrappings', where I discuss the emergence of the Central Sikh League in 1919 and the Akali Movement in the 1920s and note how movement leaders agitated support amongst followers on the grounds that Sikh communities' problems were distinct from the problems faced by other religious groups across India.⁸⁵ Hindu nationalist groups, such as the Hindu Mahasabha, focused on the entanglement of nationalist politics and rhetoric of martial race theory, particularly in relation to Bengali Hindu men. The Hindu Mahasabha resisted the projection of the 'effeminate Bengali' as representative of Hindu identity and 'encouraged Indian Hindus to view military service and militancy as inseparable from masculinity.'⁸⁶ Through popularizing volunteer corps, military schools and the uptake of kushti practices in akharas, Hindu nationalists encouraged Hindu men 'to develop strong

⁸² Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 158 and 160.

⁸³ Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 161-164 (emphasis in original).

⁸⁴ Kate Imy, *Faithful Fighters: Identity and Power in the British Indian Army, South Asia in Motion* (Stanford University Press, 2019), pp. 22 and 26-27.

⁸⁵ See pages 165-166 of this thesis.

⁸⁶ Kate Imy, *Faithful Fighters: Identity and Power in the British Indian Army, South Asia in Motion* (Stanford University Press, 2019), p. 183.

civilian physiques capable of fighting for the nation,' where that nation was an independent India.⁸⁷

Early-twentieth century nationalisms were divided not just by groups' identities and the agendas that were linked to them, but also by the strategies adopted to secure those demands. Gajendra Singh offers a detailed overview of the nationalist positions and revolutionary discontent in 'India and the Great War: Colonial Fantasies, Anxieties and Discontent,' beginning with the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal and particularly the discontent that emerged within nationalist groups about appropriate agitation and strategy.⁸⁸ Singh points to various secret societies that formed in Bengal (including the Anushilan Samiti and the Dhaka Anushilan Samiti and Jugantar groups) and in Western India (including the Mitra Mela and Abhinava Bharat groups) between 1900 and 1905, comprising 'young, urban, educated, high-caste, male elites promoting revolutionary terrorism.'⁸⁹ In demonstration of the range of sites and expressions of anti-colonial politics, I also argue in Chapter 3 of this thesis that anti-colonial activism was not always articulated explicitly by soldiers as resistance; forms of movement rooted in worldviews and spiritual frameworks that were inherently anti-colonial had the potential to express nationalist sentiment and solidarity.

In terms of how these positions were articulated during the War, Singh argues that the locus of any explicitly revolutionary appetite moved to migrant agricultural labourers. These were individuals who may have been born in the Punjab, but had since moved variously to Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, and the Pacific Coast of North America as 'colonial policemen and colonial labourers.'⁹⁰ His focus is on the revolutionary rhetoric that proliferated in North America, particularly the Hindustani Association of the Pacific Coast,

⁸⁷ Kate Imy, *Faithful Fighters: Identity and Power in the British Indian Army*, South Asia in Motion (Stanford University Press, 2019), p. 183; Imy notes in the context of her discussion on self-martialized masculinities amongst Hindu nationalists, how author and nationalist Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in 1907 described the 1857 Rebellion 'as a war of independence.'

⁸⁸ Gajendra Singh, 'India and the Great War: Colonial Fantasies, Anxieties and Discontent', *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 14.2, pp. 343–61 (p. 346).

⁸⁹ Gajendra Singh, 'India and the Great War: Colonial Fantasies, Anxieties and Discontent', *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 14.2, pp. 343–61 (p. 346).

⁹⁰ Gajendra Singh, 'India and the Great War: Colonial Fantasies, Anxieties and Discontent', *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 14.2, pp. 343–61 (p. 347).

formed in May 1913, which '[united] the various associations and organizations that littered Indian migrant enclaves in Canada and the United States' – and the Ghadar Movement that emerged from it.⁹¹ The extent to which these calls for Indian independence affected or were shared by the soldiers serving in the Indian Army is, however, both mixed and unclear – not least because of this constellation of different nationalisms and their different expressions between groups. Imy positions the Ghadar movement as the most influential anti-colonial movement in India during the First World War.⁹² The Ghadar movement 'grew out of prewar agricultural protests and discriminatory migration policies in the United States and Canada,' but more gained traction with its ultimate goal to 'overthrow British rule in India.'⁹³ Supporters were drawn predominantly from Sikh communities, especially military families of former and current soldiers, and indeed Imy argues that the movement 'benefited from the rapid mobility of wartime'; Singh's position, however, is more cautious. He argues that the Ghadar Movement was too embroiled in its own discordance and poor organisation ever to be a success; from its early British Intelligence monitoring, to last-minute and 'disjointed' strategizing on revolutionaries' passage in August 1914 back the Punjab, Singh suggests that most participants in the movement were 'unsure of what action to take or even if there was a larger plan.'⁹⁴ In contrast to Imy's focus on the Ghadarites mobilisation at recruitment drives and gurdwaras, and the initial success the movement had amongst Indian soldiers stationed in Hong Kong and Singapore, Singh points to the limited written archival evidence of strong Ghadarite support amongst soldiers stationed on the Western Front. Looking to the fragments of letters retained by the India Office, Singh observes that of those letters written to Indian Army soldiers invoking Ghadarite politics, the replies from soldiers are only to distance themselves from it.⁹⁵ He concludes that 'the politics of organized Indian nationalisms proved marginal to Indian soldiers' experiences of the First World War,' and that the increased politicisation of Indian combatants came during

⁹¹ Gajendra Singh, 'India and the Great War: Colonial Fantasies, Anxieties and Discontent', *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 14.2, pp. 343–61 (p. 348).

⁹² Kate Imy, *Faithful Fighters: Identity and Power in the British Indian Army*, South Asia in Motion (Stanford University Press, 2019), p. 28.

⁹³ Kate Imy, *Faithful Fighters: Identity and Power in the British Indian Army*, South Asia in Motion (Stanford University Press, 2019), p. 28.

⁹⁴ Gajendra Singh, 'India and the Great War: Colonial Fantasies, Anxieties and Discontent', *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 14.2, pp. 343–61 (p. 350).

⁹⁵ Gajendra Singh, *The Testimonies of Indian Soldiers and the Two World Wars: Between Self and Sepoy* (Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 98.

the interwar period.⁹⁶ Santanu Das echoes this view on the limited expression of nationalist support through the behaviour of Indian Army soldiers during the War; in his recent work on colonial encounters across different sites for Indian Army soldiers, he makes the point that 'anti-colonial aspirations' for many soldiers was articulated less through an organised push for a nation state than in their everyday resentment against discriminatory practices reinscribed by the British.⁹⁷ This is not to say that soldiers were actively opposed to Ghadarite objectives, or that nationalist politics was absent altogether in the Indian Army: I point in Chapter 1 to the oral history accounts given by Indian Army veterans that recollect widespread anti-colonial allegiance, and Imy describes the Ghadarite-driven Singapore Mutiny in February 1915, led and instigated by Sikh-identifying men 'in the Singapore-based and Indian-staffed Malay States Guides,' which resulted in the 'execution of nearly fifty South Asian soldiers.'⁹⁸ But it does begin to trace the limits of the written archival record in accounting for the political worldviews of soldiers. What emerges from reading across the scholarship is that whilst revolutionary politics and different nationalist mobilisations may have found substantial support amongst different regional and religious communities, this support did not result in explosive revolutionary activity amongst members of those same communities serving as soldiers, nor is there significant evidence of nationalist solidarity within the archive. The nationalisms described above lay the foundations for shifts in consciousness and anti-British feeling amongst soldiers across the War, but how these shifts and feelings were actioned were more subtle. Tentativeness again becomes important here in proposing new ways of encountering the complexity of these men and their shifting worldviews during this time. Through an examination of (im)material cultures and bodiliness, historians can account for the positions of Imy, Singh, and Das and trace where, for example, Sikh and Hindu nationalist consciousnesses were being mobilised in ways that have been recorded otherwise than in the written archival record. By adopting these

⁹⁶ Gajendra Singh, 'India and the Great War: Colonial Fantasies, Anxieties and Discontent', *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 14.2, pp. 343–61 (pp. 351 and 354).

⁹⁷ Santanu Das, 'Precarious Encounters: South Asia, the War and Anti-Colonial Cosmopolitanism', in *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914–1918*, ed. by Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach (Routledge, 2021), pp. 125–48 (p. 128).

⁹⁸ See page 166 of this thesis; see also Kate Imy, *Faithful Fighters: Identity and Power in the British Indian Army, South Asia in Motion* (Stanford University Press, 2019), p. 29.

methodologies, historians can begin to see how political agency was being exercised in different and unexpected ways.

Contextualising the cultural backgrounds of the soldiers in the Indian Army is necessarily difficult, given their plurality and overlap. Although recruitment in the early years of the War was focused on the North, as casualties mounted officials were forced to recruit from other regions and communities, with the result that the Indian Army by 1918 comprised recruits from at least 12 different provinces, including Madras, Bombay, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, and the Central Provinces.⁹⁹ Cultural worldings across the Indian Army were therefore myriad and reflected regional differences, and the cultural plurality within those regions. To this point, Heather Streets has observed that, even within the Sikh and Gurkha soldiers, individuals heralded from 'different regional, religious, cultural, linguistic, political and social' positionings.¹⁰⁰ However, having examined military recruitment practices, and the values and agendas that underpinned them, and provided some background to the existing and newer nationalist movements gaining traction in India in the run-up to the War, a discussion of some of the common cultural threads to the pre-War lives of Indian Army soldiers is helpful for its potential to add to the discussion above. Even by the end of the War, Punjabi agricultural communities still made up the vast majority of the Indian Army wartime recruits, and the governance of and challenges experienced by agricultural labourers interconnects with the relationship of these men to nationalist rhetoric and their self-identity as 'soldierly'.

Streets looks to the 1849 annexation of the Punjab, and the associated disarmament of Punjabi society, 'the strict policing of the countryside and the forfeiture of rebel estates,' as foundational in defining the agricultural model and livelihood for Punjabis over 60 years on at the outbreak of the War. Peasant proprietors were required to pay land revenue taxes in cash, which 'encouraged peasants to make their most valuable crop – wheat – consistently

⁹⁹ Gajendra Singh, *The Testimonies of Indian Soldiers and the Two World Wars: Between Self and Sepoy* (Bloomsbury, 2015), Appendix I ('Recruitment by province, August 1914-November 1918'), p. 253.

¹⁰⁰ Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 191.

available on the market.¹⁰¹ Streets describes how the overproduction of wheat led to the development of an international export trade, opening up Punjabi agricultural labourers to the precarity and fluctuations of a global market.¹⁰² Streets makes the point that this need for cash in turn perpetuated reliance on money-lenders, secured with collateral in the form of wheat crops or land, creating a 'cycle of debt' that forced peasant families to supplement their income 'via military service.'¹⁰³ This complicates accounts of soldiers' motivation for enlisting; it goes further than other writers who have claimed soldiers invariably signed up to escape the variations and precarity of a seasonal labour model, and instead begins to connect recruits motivation for military service with their connection to colonial economic infrastructure.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, Streets also links these two constellation points in constructing (at least the Punjabi Sikh) soldiers' identity with the exposition of martial race discourse and its impact on recruitment. She problematises 'the thrust of subaltern studies in academe,' in her argument that 'many "martial race" soldiers appeared to accept popular constructions of themselves as brave, elite warriors' and 'do not "always reject outright the roles cast for them in colonialist narratives".'¹⁰⁵ This is important as it helps position how colonial rhetoric around race leveraged indigenous community identities – such as the warrior class of the Guru Gobind Singh's Khalsa army – that were in turn compounded by circumstantial 'debt and dislocation' that made military service appealing as a means of financially supporting one's family and honouring one's heritage.¹⁰⁶

Using the scholarship in this way helps supplement primary sources to map points in the cultural backgrounds of the men that served in the Indian Army, and also speaks to the methodological complexities of historically locating these men. Archival accounts of these

¹⁰¹ Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 194.

¹⁰² Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 194.

¹⁰³ Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 194-195.

¹⁰⁴ See for example the descriptions of Indian Army soldiers as 'illiterate peasants [...] most were willing labour migrants looking to make the most of the economic opportunities created by the colonial encounter' (Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War* (1999), p. 1.

¹⁰⁵ Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 203.

¹⁰⁶ Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 193.

men are fragmentary and often nameless; men are referred to by only an ethnic or ethno-religious moniker (such as 'Pathan' or 'Sikh'), making it impossible to narrow down an individual's cultural background to any region, class, caste or occupation. Even if historians were able to so narrow down an individual's background in this way, my own discussion of soldiers modifying their physical appearance to don or shed colonial labels attached to physical markers or arbitrary character traits highlights the slippery quality to identity construction within the Indian Army during this period.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, given the role of officials in recording much of the information retained in primary sources, and the role played by taxonomical Handbooks that guided officials in making visual judgement calls about a man's identity, this slipperiness seems to have transcended any 'frayage' (to borrow Gayatri Spivak's term) around identity categories created by the men themselves; British colonial forces also contributed to the fugitivity of identities and any taxonomical order of soldiers. Any histories of the men in the Indian Army therefore needs to hold space, if not actively account for and engage with, how the men were racialised and socialised by the British, since this is how they are represented in the archive. As Sarah Cheang noted above, this is where historians encounter the limits of politics of representation. The context provided can help illuminate specific fragments of some men's cultural background and worlding, but part of the project of this thesis is to use this context in conjunction with new methodologies to move historians towards a politics of relationality. This is not about seeking out a voice or the agency of the men, nor is it about denying that the men represented in the archive *have* a voice. Rather, it is about questioning what kind of voice has been afforded to them, and what histories might be written if the study of material and immaterial cultures, and the proposed bodily methodologies, are placed into dialogue with this voice. Again, tentativeness and unfixity are crucial here. This thesis holds space for orthodox histories and the textual analysis of, for example, the Censor of Indian Mails reports held by the India Office Records or the Halbmondlager prisoner of war recordings; it also pluralises these methods, creating unfixity in the historical narrative of these men that offers new insights into their lived experiences.

¹⁰⁷ See page 147 of this thesis.

Material Culture of the Indian Army

There are many publications on the history of the Indian Army, but very few that engage directly with materialities or material cultures.¹⁰⁸ Publications tend instead to focus on event-driven narratives emerging out of a military history tradition, or approach the topic from positions of cross-disciplinarity with an emphasis on historical sociology.¹⁰⁹ The few scholars that have foregrounded material cultures do so without the sustained methodological engagement with either the objects themselves, or the theories of decoloniality that I have sought to embed in my research and writing. Jane Tynan, for example, opens up a necessary and urgent discussion of how material cultures of dress can be entangled with expressions and constructions of racialised identities, arguing in her 2013 book *British Army Uniform and the First World War: Men in Khaki* that '[m]ilitary uniforms appeared to embody racial and ethnic differences [...] offering a system for the expression of various cultural allegiances.'¹¹⁰ However, the frameworks used to interrogate how uniforms 'embody' difference are limited to Foucauldian models of uniform as a function of power and control. By contrast, this thesis takes similar questions in a new direction. Where Tynan invokes Michel Foucault's claim that 'uniform [is] a feature of modernity that made the body a target of power: "the soldier has become something that can be made,"' this thesis develops new materialist-inflected critical lenses to ask how the bodily and aspects of dress might be agents in the cultivation of something other than control – and asks what design historians might learn from this about the lived experience of the Indian Army men.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Examples of work on the Indian Army in the First World War that do not use material culture as a primary source include: Barkawi, *Soldiers of Empire* (2017); Shrabani Basu, *For King and Another Country: Indian Soldiers on the Western Front, 1914-18* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015); Gordon Corrigan, *Sepoys in the Trenches: The Indian Corps on the Western Front 1914-15* (History Press Limited, 2015); D. Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army, 1860-1940*, Studies in Military and Strategic History (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016).

¹⁰⁹ On the former, see for example Corrigan, *Sepoys in the Trenches* (2015), on the Indian Army in the First World War, and G. Bowman, *The Indian Contingent: The Forgotten Muslim Soldiers of Dunkirk* (History Press, 2020), on the Indian Army in the Second World War; on the latter, see for example Barkawi, *Soldiers of Empire* (2017).

¹¹⁰ Jane Tynan, *British Army Uniform and the First World War: Men in Khaki* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 131.

¹¹¹ Tynan, *Men in Khaki* (2013), pp. 12 and 22.

Gajendra Singh in his 2015 book *The Testimonies of Indian Soldiers and the Two World Wars: Between Self and Sepoy* similarly points to artefacts in his wider consideration of transcripts from investigations conducted by the Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre (India) (CSDIC(I)) – the organisation tasked with identifying and interrogating defectors to the Indian National Army (INA) – but does not analyse these examples of material culture for what their objecthood might tell historians.¹¹² For example, Singh discusses and cites the content of a pamphlet for an anti-imperial play entitled *The Rani of Zanshi: a Play in Three Acts*, produced by Dharam Chand Bhandari as part of his role as playwright and actor for the 'Drama Party' faction of the INA, which produced performance propaganda to recruit Neesoon Camp prisoners of war to the INA cause.¹¹³ Bhandari was captured and interrogated by intelligence officers of CSDIC(I) in the first months of 1946, and the pamphlet features in the records of his interrogation. Singh does not engage with the materiality of the pamphlet, however, nor with the mentioned but unidentified 'other sources' used by Bhandari's interrogators to understand the themes of the performances he coordinated.¹¹⁴ Singh's objective here was to understand what could be learned from the textual content of the Drama Party's plays and offer an interpretation of what it meant for Bhandari to have both retained a copy of *The Rani of Zanshi*, and to have offered it up to his interrogators. He concludes that both object and acts could be understood as heteroglossic, at the same time conveying an 'unvarnished version of why *sipahis* had joined the IRA', a basic 'historical drama', and an effort to 'defiantly communicate what Bhandari thought and wished to say even as he sat pliantly in the interrogation room.'¹¹⁵ Engaging with the materialities of these objects and acts would add to this kind of textual analysis, by offering insights into how these plays were produced and circulated amongst INA members and sympathisers, how the pamphlet had been handled and kept, how the interrogation was conducted and recorded. For example, what kind of paper was *The Rani of Zanshi* printed on? What kind of printing was used to create it? Answers to these questions could offer insights into the material mechanics of grassroots INA mobilisation and thus to historians' understanding of what resistance comprised in real terms. Such answers might, for

¹¹² Singh, *Between Self and Sepoy* (2015), pp. 169-170.

¹¹³ Singh, *Between Self and Sepoy* (2015), pp. 169-170.

¹¹⁴ Singh, *Between Self and Sepoy* (2015), p. 170.

¹¹⁵ Singh, *Between Self and Sepoy* (2015), p. 173 (emphasis in original).

example, explain whether local resources and techniques were used during Bhandari's internment in Singapore, or during his return to India, and thus how the cultural space of internment or travel shaped INA performance propaganda. Similarly, examining the interrogation materials, such as the 'other sources' produced by interrogators, might offer an insight into what evidence was retained, circulated and survived long enough for interrogators to seize them. This would therefore extend Singh's work; by examining the interrogation materials he deals with directly (in conjunction with additional materials, such as those documents that detail the work of 'Traitors Day performances' and the autobiographical plays authored by Bose in an exercise of self-mythologising), historians might move beyond the conclusions gleaned by a textual examination of INA plays and begin to understand how the material culture of performance in the Drama Party shaped the strategy of Indian resistance.¹¹⁶

The bodily aspects of these performances, or the materialities of their staging could also be questioned. The different ways in which the materialities of the bod(il)y can be significant have been extensively researched across a range of fields, and it is worth considering some examples of these to understand how an examination of bodily materiality can add to the histories written by scholars like Singh. Katherine Hayles for example, writing within literary and science studies, framed the body and embodiment as the medium through which cultural practices are materialised and inscribed.¹¹⁷ Feminist philosopher, ethicist and literary scholar Judith Butler argued in the same moment that the body materialises through a matrix of power relations in a process that occurs over time through 're-iterations of norms', such that subject agencies around sex and gender, but also race, ethnicity and class, emerge after the construction of the bodily.¹¹⁸ Syliva Winter and Denise Ferreira da Silva both speak to further ways in which the materialities of the body and bodily are constructed in the (white heteronormative) social imaginaries, arguing that the metaphysical and physical, touchable 'figure of the human' is entangled with historically dominant systems of

¹¹⁶ For the Traitor's Day performances, and the self-authored, autobiographical play 'Life Sketch of SC Bose', see Report No. 985 (Flying Officer Gurbachan Singh Bhullar), dated 30 June 1945, and Report No. 1001 (Captain Asiruddin Jahangir), dated 14 August 1945, respectively; both in 'Selected Papers of the Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre (India) (CSDIC(I))', British Library, IOR MSS EUR F 275.

¹¹⁷ Katherine N. Hayles, 'The Materiality of Informatics', *Configurations*, 1.1 (1993), 147–70 (pp. 157–158).

¹¹⁸ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 10.

knowing and being.¹¹⁹ The result is the privileging of 'a *genre* of the human that reified western bourgeois tenets' is privileged above all others, and those that fall short of this genre are deemed subjects that are passively 'affectable', rather than able to affect others.¹²⁰

Butler, Winter and Ferreira da Silva's work each points to the social construction of the bodily, but Winter and Ferreira da Silva's research has particularly profound repercussions for how the materialities of the raced body and bodiliness are understood both in public discourse, and in historical studies. What draws this together in the context of Singh's work, is that these scholarships on the complex and transdisciplinary relevance of bodily materiality speak to the importance of examining bodiliness in history research and writing – especially, as here, where the bodiliness in issue is inflected with questions of race, class, caste and plural norms of masculinity. For Singh's book includes an image from the IWM entitled 'Outdoor Theatre of Indian Porter Corps at Cut al-Imara', in which four men move before a large crowd, as if performing a play such as that described in Bhandari's interrogation.¹²¹ This is a curious illustration, given that Singh's focus is not on the materialities of INA performance culture; indeed, Singh does not acknowledge the photograph in the body of the text at all. Furthermore, the IWM catalogue record dates the image to 1916, around 39 years before Bhandari's testimony.¹²² If Singh's intention was to make a larger point about performance in the Indian Army, this feels lost without an examination of the material culture of military dramatic performance reflected in the pamphlet and photograph. Furthermore, how bodiliness was understood by the men performing, the content and context of the performance, and the space in which the performance occurs can dramatically impact how the photograph, and wider military performance culture, might be interpreted. As discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis, the enunciation of certain performance forms by men who conceive of their bodiliness as closely entangled with their spiritual beliefs requires historical analysis that allows for the

¹¹⁹ Ben Spatz, 'Notes for Decolonizing Embodiment', *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, 33.2 (2019), 9–22 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/dtc.2019.0001>>, p. 17.

¹²⁰ Spatz, 'Notes for Decolonizing Embodiment' (2019), p. 17.

¹²¹ Singh, *Between Self and Sepoy* (2015), p. 170.

¹²² Ariel Vargas, *Outdoor Theatre of Indian Porter Corps at Kut, 1916*, Imperial War Museum, Q 24574 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205222864>>.

agency of non-human forces. To date, however, these performances have tended to be interpreted by historians simply as dramatic arts, conducted only for entertainment purposes. Part of this thesis's intervention in the existing literature on the Indian Army is thus to examine these practices and spaces, often created through the presence of an audience rather than any form of stage, and to ask what historians might learn from these tangible and intangible materialities of bodiliness, space and dress.

Moving beyond text – and object-as-text – is also part of the methodological commitment made by First World War literature scholar Santanu Das in his recent work on the Indian Army, and yet his recent work may also pose similar issues to those outlined above. He writes that it is 'necessary [...] to go beyond the solely textual to [consider] these other kinds of evidence – material, visual, oral – and establish a dialogue between them,' and he rightly calls for a 'redefinition of the "archive"' in this regard.¹²³ In practice, however, Das tends to limit this 'extension' to the inclusion of oral phenomena; while he seeks to 'read' the materiality of well-known sources, such as extracts of letters attached to reports by the Censor of Indian Mail, in practice he deploys the methodology of close textual reading used in his previous publications.¹²⁴ Even in his discussions of the sonic – including the traces of Punjabi storytelling in the letters and the sound recordings of Indian prisoners of war – Das focuses on the *content* of what is being relayed, and thus does not consider the underlying bodiliness of the speaker. Furthermore, sources are routinely framed as having an expressive function, belonging to 'emotional communities' and 'repositories of feeling', which reveal 'a subaltern history of feeling'.¹²⁵ The result is a return to methodologies that treat texts as concealing forms of agency – specifically 'subaltern' agency.

Writers like Das thus draw on the terminology of early postcolonial theory, using subalternity as a reference to historically marginalised peoples who are not represented in

¹²³ Santanu Das, *India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images, and Songs* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 11, 23 and 204-205.'

¹²⁴ See for example Santanu Das, 'The Singing Subaltern', *Parallax*, 17.3 (2011), 4–18 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13534645.2011.584409>>; Santanu Das, 'Touching Semiliterate Lives: Indian Soldiers, the Great War, and Life-"Writing"', in *Modernism and Autobiography*, ed. by M. DiBattista and E.O. Wittman (Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 127–42; Santanu Das, 'Indian Sepoy Experience in Europe, 1914–18: Archive, Language, and Feeling', *Twentieth Century British History*, 25.3 (2014), 391–417 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/hwu033>>.

¹²⁵ Das, *Writings, Images, and Songs* (2018), pp. 212-213.

written histories, or indeed in the bulk of the materials collected in formal archives. Das's work specifically therefore offers a valuable extension to postcolonial histories of the Indian Army; it traces Indian soldiers' experiences through sources that Das critically represents as having echoes of first-hand testimony. As discussed above, the concept of subalternity in history writing has its roots in a postcolonial critique of whose perspective is included in written histories, and my work similarly contends with perspective; it also grapples with the idea of that which is inaccessible and unknowable to the historian.¹²⁶ This thesis is therefore not an exercise in pitting methods of subalternity and otherwise against one another. On the contrary, I draw on both approaches to reimagine what history research and writing is, can be, and can do when different conceptualisations of insurgency – that advanced by Gayatri Spivak and by decolonial scholars like Mignolo and Walsh – are used in tandem.¹²⁷ This thesis embraces unknowability through what it has termed methods of opacity (outlined below), and argues for two things, outlined further in the section below. Firstly, by introducing ideas of bodiliness into the discussion around these sources, historical studies into the wartime Indian Army can open-up new possibilities for understanding the men's lived experiences. Secondly, that these accounts must understand bodiliness as something that goes beyond the corporeal, and in fact resists the assumption that the corporeal body is the starting point for the 'praxis of living.'¹²⁸ As a result, this thesis goes beyond the conclusions drawn in the existing literature by fundamentally changing the terms on which histories of the Indian Army are researched and written.

Bodiliness, Embodiment and Worlding

The use of bodiliness as a research category is a core element of this project's objective to test how far history research and writing can resist frames of reference grounded in European Christian ontologies that 'carry assumptions of individualism and biologism.'¹²⁹ A Cartesian-style distinction between body and mind is central to most existing accounts of the Indian Army during the First World War, which consequently assume forms of selfhood that were not necessarily shared by the indigenous ontologies more familiar to the men

¹²⁶ For my outline on the origins of subalternity in postcolonial discourse, see page 70, above.

¹²⁷ For my discussion of these conceptualisations of insurgency, see pages 32, 72 and 73-74.

¹²⁸ Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality* (2018), p. 162.

¹²⁹ Spatz, 'Notes for Decolonizing Embodiment' (2019), p. 14.

recruited from across India. Instead, this project aligns itself with the call to 'deontologize the entity body [...] and restore it to the irreducible processes in the praxis of living.'¹³⁰ The concepts of bodiliness and embodiment are treated as part of one's subjectivity and selfhood; they are sites at and ways in which subjects encounter their material reality.¹³¹ The term subjectivity then refers not to one's feelings or position on any given matter, but to subjecthood and agency. The ideas of bodiliness and embodiment thus begin to 'cut ties' with the anthropocentrism that characterises the colonial matrices of power, and which is entangled with its own racist histories of grading the racialised person on a scale of humanness.¹³² This project especially aims to problematise the paradigmatic categories of material culture and embodiment used within design history. The literature discussed below illustrates how design historians might reimagine how material culture is used in the research and writing of histories. Once design historians move away from Eurocentric, and even anthropocentric, ontologies, and begin engaging with otherwise worldviews, what material culture is and can do is transformed.

The importance of theories of embodiment to material culture studies has long been discussed by dress historian and fashion theorists. Since the very early 2000s, Joanne Entwistle has used embodiment to bridge the gap between the existing scholarship on fashion and dress (framed as 'merely textual or discursive' practices), towards fashion and dress as embodied practices in their own right.¹³³ Drawing on the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty – namely the body as 'the existential ground of culture' – Entwistle argues that dress is a '*situated bodily practice* that is embedded within the social world and fundamental to microsocial order.'¹³⁴ Yet she also emphasises the personal and experiential dimensions of existing in a (dressed) 'fleshy body', thus pushing post-structuralist discourse – especially the work of Michel Foucault – to account for both the role of social constructivism and cultural sensibilities and personal, individual agency in shaping the

¹³⁰ Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality* (2018), p. 162.

¹³¹ Spatz, 'Notes for Decolonizing Embodiment' (2019), p. 17.

¹³² Spatz, 'Notes for Decolonizing Embodiment' (2019), pp. 16-17.

¹³³ J. Entwistle, 'Fashion and the Fleshy Body: Dress as Embodied Practice', *Fashion Theory*, 4.3 (2000), 323–48; J. Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Social Theory*, 2nd edn (Polity Press, 2015); *Body Dressing*, ed. by J. Entwistle and E. Wilson, Dress, Body, Culture (Berg Publishers, 2001)

<<https://www.bloomsburyfashioncentral.com/encyclopedia?docid=b-9780857854032>>, p. 4.

¹³⁴ Entwistle, 'Fashion and the Fleshy Body' (2000), p. 325; Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body* (2015), p. 34 (emphasis added).

experience of 'living in and acting on the [dressed, corporeal] body.'¹³⁵ For Entwistle then, embodiment is the process of asserting agency whilst existing within the fleshy physicality of something that is shaped and constructed in parallel by external social forces. The body is 'the environment of the self', and thus processes acting on the body (such as the practice of dressing) must be understood as 'part of the experience of selfhood.'¹³⁶ Entwistle's work continues to be dominant as a model for understanding the embodied practice of dress in material culture studies. However, writing principally from a sociological and cultural studies space, her framework of embodiment is what Ben Spatz has called 'an excess of the body': embodiment is understood as that which emerges out of the corporeal (human) body.¹³⁷ This makes sense, given that sociology as an academic discipline has and continues to be concerned primarily with modern/colonial models of existence, such that otherwise ways of being and 'diverse Indigenous conceptions of time' have been not just unaccounted for, but actively excluded from the normative understanding of what it means to exist and experience the world.¹³⁸ Working within transdisciplinary efforts to decolonise how bodiliness is understood, Spatz suggests defining the body:

secondarily, as a derivative of embodiment. Embodiment, then, is not the excess of the body; rather, 'the body' is a set of overlapping and contiguous fields through which we work in partial ways with the affordances of embodiment.¹³⁹

I deploy this sense of embodiment across the project, in an effort to delink from ideas of embodiment that presuppose a human body entity; the corporeal body may be one of plural ways to articulate and experience embodiment. My use of the term bodiliness similarly draws from this approach. It refers not exclusively to the physicality of the human body, or even to an understanding of bodiliness that tries to collapse body/mind distinctions; rather, it goes further than this, by using bodiliness to refer to a 'complex, multidimensional space' where 'the dialogue between agency and materiality takes

¹³⁵ Entwistle, 'Fashion and the Fleshy Body' (2000), pp. 330-332.

¹³⁶ Entwistle, 'Fashion and the Fleshy Body' (2000), p. 332.

¹³⁷ Spatz, 'Notes for Decolonizing Embodiment' (2019), p. 14.

¹³⁸ Lisa Tilley, 'Resisting Piratic Method by Doing Research Otherwise', *Sociology*, 51.1 (2017), 27-42 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038516656992>, p. 28.

¹³⁹ Spatz, 'Notes for Decolonizing Embodiment' (2019), p. 14.

place'.¹⁴⁰ Doing so enables me to suggest an acutely different model of subjectivity to poststructuralist writers like Butler and Merleau-Ponty. In contrast to models that necessarily presuppose a division between the body and mind – such that one's subjectivity and agency emerges secondarily to a body that itself is first shaped by culture – my position presumes that bodiliness is an entanglement of intangible and tangible materialities that make up our sense of being. This position also allows me to both use ideas of embodiment in relation both to human and non-human agencies and subjectivities. This is especially important in the context of Chapter 1, which argues that divine agencies were understood as inhabiting a variety of objects in the possession of men in the Indian Army, and that the bodiliness of these men was key to securing the protection and fortune-bestowing properties of those divine objects. Bodiliness thus becomes the site at which the affordances of mortal, human and divine agencies materialise and engage with one another. To better situate this framework in the context of this thesis and illustrate how these concepts might be incorporated into Indian design histories, what follows is an example of how closely aligned definitions of bodiliness and embodiment have been articulated in ethnomusicology scholarship around Indian worship practices.

In 2018, Finnian M. M. Gerety published an extensive study on the Brahminic 'transmission of traditional knowledge' in Vedic scripture, particularly Sāmavedic 'songs'.¹⁴¹ Working out of a religious studies space and a research practice embedded in sensory ethnography, Gerety's focus is the 'pedagogical paradigm' for Keralan practitioners, which is centred on 'direct experience [...] a singer hears a song performed by another, repeats it, and masters it; in this way, a song moves as oral, embodied knowledge from one person to another, and from one generation to the next.'¹⁴² This pedagogical paradigm illustrates a form of bodiliness closely aligned with the definition I put forward above. The 'embodied flow of knowledge' to which Gerety speaks is an entanglement of human and non-human agencies. Gerety explains that the transmission of the Vedic scriptures has been 'predominantly oral,

¹⁴⁰ Ben Spatz, 'Embodiment as First Affordance: Tinkering, Tuning, Tracking', *Performance Philosophy*, 2.2, 257–71 (pp. 259–261).

¹⁴¹ Finnian M. M. Gerety, 'Digital Guru: Embodiment, Technology, and the Transmission of Traditional Knowledge in Kerala', *Asian Ethnology*, 77.1/2 (2018), 3–32.

¹⁴² Gerety, 'Digital Guru' (2018), p. 4.

motivated by an ideal of total fidelity to the definitive oral text [...] with every syllable of every mantra intoned exactly as it always has been,' with the result that 'the practitioner learns, transmits, or performs the Veda by quite literally embodying it.'¹⁴³ Human and scriptural subjects become enmeshed, creating an 'embodied archive [...] generation after generation through the intensely rigorous transmission of knowledge from teacher to student.'¹⁴⁴ Through this process, the Brahminic practitioner is 'essentially identical with the texts he transmits,' and Gerety goes on to cite a passage of Vedic prose from c. 1000 BCE that implies 'once a Brahmin has learned the Veda, his textual parentage supersedes even his biological parentage [...] If one understands the Veda to be existing in him, that is his father, that is his grandfather.'¹⁴⁵ The absence of any distinction between scripture, individual Brahmin, and Vedic knowledge demonstrates that the Brahminic sense of self cannot be read along dualist lines; it should instead be framed in the way described above, as the entanglement of bodiliness within a wider ecology that incorporates spiritual dimensions and agency in non-human (sometimes immaterial) actors such as Vedic knowledge. My proposed understanding of bodiliness is therefore particularly pertinent for thinking about bodily materialities and experiences in the contextual of historic Indian cosmologies, as it illustrates how conceptualisations of bodiliness have been understood as imbued with historical memory and knowledge that is capable of being transmitted through the entanglement of subjects.

This example speaks to the materiality of the body as articulated by a small community of Brahminic caste members who are 'eligible' to learn the scripture. As discussed in the section above titled 'Contextualising the Indian Army and its soldiers,' the British deemed the landowning, educated Brahmin classes to be amongst the primary instigators of the 1857 Indian Army Rebellion, following which British colonial administrators sought to limit the recruitment of Brahmin caste members in the belief that their typically higher-educated status made them both more likely to and capable of revolt.¹⁴⁶ Brahmins were therefore not

¹⁴³ Gerety, 'Digital Guru' (2018), pp. 9 and 17.

¹⁴⁴ Gerety, 'Digital Guru' (2018), p.11.

¹⁴⁵ Gerety, 'Digital Guru' (2018), pp. 9-10.

¹⁴⁶ See also Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 8-9 and 173.

recruited as heavily as other Hindu castes in the First World War; however, this example of bodily materialities in Vedic worship has wider relevance for this project, given the significance of oral transmission and practice also for Hindu congregants *listening* to Brahminic renditions of the Vedic message.¹⁴⁷ Gerety highlights that the significance of Vedic scripts is not just in their oral actualisation through the sounding out of the mantras (where the emphasis is on the Brahmin *transmitting* the text), but also in the scripts' state of śruti. Various translated as 'that which is heard', 'learning by hearing' or 'holy hearing', śruti is a 'form of auditory revelation', where the emphasis is on the listening Hindu audience.¹⁴⁸ This illustrates the significance of bodiliness as a multi-sensorial affordance, and further highlights how analysis of the Vedic scripture – quoted by Indian soldiers to senior British officers transcribing letters on their behalf, recited in prayer on the battlefield, or spoken in a recording taken in a prisoner of war camp (all examples of primary sources) – cannot be limited to the *content* of the text. It must take account of bodiliness to begin to understand the significance of the source. This is an approach I explore particularly in Chapter 2, which considers the sonic dimensions of life within the Indian Army, drawing attention to the affective dimensions of language, sound-creation, and practices of listening.

The discussion around the significance of listening as a bodily practice – and indeed the idea of a shared experience between practitioner and listener – is discussed further by Inderjit Nilu Kaur, whose work explores the significance of *sabad kīrtan* for members of the Sikh Panth.¹⁴⁹ *Sabad kirtan* comprises forms of sung sacred poetry, typically at the *gurdwāra*, which acts both as a means by which listeners access the divine, but also an 'epistemic site where divinity and ethics are experienced as unified embodied knowledge' that is 'experiential [...] sensorial and bodily, and intersubjectively produced.'¹⁵⁰ Kaur thus frames listening in the context of musical rendering of *sabad* as a generative, affective practice, and

¹⁴⁷ For recruitment figures, see Singh, *Between Self and Sepoy* (2015), Appendix II.

¹⁴⁸ Gerety, 'Digital Guru' (2018), p. 8.

¹⁴⁹ Inderjit Nilu Kaur, 'When "Unheard Sound" (Re)Sounds: Affective Listening, Ethical Affects, and Embodied Experience in Sikh *Sabad Kīrtan*' (unpublished PhD, University of California, Berkeley, 2016)

<https://digitalassets.lib.berkeley.edu/etd/ucb/text/Kaur_berkeley_0028E_16368.pdf> [accessed 6 November 2019];

Inderjit Nilu Kaur, 'A Multisensorial Affective Ecology of Sonic Worship: The Sikh Sacred Song Culture', *MUSICultures*, 46.2 (2019), 109–33

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328715749_A_Multisensorial_Affective_Ecology_of_Sonic_Worship_The_Sikh_Sacred_Song_Culture> [accessed 31 March 2020].

¹⁵⁰ Kaur, 'When "Unheard Sound" (Re)Sounds' (2016), pp. 19 and 129.

a means through which the foundational moral systems and teachings of Sikhism are intersubjectively generated and experienced by listeners in the 'Sikh affective ecology.'¹⁵¹ This affective ecology reduces 'the felt temporal and spatial distance with the Gurus' by opening 'the heart and body both to their teachings and to deepened aesthetic sensations.'¹⁵² This process is known as the manifestation of anhad, 'limitless divine vibrations'; the act of reciting and listening to the sabad 'make[s] physically perceptible divine vibrations that are otherwise not heard.'¹⁵³ As Kaur notes, drawing from her sensory ethnographic research, observational field work, interviews and casual conversations in the gurdwāra, the sabads 'repeatedly stress [...] that the human body is formed as a special opportunity to enact divine virtues.'¹⁵⁴ This understanding of bodiliness aligns with that proposed by Spatz; the collective and individual human Sikh body/ies is positioned as the site where the agencies each of human, forms of knowledge, and the divine engage with one another. The body becomes the means by which Sikh subjects can 'do' divine work. This further illustrates the importance of reimagining how bodiliness is understood in the context of researching and writing histories of Indian Army soldiers. As a design historian encountering the archive, I was struck by the potential to apply Kaur's work further, beyond ethnographic field research. Indeed, for me her interview work underlines the importance of understanding different types of sources that bear some connection to the sonic – including transcripts, recordings – as having their own agentive potential, which becomes enmeshed with the bodiliness of listeners. In Chapters 2 and 3 I place this approach to the sonic into conversation with Black feminist scholarship that proposes the possibility of listening to images. By drawing on frameworks like these for understanding the affective and generative potential of sound and listening in Indian cultures, and considering them in tandem with otherwise methodologies of primary source analysis, I propose new critical registers of the bodily and seek to move beyond methodologies of histories that focus on the content of a text that is enunciated aloud.

¹⁵¹ Kaur, 'When "Unheard Sound" (Re)Sounds' (2016), p. 1.

¹⁵² Kaur, 'When "Unheard Sound" (Re)Sounds' (2016), pp. 1 and 113.

¹⁵³ Kaur, 'When "Unheard Sound" (Re)Sounds' (2016), pp. 3 and 21.

¹⁵⁴ Kaur, 'When "Unheard Sound" (Re)Sounds' (2016), p. 22.

Kaur borrows from Kathleen Stewart's exposition of worlding to develop a framework for connecting this sense of bodiliness with forms of worldmaking that emerge from the same South Asian onto-epistemologies. Stewart describes worlding as the ways in which an assemblage of elements comes to hang together as a thing that has qualities, sensory aesthetics and lines of force.¹⁵⁵ Stewart's concern here is the process of becoming – 'the tactility and significance of the process of coming into form itself.'¹⁵⁶ However, Kaur argues that the notions of becoming and worlding can be moved beyond any preoccupation with 'form', by infusing the notion of worlding with Sara Ahmed's discussion on stickiness.¹⁵⁷ Kaur does not point exactly to which aspects of stickiness she seeks to marry with worlding, but I have found the following passage from *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* to be a helpful one when reimagining plural ways of worlding:

Rather than using stickiness to describe an object's surface, we can think of stickiness as an effect of surfacing, as an effect of the histories of contact between bodies, objects, and signs.¹⁵⁸

Through her attention to 'accruals of affects emerging from the interactives between old and new localities – materialities as well as imaginaries,' Kaur's use of worlding might be understood as accounting for the role of stickiness in binding together localities, materialities, imaginaries in the generative process of an individual's worldmaking.¹⁵⁹ At least, this is how I have chosen to understand and use the term worlding: a generative process that does not depend on individualised senses of the self, but rather be collectively produced through the stickiness of human and non-human actors alike. Rather than cultivating a singular worldview, worlding thus has the potential to be plural depending on how one's consciousness is embodied. In the context of sound, this opens up the possibility

¹⁵⁵ Kathleen Stewart, 'Tactile Compositions', in *Objects and Materials: A Routledge Companion*, ed. by Penny Harvey and others (London, United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), pp. 119–27
<<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/rcauk/detail.action?docID=1743868>>, p. 119.

¹⁵⁶ Stewart, 'Tactile Compositions' (2013), p. 119.

¹⁵⁷ Inderjit Nilu Kaur, 'Transnational Affects, Transnational Worldings: Sikhs Sounding Sacred Songs, Making Multiple Worlds', *Civilisations*, 67 (2018), 23–40
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328715170_Transnational_Affects_Transnational_Worldings_Sikhs_Sounding_Sacred_Songs_Making_Multiple_Worlds> [accessed 23 June 2020], p. 25.

¹⁵⁸ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh, United Kingdom: Edinburgh University Press, 2014)
<<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/rcauk/detail.action?docID=1767554>>, p. 90.

¹⁵⁹ Kaur, 'Transnational Affects, Transnational Worldings' (2018), p. 25.

that the worldings of the men in the Indian Army shaped the generative effect of sound-making and sound-experiencing in the different spaces recorded by the primary sources. The significance of this is in recognising that historians encountering traces, imprints or reproductions of sound(ing) in the archive could contextualise these sources using worldings that may not align with their own – and indeed may not be knowable to the historian. It is not in-keeping with the decolonial objectives of this thesis to describe history-writing as being done 'accurately', as if there is an empirical metric against which historical interpretations of lived experiences can be measured. However, I would talk about this practice being done with care. One objective of this thesis then was to write up my encounters with these sources in a way that explores how to navigate experiences of sound(ing) that may differ from my own, including the role the historian's own (shifting) bodiliness in this process of navigation and writing.

Encountering the Archive

This thesis never set out to interrogate in detail questions about the nature of 'The Archive'. However, part of my research method involved thinking very carefully about how writers have encountered archival sources in history writing, and whether iterations of these approaches might inform my own methodology. Alongside the approaches grounded in literary theory, ethnomusicology, and historical studies, it is important to consider the potential contribution to this project of analytical frameworks emerging out of postcolonial and decolonial discourse and praxis. Following the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, early postcolonial studies scholars coalesced around the work of the South Asian Subaltern Studies Group, beginning in the 1980s.¹⁶⁰ Blending the terminology of Antonio Gramsci's Marxism with an attempt to rewrite (and re-right) a predominantly Indian historiography of the national past under colonial rule, the group was situated in a pre-existing culture of debate around 'history from below and on insurgency in colonial India.'¹⁶¹ As touched on above, the efforts of the group and of those that have since emerged from it, to privilege the formation and perspective of the (Indian) colonized subject was thus grounded in a radical academic culture that espoused the autonomy of the subaltern peasantry.

¹⁶⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (New York: Penguin Books, 1978).

¹⁶¹ D. Ludden, *Reading Subaltern Studies: Critical History, Contested Meaning and the Globalization of South Asia*, Anthem South Asian Studies (Anthem, 2002), p. 4.

Decoloniality is, by contrast, associated with scholarship emerging from 1990s Latin America, in response to the 'Spanish and Portuguese colonization of the Americas' that occurred earlier than the British colonisation of India, and went largely undiscussed by postcolonial theorists.¹⁶² Postcolonialism and decoloniality share some fundamental tenets and commitments; however, each emerged in response to specific and distinct moments in time and questions around coloniality, and deploys different methodologies to address those questions. Placing both methodologies in dialogue allows me to learn from and think with classic postcolonial writing on the relationship of so-called colonial subjects with coloniality, and to explore approaches that foreground the lived experience of the men in the Indian Army. Yet it also allows me to pursue the otherwise epistemological objectives of decoloniality, in an effort to delink from practices of history research and writing that shore up

the hierarchical structures of race, gender, heteropatriarchy, and class that continue to control life, knowledge, spirituality, and thought, structures that are clearly intertwined with and constitutive of global capitalism and Western modernity.¹⁶³

Early members of the South Asian Subaltern Studies Group have written extensively on aspects of colonial subjectivity, and their work continues to offer methodological inspiration for this doctorate project. Most prominently is Gayatri Spivak's oft-cited essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', which engages with a wide range of political, cultural and philosophical questions.¹⁶⁴ Of central importance to my methodology though is her discussion of *sati*, or the rite of widow sacrifice.¹⁶⁵ Spivak opens up discussion around 'the "différend" – the inaccessibility of, or untranslatability from, one mode of discourse in a dispute to another' – and whether this is the same as the inability, or *unwillingness*, to understand the discursive 'translation'.¹⁶⁶ This is critical for historians drawing on the imperial archive, for the questions it raises both more broadly on methodologies of interpretation, but also those

¹⁶² Emma Velez and Nancy Tuana, 'Editors' Introduction Tango Dancing with María Lugones: Toward Decolonial Feminisms', *Critical Philosophy of Race*, 8.1–2 (2020), 1–24 <<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/747656>> [accessed 5 March 2020], p. 5.

¹⁶³ Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality* (2018), pp. 17 and 115.

¹⁶⁴ G.C. Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. by P. Williams and L. Chrisman (Taylor & Francis, 2015), p. 93.

¹⁶⁵ Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (2015), p. 93.

¹⁶⁶ Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (2015), p. 96.

around the communicative potential of the bodily. For Spivak, subaltern Indian women sought to reclaim agency through their participation in rites such as *sati*, or widow sacrifice, noting early in the essay that 'the notion of what the work *cannot* say becomes important. In the semiosis of the social text, elaborations of insurgency stand in the place of "the utterance".'¹⁶⁷ For Spivak, these subaltern women would *act* where they were unable (due to patriarchal and colonial constraints on the credence given to Indian women's voices in the period) to speak. In the act can be found a plurality of meanings and intentions; in the example of *sati*, the participant was read by the colonial elite as disempowered devotee, but for Spivak is insurgent agent.¹⁶⁸ I was reminded of this when encountering Gajendra Singh's use of Mikhail Bakhtin's term heteroglossia, to describe 'the presence in a single text of plural meanings and realities' in 'the vernacular as [...] cultured text.'¹⁶⁹ For Singh, the possibility that 'even the same word will belong simultaneously to two languages, two belief systems that intersect in a hybrid construction' allowed Indian soldiers to subvert official media such as the letter, the courtroom testimony, the interrogation chamber.¹⁷⁰ This speaks to the well-known use of code in soldiers' letters, but Singh also proposes that soldiers' heteroglossic voices allowed them to 'resituate themselves' in new spaces where colonial control was consequently brought into question:

The space of the colonial courtroom was reappropriated by *sipahis* in order to thwart the prosecution of their peers. And the interrogation chamber became a forum for many soldiers to demonstrate that they no longer considered themselves subject to the rigours of British military discipline.¹⁷¹

In outlining his methodology, Singh references the criticism that has since been made of Spivak's (and other postcolonial scholars') work. Specifically, he discusses the concerns in the context of a pressure to heroize the indigenous and find recurring sites of resistance against coloniality in the archive, which often results in the projection of an imagined

¹⁶⁷ Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (2015), p. 82 (emphasis in original).

¹⁶⁸ Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (2015), pp. 82-83. A clear explanation of this strand of Spivak's, sometimes opaque, argument is available in Rahul Gairola, 'Burning with Shame: Desire and South Asian Patriarchy, from Gayatri Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" To Deepa Mehta's "Fire"', *Comparative Literature*, 54.4 (2002), 307-24 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/4125368>>.

¹⁶⁹ Singh, *Between Self and Sepoy* (2015), p.7.

¹⁷⁰ Singh, *Between Self and Sepoy* (2015), p.7, the latter is Singh quoting Bakhtin directly.

¹⁷¹ Singh, *Between Self and Sepoy* (2015), p. 8.

agency onto oppressed peoples in a way that arguably denies them agency further.¹⁷² Singh therefore insists that his approach is not an exercise in treating letters, transcripts, or court records as 'hidden transcripts [...] a readable "critique of power that was spoken behind the[ir] back" and which had the potential to evolve into overt forms of "resistance".¹⁷³ However, in substituting 'patterns of sentiment, metaphor and tone as much as cold established fact' to reinterpret a binary vision of sepoys' 'twin identities' of martial and community honour and loyalty, Singh's work nonetheless lapses back into a vision of Indian Army soldiers as torn between two competing subjects of loyalty, and attempts to uncover this using a similar method that privileges close reading and the projection of agency.¹⁷⁴ Spivak and Singh's work therefore raise questions for me about how historians might understand the polyvocal and plural potential of sources (both textual and beyond textual). With mind paid to how this thesis understands bodiliness and embodiment, I have asked whether historians might research and write more expansive and liberatory histories if historical actors – here, the men of the Indian Army – are understood as *heterobodily* agents. This riffs off Singh's use of heteroglossia, but rather than asking if the men's bodiliness acts as the vessel for heteroglossic intention or forms of Spivak's 'utterance', this thesis instead uses heterobodiliness to describe the potential for plural worldings within the one subject. Heterobodiliness also parallels Gloria Anzaldúa's theory of border thinking, and the capacity of individuals and communities to live fluidly across plural subject positions. The research presented here builds on these models, but goes further by illustrating how these different models of plural or hybrid subjecthoods are articulated and experienced through bodiliness. Bodiliness thus becomes the site through which these plural subject positions are encountered, enunciated and navigated.

There are additional considerations with this approach to the archive, however, specifically in whether these heteroglossic or heterobodily 'elaborations' (acts) of insurgency can be identified – or understood – by the historian. Spivak argues that not only is the subaltern woman unable to speak, but when she acts in place of speaking, the ideological intention underpinning her insurgent conduct is not recognised for this potential by the colonial

¹⁷² Singh, *Between Self and Sepoy* (2015), p. 184.

¹⁷³ Singh, *Between Self and Sepoy* (2015), pp. 68-69.

¹⁷⁴ Singh, *Between Self and Sepoy* (2015), pp. 7 and 68-69.

elites. Spivak thus reveals the dissonance between the 'sender' and 'receiver' of insurgent messages, which raises the question of if and how 'unspoken' insurgency can be recorded, identified and interpreted by the historian.¹⁷⁵ Singh has himself addressed the inevitability of 'blind spots' and the limitations of historical research into the Indian soldiers' self(s) – or, as I would prefer in an effort to move away from European post-Enlightenment models of selfhood, the soldiers' worldings. He quotes Spivak's later remarks that historians should write 'not in expectation that one day those limits will be overcome but in the realization that "systematic research cannot capture what the everyday sense of self shores up."' ¹⁷⁶ For Singh and Spivak, the only solution is a 'sense of haunting' from the historical subject, 'to lay to rest any hope of "detecting the traces of [an] uninterrupted narrative"' and instead to embrace history writing as 'a radical series of discontinuous interruptions [...] a repeated tearing of time that cannot be sutured.'¹⁷⁷ Thus, while my research resists the suggestion that bodily utterance(s) ought to be understood by the historian exclusively as acts of, or indeed only within broader frameworks of resistance, I do embrace this articulation of the reckoning faced by historians in encountering sources about people for whom little to no first-hand written record has been kept. This thesis therefore offers its conclusions tentatively and, I hope, with care, as discontinuous interruptions: possible articulations of the plural worldings soldiers may have experienced through heterobodiliness.

This project also took lessons from writers within the decolonial discourse on approaches to archival research and analysis. Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine Walsh speak of decoloniality as 'the recognition and undoing of the hierarchical structures of race, gender, heteropatriarchy, and class'.¹⁷⁸ They configure it as a *praxis*, a 'dialogical movement that goes from action to reflection and from reflection upon action to a new action' that

interrupts [...] the modern / colonial / capitalist / heteropatriarchal matrices of power and advances other ways of being, thinking, knowing, theorizing, analysing, feeling, acting and living for us all.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ Michael Kilburn, 'Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty', *Postcolonial Studies @ Emory*, 1996
<<https://scholarblogs.emory.edu/postcolonialstudies/2014/06/19/spivak-gayatri-chakravorty/>> [accessed 6 March 2020].

¹⁷⁶ Singh, *Between Self and Sepoy* (2015), p. 186.

¹⁷⁷ Gajendra Singh, quoting Spivak in Singh, *Between Self and Sepoy* (2015), p. 186.

¹⁷⁸ Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality* (2018), p. 17.

¹⁷⁹ Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality* (2018), pp. 9-10 and 50 (emphasis added).

For Gloria Anzaldúa, a critical element of decolonial research has been to privilege border thinking: a space of colonial difference where these 'other ways' (of being, thinking, knowing etc) have to be 'adapted, adopted, rejected, integrated, or ignored'.¹⁸⁰ In the context of this PhD, border thinking includes drawing on worldviews that are not grounded on the dualistic foundations of 'Enlightenment epistemology', or the Newtonian model of linear time, to build the project (to borrow Trinh T. Minh-ha's term) 'nearby' perspectives originating in the Global South.¹⁸¹

Mignolo and Walsh in their recent work have also called for 'decolonial insurgency': an 'act-action of creation, construction, and intervention' towards deconstructing the matrices of power that privilege hegemonic European ways of thinking and being (and, accordingly, subalternism).¹⁸² They understand this as 'more than a simple renewal, restoration or revival (of knowledges, life practices, and re-existences)', but rather 'the recognition and undoing of the hierarchical structures of race, gender, heteropatriarchy, and class.'¹⁸³ It is important in light of this to recognise that this project is not claiming to 'do' decolonial research; rather one of its objectives will be to test whether historical research on subjects with little to no recorded history can have decolonial outcomes. It is important to situate this question in *this* historical moment; the majority of this thesis was researched and written during the global Covid-19 pandemic, when archives were largely closed or access restricted. How this impacted history researching and writing as a practice – and one that seeks to embed itself within decolonial praxis – is addressed across the thesis. Furthermore, borrowing from decolonial efforts to create a qualitative research model presents some challenges. As a doctorate project, there are limits to how far I can be de-centred as

¹⁸⁰ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* (2012); Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs* (2012), p. ix.

¹⁸¹ Ramon Grosfoguel, 'Decolonizing Post-Colonial Studies and Paradigms of Political-Economy: Transmodernity, Decolonial Thinking and Global Coloniality', *Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*, 1.1 (2011), 1–37 <<http://www.dialogoglobal.com/barcelona/texts/grosfoguel/Grosfoguel-Decolonizing-Pol-Econ-and-Postcolonial.pdf>> [accessed 25 September 2019], p. 3; Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality* (2018), p. 17; Nancy N. Chen, "'Speaking Nearby": A Conversation with Trinh T. Minh-ha', *Visual Anthropology Review*, 8.1 (1992), 82–91 <<https://www.situatedecologies.net/wp-content/uploads/Trinh-Speaking-Nearby-1983.pdf>>. In this exchange, Minh-ha explains that speaking nearby is to 'a speaking that does not objectify,' but rather 'reflects on itself and can come very close to a subject *without, however, seizing or claiming it*' (emphasis added).

¹⁸² Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality* (2018), p. 17 and 33-34.

¹⁸³ Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality* (2018), p. 17 and 33-34.

researcher and still meet institutional requirements for the degree. The Royal College of Art criteria for a doctoral award emphasise the candidate's ability to undertake certain research tasks, including identifying the scope of the project and archival resources, conducting independent research and defending the research outcomes at viva-voce examinations.¹⁸⁴ The co-creational methodologies proposed by scholars who aim to address 'extractive' social science methodologies by working *with* the subjects of their study and integrating emancipatory objectives from critical theory, are therefore not easily replicable within the doctorate award framework.¹⁸⁵ It instead falls to my research objectives to question whether history research and writing projects can have decolonial outcomes – or whether they are limited by their researcher-centric methodologies.

The emphasis on plurality introduced above is at the heart of Patricia DeRocher's work on testimonio life-writing. DeRocher's 2018 book *Transnational Testimonios: The Politics of Collective Knowledge Production* is perhaps best described as an interdisciplinary invitation to any number of different imagined audiences with an interest in media that 'create productive "epistemic friction"'.¹⁸⁶ It argues for the recognition of certain life-writing forms as methods of collective feminist knowledge production, but its broader model for destabilising epistemic categories, recognising 'the centrality of the cultural imaginary' and understanding the different strategies and objectives of storytelling has been useful in my own project. DeRocher defines testimonio writing through function and intention, rather than form, but simply put testimonios are 'creatively shaped stories that refer outwardly to actual life events – narratives that resided intentionally at the nexus of the discursive and the material'.¹⁸⁷ One of the central tenets of testimonio writing is the role of a first person narrator as deliberately representative of the experiences of a collective 'we' to showcase the typicality of the lived experience(s) described; in DeRocher's words, 'utilisation of first-person plural narratives [...] relay[s] a macrosocial critique in a microsocial, affective

¹⁸⁴ Royal College of Art, *Postgraduate Research Degrees Programme Handbook*, 2019-2020 (section 4.2); Royal College of Art, *Postgraduate Research Degrees Programme Handbook*, 2022-2023 (section 4.2).

¹⁸⁵ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd edn (London: Zed Books, 2012), Chapter 10; Venkatesh Vadiya, 'Social Domination and Epistemic Marginalisation: Towards Methodology of the Oppressed', *Social Epistemology*, 32.4 (2018), 272–85 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/02691728.2018.1444111>>, p. 282.

¹⁸⁶ P. DeRocher, *Transnational Testimonios: The Politics of Collective Knowledge Production*, Decolonizing Feminisms (University of Washington Press, 2018), p. xi.

¹⁸⁷ DeRocher, *Transnational Testimonios* (2018), p. x.

register' and offers a way of 'seeing the communal in the private.'¹⁸⁸ This is not to say that any of the sources created by, with or about Indian soldiers across the war are strict testimonios. But looking to these analytical frameworks can help identify instances where, to use DeRocher's phrasing, personal experience is used 'to sharpen an understanding of collective histories.'¹⁸⁹ DeRocher emphasises that testimonio 'moves away from the liberal autobiography focus on the self, and instead imagines subjectivity differently', encouraging the reader to 'look outward and around – beyond, behind and below, and above the speaker – to understand how their lives fit into the larger social landscape.'¹⁹⁰ This project sought to do exactly this by taking as its starting point otherwise forms of articulating one's worlding: forms that emerge out of the practices involving sound, language, and movement with which soldiers in the Indian Army engaged. Primary sources examined through bodily analytical frameworks thus have the potential to create 'epistemic friction [...] by bringing disparate worlds into proximate contact, and which are articulated in different language registers for different audiences and contexts.'¹⁹¹

DeRocher's work introduces well the final point around how this thesis uses bodiliness as a form of analytical enquiry to reappraise how historians encounter the archive. The question of how to reach towards the ungraspable, as articulated by postcolonial and decolonial studies, has been the subject of several texts recently published by Black feminist studies scholars. Their approach to the archive prompted me to think about how the position and affect of the historian's bodiliness(es) in archival encounters. Those texts that especially informed my approach include Saidiya Hartman's *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* and *Venus in Two Acts*, Tina Campt's *Listening to Images*, and Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*.¹⁹² Each of these texts proposes a different method of reappraising the archive and re-encountering its contents through new modes of relation with the subjects whose lives are traced by the historical record. For Hartman, this is achieved through fiction. Through 'close narration [...] which

¹⁸⁸ DeRocher, *Transnational Testimonios* (2018), pp. 4, 15 and 17.

¹⁸⁹ DeRocher, *Transnational Testimonios* (2018), pp. 17-18.

¹⁹⁰ DeRocher, *Transnational Testimonios* (2018), pp. 24-25.

¹⁹¹ DeRocher, *Transnational Testimonios* (2018), pp. xi and 10.

¹⁹² Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (2021); Saidiya Hartman, 'Venus in Two Acts', *Small Axe*, No. 26 (Vol. 12, No. 2), June 2008, pp. 1-14; Campt, *Listening to Images* (2017); Sharpe, *In the Wake* (2016).

places the voice of narrator and character in inseparable relation,' Hartman fills in what is missing from the archive on the lives of young women in Philadelphia and New York at the turn of the twentieth century, using speculative fiction that 'elaborates, augments, transposes, and breaks open archival documents.'¹⁹³ Her efforts are in response to the question she posed in *Venus*: 'How can narrative embody life in words and at the same time respect what we cannot know? [...] Is it possible to construct a story from "the locus of impossible speech" or resurrect lives from the ruins?'¹⁹⁴ Hartman's goal is to 'tell a story [...] predicated upon impossibility—listening for the unsaid, translating misconstrued words,' interrogating those archival fragments that are 'as close as we come to a biography of the captive and the enslaved', in an act that might be described as reparative, or certainly one of care.¹⁹⁵ In *Venus* and *Wayward Lives*, Hartman's act of augmenting and intensifying the fictions of the archive allows the reader to 'understand and experience the world as these young women did, to learn from what they know'.¹⁹⁶ Its effect is to create a new form of relationality, and an otherwise way of researching and writing histories that engage directly with the historical subjects (who Hartman calls the 'characters'), whilst also acknowledging that as a history her work can only ever speak 'nearby' them.¹⁹⁷ My own research and writing does not employ fiction, but it does reach towards an otherwise mode of engaging with the men about whom I write. Hartman's text then was a profound introduction to otherwise methodologies of writing and an influence over how I ultimately positioned bodiliness – as a focus of enquiry into subject matter and as method – as a way of reaching out towards the unknowable aspects of the historical subject. This includes the shifting bodiliness(es) of the historian (Chapter 2) and the way embodied research practices might change how researchers engage with the subjects of their work (Chapters 2 and 3).

The transparency of the historian's role in crafting the historical narrative exhibited in *Wayward Lives* echoes the embodied methodologies explored by Tina Campt in *Listening to*

¹⁹³ Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (2021); Sharpe, *In the Wake* (2016); Campt, *Listening to Images* (2017), pp. xv-xvi.

¹⁹⁴ Hartman, 'Venus in Two Acts' (2008), p. 3.

¹⁹⁵ Hartman, 'Venus in Two Acts' (2008), pp. 2-3.

¹⁹⁶ Hartman, 'Venus in Two Acts' (2008), p. 9; Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (2021); Sharpe, *In the Wake* (2016); Campt, *Listening to Images* (2017), p. xvi.

¹⁹⁷ Chen, "'Speaking Nearby'" (1992); see n181.

Images. Campt asks 'through what modalities of perception, encounter, and engagement do we constitute' the historical record of 'the recalcitrant and the disaffected, the unruly and the dispossessed?'¹⁹⁸ This question of perception and experience underpins the enquiry of *Listening to Images*, which sets photography 'in a kind of "sensorial" relief that juxtaposes the sonic, haptic, historical and affective backgrounds' in order to 'interrogate both the archival encounter, as well as the archival collection, in multiple tenses and temporalities,' and 'how these forms of [archival] capture and accounting affect their viewers.'¹⁹⁹ Similar to how Hartman uses fiction to access – or at least reach towards – the lives of the women in *Wayward Lives*, Campt also 'theorizes the forms of subjectivity enacted through' photography by listening to the 'affective frequencies' of visual sources.²⁰⁰ She described this process as an 'inherently embodied' one that creates a haptic encounter that might be instructive for the historian using materials that feel incomplete or misrepresentative. By listening to the images, Campt's method foregrounds how photographs 'move, touch, and connect us to the *event* of the photo', thereby creating that new form of haptic relationship with the experiences of the people in the photographed event.²⁰¹ It is this aspect of Campt's work that informed my own research. Through bodiliness, historians can create a similar haptic relationship with the lives entangled with(in) the primary sources discussed across this thesis, thereby developing otherwise modes of relating to the historical subjects.

Finally, speaking about her work as a Black scholar of slavery, Sharpe calls for 'new ways of entering and leaving the archive' that allows for knowledge gained 'in excess of [our] studies.'²⁰² Her focus here is on the particular, positioned and embodied knowledge that comes from being Black in the Academy and from existing as a Black woman generally in the world today. I do not share Sharpe's positionality in this respect, however she makes a broader point that resonated with me when crafting my methodology. In noting how 'the methods most readily available to us sometimes, oftentimes, force us into positions that run counter to what we know,' Sharpe points to how Black scholars can find themselves

¹⁹⁸ Campt, *Listening to Images* (2017), p. 3.

¹⁹⁹ Campt, *Listening to Images* (2017), p. 8.

²⁰⁰ Campt, *Listening to Images* (2017), pp. 5 and 9.

²⁰¹ Campt, *Listening to Images* (2017), p. 9 (emphasis in original).

²⁰² Sharpe, *In the Wake* (2016), pp. 12-13.

constrained into adopting research methods that do a larger 'violence to our own capacities to read, think and imagine otherwise.'²⁰³ She calls on scholars to resist this, stating 'We must become undisciplined.'²⁰⁴ This is put into practice in her meditation around an image of a young Haitian girl in the aftermath of the catastrophic Haiti earthquake in January 2010. The young girl lies on a stretcher, apparently in a hospital gown, staring directly into the camera, with 'a piece of transparent tape with the word *Ship* written on it' attached to her forehead.²⁰⁵ Sharpe's process of analysing this photograph is deeply embodied and emotional, and her reckoning with it – and particularly with the piece of tape – is profoundly *present*. Sharpe writes of the tape:

Who put it there? Does it matter?

What is the look in her eyes? What do I do with it?

When I stumbled upon *that* image of *this* girl child with the word *Ship* taped to her forehead, it was the look in her eyes that first stopped me, and then, with its coming into focus, that word *Ship* threatened to obliterate every and anything else I could see. (What was it doing there?) But I returned to her face; what was the look in her eyes? And what was I being called to by and with her look at me and mine at her? [...] Who and what is she looking for? Who can look back? Does she know that there is a piece of tape on her forehead? Does she know what the piece of tape says? Does she know that she is destined for a ship? [...] In this photographic arrangement I see her and feel with her and for her as she is disarranged by this process.²⁰⁶

I have quoted this passage at length to illustrate this aspect of Sharpe's method, which is aimed at reconstructing some narrative around the image with the dignity of the photographed girl; as she later notes, 'Look you, child, I signify ... the child was black and female ... and therefore mine, Listen.'²⁰⁷ Sharpe concludes that 'this looking' conducted by

²⁰³ Sharpe, *In the Wake* (2016), pp. 12-13.

²⁰⁴ Sharpe, *In the Wake* (2016), p. 13.

²⁰⁵ Sharpe, *In the Wake* (2016), p. 44.

²⁰⁶ Sharpe, *In the Wake* (2016), pp. 44-45 (emphasis in original).

²⁰⁷ Sharpe, *In the Wake* (2016), p. 51.

historians 'makes ethical demands on the viewer; demands to imagine otherwise', and her extensive questioning above forms part of this imagination, and part of this search for an otherwise way of interpreting the photograph that imagines the subject beyond the categories and tags of the archive.²⁰⁸ It is this effort to reach out to the subjects with dignity that I have tried to take forward in this thesis. In Chapter 2, for example, I have proposed how the shifting bodiliness of the historian – the person *looking* – affects the archival encounter, but can also serve as a point of connection with its contents. By tracing the embodied dimensions of my research, then, I try to echo the work of Hartman, Campt and Sharpe in both proposing my own mode of reaching out towards the unknowability of many of the primary sources used across this thesis, and also reckoning with the 'ethical demands' on me as a researcher.

Spectres in the archive: the relevance of provenance and the decolonial imperative of unfixity

The discussion of the works above allowed me to plot something akin to a methodological constellation. Thinking *with* their respective approaches to the archive – with all its noise, silence and intermediary mumbling – the reflections and methods of Gajendra Singh, Gayatri Spivak, Patricia DeRocher, Saidiya Hartman, Tina Campt and Christina Sharpe collectively brought me to thinking about primary sources through ideas of haunting.²⁰⁹ Haunting is a helpful critical analytic for thinking about archives, collections and individual objects specifically for what it can add to how historians position and problematise the notion of provenance. I introduce it here to address the relevance of provenance to the research conducted in this thesis, and the relationship of provenance to the thesis's decolonial objectives.

Across this thesis, the provenance of some sources is well documented. The sound recordings made at the Halbmondlager prisoner of war camp at Wünsdorf, for example, are the focus of much scholarly writing on the Royal Prussian Phonographic Commission's anthropological projects. This literature uses the German authorities' reports and

²⁰⁸ Sharpe, *In the Wake* (2016), p. 52.

²⁰⁹ Jonathan Culler, 'Afterword: Theory Now and Again', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 110.1 (2011), pp. 223–30 (p. 227), doi:[10.1215/00382876-2010-030](https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-2010-030).

correspondence to situate Halbmondlager and the 'scientific' studies conducted within it, allowing scholars like Ravi Ahuja to identify how the experiences of imprisoned men 'were framed by their captors through ideologies, policies and institutions.'²¹⁰ Other scholars and creative practitioners, however, have spoken of the 'excess' of affect and of unknown that spills out of the archive, even where provenance is known. Priyanka Basu for example has written at length on the challenges of producing histories from the Halbmondlager records at the Humboldt Universität zu Berlin Lautarchiv, as articulated and shown through Philip Scheffner's 2007 film *The Halfmoon Files*.²¹¹ Her essay highlights how Scheffner's search for Halbmondlager prisoner Mall Singh, whose recording as part of the Royal Prussian Phonographic Commission project is held at the Lautarchiv, illuminated the limits of the collection, and the subsequent importance of artistic interventions in the archive that emphasise 'the interest and importance of fragments, contingency and counter-histories.'²¹² Basu argues that one of the strengths of the film – and other similar artistic works that rely on archival research – is in the use of 'a spectrum of approaches from analytic to affective,' which 'pay close attention to documents as material objects.'²¹³ This is especially the case where the textual content of a document – or, as here, the content of the recordings – is called into question *by* its very provenance. As Santanu Das has pointed out, the Halbmondlager recordings cannot be read 'as' text, and it is through turning to their materialities that I have sought to offer a new insight into the recordings and encounter the speakers in a new way.

A similar issue can be found with the material held amongst the British Library's India Office Records collection. Of particular importance to this thesis are the Censor of Indian Mails reports, and the snippets of letters reproduced as part of these reports. As has been extensively discussed by First World War scholars, whilst historians can situate these reports

²¹⁰ Ravi Ahuja, 'Lost Engagements? Traces of South Asian Soldiers in German Captivity, 1915-1918', in *When the War Began We Heard of Several Kings': South Asian Prisoners in World War I Germany*, ed. by Franziska Roy, Heike Liebau, and Ravi Ahuja (Social Science Press, 2011), pp. 17–52 (p. 27).

²¹¹ *The Halfmoon Files*, dir. by Philip Scheffner, 2007 <<https://pong-berlin.de/en/project/film/halfmoon-files>>; Priyanka Basu, 'Archives of German Anthropology and Colonialism in Philip Scheffner's *The Halfmoon Files*', *Third Text*, 33.6 (2019), pp. 727–43, doi:[10.1080/09528822.2019.1667618](https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2019.1667618).

²¹² Priyanka Basu, 'Archives of German Anthropology and Colonialism in Philip Scheffner's *The Halfmoon Files*', *Third Text*, 33.6 (2019), pp. 727–43, doi:[10.1080/09528822.2019.1667618](https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2019.1667618), p. 741.

²¹³ Priyanka Basu, 'Archives of German Anthropology and Colonialism in Philip Scheffner's *The Halfmoon Files*', *Third Text*, 33.6 (2019), pp. 727–43, doi:[10.1080/09528822.2019.1667618](https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2019.1667618), p. 740.

and the glimpses into correspondence in their historical and cultural context of an imperial military machine – laden with multiple layers of reinterpretation across translators and Censors – contextualising the provenance of these sources does not necessarily get historians any closer to the lived experiences of the correspondents. It depends of course on the individual researcher's aims. If, for example, the researcher is looking to understand forms of communication used by the men during their service, then the available information positioning the provenance of the Censor's reports is critical. If however, the researcher is looking to understand what Santanu Das describes as the 'inner world of the sepoy', the reports and their letter extracts require a different analytic approach.²¹⁴ The fact that the men knew their letters were being censored means that they cannot be uniformly read as descriptive of the men's experiences and views; that historians know the provenance of the letters does not necessarily make them any easier to use, as a primary source. Furthermore, the men themselves are largely anonymous, either by virtue of a clerk's pen striking out the name of the writer or, even where the name is visible, through the virtually untraceable identity of an individual located by reference to a hospital bed or French town. The men serving in the Indian Army consequently have some form of voice in the archive, but it is fragmented, unverifiable and in practice almost always anonymous. What kind of a voice, then, is open to question.

Other collections of Halbmondlager primary sources have been compiled with similarly well-documented information as to their provenance. Photographs taken at the camp have been traced to amateur photographer and second-in-command at camp headquarters, Otto Stiehl, but again this information has produced a range of positions amidst scholarly efforts to contextualise the images and assess their impact on historical research and history-writing.²¹⁵ Margot Kahleyss, for instance, suggests the composition of the majority of Stiehl's photographs suggests he 'rarely produced slides for public use,' instead compiling images 'as a personal souvenir' that comprised 'an overall documentation of prison camp

²¹⁴ Santanu Das, *India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images, and Songs* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 204-205

²¹⁵ Margot Kahleyss, 'Indian Prisoners of War in World War I: Photographs as Source Material', in *When the War Began We Heard of Several Kings': South Asian Prisoners in World War I Germany*, ed. by Franziska Roy, Heike Liebau, and Ravi Ahuja (Social Science Press, 2011), pp. 207–30 (pp. 217-218).

life,' even where that documentation was largely staged or artificial.²¹⁶ Das however points to how the photographic composition and preservation nevertheless align with the racist 'ethnological discourse of the day,' in all likelihood deliberately 'to frame and market the material' in Stiehl's published 1921 study *Unsere Feinde: 96 Charakterköpfe aus deutschen Kriegsgefangenenlagern*.²¹⁷ These different interpretations of Stiehl's intention and artistic vision begin to point to the margins for different interpretations amongst historians of even well-documented sources.

Elsewhere in the thesis, I draw on objects whose provenance is far less documented. Many photographs, for example, are traceable only to the official war collection at the Imperial War Museum; sometimes they may have a photographic unit attached, but rarely specific photographer names or details of the photographic subjects. Various images of soldiers on the Indian Home Front, for example, are either unattributed or credited as being taken by 'Indian Army Official Photographer', and may offer a military regiment reference but little to no details of the individuals and their names, occupations, or backgrounds (see Figures 68 and 73 to 76). Even where a photographer is listed, knowing how an archived photographic negative was used, or intended at the point of composition and photographing, is not always certain; photographers like Ariel Vargas, Horace Grant, and H.D. Girdwood often worked with the British press or the War Office for war coverage and propagandist purposes, but others like George Westmoreland were enrolled primarily as military personnel (Westmoreland served with the Queens (Royal West Surrey) Regiment), producing photographs as an additional role, the parameters of which are less traceable.²¹⁸ Similar problems are encountered with the strings of beads shown at Figures 21 to 23; aside from labels attached reading 'Presented by Her Highness Maharani of Bhavnagar' (see Figures 22 and 23), no other documentation accompanies the beads.

²¹⁶ Margot Kahleyss, 'Indian Prisoners of War in World War I: Photographs as Source Material', in *When the War Began We Heard of Several Kings': South Asian Prisoners in World War I Germany*, ed. by Franziska Roy, Heike Liebau, and Ravi Ahuja (Social Science Press, 2011), pp. 207–30 (pp. 219 and 226).

²¹⁷ Santanu Das, *India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images, and Songs* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 168–171.

²¹⁸ J. Carmichael, *First World War Photographers* (Taylor & Francis, 1989), p. 82.

What emerges in the use of these sources across this thesis is how provenance has the capacity – through its presence but also its absence – to destabilise how a source produces meaning. Where the archive has historiographically already been exposed as 'selective', the excess of the unknown, the absent, and the unfixed that haunts the historical record necessarily becomes part of the evidence encountered by the researcher.²¹⁹ Even sources with relatively settled provenance become unreliable narrators, and the historian is then faced with the task of mediating – both in how they engage with the archive and in how they communicate their findings – between collections that have amassed much contextualising documentation and collections with comparatively little. What this thesis does is propose new ways of dealing with the spectrality of the unfixed that results, through a combination of the methods outlined by the scholars above. Haunting as an overarching framework draws these scholars together, and articulates how decolonial interventions in addressing provenance are not only useful but critical when dealing with collections that are grounded in systems of historic injustices.

Avery Gordon's foundational work on haunting positions ghostliness in the archive as 'an animated state' in which 'abusive systems of power make themselves known [...] sometimes very directly, sometimes more obliquely.'²²⁰ As a critical analytic, haunting produces 'something-to-be-done' in the form of a search for otherwise modes of knowledge production.²²¹ This is reflected in the works of Singh, Spivak, DeRocher, Hartman, Campt and Sharpe, and Gordon has herself touched on what this means in relation to the Lautarchiv in an essay responding to Scheffner's film. Singh speaks of writing 'history or a poetics of haunting', and explicitly invokes Spivak to deploy the 'sense of haunting, of incompleteness' in discussing what is realisable in history-writing about the subaltern.²²² Doing so, Singh writes, 'opens possibilities of how one reads the subject of history and writes that subject

²¹⁹ On the 'selective' archive, see Priyanka Basu, 'Archives of German Anthropology and Colonialism in Philip Scheffner's The Halfmoon Files', *Third Text*, 33.6 (2019), pp. 727–43, doi:[10.1080/09528822.2019.1667618](https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2019.1667618), p. 741.

²²⁰ Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (University of Minnesota Press, 2008) <<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/rcauk/detail.action?docID=346045>>, p. xvi. See also Avery F. Gordon, *The Hawthorn Archive: Letters from the Utopian Margins* (Fordham University Press, 2017), doi:[doi:10.1515/9780823276332](https://doi.org/10.1515/9780823276332), p. 209.

²²¹ Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (University of Minnesota Press, 2008) <<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/rcauk/detail.action?docID=346045>>, p. xvii.

²²² Gajendra Singh, *The Testimonies of Indian Soldiers and the Two World Wars: Between Self and Sepoy* (Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 186 and 190.

into history,' and describes that process as one of moving 'towards a ghost story.'²²³ Sharpe observes that '[i]n the wake, the past that is not past reappears, always, to rupture the present', implicitly echoing the language of ruptured time used by Spivak to describe the challenge of tracing a comprehensive picture of imperial history: 'one might say that the epistemic story of imperialism is the story of a series of interruptions, a repeated tearing of time that cannot be sutured.'²²⁴ Sharpe uses the 'new analytic' of the wake metaphor as 'a method of encountering a past that it not past', pointing again to the spectrality of pasts that exist in and between 'the partial truths of the archive' and 'their silences, absences and modes of dis/appearance.'²²⁵ Rupture is similarly at the heart of Tina Campt's proposal to listen to images; it is in the 'rupture and refusal' of the visual terms of photography that she proposes viewers can access those 'affective registers through which these images enunciate alternate accounts of their subjects.'²²⁶ The 'hum' of the archive is, for Campt, a haunting less in the sense of ghostliness and more as a reverberation, or an echo, of otherwise narratives.²²⁷ She speaks of the capacity of the hum to 'haunt', as well as to 'be mournful [...] be presence in absence [...] It can celebrate, animate, or accompany. It can also irritate, haunt, grate or distract.'²²⁸ For Patricia DeRocher and Saidiya Hartman, haunting in the archive comes through the noise of absence and a move towards using emotion and empathy as methodology. DeRocher positions forms of testimonio as working 'to mirror the disorientating effects of how the past continues to haunt and overshadow the present,' and explores how writers 'shift readers to move from "knowing" about specific historical circumstances to "understanding" their continued effects on the present.'²²⁹ Hartman, similarly, describes her 'goal' as 'to understand and experience the world as these young women did, to learn from what they know,' by writing a 'fugitive text of the wayward' that aims to capture the texture of 'black social life' in New York and Philadelphia in the

²²³ Gajendra Singh, *The Testimonies of Indian Soldiers and the Two World Wars: Between Self and Sepoy* (Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 186.

²²⁴ Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Duke University Press, 2016), p. 9; Gajendra Singh, *The Testimonies of Indian Soldiers and the Two World Wars: Between Self and Sepoy* (Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 186.

²²⁵ Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Duke University Press, 2016), pp. 12-13.

²²⁶ Tina M. Campt, *Listening to Images* (Duke University Press, 2017), p. 5.

²²⁷ Tina M. Campt, *Listening to Images* (Duke University Press, 2017), p. 4.

²²⁸ Tina M. Campt, *Listening to Images* (Duke University Press, 2017), p. 4.

²²⁹ P. DeRocher, *Transnational Testimonios: The Politics of Collective Knowledge Production, Decolonizing Feminisms* (University of Washington Press, 2018), p. 136.

early 1900s.²³⁰ Returning to Gordon, following an invitation by Sheffner and Britta Lange to speak at a series of events related to *The Halfmoon Files*, Gordon wrote an essay in which she argues that the 'cinematic language' of 'historicity is the ghost story as told [...] As told, the ghost story creates space for what is missing.'²³¹

To the extent that the haunting in this thesis, then, comes from the intentional use of archives characterised by and organised along axes of colonial orders of knowing and being, the 'something-to-be-done' is in approaching matters of provenance in the moment of archival encounter and in the writing-up as *unfixed*. Part of the decolonial imperative of this thesis is in working with unfixed objects, unfixed narratives, and destabilising sources to create unfixity where it has been unjustly settled. As a result, it is not in the interests of the research project to valorise the information on a collection's provenance as provided by the archive itself. As Gordon observes, even where an archival montage is created that constellates 'all the bits and pieces— the screams and cries, the silences, the density of the nation's history, the ideological justifications, the geopolitical forces [...] the courageous political resistance, and so on', it can feel as if 'as if in that very act the ghosts return, demanding a different kind of knowledge.'²³² It is in the search for a different kind of knowledge that I locate the decolonial imperative of unfixity and pluriversality, offering ways of reimagining the archive otherwise through methodologies of bodiliness and the examination of bodiliness as a subject matter. As critic Naomi Wolf wrote in relation to *The Halfmoon Files*, the challenge to the 'colonial plan to produce knowledge by measuring, numbering, categorizing, codifying, and displaying the exotic is undermined [...] not by means of a counterstatement, but *by displaying historicity otherwise*.'²³³

²³⁰ Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (Serpent's Tail, 2021), pp. xv-xvi.

²³¹ Avery F. Gordon, "'I'm Already in a Sort of Tomb': A Reply to Philip Scheffner's *The Halfmoon Files*", *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 110.1 (2011), pp. 121–54, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-2010-026>, p. 125.

²³² Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (University of Minnesota Press, 2008) <<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/rcauk/detail.action?docID=346045>>, p. 64.

²³³ Avery F. Gordon, citing Nicole Wolf, in "'I'm Already in a Sort of Tomb': A Reply to Philip Scheffner's *The Halfmoon Files*", *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 110.1 (2011), pp. 121–54, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-2010-026>, p. 125 (emphasis added).

ENTANGLED METHODOLOGIES

While the above literature review gives an introduction to some of the key theoretical starting points, prompts and resistances that have shaped aspects of this doctorate project's methodology, other aspects of my research and writing practice have been developed alongside the review of scholarly publications. The first of these is a deliberate choice not to italicise non-English words, except where a quotation includes italics. This move marks a deliberate effort to delink from academic practices that reinscribe English – and its plural colonial pasts – as the default language of scholarship, with the effect that languages and the knowledges they express are othered. Recent examples of similar moves in academic publishing include the edited volume *Rethinking Fashion Globalization*, in which the editors note that the result of such publishing conventions is to '[mark] out non-Euro-American fashion terms as unfamiliar and exotic, at one remove from the reader and their assumed vocabulary.'²³⁴ As Khairani Barokka puts it:

We're going to impose English upon you—or Indonesian onto Asmat dialects in Papua, or abled languages onto autistic languages, or any other case in which a dominant language imposes itself upon another—but your own words, included in sentences that are otherwise in the dominant language, won't be allowed into what is "proper."²³⁵

My choice to retain italics where these have been used in a quotation that is included in the body of the thesis is rooted in both the desire for transparency with sources, and an effort not to interfere with the integrity of primary evidence, as they appear originally. Readers of this thesis are therefore better enabled to assess my own conclusions against the sources used, as they appear in their original form.

This thesis also includes in Appendix A a list of men – some named, some unnamed, some dated, some cut loose from the anchorage in (linear conceptions of) time offered by the archival record. This was inspired by the 'Cast of Characters' at the front of Hartman's

²³⁴ *Rethinking Fashion Globalization*, ed. by Sarah Cheang, Erica de Greef, and Takagi Yoko (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021), p. 9.

²³⁵ Khairani Barokka, 'The Case Against Italicizing "Foreign" Words', *Catapult*, 11 February 2020 <<https://catapult.co/stories/column-the-case-against-italicizing-foreign-words-khairani-barokka>>.

Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments.²³⁶ Hartman offers here an identifier (a given name, such as May Enoch, or a moniker of Hartman's choosing, such as Girl #2) and a brief biography ('a recent arrival to New York', or 'Trapped in an attic studio in Philadelphia, year 1882'). In the context of *Wayward Lives*, the casting list forms part of Hartman's methodological choice to interweave fiction and archival research, to blur the boundaries between what the archive has chosen to retain and what has been lost. In my own project, the list in Appendix A plays a slightly different role. Like Hartman, many of the people I encountered in the archive went unnamed, and indeed were framed only within terms chosen by the British administration (for example, 'A Sikh', 'A soldier' or 'A Pathan in a regiment at Colombo'). Out of concern to treat the men about whom these sources were produced with care, I wanted to recognise their contribution to my research. It is not possible to trace these men's names, or broader aspects of their identity, and whilst I have sometimes treated sources as akin to testimonio, I have not (as noted above) created fictions of my own to interweave with my research. However, by compiling a list of the men referenced in sources, or my own descriptors of the men that appear in film and photography, I hope to highlight their personhood. It reminds me, as well as readers, that these men were brothers, sons, able-bodied, nephews, queer, fathers, disabled, ambitious, scared, and much else besides.

The unknowability of these men and aspects of their identities is important to what I have termed a methodology of opacity. This is critically how my thesis places into dialogue postcolonial and decolonial theories. My aim is not to uncover or recover 'forgotten histories', as if histories exist only if recorded in writing and not embedded in the very being of families and communities who recount and patchwork stories over the years. Nor does my research try to recover some form of subaltern agency, as discussed above. Rather, I use the phrase methodologies of opacity to describe my approach to creating discontinuous interruptions in written histories, by introducing plural interpretations of the historical record and intentionally holding space for what is unknowable to the historian – whilst offering bodily modes of relating to the historical subject. Methodologies of opacity then marry the insurgency of postcolonial and decolonial attempts to access that unknowability

²³⁶ Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (2021), pp. xix-xxiii.

through exploring both lived experience and methodologies that foreground relationality. This approach arose in part in response to the provocation in Gayatri Spivak's work on the untranslatability of sati sacrifice, but also Édouard Glissant's exposition of Relation, opacity and giving-on-and-with.²³⁷ Glissant suggests Relation is a 'totality in evolution, whose order is continually in flux and whose disorder one can imagine forever.'²³⁸ Relation is thus necessarily opaque ('that which cannot be reduced'); it is eternal and constantly evolving, it is not finite but radiant.²³⁹ My emphasis on plurality across this thesis is a nod to this position, and I approach history research and writing with the same belief that lived experiences are endless and resist being contained in the forms offered by the archival record. I hope then that my effort to create these interruptions to existing historical accounts of the Indian Army might be taken as invitations to pause. They are suggestions, a resistance to the extractive, 'appropriative, almost rapacious' notion of understanding on which original contributions to knowledge are based.²⁴⁰

It is here that tentativeness as a form of decolonial insurgency operates. In developing this position, I looked early in my doctoral research to the work of Linda Tuhiwai Smith on decolonising research methodologies. Although largely responding to research in the science and social science spheres, Smith's work offers critically important prompts to researchers interested in decoloniality across any discipline, regardless of whether their work engages indigenous populations. In *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Smith speaks to the historically extractive nature of research on indigenous populations, and outlines how research tools have been used to 'extract and claim ownership' of indigenous knowledge 'for commodification and value addition as experts in the Global North.'²⁴¹ She goes as far to question whether 'history in its modernist construction [is] important or not important for indigenous peoples,' concluding that until indigenous communities have the power to 'transform history into justice', history as a

²³⁷ Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. by Betsy Wing (University of Michigan Press, 1990).

²³⁸ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (1990), p. 133.

²³⁹ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (1990), p. 191.

²⁴⁰ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (1990), p. xiv.

²⁴¹ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd edn (Zed Books, 2012), p. 1; Lisa Tilley, 'Resisting Piratic Method by Doing Research Otherwise', *Sociology*, 51.1 (2017), pp. 27–42, doi:[10.1177/0038038516656992](https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038516656992), pp. 32–33.

discipline is 'not important for indigenous peoples.'²⁴² This thesis does not claim to enable such a transformation on the part of the communities connected to the men who served in the Indian Army, but the bodily methodologies and methodologies of opacity that I developed across this research have aimed to respond to some of Smith's concerns about the potential of history as a concept to be in service to indigeneity. For example, Smith describes how the discipline of history as a field of scholarship in the Global North has been 'assembled around a set of interconnected ideas' that are at odds with indigenous lived experiences and decolonial imperatives.²⁴³ These include 'the idea[s]' that 'history is a totalizing discourse,' 'there is a universal history,' 'history is one large chronology,' 'history is about a self-actualizing *human* subject', and that history 'can be told in one coherent narrative.'²⁴⁴ Each of these ideas are touched on in some way across the thesis. The efforts made methodologically, for example to destabilise totalising discourse and to pluralise otherwise universal narratives of the history of the First World War Indian Army combatant; the disruption of linear temporal models, particularly in discussing the nature of time and otherwise models time in Islam in Chapter 2; the reconfiguration of what agency might be and what might yield agency, including immaterial space and emotion; and ultimately the fundamental proposition that interruptions to coherent histories can form part of a decolonial project.

Tentativeness thus becomes a way of resisting the extractive model problematised by Smith, and of effecting these methodological attempts at working toward a decolonial pluriverse. It resists making universal claims or claims to absoluteness, and instead works in tandem with bodily methodologies to disrupt the canon of First World War history rather than expand it. Unfixity then is not just about unfixing definitive research conclusions that, given the ambiguity and unreliability of the archive, need problematising, but also about unfixing ideas within the field of design history of what history is and how it can be. These interruptions are attempts, to adopt the language of Trinh T. Minh-ha, to speak 'nearby' to the topics under discussion rather than 'about'; in all their plurality and resistance, they are

²⁴² Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd edn (Zed Books, 2012), p. 35.

²⁴³ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd edn (Zed Books, 2012), p. 31.

²⁴⁴ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd edn (Zed Books, 2012), pp. 31-32.

a deliberate rejection of history as transparent and definitive.²⁴⁵ The thesis offers possible understandings that 'give-on-and-with' and speak nearby to the infinite plurality of lived experiences and worldings, and respect the opacity by explicitly leaving what is unknown as a cloudy site of knowing.²⁴⁶ In so doing, methodologies of opacity are the intersection of these plural postcolonial and decolonial modes of seeking to research and write histories that are not fully knowable, drawing together both research into lived experience (using bodily registers) and otherwise methodologies that foreground relationality and border thinking. However, Smith's sharp observations on the end to which research with decolonial objectives can truly achieve emancipatory outcomes – especially where the research places indigenous communities as the subject – raises questions around how far my own research can claim to be transformational. As Smith notes, 'research exists within a system of power [...] getting the story right and telling the story well are asks that indigenous activists and researchers must both perform.'²⁴⁷ Measuring the effectiveness of this research then remains to be seen across a longer process of transformational insurgency within the Humanities.

I understand the practice of writing this thesis to be a critical engagement with the chosen methodologies and objectives of the project; how the project is enacted in these pages is as much part of the research as identifying and examining primary sources. With this in mind, I have made a number of syntactical and formal decisions in writing this thesis, which contribute to questioning how far history research and writing might delink from academic structures that reinscribe colonialities of knowledge and being. Embracing the ebb and flow between academic history methodologies – such as object-led material analysis, the use of existing oral histories, and visual and moving image analysis – and experimental ones, is one such approach, as is embracing the use of specific terminology. Chapter 2, for example, explores autobiography as a way of encountering the archive. By framing the enquiry through the lens of embodied, neurodivergent, synesthetic and emotional encounters, the chapter offers an otherwise way of using the colonial archive that creates friction with the mask of universal, stable and singular knowledge touted by the archive and presented in

²⁴⁵ Chen, "'Speaking Nearby'" (1992).

²⁴⁶ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (1990), pp. 191-192.

²⁴⁷ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd edn (Zed Books, 2012), p. 226.

traditional history writing. It deploys the idea of bodiliness – in all its transitional, changing potential – in respect of the historian, not with the intention of centring the historian but rather to explore the capacity for individualised, feeling-led methodologies to shape history-research and writing. The thesis also critically interrogates conceptual frameworks that have been foundational to postcolonial and decolonial theory, and reflects on how they are used across this thesis. Such concepts as subalternism (as understood by postcolonial theorists), the Western epistemic lens, and even divisions across the Global North and South have come to define aspects of postcolonial and decolonial thinking. Used uncritically, however, they risk flattening post-and-decolonial methodologies into one side of a binary that is otherwise to dominant pedagogies in academia; history writing is thus placed within framework of oppositional thinking, and cannot embrace disobedient ways of thinking as an option, but rather understands them as a competing framework. By using these methodologies and terminologies in conversation with one another, I hope to work across plural ways of being, thinking and knowing.²⁴⁸

CHAPTER STRUCTURE

This thesis is divided into three chapters, each of which uses a different register of bodiliness as a mode of answering the research question, what can the study of material culture add to histories of the experiences of men that served in the Indian Army during the First World War? Each register acknowledges and works with the capacity for bodiliness and (auto)biographical experiences to change over time, and reflects critically on the impact of this capacity to change on how the research question is answered. The first chapter considers objects that are worn on and with the bodily, including miniaturised Qur'ans, strings of mala beads, pagri head wrappings, and hair itself. The second chapter interrogates how historians might learn more about the experiences of men in the Indian Army by examining the materialities of sound, focusing specifically on recordings of men held in the German Halbmondlager prisoner of war camp between 1916-1917, and letters written by men serving in the Indian Army across the war. The third and final chapter interrogates how

²⁴⁸ M. Angela Jansen, 'Fashion and the Phantasmagoria of Modernity: An Introduction to Decolonial Fashion Discourse', *Fashion Theory*, 24.6 (2020), 815–36 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2020.1802098>>, p. 825.

historians might learn more about the experiences of men in the Indian Army by examining the materialities of movement, and asks interpretive pluralities can be introduced into sources by deploying a conceptualisation of bodiliness that is generative, unfixed, autobiographical and constantly operating in relation to other (im)material agencies. Each chapter also includes a discussion of the collections in which the sources consulted are contained, titled 'Contextualising the Collections'. These sections consider how the materials are catalogued as a reflection of how the archive situates the objects in its collections and how the archive perceives its research value.

Chapter 1 emerged out of an attempt to challenge the idea of the passive dressed body. Having problematised the definition of embodiment used by Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wilson in their description of dress as an 'embodied practice' (explained above), it followed that this understanding of dress – or at least things worn with the body – also required revisiting. As much as Entwistle and Wilson rightly advocate for an understanding of dress that is active, their focus is on the embodying *human*. If the body, as described above, emerges *out of* embodiment, this leaves scope for plural articulations of embodiment – the human, corporeal body and beyond – to be implicated in the practice of using things with and on the body. Chapter 1 is therefore less about dress than about the intimate entanglement of Indian Army soldiers' bodiliness(es) with things worn on and with the body, and other intra-acting agencies. Through an examination of miniature Qur'ans, mala beads, pagri headwrappings and hair, I ask how questions of heterobodily frameworks and ontologies that allow for the agency of non-human subjecthoods like the divine can add to histories of the Indian Army during the war. The chapter explores this through two sections, each of which examine different aspects of the soldiers' relation to his environment. Section 1 is titled 'The Personal', to highlight those practices that comprise intra-actions between the subjectivity of the soldier and other non-human material and immaterial agencies. Section 2, titled 'The Interpersonal' explores the relationality between the Indian soldier and the bodiliness of his peers. The use of the term personal in each of these headings is not intended to frame the chapter around an axis of what the human does or is. Rather, it presents one possible lens of enquiry into how subjectivity – here, human soldiers – exists

and lives in relation to other agencies, including those of objects, divine forces, nature, other bodilinesses, and all the ways these might overlap and interweave with one another.

Turning from bodiliness as a site of object and divine entanglement, Chapter 2 asks how an exploration of the materialities of sound(ing) might add to the histories of men in the Indian Army in the First World War. Drawing from scholarships across the fields of ethnomusicology, digital sound studies, sonic anthropology and translation studies, the chapter explores the sonic dimensions of life within the Indian Army, drawing particular attention to the affective dimensions not only of language, but also of sound-creation and practices of listening – including the implication of the historian's bodiliness in these practices. In the first section to Chapter 2, titled 'Cultivating an Effective Ecology Through the Sonic', I propose that sound archives and historians using those archives are engaged in plural acts and forms of translation. By making extensive use of the recordings made of Indian Army men held as prisoners of war in the German Halbmondlager camp between 1915 and 1916, this section asks how historians might push existing ethnomusicological frameworks of the 'affective ecology' further by considering the bodiliness of the historian in this ecology of sound(ing). This discussion draws on my own experiences as a synesthete and neurodivergent historian, and meditates on the implications these unique information processing qualities may have on how I research and write histories. The chapter moves on to a section entitled 'Plural Materialities', which explores how design historians might work with instances of historical sound(ing) that inhabit plural materialities. This section draws particularly on the letters sent from and received by men serving in the Indian Army on the Western Front during the early years of the First World War, many of which include passages that echo forms of prayer and popular narrative, and almost all of which have gone through plural processes of linguistic and material translation. The section thus considers what happens when design historians encounter sources that have traces of sonic, written and bodily materialities, and whether account needs to be taken of the historian's own role in further complicating these sources. The final section to this chapter, 'Bodily Materiality of Metaphor' builds on these discussions to look specifically at the relationship of bodiliness to the use of metaphor in soldiers' letters. The section positions research on the role of bodily experience in cultivating metaphor in dialogue with research on the use of

metaphor amongst different Indian communities to process and articulate experiences of trauma. The result is a discussion of how design history might engage with the plural bodily materialities of language.

It is worth mentioning the overlapping origin stories of Chapter 3, one of which is my time researching during the summer of 2020 in London. Having shaped my doctorate project to explore how far history might be researched and written otherwise, the Covid-19 pandemic pushed me to explore this by developing research methodologies that might bypass physical archive access and object-handling. Encountering visual media on digitised archive websites, I was struck by the prevalence of footage depicting forms of movement. I identified these practices as being inspired by kushti (a spiritual bodily practice, one aspect of which involves interpersonal exercises that visually resemble European wrestling forms), jori swinging, comic entertainment and devotional performances. These practices form the focus of Chapter 3, which builds on the ideas of bodiliness and an expanded sense of material culture developed across Chapters 1 and 2. This approach understands materiality as having plural facets and agencies that exist within an intra-acting network. Material culture is thus understood as capable of being physical, or tangible, as well as immaterial, absent, unbuilt; it forms part of a matrix plural agencies, including human but also environmental, animal, divine, and any number of other subjects.²⁴⁹ I have deliberately used the term intra-action across this thesis to describe this matrix and its metaphysics, borrowing this from Karen Barad's 'agential realist ontology.'²⁵⁰ Barad explains that, in contrast to 'interaction':

the notion of 'intra-action' queers the familiar sense of causality (where one or more causal agents precede and produce an effect), and more generally unsettles the metaphysics of individualism (the belief that there are individually constituted agents or entities, as well as times and places). According to my agential realist ontology [...] 'individuals' do not preexist [sic] as such but rather materialize in intra-action.²⁵¹

²⁴⁹ Adam Kleinmann, 'Intra-Actions: An Interview with Karen Barad', *Mousse Magazine*, 34 (2012), 76–81.

²⁵⁰ Kleinmann, 'Intra-Actions' (2012), p. 76.

²⁵¹ Kleinmann, 'Intra-Actions' (2012), p. 76.

With this in mind, Chapter 3 argues for interpretive pluralities. It is not necessarily the chapter's aim to identify conclusively the types of movement exhibited in the sources, or to show that they have been so-called 'mislabelled' by the archive. Rather, the chapter introduces the idea that the (un)built environment has an agency that, in combination with the movement articulated by the bodiliness of the soldiers, is generative. These practices might be understood as examples of intra-action that draw on the men's plural worldings of movement, entangled with the space of war and the shifting, changing bodiliness of soldiers. However Chapter 3 also explores how bodily methodologies can help design historians reach new conclusions about the fugitivity of sources.

ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

This final section to the introduction gives a brief overview of the original contributions to knowledge made by this thesis: the plural roles of bodiliness (as an analytical framework for interrogating subject matter(s) and as a mode of researching history otherwise), and the entanglement of bodiliness with methods of opacity.

The use of bodiliness as both a mode of historical enquiry into subject matter, and also a working model of researching and writing histories otherwise, is a key original contribution made by this thesis. These two dimensions of bodiliness are often intertwined and not easily separated, as is shown through the use of bodiliness as an analytical model that also helps historians engage with matters of relationality. For example, I discuss the (im)materialities of bodiliness across each of the three chapters, but especially Chapter 1. In so doing, I offer a decolonial critique of new materialist discourse that prioritises intra-matter relationality, but often misses the parallels with indigenous orders of knowledge and being.²⁵² Similarly, my research suggests that a concept of heterobodiliness might be used to understand the relationship between different embodied experiences within the same soldier, as

²⁵² For pre-existing work in this area, see Hinton, Mehrabi, and Barla, 'New Materialisms/New Colonialisms' (2015), and Jerry Lee Rosiek, Jimmy Snyder, and Scott L. Pratt, 'The New Materialisms and Indigenous Theories of Non-Human Agency: Making the Case for Respectful Anti-Colonial Engagement', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 26.3–4 (2020), 331–46 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800419830135>>, and Jessica L. Horton and Janet Catherine Berlo, 'Beyond the Mirror', *Third Text*, 27.1 (2013), 17–28 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2013.753190>>.

articulated across different registers of the bodily. These frameworks can propose insights into the lived experiences of Indian Army soldiers for whom historians lack much written primary testimony; the frameworks speak to the legacy of postcolonial studies, and the use of the embodied perspective of the historical subject as a mode of reaching towards that which is otherwise unknowable, especially in the absence of written testimony. However, bodiliness as a method also has the potential to illustrate how decolonial thinking can be incorporated into the work of historians. This becomes clear when bodiliness is used as method in conjunction with my proposal for methodologies of opacity, my second original contribution to knowledge.

As described above, methodologies of opacity reconcile the postcolonial-esque focus on the perspective of the historical subject with decolonial efforts to research and write histories 'nearby' (rather than with, or about) historical subjects. Methodologies of opacity are the intersection of these plural modes of seeking to research and write histories that are not fully knowable. Bodiliness in this sense becomes central to methodologies of opacity. Having illustrated the relevance of bodily materialities to the subject matter, I show how bodiliness can operate as a relational metric: between the different heterobodily dimensions of a single soldier, between the soldier and his comrades or forms of non-human agency, but also between the historian and the soldier. Chapters 2 and 3 gives sustained focus to this third point, and explores the potential for the historian's positionality and interpretive approaches might – drawing on Hartman, Sharpe, Camp and Minh-ha – meet the challenge of decolonial imperatives to explore the relationality of being, and to act as an empathetic means of reaching out the unknowable historical subject. It is not a resolution – methods of opacity by definition do not aim to grasp that which is unknowable – but by adopting a bodily method of opacity and engaging intentionally with my positionality, I suggest this as an original, otherwise approach for historians.

CHAPTER 1

'STRANGE PHENOMENA'? ENTANGLEMENTS OF THE BODILY

The title of this chapter takes as its prompt an observation by the protagonist, Lalu, in Mulk Raj Anand's 1939 novel, *Across the Black Waters*.²⁵³ The novel traces the experiences of Lalu, a Punjabi 'peasant-warrior', and his regiment as they land in Marseilles and proceed to the Front Line in the early months of the First World War.²⁵⁴ The observation in question is made by a child encountering Lalu's regiment, the 69th Rifles, for the first time.²⁵⁵ The novel forms the second part of a trilogy that follows Lalu from early youth, through to his enlistment to the army (*The Village* (1939)), his service during the First World War (*Across the Black Waters* (1940)), and his return to the Punjab (*The Sword and the Sickle* (1942)).²⁵⁶ Likely written from the accounts relayed to Anand through childhood, from family and friends who served in the Indian Army, *Across the Black Waters* has been understood as rendering a patchwork of individual and collective experiences of the lowest-military ranking Indian recruits.²⁵⁷ I have subsequently used the novel across this chapter as something akin to a testimonio: an iteration of those 'creatively shaped stories' described by Patricia DeRocher that 'refer outwardly to actual life events – narratives that resided intentionally at the nexus of the discursive and the material,' and which showcase a typicality of lived experience by blurring fiction, recollection and polyvocality.²⁵⁸ I chose this extract as the title, as it captured for me the tensions in historical enquiry that emerge between colonial gazes, historians' interpretive approaches, and the pluralities of lived experience. Lalu notes that the child 'stood peering at the strange phenomena of turbaned, brown men, with her untrusting hazel eyes.'²⁵⁹ The passage recognises the disembodiment and dehumanising potential of spectatorship over the unfamiliar; described as 'turbaned, brown men', Lalu and his peers are reduced to 'strange' passive bodies. Yet the term

²⁵³ Mulk Raj Anand, *Across the Black Waters*, Library of South Asian Literature (Orient Paperbacks, 1940).

²⁵⁴ Das, *Writings, Images, and Songs* (2018), p. 343.

²⁵⁵ Das, *Writings, Images, and Songs* (2018), p. 343.

²⁵⁶ Rajender Kaur, 'Mulk Raj Anand. The Trilogy Comprising *The Village*, *Across the Black Waters* and *The Sword and the Sickle*', *South Asian Review*, 37.3 (2016), 162–65 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/02759527.2016.11978328>> (p. 162).

²⁵⁷ Das, *Writings, Images, and Songs* (2018), p. 345.

²⁵⁸ P DeRocher, *Transnational Testimonios* (2018), p. x.

²⁵⁹ Anand, *Across the Black Waters* (1940), p. 98.

'phenomena' conjures the impression that Lalu and his peers do not so much resist this effect, as circumvent it altogether; the men wield a generative potential and reflect the plurality of human experiences. The two poles of passive and generative created by Anand's prose create for the reader a classic binary between the passive, disenfranchised sepoy, and the agency-exercising, resistant Indian recruit, which was given more formal academic grounding in the early work of the Subaltern Studies Group. This chapter challenges these binaries, and complicates the desire to search for subaltern agency within the archive. Rather than seeking evidence for Lalu's phenomenal being, this chapter asks whether otherwise conceptualisations of bodiliness add to how historians have interpreted the experiences of the Indian Army recruits in the First World War. Both sections of Chapter 1 explore the different ways in which the Indian soldier existed *in relation to* others. Section 1 is titled 'The Personal', to highlight those practices that comprise intra-actions between the subjectivity of the soldier and other non-human material and immaterial agencies. Section 2, titled 'The Interpersonal' explores the relationality between the Indian soldier and the bodiliness of his peers. The use of the term personal in each of these headings is not intended to frame the chapter around an anthropocentric axis, of what the human does or is. Rather, it presents one possible lens of enquiry into how subjectivity – here, human soldiers – exists and lives in relation to other agencies, including those of objects (for example, miniaturised Qur'ans, mala beads, and pagri), divine forces, nature, other bodilinesses, and all the ways these might overlap and interweave with one another. Part of this chapter's enquiry then is to ask what the historian can learn about the experiences of the Indian Army during the First World War by examining the relationality of the soldiers' bodilinesses to things that go beyond the human and corporeal.

Historiographical Positioning

The terms relationality and bodiliness are not invoked by other First World War scholars exploring colonial soldiers lived experiences during the conflict, but recent scholarship does show a move towards methodologies and analytical frameworks that similarly position primary sources as unstable and in-process. Santanu Das, Anna Maguire and Daniel Steinbach's edited volume on colonial encounters during the War is framed around the idea that primary sources can be understood as the 'spaces and processes' through which the 'multi-directional mess' of interpersonal and interbodily (to use my terms) encounters and

relationships emerged.²⁶⁰ To speak of encounters as multi-directional and messy is intentionally to challenge models of wartime relationships 'beyond metropole and colonies', but it also echoes the argument advanced in this chapter that relationships also come in the form of entanglements, which may not be lateral; as argued here, these may also occur between humans and non-human actors.²⁶¹

In this chapter, these entanglements are examined across miniature Qur'ans, mala beads and the management of hair and pagri by Indian Army. Although the emerging discourse around 'encounters' signals a methodological shift amongst First World War scholars, and greater engagement with 'non-conventional' sources and a reappraisal of the archive, these particular case studies have either received little to no attention in the context of the First World War, or have been examined only for their role as sites of anti-colonial agitation.²⁶² For example, Gajendra Singh does not write about pagri in the First World War but does discuss the January 1941 Hong Kong and Singapore Royal Artillery (HKSRA) mutinies 'over refusals to wear steel helmets over, or instead of, their *pagris*.'²⁶³ The HKSRA action occurs outside the time period for the research in this thesis, although absolutely warrants attention as part of a longer study that takes into account the re-inscription of men who served as part of the Indian Army across 1914-1918, and the shifting political and bodily positionalities amongst these men who fought twice for the British Empire. For the purposes of this thesis though, Singh's focus is not on the materiality of the pagris or what might be learned from an object-led interrogation of a pagri's role in relationship with its wearer – or, as seen across numerous photographs in this chapter of ready-made pagri set to one side – or its broader role when not being wrapped or worn. Singh rightly identifies pagri in that moment as the site of anti-colonial rebellion, and I have discussed in the section of this

²⁶⁰ Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach, 'Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict: An Introduction', in *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914–1918*, ed. by Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach (Routledge, 2021), pp. 1–33 (p. 26).

²⁶¹ Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach, 'Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict: An Introduction', in *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914–1918*, ed. by Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach (Routledge, 2021), pp. 1–33 (p. 25).

²⁶² For the reference to 'non-conventional' sources, see Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach, 'Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict: An Introduction', in *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914–1918*, ed. by Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach (Routledge, 2021), pp. 1–33 (p. 5).

²⁶³ Gajendra Singh, *The Testimonies of Indian Soldiers and the Two World Wars: Between Self and Sepoy* (Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 23, 165 and 176 (emphasis in original).

chapter devoted to pagri and head-wrappings how the pagri became a function of identity expression in the run-up to and across the War. However, I also examine surviving pagri at the Imperial War Museum and photographs of Indian Army soldiers to argue that pagri were playful, ubiquitous and everyday for some men. This is not incompatible with Singh's argument; my overview of the role of pagri in emergent nationalist politics and their complex relationship with religious identities supports his research, further evidencing the important role pagri played for some men in signifying their political and cultural positionalities and ambitions. My research *expands* this scholarship, pluralising narratives of the Indian soldier experience and moving the literature further away from binaries of the Indian soldier as either an opportunistic or naïve recruit, or an anti-colonial revolutionary hidden in plain sight.

My work here is in alignment with Anna Maguire's writing on colonial encounters in military camps.²⁶⁴ Maguire does not focus on any of the case studies used in this chapter specifically, but she draws broader conclusions that are relevant to my argument that pagri functioned in forms of cultural cross-dressing, and my discussion of the power dynamics in play in these moments.²⁶⁵ Once again in an effort to complicate binary narratives, Maguire writes that military camps, of different types, were 'neither the frictionless contact zones nor the "colourful" environments of temporary imperial microcosms' that feature in the accounts of 'white colonial soldiers.'²⁶⁶ Instead, she argues that personal accounts from combatant and non-combatant recruits from New Zealand, South Africa and the West Indies point to complex sites of shifting agitation, unrest, cultural exchange, underpinned by 'emotional communities' formed between and across units from different countries.²⁶⁷ This is particularly relevant for my work on sources that record engagement across soldiers from different countries and cultural backgrounds, including passages of *Across the Black Waters*,

²⁶⁴ Anna Maguire, "'A Pageant of Empire?': Untangling Colonial Encounters in Military Camps', in *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914–1918*, ed. by Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach (Routledge, 2021), pp. 37–56.

²⁶⁵ See pages 181–182 of this thesis.

²⁶⁶ Anna Maguire, "'A Pageant of Empire?': Untangling Colonial Encounters in Military Camps', in *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914–1918*, ed. by Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach (Routledge, 2021), pp. 37–56 (pp. 38–39).

²⁶⁷ Anna Maguire, "'A Pageant of Empire?': Untangling Colonial Encounters in Military Camps', in *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914–1918*, ed. by Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach (Routledge, 2021), pp. 37–56 (pp. 38–40).

in which a young French child asks for a pagri to be tied on him by the protagonist Lalu, and the image of Driver Tommy Lees having a bedsheet tied around his head in a pagri style by members of the 1205th Indian Pioneer Company (Figure 54). Maguire argues that apparently intimate and tender moments recorded in the archive 'have a tendency to obscure the asymmetries of power at play and the colonial discourses which frame them as cross-cultural, cross-racial and cross-national.'²⁶⁸ Santanu Das, in the same volume, makes a similar point that individuals often '[came] together not because of some commitment to an abstract ethical or sociopolitical ideal in times of war but through the "unbearable vulnerability" produced by historical and geopolitical entanglements.'²⁶⁹ Maguire writes that behind these asymmetries of power and apparently wholesome encounters is a restriction on access and on the types of encounter *available* to different classes of soldier. I agree across this thesis that sources need to be situated within their imperial context – and, where relevant, within any internal organising hierarchies such as combatant/non-combatant status. However, what resonates with my work more is Maguire's argument (quoting Tony Ballantyne) that 'the lateral connections between these colonial groups as they moved through these shifting spaces demonstrates the "inherently relational" nature of the Empire'.²⁷⁰ But what *type* of relationality are we dealing with, as historians, and how can studying material culture illuminate different types of relation? I would argue existing scholars are right to emphasise how sites of encounter saw the 're-articulation of differences along national, ethnic, religious and class lines', but that historians can agree with Maguire and *also* observe how sources show articulations of difference in otherwise, if not equally powerful ways.²⁷¹ In the context of the photograph of Tommy Lees, for example, there is absolutely a power dynamic at play articulated along racial and national lines; this is an image of a white European man and a group of men recruited from across India. But

²⁶⁸ Anna Maguire, "'A Pageant of Empire?': Untangling Colonial Encounters in Military Camps', in *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914–1918*, ed. by Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach (Routledge, 2021), pp. 37–56 (p. 39).

²⁶⁹ Santanu Das, 'Precarious Encounters: South Asia, the War and Anti-Colonial Cosmopolitanism', in *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914–1918*, ed. by Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach (Routledge, 2021), pp. 125–48 (p. 133-134).

²⁷⁰ Anna Maguire, "'A Pageant of Empire?': Untangling Colonial Encounters in Military Camps', in *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914–1918*, ed. by Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach (Routledge, 2021), pp. 37–56 (p. 40).

²⁷¹ Anna Maguire, "'A Pageant of Empire?': Untangling Colonial Encounters in Military Camps', in *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914–1918*, ed. by Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach (Routledge, 2021), pp. 37–56 (p. 39).

where Maguire speaks of access to European soldiers, and to European and white privilege, my research looks at access to Indian Army camaraderie and brotherhood (which I argue Lees is visibly being denied by virtue through having his head wrapped in a bedsheet rather than the military issued pagri material). This is not – in the vein of Singh's research – necessarily a deliberate articulation of resistance or anti-colonial politics. The access denied to Lees is of an entirely different nature – with different ramifications – to access to privileges associated with Europeaness, whiteness, or certain roles within the military. But it does highlight how my research can develop the existing scholarship further, using an examination of material culture to account for those liminal zones where difference is articulated and access to something is denied in ways that are not empowering, nor revolutionary, nor intentionally oppressive.

In relation to the miniature Qur'ans and mala beads in the First World War Indian Army, published research is extremely limited. The most comprehensive work has been produced by Kristina Myrvold and Andreas Johansson, and sits alongside Myrvold's extensive work on scripture in the War that also includes the role of religious books, symbols and practices amongst Sikh and Hindu soldiers.²⁷² Myrvold and Johansson's meticulously researched account of the miniature Qur'ans provided to Indian Army recruits draws together research from across the India Office Records, newspapers, and private correspondence to provide a broad overview of the context within which these miniature objects were given, and the surviving accounts of how they were received. By Myrvold and Johansson's own account, however, 'first-hand sources that can reveal how the Indian Muslim soldiers responded to these religious gifts and in particular how they used the small and large versions of the Qur'an in various religious practices during the war' are 'brief', to the extent that they are available at all.²⁷³ This chapter aims to bring further insights to this question of how the

²⁷² Kristina Myrvold and Andreas Johansson, 'Miniature Qur'ans in the First World War: Religious Comforts for Indian Muslim Soldiers', in *Miniature Books: The Format and Function of Tiny Religious Texts*, ed. by Kristina Myrvold and Dorina Miller Parmenter (Equinox Publishing, 2019), pp. 132–57; Kristina Myrvold, 'Miniature Scriptures for Muslim and Sikh Soldiers in the British Army during World War I', *Miniature Book Society Newsletter*, 2016, 15–16 <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59a6ee584c0dbf52b461ddfb/t/5a4e7155e4966b5d9edef1d6/1515090273563/MBSN_101_March_2016.pdf#page=8>. See also Kristina Myrvold, 'Hindu Soldiers in Europe During the First World War: Religious Books, Symbols and Practices', in *Handbook of Hinduism in Europe* (Brill, 2020), pp. 174–203.

²⁷³ Kristina Myrvold and Andreas Johansson, 'Miniature Qur'ans in the First World War: Religious Comforts for Indian Muslim Soldiers', in *Miniature Books: The Format and Function of Tiny Religious Texts*, ed. by Kristina Myrvold and Dorina Miller Parmenter (Equinox Publishing, 2019), pp. 132–57 (p.149).

miniature Qur'ans were used through an examination of the materiality of the objects themselves, by placing Myrvold and Johansson's work in dialogue with literature that examines how objects in Islam have been used across history. The work of art historian Christiane Gruber has been particularly instructive in this regard, specifically her research on the protective, curative and auspicious properties of Late Ottoman amulet scrolls, prayer books, and 'talismanic fabrics.'²⁷⁴ These objects typically included inscriptions, engravings or other forms of Qur'anic passage on their materiality, and Gruber writes on the critical role of the user's bodiliness in activating the object's power through 'visual and physical acts,' including 'the gaze, heat and motion of the human body.'²⁷⁵ Gruber does not engage with the miniature Qur'ans researched by Myrvold and Johansson, but in this chapter I argue that design historians draw tentative new insights by applying Gruber's findings on the agency in miniaturised, wearable objects bearing Qur'anic inscriptions to a combination of an examination of archived examples of the miniature Qur'ans, and Myrvold and Johansson's accompanying work. The new insights that emerge from doing so speak to both how the miniature Qur'ans were used by soldiers, and also how they were worlded and understood in soldiers' wider spiritual and cultural frameworks. These conclusions supplement the existing literature on the (im)material cultures of the Indian Army, and move the scholarship forward into a deeper conversation both on object agency and the divine in design history research.

Contextualising the collections

One of the main focuses of this chapter is on how the objects considered mediate personal and interpersonal relationships between Indian Army soldiers, their peers, and non-human agencies. Given this context, it is instructive to consider how the objects discussed are positioned across the collections in which they are housed, given that much of my argument

²⁷⁴ Christiane Gruber, "'Go Wherever You Wish, for Verily You Are Well Protected": Seal Designs in Late Ottoman Amulet Scrolls and Prayer Books', in *Visions of Enchantment: Occultism, Magic and Visual Culture*, ed. by Daniel Zamani and Judith Noble (Fulgur Press, 2019), pp. 23–35 (pp. 31–32); Christiane Gruber, 'The Arts of Protection and Healing in Islam: Amulets and the Body', *Ajam Media Collective*, 2021 <<https://ajammc.com/2021/04/30/amulets-and-the-body/>> [accessed 15 May 2022]; Christiane Gruber, 'The Arts of Protection and Healing in Islam: Talismanic Shirts as Premodern "PPE"', *Ajam Media Collective*, 2021 <<https://ajammc.com/2021/04/30/premodern-ppe-talismanic-shirts/>> [accessed 15 May 2022].

²⁷⁵ Christiane Gruber, "'Go Wherever You Wish, for Verily You Are Well Protected": Seal Designs in Late Ottoman Amulet Scrolls and Prayer Books', in *Visions of Enchantment: Occultism, Magic and Visual Culture*, ed. by Daniel Zamani and Judith Noble (Fulgur Press, 2019), pp. 23–35 (pp. 31–32).

pushes against the grain of the archives' classification systems. Taking each object type in turn, this section outlines the archives and the role of the objects within them, and reflects on how this affects my work as researcher in engaging with the materials.

This chapter opens by reconsidering both the nature of miniature Qur'ans and strings of beads distributed amongst Indian Army soldiers during the War, and how those miniature Qur'ans and beads were used. Although it examines practices conducted by soldiers on an individual level, the thrust of this discussion is in its proposal that the nature of the objects and their handling implicated divine, non-human agencies. This framing of the objects and their functions, however, contrasts with the general position taken by the IWM, Horniman Museum, Emery Walker Trust, National Library of Scotland and Royal Collection, each of which hold examples of the miniature Qur'ans (along with other miniaturised holy books). The IWM is the only institution of these that holds the strings of beads, however it seems that the interpretation of the beads within the IWM collection is similar to that envisaged by the IWM and other institutions for the miniature holy books: they are ambiguous, decorative artefacts consigned to undefined 'and the rest' areas of the collection.

The IWM holds two styles of miniature Qur'an; the first, manufactured by Scottish printer David Bryce & Sons, a bound book enclosed within a metal locket-style case (for example, Figure 3), and the second, a single sheet of paper imprinted with Qur'anic text and attached to the body by a looped tassel-tie (for example, Figures 5 and 7). Both examples are categorised within the museum catalogue as 'souvenirs and ephemera', as are the strings of beads that this thesis proposes might be understood as examples of mala beads. Neither the Qur'ans nor the beads form part of a specific archival collection in the way that many of the IWM photographic materials do, such that the role of the Qur'ans and the beads within the collection is particularly unclear. The categorisation of these objects in this way might be a reflection of the limits of the IWM catalogue, which only extends to six object types (Equipment, Film, Photographs, Posters, Sound, Souvenirs and ephemera). Although the beads are titled 'bracelet' and 'necklace', the catalogue does not account for interpretations like those of the Royal Collection, which position the David Bryce edition in its care as an

example of 'Gems and Jewellery'.²⁷⁶ Indeed, this perhaps reflects IWM's mission to 'give an insight into people's experiences of war,' including its 'impact on people's lives,' and to 'be a leader in developing and communicating a deeper understanding of the causes, course and consequences of war.'²⁷⁷ As possible examples of personal and interpersonal entanglements with the divine, the Qur'ans and beads thus fall between the fault lines of the IWM's collection and collections management data, with the result that their role is limited to being an example of things generated by the war, and retained as mementos thereof. This is at odds with how this chapter proposes the objects be understood, as having a long lineage in spiritual practices. However it also appears to be with the aim of exemplifying ephemera and undefined decorative objects that the Emery Walker Trust classifies their example of a David Bryce Qur'an as 'Wood and Miscellaneous'.²⁷⁸ How the Qur'an came to be part of the Emery Walker Trust is unclear, although presumably it formed part of the late Emery Walker's estate. The Trust's objectives are otherwise to 'conserve, maintain and display' his house and its contents, and to 'promote the advancement of the study and appreciation of the Arts & Crafts Movement'; given Walker's interest in Islamic visual and material culture it is likely that the Qur'an captured his joint interests in craftsmanship, Arabic and Islam as a faith.²⁷⁹ The role of the object within the collection it seems is to act as an example of material culture acquired through curiosity by Walker, and as an example of his intersecting design and cultural interests.

There is a noticeable shift amongst other collections in terms of how the function of the miniature Bryce Qur'ans are understood. The Horniman Museum, for instance, holds their

²⁷⁶ David Bryce & Sons, *Al-Quran* القرآن (*The Quran*), Royal Collection Trust, RCIN 1128080 <<https://www.rct.uk/collection/1128080/al-quran-lqran-the-quran>>. See *Threaded Beads, with Paper Note Attached Reading 'Presented by Her Highness Maharani of Bhavnagar'*, 1914, Imperial War Museum, IWM EPH 5819 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30085748>> and *Threaded Beads, with Paper Note Attached Reading 'Presented by Her Highness Maharani of Bhavnagar'*, 1914, Imperial War Museum, IWM EPH 5817 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30085752>>.

²⁷⁷ Imperial War Museum, 'Annual Report and Accounts 2023-2024' (HH Associates Ltd, 2024) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/2024-09/Imperial%20War%20Museum%20ARA%2023-24_Accessible.pdf>, p. 7.

²⁷⁸ David Bryce & Sons, *David Bryce Miniature Qur'an in Silver Locket with Circular Magnifying Glass to Front. Swirl Pattern Embossed on Front and Back. Enclosed Printed Miniature Qur'an with Red and Gold Decoration on Cover.*, Emery Walker Trust, 01470 <<https://artsandcraftshammersmith.org.uk/Collection/Detail/17888/>>.

²⁷⁹ 'The Emery Walker Trust: About' <<https://www.emerywalker.org.uk/trust/>>; Sara Choudhrey, 'A Journey of Discovery – The Walkers and Islamic Art', *Arts and Crafts Hammersmith*, 8 November 2018 <<https://artsandcraftshammersmith.org.uk/a-journey-of-discovery-the-walkers-and-islamic-art/>>.

edition as part of their Anthropology (Ethnography) collection, while the National Library of Scotland categorises all of their miniature David Bryce holy books – including a miniaturised Qur'an, Christian Bible, Hindu Bhagavad-Gita, and Zoroastrian Kordeh Avesta – as 'miniature books'.²⁸⁰ Where the IWM and Emery Walker Trust position the Qur'ans and beads in a way that highlights their role as an example of craftsmanship as a product of (and in the context of) war, locating the Qur'ans within the Horniman's ethnographic collection brings attention back to their role in cultural practices. By categorising the miniature Qur'ans as 'miniature books', the National Library of Scotland does not necessarily use their collections management policy to illuminate the cultural aspects of the David Bryce designs, but it does position the objects as *texts*, rather than as potentially agentic. This arguably reinscribes the institutional tendency to see archival contents as objects to be read, and certainly to understand textual sources as having only a textual function. The fact that different institutions categorise the same objects in different ways highlights the absence of any consistent interpretive approach to the miniature Qur'ans in particular, and creates space for reimagining their nature and function using constellations of agency and materiality that are less present within the traditional archive.

The second part of this chapter examines bodily materialities through photographs of hair maintenance and pagri wrapping, and physical examples of pagri worn by Indian Army soldiers. Unlike the miniature Qur'ans and beads, photographs used in this chapter that are held by the IWM tend to fall within one of two substantial collections. For images taken between 1914 and 1918, this is the 'Ministry of Information First World War Official Collection'; for images taken between 1939 and 1945, images tend to form part of the 'War

²⁸⁰ David Bryce & Sons, *David Bryce Miniature Qur'an Made of Paper and Printed with Ink within a Metal Miniature Qur'an Case, with a Patterned Surface and a Glass Magnifying Section at the Front.*, 1900, Horniman Museum and Gardens, 12.2.65/1 <<https://www.horniman.ac.uk/object/12.2.65/1>>; David Bryce & Sons, *The Qur'an*, 1900, National Library of Scotland, RB.s.2279 <https://search.nls.uk/permalink/f/19q5vbt/44NLS_ALMA21452425760004341>; *The Allies' Bible in Khaki*, 1914, National Library of Scotland, FB.s.959 <https://search.nls.uk/permalink/f/mp49cm/44NLS_ALMA21577983670004341>; *Bhagavad-Gita* (David Bryce & Sons, 190AD), National Library of Scotland, RB.s.2748 <https://search.nls.uk/permalink/f/sbbkgr/44NLS_ALMA21548119970004341>; David Bryce & Sons, *Kordeh Avesta*, 1905, National Library of Scotland, FB.s.960 <https://search.nls.uk/prime-explore/fulldisplay?docid=44NLS_ALMA21504035960004341&context=L&vid=44NLS_VU1&lang=en_US&search_scope=SCOPE1&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=tab1_local&query=sub,exact,Miniature%20books%20--%20Specimens,AND&facet=creator,include,David%20Bryce%20%26%20Son&mode=advanced&offset=10>.

Office Second World War Official Collection'.²⁸¹ This grouping reflects the IWM's broader approach to manage its collections by time period.²⁸² However, other photographs form part of a collection defined by an individual who acted, it seems, as photographer and/or image collector. Figures 55 and 56, for example, are not credited with a photographer on the IWM catalogue, but form part of a collection titled 'Cooke G H (Lieutenant Colonel)'. What is interesting about collections such as Cooke's is that they offer an unofficial visual narrative of the War. Their role in the museum collection more broadly, and in alignment with the IWM mission statement, is to provide insight into the experience of conflict on an individual and non-elite level. This contrasts with images such as Figures 28, 33, 45 (and Figure 70, later in the thesis), which are credited as being taken by photojournalists known to have worked under governmental or media contracts to document the war, including Ariel Vargès and John Warwick Brooke. These occupational credentials are not explicit on the catalogue for images taken during the First World War; only the names of the photographers are given, such that the researcher must interrogate the professional backgrounds of the individuals to understand the images' compositional context. However, military and governmental affiliations are more readily visible in respect of those images taken during the Second World War; figure 50, for example, form part of the War Office Second World War Official Collection and feature the name of the photographer along with his respective Army Film and Photographic Unit (AFPU).²⁸³ Collections of AFPU footage in the IWM is positioned as offering an on-the-ground official visual record of major events, including the evacuation of troops from Dunkirk, the D-Day landings, and the liberation of the Bergen-Belsen camp.²⁸⁴ IWM materials emphasise that members of the AFPU were 'were recruited from the ranks of the Army,' and were 'embedded' within military ranks and

²⁸¹ See for example Figures 28, 33 and 45 (First World War), and Figures 35-38 and 46-47 (Second World War).

²⁸² Imperial War Museum, 'Managing Our Collections: Collections Departments', *Imperial War Museums* <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/managing/curators>>.

²⁸³ The IWM catalogue lists the 'creator' of Figure 50 as both the 'No. 2 Army Film and Photo Section, Army Film and Photographic Unit' and one 'Sgt. Johnson', who is also credited as having taken the image on the typed 'original wartime caption' that accompanies the image in the archive; see Sgt. Johnson (No. 2 Army Film and Photo Section, AFPU), 'Havildar Mirza Khan of Jhelum Helps L/Nayak Sultan Khan of Camelpore with His Turban, Which Is 41/2 Yards Long and Two Feet in Width.', 1944, Imperial War Museum, IWM NA 12683 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205527069>>.

²⁸⁴ 'The Photographers And Filmmakers Who Captured The Second World War', *Imperial War Museums* <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-photographers-and-filmmakers-who-captured-the-second-world-war>>.

the operations that they captured.²⁸⁵ The result is that, much like the positioning of potentially independent photography (such as that at Figures 55 and 56), the images are presented as visual records that reflect the lived experiences of soldiers. It falls to me as researcher then to contextualise the moments in which these images were taken in order to assess how the images can be used critically to research and write histories of the Indian Army.

Examples of pagri within the IWM collection occupy a slightly more unsettled space, largely due to the absence of much contextual information about who might have worn or owned the objects, and how they came to be part of the collection. None of the First and Second World War pagris held by the IWM form part of a specific archival sub-collection but are categorised by object type as 'Uniforms and Insignia'. Some feature additional catalogue tagging, pointing to further 'object associations' that are heavily oriented towards military classifications. These include specific Indian Army regiments (such as 'Indian Army 36th Sikhs' and 'Indian Army 21st Punjab Regiment') and terms that are historically located in the First and Second World War (such as 'Indian Home Front 1914-1918').²⁸⁶ The pagris subsequently perform a representative role, acting as exemplars of uniform without it being entirely clear from the catalogue what they are examples of, or for whom, besides part of standard issue uniform. Presenting the objects in this way emphasises their research value as military dress specimens, but this chapter opens up the possibility of looking to the fabric, wrapping styles and stitching in order to ask whether an interrogation of the pagris' materiality might offer new insights for historians of the Indian Army.

THE PERSONAL

The first section to this chapter examines practices that were conducted by soldiers on an individual level, albeit in ways that implicated non-human agencies. Writing from

²⁸⁵ The Photographers And Filmmakers Who Captured The Second World War', *Imperial War Museums* <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-photographers-and-filmmakers-who-captured-the-second-world-war>>; 'The AFPU on D-Day', *Imperial War Museums* <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-afpu-on-d-day>>.

²⁸⁶ See *Pagri (36th Sikhs, Indian Army, First World War)*, Imperial War Museum, UNI 12270 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30100086>>; *Pagri (21st Punjabis, Indian Army, First World War)*, 1914, Imperial War Museum, IWM UNI 6202.

Kitchener's Indian Hospital in Brighton to a friend in the Punjab, Naik Nizam-ud-Din expressed concern on 26 April 1915 that his peer and fellow patient Bagh Ali had '[a] few days ago [...] lost his *tawiz* and now he has begun to be possessed and subject to seizure at intervals.'²⁸⁷ Translated by the Censor as an 'amulet', Bagh Ali's *tawiz* is one of many references in letters written by Indian Army soldiers to objects endowed with specific power, often for physical and spiritual protection, or to garner favourable odds in the battlefield or their career. Mahomed Latif Khan reprimanded his correspondent for failing to provide such an object, noting (referring to himself in the third person, as the correspondent's 'servant'): 'nor did you send [your servant] a talisman such as he desired for the fulfilment of his desires. Your prayers are of great efficacy; but what your servant wanted were such incantations [...] as would give him prospects of promotion' and as would make his enemies' 'thoughts towards him [...] become kindly.'²⁸⁸ Dafadar Shah Jahan Khan provides such an amulet to 'a friend' in India, entreating the friend to 'keep a stout heart [...] Here is a *ta'wiz* (amulet) which I am sending you. Keep it about you.'²⁸⁹ Indeed, the editor of the Delhi-based Urdu paper *Curzon Gazette* sent 100 'amulets' to serving soldiers.²⁹⁰ What follows is an exploration of the relationship of the Indian Army soldiers with objects like these that refuse categorisation and serve both auspicious and apotropaic functions, thus serving both as amulet and talisman. In an effort to use an adjective that captures the entanglement of their plural functions and properties, I have contracted the two words – fusing them in a modest homage to Édouard Glissant's destabilisation of language – to describe them collectively as amuletalismanic. Translator of *Poetics of Relation*, Betsy Wing, notes that Glissant 'repeatedly destabilizes "standard" French in order to decategorize understandings and establish new relations'; with this in mind, I have used syllabic abbreviation to merge two words to capture the agency of objects that refuse

²⁸⁷ Correspondence between Naik Nizam-ud-Din, Brighton, England, and 'a friend', Punjab, dated 26 April 1915, in Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War* (1999), p. 56 (emphasis in original).

²⁸⁸ Correspondence between Mahomed Latif Khan, France, and Sayed Abdullah Shah, Punjab, dated 28 December 1917, in Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War* (1999), p. 342.

²⁸⁹ Correspondence between Dafadar Shah Jahan Khan and 'a friend' in India, dated 12 Sept 1915, in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 1 (Sep 1915-Oct 1915)', 1916, British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/825/6 <<http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=IOR/L/MIL/5/825/6>> [accessed 6 July 2020].

²⁹⁰ Kristina Myrvold and Andreas Johansson, 'Miniature Qur'ans in the First World War: Religious Comforts for Indian Muslim Soldiers', in *Miniature Books: The Format and Function of Tiny Religious Texts*, ed. by Kristina Myrvold and Dorina Miller Parmenter (Bristol: Equinox Publishing, 2019), pp. 132–57 (p. 148).

categorisation as either.²⁹¹ Comprising miniaturised sacred texts and mala beads, these amuletalismanic objects are all worn and used *with* – not simply worn on – the body. The following discussion situates these objects in their historical, cultural lineages, and uses otherwise conceptualisation of bodiliness to introduce new ways of understanding the role these objects played in the lives of men serving in the Indian Army.

Miniaturised Qur'ans

Histories of the Indian Army in the early-twentieth century give considerable attention to the arrangements made by British officials to accommodate differences in spiritual worldviews and their corresponding practices, whether those differences were articulated by the soldiers themselves, tropes cultivated by the British colonial imaginary, or enmeshments of both.²⁹² However, what can be added to these accounts is a more sustained examination of the materialities of these accommodations, including the provision and use of sacred texts. Letters from Indian Army soldiers and committee papers of the Indian Soldiers' Fund (ISF) from 1915 onwards illustrate the demand for sacred texts and the logistical and theological problems faced by the British authorities and the soldiers, in both providing and keeping them. General Sir James Willcocks, for example, advised on the care needed in preparing and distributing religious texts, to avoid offence if they were damaged or abandoned in the field.²⁹³ The packing and dispatch of Qur'ans was therefore conducted by 'the Secretary of the "All India Moslem League" in London, and the Maulvi of the Mosque at Woking,' to ensure appropriate handling, and Sikh scriptures were administered by Sirdar Sampuran Singh, the Secretary of the Sikh Dharmshala.²⁹⁴ What emerged was a demand for miniaturised versions of sacred texts that could be kept on one's person, even on the battlefield. Letters from Indian Army soldiers included requests for 'a Holy Qur'an – a very small one [...] which is kept in a locket', 'a small Qur'an which will go into the pocket', and 'a little Koran [sic] [...] which can go inside a little box, the sort of thing

²⁹¹ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (1990), p. xii.

²⁹² For example, Barkawi, *Soldiers of Empire* (2017), pp. 28-31 (especially for imagined spiritual difference) and 70-72; Kate Imy, *Faithful Fighters: Identity and Power in the British Indian Army*, South Asia in Motion (Stanford University Press, 2019), pp. 132-133; David Olusoga, *The World's War* (Head of Zeus, 2015), pp. 59-60 and 85-86.

²⁹³ Meeting of the General Committee of the Indian Soldiers' Fund, dated 18 August 1915, in 'Indian Soldiers' Fund: Proceedings of General Committee (Book No. 2)', 1915, British Library, Mss Eur F120/2.

²⁹⁴ Myrvold and Johansson, 'Miniature Qur'ans in the First World War' (2019), pp. 146-147.

that I can keep in my pocket.²⁹⁵ These requests were met with miniaturised versions of the Qur'an from national and international suppliers (see Figures 3 to 5), procured variously by the British Government, the ISF, and individual donors.²⁹⁶ Of these, over 100,000 copies were provided by the Glasgow-based printer David Bryce & Sons.²⁹⁷ I argue here – focusing specifically on miniaturised Qur'ans as opposed to other miniaturised holy texts – that their request and production was not just a functional solution to distribution and storage issues, but can be situated in a much longer lineage of Islamic amuletalismanic objects and practices that engage the bodily.²⁹⁸ This is not to say that such miniature texts were used exclusively in this way; Marcela A. Garcia Probert has argued, citing Hazem Hussein Abbas Ali in a call for reimagining material culture studies, that 'the performative aspect of the rituals while manufacturing, activating, and using an amulet disclose that the same amulet can be used in different ways,' including ways that do not actualise the amuletalismanic potential of the object.²⁹⁹ Indeed, examples of miniature Qur'ans sent to and used by soldiers bear close similarities with eighteenth and nineteenth century bazubands, which were often treated as predominantly decorative, and it is possible some men used the miniature Qur'ans in the same way.³⁰⁰ However, my focus here is on complicating accounts of worn objects as adornments, or representations of these objects as portable texts that were read exclusively for edification or routine spiritual practice.

Christiane Gruber has written extensively on the histories and roles of amuletalismanic objects in Islam, whilst placing them in a broader context that acknowledges cultural

²⁹⁵ Correspondence between Shah Nawaz Khan and Doctor Sahib Khan, dated 22 October 1915; correspondence between Firoz Khan and Jemadar Said Muhammed Khan, dated 13 October 1915; correspondence between Said Ali and Faqir Khan, dated 5 October 1915, all in Myrvold and Johansson, 'Miniature Qur'ans in the First World War' (2019), p. 139.

²⁹⁶ Basu, *For King and Another Country* (2015), p. 43; Myrvold and Johansson, 'Miniature Qur'ans in the First World War' (2019), pp. 140, 143, 146 and 148.

²⁹⁷ E. Smith, *Portable Magic: A History of Books and Their Readers* (Penguin Books Limited, 2022).

²⁹⁸ For other miniaturised sacred texts, see for example *Miniature Bhagvad Gita*, 1915, Imperial War Museum, IWM EPH 7789 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30087640>>.

²⁹⁹ Marcela A. Garcia Probert, 'Chapter 10 Twigs in the Tawfik Canaan Collection of Palestinian Amulets', in *Amulets and Talismans of the Middle East and North Africa in Context: Transmission, Efficacy and Collections*, ed. by Marcela A. Garcia Probert and Petra M. Sijpesteijn, Leiden Studies in Islam and Society (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2022), xiii, 253–74 <<https://brill.com/view/book/edcoll/9789004471481/BP000011.xml?body=pdf-43180>>, p. 255.

³⁰⁰ See, for example, Figures 9 and 10 and the accompanying discussion on pages 80, 82 and 84, below.



Figure 3.

David Bryce & Sons, *Miniature Qur'an (David Bryce)*, 1915, Imperial War Museum, IWM EPH 7784, <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30087635>>.



Figure 4.

David Bryce & Sons, *David Bryce Miniature Qur'an next to Silver Locket, alongside Measuring Ruler*, Emery Walker Trust, 01470, <https://artsandcraftshammersmith.org.uk/Collection/Detail/17888/> (photograph author's own).



Figure 5.

Miniature Qur'an in Metal Case with Tassels (Purple), 1915, Imperial War Museum, IWM EPH 5829, <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30085759>> (photograph author's own).

practices of agentive, charmed objects across cultures.³⁰¹ The reach of these practices has similarly been marked by recent exhibitions and defined collections of amuletalismanic objects from predominantly European Christian societies, problematising the use of strict, so-called religious categories and the reproduction of worldviews that distinguish such practices in the Global South as superstition.³⁰² The Wellcome Collection's 2011-2012 exhibition 'Charmed Life: The Solace of Objects', for example, emerged out of 'artist Felicity Powell's engagement with a collection of 1400 amulets' predominantly owned and used by London residents, interrogating the intersections of nationalities, faiths, and class in the use

³⁰¹ Christiane Gruber, 'The Arts of Protection and Healing in Islam: Amulets and the Body', *Ajam Media Collective*, 2021 <<https://ajammc.com/2021/04/30/amulets-and-the-body/>> [accessed 15 May 2022]: 'As in other global religious traditions, amulets and talismans have a long and rich history in Islam.'

³⁰² See for example 'Charmed Life: The Solace of Objects', hosted by the Wellcome Collection in 2011-2012; the Horniman Museum's collection of '19th and 20th century British charms and amulets'; and the HOMI Fashion&Jewels 2021 trade show 'exhibition of talismans and amulets in contemporary fashion jewellery'.

of amuletalismanic objects in London.³⁰³ The Horniman Museum similarly has a dedicated collection of '19th and 20th century British charms and amulets', whilst turning to more recent practices the 2021 HOMI Fashion&Jewels trade show featured an 'exhibition of talismans and amulets in contemporary fashion jewellery'.³⁰⁴

George Morton-Jack's 2018 book on the Indian Army in the First World War is an example of history writing that assumes the superiority of so-called modern science, and describes Punjabi practices as 'superstitions': the product of 'the lack of education,' rather than the product of an otherwise system of knowledge.³⁰⁵ Reference to existing scholarship on such otherwise systems of knowledge, however, helps contextualise these practices – and the material culture associated with them – within the worldviews and cultural frames of references most likely known to the soldiers themselves. Focusing on amuletalismanic objects in Islam, for example, Gruber points to 'protective devices [...] considered particularly protective and curative' that dated to the eleventh century and took the form of 'talismanic scrolls containing Qur'anic verses.'³⁰⁶ Such protective devices, Gruber notes, appear to have been 'worn around the neck or attached to the body [suggesting] that physical intimacy and contact were thought capable of unlocking the amulet's blessings.'³⁰⁷ The role of bodilyness and text are both recurring features of objects framed as having amuletalismanic potential.³⁰⁸ There are numerous examples of 'talismanic fabrics' (including shirts inscribed in ink with the full contents of the Qur'an), seal designs on rings that integrate scriptural quotes and invocations to spiritual figures, and block-printed Qur'anic

³⁰³ 'Charmed Life: The Solace of Objects (6 October 2011 – 26 February 2012)' (unpublished Exhibition, Wellcome Collection, 2011) <<https://wellcomecollection.org/exhibitions/W-GYiBEAAK61cRK1>>.

³⁰⁴ Helen Cornish, 'Magic Charms and Amulets', *Horniman Museum & Gardens*, 2014 <<https://www.horniman.ac.uk/story/magic-charms-and-amulets/>>; 'Exhibition of Talismans and Amulets in Fashion Jewellery Opens at HOMI Fashion&Jewels in Milan', *Jewellery Outlook*, 2021 <<https://jewelleryoutlook.com/exhibition-of-talismans-and-amulets-in-fashion-jewellery-opens-at-homi-fashionjewels-in-milan/>>.

³⁰⁵ George Morton-Jack, *The Indian Empire At War: From Jihad to Victory, The Untold Story of the Indian Army in the First World War* (Little, Brown Book Group, 2018), p. 33.

³⁰⁶ Gruber, 'Amulets and the Body' (2021).

³⁰⁷ Gruber, 'Amulets and the Body' (2021).

³⁰⁸ See Yasmine Al-Saleh, 'Amulets and Talismans from the Islamic World', *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)*, 2010 <https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/tali/hd_tali.htm>; Travis Zadeh, 'Touching and Ingesting: Early Debates over the Material Qur'an', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 129.3 (2009), 443–66 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20789421>> [accessed 12 May 2022]; Christiane Gruber, "'Go Wherever You Wish, for Verily You Are Well Protected": Seal Designs in Late Ottoman Amulet Scrolls and Prayer Books', in *Visions of Enchantment: Occultism, Magic and Visual Culture*, ed. by Daniel Zamani and Judith Noble (Fulgur Press, 2019), pp. 23–35 (p.25).

scrolls sewn in a container to the wearer's shirt, 'or suspended from the body' to 'bring good fortune to its owner'.³⁰⁹ This is significant in the context of the miniaturised Qur'ans provided to Indian Army soldiers; not least because what I am proposing to have amuletalismanic potential was itself a miniaturised copy of Qur'anic scripture, but also in light of the embossed text on the side of certain tasselled cases that contained them.³¹⁰ The metal case held by the IWM (Figure 5) fully encloses a single sheet of tissue thin paper that – like amuletalismanic shirts – are inscribed with the full contents of the Qur'an. However the case itself also bears an embossed invocation to God in Arabic which translates to 'Whatever God Wills' (top), 'God is Great' (bottom).³¹¹ For Gruber, Qur'anic inscriptions and invocations to the names of God affirmed that any power secured through these objects is 'granted by God alone.'³¹² On this understanding, the embossed script is not just a visual feature but is formative of the object's amuletalismanic potential, imbuing the case (not just the Qur'anic text contained inside) with the power of God. That the IWM editions feature these visual signifiers of Islamic amuletalismanic design – while the David Bryce editions (such as Figure 3 and Figure 4) do not – lends support to the argument that the IWM editions were understood at the point of design and production as having amuletalismanic potential. Indeed, the crevice through which the folded tissue of Qur'anic script can be seen is not a hinged opening, and appears instead to have been the slot through which the text was placed before the metal casing was permanently closed around it (Figure 6). The text is thus not accessible, implying that its designers did not intend that it be removed and read; these were not scriptural sources intended to be removed and used in daily scriptural study or prayer, these were a form of God's presence with all the associated protective power. This would have been in-keeping with long histories of amuletalismanic material cultures amongst Muslim communities across India, Iran, and North Africa; cases embellished with

³⁰⁹ *Talismanic Shirt, Cotton, Northern India*, 15th–early 16th century, Friends of Islamic Art Gifts, 1998 / The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1998.199 <<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/453498>>; *Seal Ring with Inscription, Iran or Central Asia*, 15th–early 16th century, Rogers Fund, 1912 / The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 12.224.6 <<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/446273>>; *Printed Amulet with Box, Egypt*, 11th century, Aga Khan Museum, AKM508 <<https://www.agakhanmuseum.org/collection/artifact/printed-amulet-with-box-akm508>>.

³¹⁰ Other IWM miniature Qur'ans (object numbers IWM EPH 5827, IWM EPH 5828, and IWM EPH 7785) also feature the same script on their cases.

³¹¹ I am grateful to Kaizad Irani and Dr Havovi Chichger for procuring an English translation of the embossed Arabic text.

³¹² Gruber, "Go Wherever You Wish" (2019), p. 25.



Figure 6.

View of script enclosed in metal case, part of Miniature Qur'an in Metal Case with Tassels (Purple), 1915, Imperial War Museum, IWM EPH 5829, <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30085759>>.

Qur'anic scripture, references, or lessons were often designed to hold longer block printed extracts that were chosen for their guidance and protection.³¹³ Such encased Qur'anic scriptures, as seen in Figures 5 and 6, were likely those designs procured and provided to soldiers through Indian notables who were themselves practicing Muslims. Editor of the *Curzon Gazette* Mirza Hairat Ali, London Muslim League founder Ameer Ali, and the Begum of Bhopal Sultan Jehan are all amongst the documented providers of Qur'ans to soldiers in hospitals and on the Front Line during the First World War.³¹⁴ Embedded within a

³¹³ Yasmine Al-Saleh, "Licit Magic": The Touch And Sight Of Islamic Talismanic Scrolls' (unpublished PhD Thesis, Harvard University, 2014) <<http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:12274637>>. See for example the Aga Khan Museum's eleventh-century lead case, inscribed with surat al-ikhlas (Qur'an 112:1-4) (<https://www.agakhanmuseum.org/collection/artifact/printed-amulet-with-box-akm508>), and the Smithsonian National Museum of Asian Art's nineteenth-century silver-copper alloy tubular case, inscribed with the so-called 'Throne Verse' (https://asia.si.edu/explore-art-culture/collections/search/edanmdm:fsg_S2018.6a-c/).

³¹⁴ Meeting of the General Committee of the Indian Soldiers' Fund, dated 18 August 1915, in 'Indian Soldiers' Fund: Proceedings of General Committee (Book No. 2)', 1915, British Library, Mss Eur F120/2; Basu, *For King and Another Country* (2015), p. 43; Myrvold and Johansson, 'Miniature Qur'ans in the First World War' (2019), pp. 140, 146 and 148;

community of spiritual practice, parts of which would have been familiar with such objects, it is possible that such individuals deliberately donated editions where Qur'anic script was concealed and permanently enclosed, and visual markers of divine power were included on the case, as they were conceived at the point of design and manufacture as amuletalismanic mediators of God's presence and power.

What draws the designs featured in Figures 5 to 7 together with the David Bryce designs in Figures 3 and 4, however, are the bodily practices with which this amuletalismanic potential must be realised. Whether the object features visual markers of a 'blessed imprint' from God or not, such 'sacred powers [...] must be activated,' and broader studies of amuletalismanic objects and their activation in Islam help contextualise the handling of miniaturised Qur'ans by soldiers in the First World War (as described in sources from the period), and helps locate them in this lineage.³¹⁵ In her 2019 study of late-Ottoman amuletalismanic seal designs, Christiane Gruber gives a detailed overview not only of the 'visual contemplation and physical engagement' with which 'the power of [objects] was believed to be activated by their Ottoman wearers and carriers,' but also the instructive manuals and prayer books that often accompanied these objects and offered explicit guidance on how best to realise their potential.³¹⁶ These manuals outlined practices that were often intensely personal and foregrounded the bodiliness of the user. Examples include an Ottoman prayer book, dated 1877, which notes 'Whoever rubs the seal on his face morning and night will be absolved from eighty years of sins, and whoever looks at the seal at the beginning of the month will be safe from all misfortune,' such that 'the pressing and rubbing of the seal on the viewer's face' is what activated the object's 'healing and protective powers.'³¹⁷ An explanatory text from the same period similarly asks users to 'gaze upon the seal of prophecy [on a scroll] and wipe it on his face every Friday while asking for God's forgiveness [...] carry it on him at all times, and rub it on his face and eyes.'³¹⁸ Another promises forgiveness for seventy years of sin provided the user 'reads this blessed great seal or carries it with him or rubs it against his face in the evening and morning.'³¹⁹ These guides

³¹⁵ Gruber, "Go Wherever You Wish" (2019), p.29.

³¹⁶ Gruber, "Go Wherever You Wish" (2019), p. 25.

³¹⁷ Gruber, "Go Wherever You Wish" (2019), p. 28.

³¹⁸ Gruber, "Go Wherever You Wish" (2019), p. 28.

³¹⁹ Gruber, "Go Wherever You Wish" (2019), p. 28.

are instructive for framing how the miniature Qur'ans provided to soldiers were used and understood, as their instructions are echoed in a letter from Alfred Ezra, who in late 1915 procured for Indian Army soldiers 'at least 3000 miniature Qur'ans' in the style of Figures 3 and 4 from David Bryce & Sons for distribution amongst patients in hospitals via the ISF.³²⁰

Addressed to David Bryce, Ezra's correspondence notes that

the mite "Korans" have been a huge success with our Mohammedan soldiers, and nothing I have given the men had been appreciated half so much as these exquisite little books. *On receiving one, the man will stand up, put the book over his head and touch each eye with it, and then kiss the book with reverence. They nearly all wear them round their necks, and say that this protects them from all harm.*³²¹

The crescent-shaped bail at the top of the case in the David Bryce designs, and the tassels at either end of the design in Figure 5 (and other examples of similar designs in the IWM collection) support Ezra's account that miniature Qur'ans were worn.³²² This was also reported in the British press, which saw articles referencing the tiny 'Scriptures' and describing how they 'are enclosed in small metal cases glazed in front, and with ring attached to enable them to be worn on the person.'³²³ While some cases at the IWM bear straight, frayed-edge tassels that seem to have lost some of the original length (see the left-hand tassel at Figure 7), others retain what appears to be the original closed loop (Figure 8). This form of fastening bears strong resemblance to the tassels used to secure bazubands to the upper biceps of Mughal soldiers (for example, Figure 9), which inspired similar designs well into the nineteenth century (Figures 10 and 11). I would suggest that the tassels on the IWM Qur'ans may have operated in the same way; tied like a hook and eye, such that the straight tassel could be pulled through the loop and tied to secure the case and its contents to clothes or the body. The conical wound-gilt thread binding of the tassel segment attached directly to the metal case similarly uses the same technique as that exhibited on bazubands,

³²⁰ Myrvold and Johansson, 'Miniature Qur'ans in the First World War' (2019), p. 148.

³²¹ Myrvold and Johansson, 'Miniature Qur'ans in the First World War' (2019), p. 149 (emphasis added).

³²² For these other examples, see Miniature Qur'an in Metal Case with Tassels (Magenta), 1915, Imperial War Museum, IWM EPH 5827 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30085757>> and Miniature Qur'an in Metal Case with Tassels (Purple, Aged), 1915, Imperial War Museum, IWM EPH 7785 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30087636>>.

³²³ See the *Edinburgh Evening*, 8 October 1915, quoted in Myrvold and Johansson, 'Miniature Qur'ans in the First World War' (2019), p. 148-149.



Figure 7.

Miniature Qur'an in Metal Case with Tassels (Turquoise), 1915, Imperial War Museum, IWM EPH 5828 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30085758>> (photograph author's own).



Figure 8.

Close-up of tassel on miniature Qur'an in metal case (IWM EPH 5829), 1915, Imperial War Museum, IWM EPH 5829 (photograph author's own).



Figure 9.

Mughal Bazuband, 18th century, Victoria & Albert Museum, 02571(IS)
<<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O452321/arm-band/>>.



Figure 10.

Bazuband (One of a Pair), 19th century, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 15.95.41
<<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/446740>>.



Figure 11.

Bazubands from Jaipur, India, 19th century, Simon Ray Indian & Islamic Works of Art, <<https://www.simonray.com/catalogue.php?id=64>> [accessed 1 May 2023]. Image courtesy of: Simon Ray, London.



Figure 12.

Mughal 'Amulet or Necklace Holding a Miniature Quran', 1700-1800, Royal Collection Trust, RCIN 11512 and RCIN 1146163 <<https://www.rct.uk/collection/11512>>. Royal Collection Trust / © His Majesty King Charles III 2023.

and an ornate eighteenth-nineteenth century encased miniature Qur'an owned by Zinat Mahal Begum, wife to the last Mughal emperor (Figure 12). The latter also appears to be fastened using a knotted fastening and loop. The IWM Qur'ans thus bear a close visual and material resemblance to bodily adornments favoured by Mughal soldiers and imperial ruling families, situating them in a longer lineage of Mughal material cultural history of the bodily and Mughal miniatures as bodily adornment. Through their size and their resemblance to tiny, jewel-encrusted and enamelled bazubands, the IWM Qur'ans also echo the Mughal practice of miniaturisation. Although articulated mainly through painting, particularly miniature portraiture, the influence of Mughal material culture into the First World War raises further issues with understanding the IWM Qur'ans as monocultural objects with singular functions. Instead they might be understood as the site of plural designs and functions; not just amuletalismanic through their relationship to bodiliness, but are also imbued with Islamic practices that cut across communities, regions and temporalities, and the visual design style and martial context that emerged specifically from the Mughal empire.

So far as the IWM Qur'ans were touched, rubbed, kissed and otherwise handled to actualise their amuletalismanic potential, press coverage on the practices of Muslim soldiers outside of the Allied forces, and corresponding objects kept in archives, point to similar practices amongst Turkish men. This is significant, as it helps further situate this argument for the amuletalismanic properties of and practices around miniaturised Qur'ans within a broader global context of Islam. *The Birmingham Daily Post*, *The Burnley News* and *The Liverpool Echo* all reported in September to October 1915 that wounded Turkish soldiers had been gifted copies of the Qur'an by the Ottoman sultan following the losses at Gallipoli, and also hung these 'around body parts 'that were hurt and in pain'.³²⁴ The IWM collection includes something similar: a small metal cylindrical container, carried by a Turkish soldier and attached to a chain, which would have held Qur'anic extracts close to the body.³²⁵ As Ezra's letter demonstrates, what emerges is an entanglement of agentive object, bodiliness and the divine at the point of activation; the object's amuletalismanic potential is realised in an

³²⁴ Myrvold and Johansson, 'Miniature Qur'ans in the First World War' (2019), pp. 148-149.

³²⁵ *Open-Ended Cylindrical Metal Container for Keeping Extracts of the Qur'an, Carried by Turkish Soldiers, 1914*, Imperial War Museum, EPH 4906 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30084828>>.

intensely personal and tactile way, through movement of the book and touch beyond just wearing. Possible material signs of 'devotional wiping and rubbing' can be seen across examples of the David Bryce designs through tarnishing patterns on the enclosing cases that hosted otherwise intact Qur'anic scripts.³²⁶ The David Bryce design held at the IWM (Figure 3) and copies of the same design held in the Horniman Museum collection (Figure 13) and the Robert Hutchings Goddard Library at Clark University all exhibit tarnishing patterns on the front of the case that exclude the bezel around the embedded magnifying glass.³²⁷ This pattern is not found on other examples (for example, Figure 4), which suggests it is not a naturally-occurring tarnish pattern that results through the ordinary course of object ageing. The combination of these tarnishing patterns with miniature Qur'ans that are otherwise intact and appear almost unread (for example, no damage or fading to the red and gilt covers, no obvious manipulation of the binding) may indicate that the scripts were predominantly kept inside cases that were then thumbed or touched around the magnifying glass in an effort to activate amuletalistic properties – or simply during the daily practice of prayer.

Furthermore, these patterns might be understood not just as traces of 'haptic engagement' with the objects, but as a more sustained intertwining of the materiality of the amuletalistic with the bodiliness of soldiers. This relationship has been described elsewhere, in relation to other devotional objects of Islam. The inked inscriptions on one of the many Qur'anic shirts (an example of which is pictured at Figure 14), for instance, are smudged and smeared where the shirt has been worn, but these signs of wear are 'more than just a blemish' resulting from spirited devotional touch.³²⁸ Rather, Gruber explains that 'this admixture of liquid ink and bodily excretion' acted as a 'philter [...] incubated words to be absorbed into the human body [...] soaked up by the pores of the flesh.'³²⁹ In the context of the soldiers' miniature Qur'ans, this raises questions as to the intention with which the materiality of the cases was affected through touch, especially in light of the visible

³²⁶ Gruber, "'Go Wherever You Wish'" (2019), p. 28.

³²⁷ I am grateful to jewellery design historian and gemmologist Georgina Izzard for her guidance on tarnishing patterns, and to Cindy A. Shenette at the Robert Hutchings Goddard Library, Clark University, for assistance in photographing the David Bryce Qur'an in their collection.

³²⁸ Christiane Gruber, 'The Arts of Protection and Healing in Islam: Talismanic Shirts as Premodern "PPE"', *Ajam Media Collective*, 2021 <<https://ajammc.com/2021/04/30/premodern-ppe-talismanic-shirts/>> [accessed 15 May 2022].

³²⁹ Gruber, 'Talismanic Shirts as Premodern "PPE"' (2021).



Figure 13.

David Bryce & Sons miniature Qur'an made of paper and printed with ink, enclosed within the original metal case with embedded magnifying glass, c. 1900, Horniman Museum and Gardens, 12.2.65/1 <<https://www.horniman.ac.uk/object/12.2.65/1>>.



Figure 14.

North Indian Talismanic Shirt, c. 15th-16th century, Victoria & Albert Museum, T.59-1935 <<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O481040/talismanic-shirt-unknown/>>.

(absence of) tarnishing described above. Using the critical lens provided by Islamic studies and research into the worldviews of Muslims using amuletalismanic objects, there are a number of new suggestions that might be made of the David Bryce Qur'ans. The visible material imprint of bodily engagement – tarnishing resulting from kissing or touching the objects in the way described by Alfred Ezra – might have been a function of enacting supreme respect for and supplication to Allah, whose blessing has conferred on the miniature text its amuletalismanic properties. Equally, using Gruber's description of the philter effect, the tarnishing pattern might be the result of a rubbing practice that was itself a deliberate effort to incorporate the object's materiality into oneself, in the hope of similarly absorbing its amuletalismanic properties. This would align with practices of Islamic healing bowls, or magic bowls, dating from at least the twelfth-century.³³⁰ Such bowls were inscribed with pictorial and textual motifs, including the divine word, relating to their intended baraka (blessing), typically a therapeutic, protective or auspicious function. When filled, alongside the appropriate accompanying prayer, the water would absorb the healing powers of the divine word inscribed onto the bowl's surface and could be drunk to imbibe the baraka transported by the water.³³¹ In the context of the miniature Qur'ans, the tarnishing patterns might be understood as reflecting a similar effort to receive the benefit of the protection offered by the miniature text contained within it. The result is that descriptions of these amuletalismanic objects as adornments – even as protective and auspicious ones – do not account fully for the relationship between the objects and the bodiliness of the wearer. Wearable miniature Qur'ans cannot be understood within existing models of military dress(ing) in the First World War, or even solely within the descriptions of bazubands and the designs they inspired, as bodily adornments for soldiers. Given the potential for these objects to be used in a way that allowed the user to literally consume their baraka or similar amuletalismanic properties, these objects might be understood as intra-active agents that appended, but also became part of, the bodiliness of soldiers. A similar worldview might be inferred from soldiers' engagement with letters; although

³³⁰ Finbarr Barry Flood, 'Bodies and Becoming: Mimesis, Mediation, and the Ingestion of the Sacred in Christianity and Islam', in *Sensational Religion: Sensory Cultures in Material Practice*, ed. by Sally Promey (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), pp. 459–93 (p. 477).

³³¹ Flood, 'Bodies and Becoming' (2014), pp. 459–93 (especially pp. 477-479); Emilie Savage-Smith and Francis Maddison, *Science, Tools & Magic*, Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art (Nour Foundation, 1997), pp. 72-97; Ashley Dimmig and Christiane Gruber, *Pearls of Wisdom: The Arts of Islam at the University of Michigan* (Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, 2015), pp. 15-16.

lacking the same amuletalismanic power of a divinely-blessed Qur'an, certain letters speak to the same attempt at fusing one's bodiliness with proxies of their loved ones (as opposed to the Divine and His protection). Jemadar Hasan Shah, a Punjabi Muslim in France, writes to a woman he addresses as 'Dearer than Life':

Happy, indeed, am I [...] that I received a letter from you, even though it contained a reproach! I kissed it til my lips were like [sic] to wear away and now it lies against my heart!³³²

The framing of this letter bears similarities with the bodily engagement, wear and wearing of the miniature Qur'ans. This is not to argue that Jemadar Shah believed his engagement with the letter would have the same protective properties – his intentions are not clear from the content of the letter – rather to suggest that the miniature Qur'ans may have been part of wider practice(s) of bodily entanglement with agentive objects that went beyond any parameters of Islam.

The miniaturisation of the Qur'ans – and the replication of designed elements in the David Bryce editions already circulating in Christian Bible markets – raises further questions around how historians might situate these amuletalismanic objects in a broader cultural landscape of 1914 that goes beyond the Indian Army. In doing so, these questions go back to the point raised above that amuletalismanic objects and associated practices were not the preserve of the Global South. The bevelled magnifying glass is, for instance, one of several design features that also appear on the miniature Bibles printed by David Bryce & Sons from 1901 onwards. These were one of the firm's core product lines, often bought to be read in church, and came in a variety of designs that closely paralleled the David Bryce miniature Qur'ans. The red and gilt cover and binding to the Qur'ans (seen in Figure 4 and glimpsed through the magnifying glass aperture in Figures 3 and 13) is also very similar to the same red and curling gilt motif used on the 1901 David Bryce miniature Bibles at Figures 15 and 16. The curling gilt pattern may itself have its origins in the Victorian pteridomania ('fern mania') that dominated much of the period's decorative arts, thus bringing the design

³³² Correspondence between Jemadar Hasan Shah and a woman in the Punjab, dated 19 September 1916, in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 2 (Aug 1916-Oct 1916)', 1916, British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/826/7 <<http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=IOR/L/MIL/5/826/7>> [accessed 15 May 2020].

of the Qur'ans into the folds of Victorian values and preoccupations, as articulated through material culture of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Some Bibles were similarly available in a small metal case, with a bevelled magnifying glass (Figures 15 and 17) and the same pattern as adorned the metal cases for the Qur'ans. Common to these David Bryce 1901 Bibles is a high degree of wear and tear; magnifying glasses are missing, the books themselves are well-thumbed – even torn. They appear to have been used as regular sources of reading material. What is interesting about this is that it contrasts materially with the other types of Bryce miniature Bible, especially the special issue Allies' Bible (Figures 18 to 20) designed as 'perfectly sized to be carried in a soldier's pocket.'³³³ The Allies' Bibles are far rarer today, yet those available to view publicly through Museum archives, private collections and auction houses appear minimally handled. Given the prevalence of charms and lucky or protective tokens amongst British Army recruits, the minimal handling and reading of the Allies' Bibles raises questions of whether the miniature David Bryce Qur'ans existed in a wider cultural landscape that also saw miniature Bibles used by British soldiers as amuletic objects, rather than sources of scripture for reading. Historians might therefore ask how the understanding of Indian Army soldiers' experiences is affected by applying critical lenses that highlight object agency to designed objects that were produced and consumed beyond the Indian Army.

The IWM collection contains an assortment of 'charms', kept on British Army personnel in the hope that they would offer them some protection: fragments of coal, German shell splinter, and bone (some carved into hearts and crosses), a metal charm carved in the shape of a shield, pebbles, and numerous objects carved from Connemara marble (including a four-leaf clover, heart, and boots) are just a few of the objects known to have been carried by soldiers in the British Army for luck and protection during the war.³³⁴ Some appear to be the result of direct inter-cultural exchange between Indian and British soldiers, as seen in

³³³ *The Allies' Bible in Khaki*, 1914, Bromer Booksellers, Item #31799 <<https://www.bromer.com/pages/books/31799/the-allies-bible-in-khaki>>. See also the copy held at the National Library of Scotland, which includes the original dust jacket and also appears to have been minimally read or handled: *The Allies' Bible in Khaki*, 1914, National Library of Scotland, FB.s.959 <https://search.nls.uk/permalink/f/mp49cm/44NLS_ALMA21577983670004341>.

³³⁴ *Fragment of Coal, Owned by Trooper Willis (City of London Yeomanry)*, 1917, Imperial War Museum, IWM EPH 4894 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30084816>>; *Fragment of a German Shell from the Bombardment of Yarmouth, November 1914, Carried by a British Soldier as a Charm at Ypres*, 1914, Imperial War Museum, IWM EPH 4898 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30084820>>. *Bone Heart and Cross Charm, 'Worn by a Londoner in*



Figure 15.

David Bryce & Sons Miniature Bible with Case (Missing Magnifying Glass), Online Auction Lot, 1901, eBay, 195191821669 <<https://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/195191821669?hash=item2d7256d565:g:lhAAAOSwSwRiwtHt>> [accessed 6 July 2022].

Khaki, 1914, Imperial War Museum, IWM EPH 3476 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30083022>>; *A Metal Charm in the Shape of a Shield with a Hole in the Top.*, 1914, Imperial War Museum, IWM EPH 4900 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30084822>>; *Pebble Charm with a Hole Bored through It, Worn by Private Matthews, Devonshire Regiment, September 1917*, 1917AD, Imperial War Museum, IWM EPH 7455 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30087309>>; *Connemara Marble Four-Leaf Clover*, 1914, Imperial War Museum, IWM EPH 3464 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30083010>>; *Connemara Marble Heart*, 1914, Imperial War Museum, IWM EPH 4895 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30084817>>; *Connemara Marble Boot*, 1914, Imperial War Museum, IWM EPH 4892 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30084814>>.



Figure 16.

David Bryce & Sons Miniature Bible, Online Auction Lot, 1901, eBay, 314059785029
<<https://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/314059785029?hash=item491f6c0345:g:wakAAOSwqohiswmc>> [accessed 6 July 2022].



Figure 17.

David Bryce & Sons Miniature Bible with Case and Magnifying Glass, Online Auction Lot, 1901, eBay, 293873689473 <https://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/293873689473?hash=item446c3ca381:g:vDAAAOSw1IBfyYog>.



Figure 18.

David Bryce & Sons Allies' Bible in Khaki, 1914, Clarke University, (uncatalogued). Photo courtesy of Clarke University Archives and Special Collections.

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Details for where it can be found are in the image caption.

Figure 19.

View of the front and spine of David Bryce & Sons *The Allies' Bible in Khaki*, 1914, National Library of Scotland, FB.s.959
<https://search.nls.uk/permalink/f/mp49cm/44NLS_ALMA21577983670004341>. Image courtesy of National Library of Scotland.

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Figure 20.

View of the binding on David Bryce & Sons *The Allies' Bible in Khaki*, 1914, National Library of Scotland, FB.s.959
<https://search.nls.uk/permalink/f/mp49cm/44NLS_ALMA21577983670004341>. Image courtesy of National Library of Scotland.

the silver pendant crafted from a half rupee coin and inscribed with the messages: 'R.F.A. [British Royal Field Artillery] Xmas Dinner SIEGE OF KUT-AL-AMARA 25 XII 1915 From Ted'.³³⁵ Many of these exhibit piercing holes or bails, through which the item could be strung on a cord and worn by the owner. Furthermore, whilst the consumers of the Allies' Bibles are unclear – although designed with soldiers in mind, there is no obvious paper trail that traces the editions available publicly to a soldier(s), so it is possible they were bought by civilians and never saw active duty. However, any amuletalistic function may have been the same in civilian circles. Military 'sweetheart' brooches and other ephemera circulated before the war, but experienced a surge in demand during the conflict as civilians sought tokens to keep proxies of their loved ones close. Sweetheart tokens often took the form of small replicas of a soldier's regimental emblem or colours, and served not only as a keepsake to symbolise the serving soldier but also as an amuletalistic agent that could be kept on the sweetheart to ensure his safety.³³⁶ Mizpah brooches served the same function, and were often inscribed with the biblical text to which their name refers: 'Mizpah; for he said, The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent from one another.'³³⁷ Touchwood charms were another notable example of amuletalistic objects used both by civilians as sweetheart tokens and by soldiers, whose properties were activated in both cases through bodily engagement, often just through the act of keeping the object on one's person.³³⁸ This might explain why Allies' Bibles appear so well-preserved; their amuletalistic functions were engaged through keeping it in contact with one's bodiliness, rather than through regular, repetitive touch.

What these examples illustrate is that both British soldiers and civilians may have been familiar with and indeed active users of amuletalistic objects that engaged the bodily, albeit in different ways: through regular patterns of touch or simply the act of keeping the

³³⁵ *Half Rupee Coin Pendant, Engraved 'R.F.A. Xmas Dinner SIEGE OF KUT-AL-AMARA 25 XII 1915 From Ted'*, 1915, Imperial War Museum, IWM EPH 10024 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30089788>>.

³³⁶ Penelope Streeter, 'Symbolic Jewels: The Military Sweetheart Brooch in Wartime Britain' (unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Sussex, 2018) <<https://sro.sussex.ac.uk/id/eprint/80442/1/Streeter%2C%20Penelope.%20Volume%201.pdf>>. Examples of sweetheart tokens are held at the IWM, including: *Sweetheart Brooch by Botley & Lewis*, 1914-1918, Imperial War Museum, IWM INS 8313 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30104735>> and *Enamelled Royal Flying Corps Sweetheart Brooch*, 1914-1918, Imperial War Museum, IWM INS 4912 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30071354>>.

³³⁷ Genesis 31:4, as quoted in Streeter, 'Symbolic Jewels' (2018), p. 197.

³³⁸ Streeter, 'Symbolic Jewels' (2018), p. 192.

object on one's person. It develops the sense of an intra-cultural landscape across which Indian and British soldiers both used artefacts – including perhaps the Allies' Bibles – as primarily amuletalismanic agents, rather than as reading material. The effect of this is to add to the work of scholars like Gruber, who have argued that amuletalismanic objects and practices exist across regions, cultures and faiths, and also to emphasise the importance of different articulations of bodiliness in securing the benefit of the objects' properties. It is important to remember too the intersections of Islam and Mughal material culture in the IWM Qur'ans, with the result that amuletalismanic objects cannot be discussed in terms of religion only; to do so situates these objects in a binary between the believer and non-believer, the secular and non-secular. In practice, objects like the tasselled IWM Qur'ans appear to have emerged over time through the combined influences of spiritual worldviews, spiritual practices, and historically-specific design styles, such as those elevated by the Mughal imperial court and military dress.

Mala Beads

The IWM holds at least 10 examples of threaded wooden beads, described in the catalogue mainly as 'necklaces' (for example, Figure 21) but in one instance as a 'bracelet or choker' (Figure 22), and catalogued as gifted to Indian prisoners of war.³³⁹ Most are accompanied by a paper note that reads 'Presented by Her Highness Maharani of Bhavnagar', who was recorded in meeting notes of the ISF General Committee as having sent '345 copies of the *Bhagavadgītā*, 300 copies of the *Rāmāyana*, and 3,350 beaded rosaries to the ISF through M.M. Bhowmagree, the Indian Parsi who was a former member of parliament in Britain and was the head of Parsi organisations in Europe.'³⁴⁰ Through their positioning in the archive – both by cataloguers and by archived contemporary records – these objects thus occupy a liminal space where their purpose and use has become unstable, despite efforts to

³³⁹ See items all titled *Threaded Beads, with Paper Note Attached Reading 'Presented by Her Highness Maharani of Bhavnagar'*, 1914, Imperial War Museum, catalogue numbers IWM EPH 5817-5818, 5821-5822, 5824-5825, 6004 and 7812. Items believed to have been presented by the Maharani of Bhavnagar, but without the accompanying paper note, include item IWM EPH 7813. For the unthreaded loose beads, described as being 'from a necklace', and the item described as a 'bracelet or choker', see IWM EPH 6005 and IWM EPH 5819, respectively.

³⁴⁰ Meeting of the General Committee, dated 16 June 1915 and 18 August 1915, in 'Indian Soldiers' Fund: Proceedings of General Committee (Book No. 2)', 1915, British Library, Mss Eur F120/2 (emphasis in original), as cited in Kristina Myrvold, 'Hindu Soldiers in Europe During the First World War: Religious Books, Symbols and Practices', in *Handbook of Hinduism in Europe* (Netherlands: Brill, 2020), pp. 174–203 (p. 186).



Figure 21.

Threaded Beads, c. 1914-1918, Imperial War Museum, IWM EPH 7813
<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30087642>> (photograph author's own).



Figure 22.

Threaded Beads, with Paper Note Attached Reading 'Presented by Her Highness Maharani of Bhavnagar', c. 1914-1918, Imperial War Museum, IWM EPH 5819
<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30085748>> (photograph author's own).

categorise them within a type of accessory. As necklaces or bracelets they are components of dress(ing), considered purely aesthetic, but as objects inflected with spiritual practice and purpose they are framed by using 'a profoundly Christian language', here in terms of prayer, as 'rosaries'.³⁴¹ What follows is an interruption to this framing and an effort, not to reinscribe the objects with an alternative fixed meaning, but to situate these objects in wider amuletalismanic material cultures, specifically amongst communities that sought protection from, and divine communication with, Vishnu. I have done this through an examination of the materiality of the beads and sources produced by their likely recipients, together with existing research that situates beads in amuletalismanic material cultures in South Asia.

A common feature across the beads held at the IWM is the multi-tonal wood from which the beads are made. Those seen in Figures 21 and 22 have been more comprehensively lathed to produce a smoother, more uniform tone, but others reveal the multi-tonality in cracks and deeply-embedded grain patterns. Figure 23 is an example of those that have been more roughly hewn, retaining the contrasting stripes that identify the beads as made of tulsi wood. Tulsi occupies a plurality of roles and significances within Hindu mythology; whilst largely regarded as sacred, its sacrosanctity is explained in various ways, relative to different accounts of its relationship to Vishnu and Vishnu-devotee-turned-goddess Vrinda. Through reincarnation or a metamorphosis decreed by Vishnu, accounts converge around Vrinda's transformation into the goddess Tulsi, whose earthly manifestation is the tulsi plant.³⁴² The result is that Hindu men serving as soldiers may have worlded tulsi plant and derivatives in overlapping but plural ways, from conceiving the plant an intermediary to Vishnu to worshipping the plant directly.³⁴³ This raises questions about how the same beads would also have been worlded and used by soldiers. Indeed, the form of the objects at Figures 21 to 23 is strongly reminiscent of mala: garlands of threaded beads used across a

³⁴¹ S.R. Arjana, *Buying Buddha, Selling Rumi: Orientalism and the Mystical Marketplace* (Oneworld Publications, 2020), p. 28.

³⁴² C.S. Littleton, *Gods, Goddesses, And Mythology*, Gods (Marshall Cavendish, 2005), i, p. 1125.

³⁴³ C.S. Littleton cites a census from a north-western province in nineteenth-century colonial-era India which recorded 1,100 people described themselves 'not as Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs, but simply as worshippers of the tulsi plant': Littleton, *Gods, Goddesses, And Mythology* (2005), p. 1125.



Figure 23.

Threaded Beads, with Paper Note Attached Reading 'Presented by Her Highness Maharani of Bhavnagar', c. 1914-1918, Imperial War Museum, IWM EPH 5818
<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30085751>>.

range of inter-religious devotional practices in India at the time.³⁴⁴ Often described in shorthand as prayer or meditation beads, mala serve different purposes depending on their composition and use and were a common feature of communities that worshipped Vishnu, his consorts and associates.³⁴⁵ As mala, tulsi beads such as those held at the IWM channel the plant's power of being proximate to Vishnu and can wield both auspicious and protective powers, creating amuletalesmanic potential that (like the Qur'ans discussed

³⁴⁴ Indeed, whilst the discussion here focuses on Hinduism, distinct forms of prayer beads were used by soldiers across faiths; for example, Punjabi Muslim soldier Nadar Khan wrote from France that he was 'much inconvenienced' having dropped and 'lost in the mud' his 'string of [prayer] beads.' See correspondence between Nadar Khan, France, and Raja Zaman Ali Khan, North-West Frontier Province, dated 10 December 1916 in Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War* (1999), p. 260.

³⁴⁵ See for example these two well-lathed and polished twentieth-century tulsi malas: *Tulasi 'rosary' Consisting of 109 Tiny Beads and Three Decorative Pieces*, 20th century, Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad, R-209 <https://museumsfindia.gov.in/repository/record/sjm_hyd-R-209-48132>, and *Tulasi 'rosary' Consisting of 109 Tiny Beads and Three Decorative Pieces*, 20th century, Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad, R-209 <https://museumsfindia.gov.in/repository/record/sjm_hyd-R-209-48132>.

above) operate across plural registers.³⁴⁶ However, central to this mediative and amuletalistic potential, are the bodily acts both of energizing the beads and then wearing or handling them. Of particular relevance here is the latter; the energization of tulsi beads is subject to *prāṇa pratiṣṭhā*, a form of consecration whereby life force is breathed into the artefact that tends to be conducted by a member of the Brahmin caste, a Hindu *pujari* (temple priest), or a *pandit* (Vedic scholar). Men of this description were deliberately obstructed from military enrolment after the 1857 Rebellion, and so it is unlikely that this would have been performed by Hindu soldiers receiving mala such as those donated by the Maharani of Bhavnagar; indeed, there are no records of soldiers doing so.³⁴⁷ It is perhaps more likely that the mala were consecrated in India before being shipped, where pure water from the Ganges could be obtained for the necessary rituals.

Mala have long been depicted in visual culture as being worn on and with the body. Thousands of prints, drawings, engravings, paintings and statues – including those produced by the same Indian prisoners of war that likely received the Maharani's donation – depict deities, their attendees and worshippers as wearing strings of beads around their necks or in their hands. Figures 24 to 26 show watercolours produced by men from the Indian Army imprisoned at the Half Moon Camp in 1917, variously depicting the deities Ganesha, Saraswati and Hanuman in classic iconographic arrangements that include mala. Ganesha (Figure 24) sits atop a throne, attended to by his *vahana*, holding a mala in his lower left hand and wearing a second mala around his neck.³⁴⁸ Saraswati (Figure 25) is seated next to her swan *vahanas* and in her four hands holds a copy of the *vedas* (far right), a *veena* (centre), and a mala (top left), whilst wearing what appears to be a second mala around her neck. Finally, Hanuman (Figure 26) holds Mount Dronagiri in one hand and wears both a lotus garland and two strings of beads around the base of his neck, resembling shorter *kanthi malas*, which tend to be worn as two or three parallel strings of beads. Images like these would suggest that the imprisoned men were familiar with the role of mala both in

³⁴⁶ On the curative and protective power of mala, see Pravina Shukla, *The Grace of Four Moons: Dress, Adornment, and the Art of the Body in Modern India*, Asia: Folklore & Folk Art (Indiana University Press, 2016), pp. 172-174.

³⁴⁷ For a discussion of these exclusionary recruitment policies, see the section titled 'Contextualising the Indian Army and its soldiers' in the Introduction, and also Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 173.

³⁴⁸ A *vahana* is the vehicle or mount used by a Hindu deity, which for Ganesha is typically a mouse or rat.

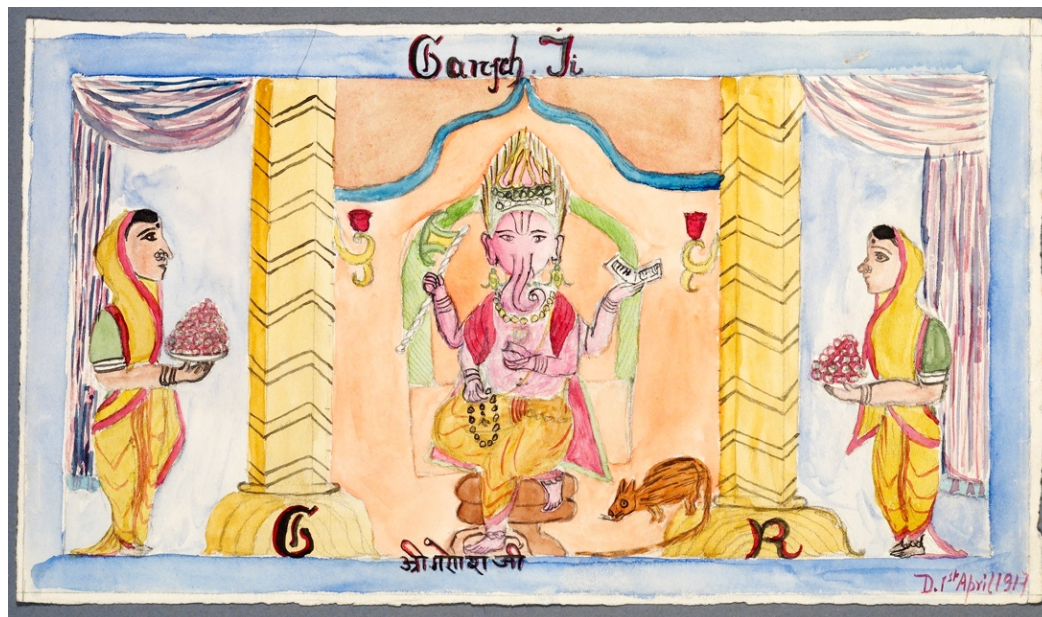


Figure 24.

Watercolour Painted by Unknown Prisoner of War at the Half Moon Camp, Zossen, Depicting the God Ganesha and Titled 'Gansch Ji', c. 1915-1917, Museum Europäischer Kulturen, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Image No. VIII Eu 27627.



Figure 25.

Watercolour Painted by Unknown Prisoner of War at the Half Moon Camp, Zossen, Depicting the Goddess Saraswati and Titled 'Garfwoti', c. 1915-1917, Museum Europäischer Kulturen, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, VIII Eu 27626.



Figure 26.

Watercolour Painted by Unknown Prisoner of War at the Half Moon Camp, Zossen, Depicting the God Hanuman and Titled 'Mahabirji', c. 1915-1917, Museum Europäischer Kulturen, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Image No. 00070114.



Figure 27.

'Halbmondlager', Wünsdorf: Blick in die Indier-Baracke, 1914-1918
(Halbmondlager', Wünsdorf: View into the Indian Barracks 1914-1918), BayHStA, BS D 9274. Courtesy of the Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv.

devotional practice (for example, thumbing through them while reciting mantras) and in cultivating a relationship with the divine (for example, wearing consecrated mala to call on the protection of Vishnu). Given the winter conditions in which most Indian soldiers were imprisoned in Europe, the few photographs that exist from the Half Moon Camp tend to show the men bundled up in scarves and coats, hands stuffed into pockets, that conceal their necks and hands. However one photograph of the interior to the Indian barracks in Halbmondlager shows four men sitting around a room bedecked with images, including scenes and notable characters from Vedic literature (Figure 27). In the centre, huddled over a large bound text, sits a man who appears to hold in his hand a small string looped over his central fingers, in-keeping with the way mala would be used as meditative aids in reciting mantras or prayer. Whether worn around the neck, actively thumbed in the hand, or something entirely different, then, it seems that there is anticipated an acutely bodily engagement with the beads themselves. However, unlike the Qur'ans discussed above, the resilience of the hard wood of the mala held at the IWM do not show similar signs of wear, and there are no further images or accounts from or about Hindu soldiers that speak to the malas' receipt and use. What is interesting then is the provision to the men by an Indian notable of objects that may have been recognised by soldiers as mala, and this effort on the part of the Maharani to protect Hindu recruits through their own bodiliness. Soldiers' bodiliness thus becomes entangled with the agency of Vishnu and associated divine forces, which pushes any analysis of the mala outside the traditional research categories of material culture and invites design historians to consider how supernatural agency can be included in historical analysis. Situating the beads in the wider amuletalismanic landscape of Vishnu devotees is one possibility, opening a conversation around the materiality of beads where that materiality is imbued with forces and agencies that are not human. In fact, this poses a question that opens up the final section of Chapter 1, below, and indeed topics that are examined further in Chapter 2. Both sections ask how historians can deal with human bodiliness where such bodiliness becomes unstable. In the final section of Chapter 1, below, I discuss these questions through the topic of the material culture of the interpersonal, specifically through the material culture of hair and head wrappings.

THE INTERPERSONAL

Crouched and standing respectively in an unspecified sparse landscape, two men are interrupted by a photographer (Figure 28). One looks up, distracted from the task literally at hand. This individual, standing to the right, holds in his hands the ends of the crouched man's long hair; assembled around them are various containers, and liquid(s) pool on the floor, their feet and the crouched man's back. This joint effort between the two men introduces the fraying between personal and interpersonal (and public and private) bodilinesses explored in this final part of Chapter 1. Where the previous section discussed the entanglement of individual human bodilinesses with associated material culture – and non-human forces – the discussion below uses the material culture of hair to open up possible instances where the limits of one's solo bodiliness become blurred, and start to implicate not only interpersonal and communal bodilinesses, but also different registers of relationality like friendship and camaraderie.

The written record in the archive tends to deal with hair and hair management in the Indian Army as an ethno-religious matter. Army-published typologies of Indian men, for example, were used as recruitment handbooks and discuss hair as a visual marker of raced religion. Metrics included whether a soldier 'calling himself a Sikh [...] wears uncut hair' as 'the best practical test of a true Sikh'.³⁴⁹ Visual distinctions were drawn between communities and geographies based on their hair styling; men from various Muslim communities are described as 'wear[ing] a moustache and usually whiskers, but never a beard,' and shaving their heads 'all except a top-knot [...] which the Konkani wears much longer than the Dekhani,' whilst the 'faces and hair' of Mappila Muslim men are described as 'quite unlike and distinct from other classes and races in Southern India. The men shave their entire head, but wear the beard and a small moustache kept closely trimmed.'³⁵⁰ Facial hair for

³⁴⁹ R.W. Falcon, *Handbook on Sikhs for Regimental Officers* (Allahabad: The Pioneer Press, 1896), The Library of Congress / The Internet Archive, OL6445666M <<https://archive.org/details/handbookonsikhsf00falc/page/n3/mode/2up>>, p. 15, via Tony Ballantyne, *Between Colonialism and Diaspora: Sikh Cultural Formations in an Imperial World* (Duke University Press, 2006), p. 65.

³⁵⁰ R.M. Betham, *Marathas and Dekhani Musalmans*, Handbooks for the Indian Army (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing India, 1908), British Library, IOR/L/MIL/17/5/2164, p. 76, and P. Holland-Pryor, *Mappillas or Moplahs*, Handbooks for the Indian Army (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing India, 1904), British Library, IOR/L/MIL/17/5/2163, p. 47.



Figure 28.

Ariel Vargas, 'Indian Sepoys Assist Each Other in Dressing Their Hair', c. 1914-1918, Imperial War Museum, Q 24252 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205264546>> (cropped).

Brahmans is similarly framed entirely in terms of a spiritual framework: '[d]aily shaving is almost a religious duty'.³⁵¹ The ISF committee predominantly discusses hair in relation to providing kangha combs for Sikh soldiers, and press coverage exoticizes Indian facial and head hair, embedding descriptions of it in visions of othered masculinities. An article in the *Sussex Daily News*, for example, speaks of 'a striking figure – glossy black beard, brilliant eyes, a flowing crimson garment down to his knees, and then khaki puttees and mud bespattered boots. He seemed quite to fancy himself in this dazzling grandeur,' while the

³⁵¹ A.H. Bingley and A. Nicholls, *Brahmans*, Caste Handbooks for the Indian Army (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing India, 1918), British Library, IOR/L/MIL/17/5/2155, p. 43.

Manchester Guardian wrote of 'Oriental crowns' and 'curled beards' on the Indian Army soldiers arriving in Marseilles.³⁵² Hospital beds were described as 'occupied by those invincible fearless fighters [...] the bearded Sikhs, who [...] laid the foundation of the exalted and patriotic military reputation they are so nobly maintaining at the front today.'³⁵³ As with the military recruitment handbooks, the media othered masculinities through regional physicality, in descriptions like 'the long-haired Sikh, who hates the daredevil Pathan from over the border,' and an account in the Australian publication *The North Western Courier*, which drew on mythicised indigenous imagery to describe 'the Sikh' as an imaginary homogenous figure:

His huge black beard is parted on the chin and carried back in two rolls, fastened behind his ears, and surmounted by an immense pagri [...] into which is folded a flat, sharp steel wing, the "throwing quoit," an ancient weapon, with which an expert can kill a man at 60 yards.³⁵⁴

In recent years an extensive literature has emerged on the 'polylogic negotiation' of Indian – particularly Sikh Punjabi – identities that forefront the significance of hair.³⁵⁵ Tony Ballantyne and Kate Imy have both written on the iterative co-construction of plural Sikh identities by interconnected networks of agencies, including nationalist reform movements like the Tat Khalsa, the 'imperial structures' that '[met] the needs of the British', and broader communities of Punjabis.³⁵⁶ A common thread between many of these emergent identities was the importance placed on visual markers of what became touted as 'true' Sikhism, including kes (uncut hair). Ballantyne and Imy make the point that by leveraging colonial administrative apparatus like the Army to recruit men along the lines of their specific articulation of Sikhness, nationalist reformers like the Tat Khalsa entrusted Commanding Officers of the Indian Army with the power to police both military and

³⁵² *Sussex Daily News*, 15 December 1914, p. 3, British Library, MSS Eur F143/96; Basu, *For King and Another Country* (2015), p. 34.

³⁵³ 'The Pavillion as a Hospital', *Brighton and Hove Society*, 11 January 1915, British Library, MSS Eur F143/96.

³⁵⁴ *The Indiaman*, 16 July 1915, British Library, MSS Eur F143/96, and *The North Western Courier* (Australia, 21 September 1914) <<https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/52bfdc44e4b016fb8a831913/1451401093370-E6X0TAQ8DG8IONGDPKRD/News.jpg?format=750w>>.

³⁵⁵ Ballantyne, *Between Colonialism and Diaspora* (2006), pp. 27-28.

³⁵⁶ Ballantyne, *Between Colonialism and Diaspora* (2006), p. 30.

religious discipline.³⁵⁷ Codification of a unifying Sikh identity became an ongoing project of making and remaking between a complex network of colonial and Punjabi actors, and conforming to the articulations of Sikhism that required kes became a necessary bodily discipline for men seeking to have their identity as Sikh respected by the military authorities. Mulk Raj Anand provides an account of this in *Across the Black Waters*, where a Sikh recruit is registered by the Army as a Dogra for having had his hair cut, and more recent scholarship on the Indian Army has added to the argument that being 'visibly detectable' as a Sikh was attractive to men as individuals and community members for the potential it offered to be recruited and garner 'tangible economic and political opportunities', including 'favoured treatment from the Raj,' but also 'social rewards' in the form of 'enhanced reputations, status and honour' from their communities once there.³⁵⁸ Ballantyne has even suggested that that numbers of Sikhs in the military may have been artificially inflated in the early 1900s, as 'some Punjabis, especially those from celebrated recruitment grounds, adopted the outward symbols of Sikhism in order to enter into military service.'³⁵⁹ John Soboslai and Heather Streets have both written of how it was in the British interests to foster this specific Sikh identity, fracturing it from Hinduism and any 'Punjabi national identity', and thus limiting any threat to British control from indigenous solidarities, whilst also fostering a Khalsa-specific sense of martial identity.³⁶⁰ The power of visible markers of Sikhism, however, also went both ways; testimony of Indian Army Second World War veterans and their families include an account of an escape from a prisoner of war camp in Avezano, Italy, during which time Lieutenant D. S. Kalha cut his kes so as to avoid identification as a Sikh and 'pass as an Italian.'³⁶¹ This section subsequently asks how investigating the wider material culture of hair in the Indian Army through its relationship with bodiliness might add to these histories that focus on the entanglement of identity(/ies) formation with twentieth-century British coloniality in India.

³⁵⁷ Ballantyne, *Between Colonialism and Diaspora* (2006), pp. 27-28, 56, 65-66; Imy, *Faithful Fighters* (2019), pp. 19-21.

³⁵⁸ Ballantyne, *Between Colonialism and Diaspora* (2006), p. 67; Barkawi, *Soldiers of Empire* (2017), p. 31; Imy, *Faithful Fighters* (2019), p. 20; Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 212-213.

³⁵⁹ Ballantyne, *Between Colonialism and Diaspora* (2006), p. 67; Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 174.

³⁶⁰ John Soboslai, 'Sikh Self-Sacrifice and Religious Representation during World War I', *Religions*, 9.2 (2018), 55–73 <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9020055>, p. 5.

³⁶¹ Annu Palakunnathu Matthew, 'Research into Indian PoWs', *Monte San Martino Trust*, 2020 <<http://msmtrust.org.uk/research-into-indian-pows/>>.

Head and Facial Hair

What emerges out of the visual record in the archive – and yet which goes undiscussed in the existing literature on the twentieth-century Indian Army – is the often communal nature of hair care. Figure 28 offers an example of this, and a similar scene is photographed at a distance in the photograph at Figure 29: on the foothills of the Gallipoli peninsula, two men stand and crouch respectively as one appears to rub a lathered substance into the hair of his peer, who in turn grasps the other's leg for support. Even where such practices are photographed being executed individually, they are often done as part of a communal practice where groups of men simultaneously tend to their hair. Instances of this were captured in photographs from across various Fronts of the First World War; whilst hair washing (Figure 30), tying, twisting or combing (Figure 31) is performed singularly, it is done in the context of a communal 'toilette'.³⁶² The same can be seen in records of facial hair management across the war. Again, men are photographed in pairs, as one shaves the other with a razor at their base camp (Figures 32 to 34). The ISF committee papers record multiple requests for black dye that are echoed through a communal exercise in *Across the Black Waters*, where Subedar Arbel Singh employs the assistance of an orderly to dye and wrap his beard amidst a gathering of other Indian Army soldiers.³⁶³ For example, an order for 144 bottles of black hair dye followed an ISF report dated 7 July 1915, in which Sir Trevredyn Wynne, Lord Norreys and Mr C.C. McLeod – returning from a visit to France – note that 'General James [Willcocks]' has requested ' [b]lack dye for Indian officers' beards.'³⁶⁴

Santanu Das has described accounts and visual records of touch between Indian Army soldiers during the First World War as a form of 'homosocial camaraderie', an intimacy that was part of a 'daily tactile continuum' familiar to South Asian soldiers.³⁶⁵ It is this sense of the interpersonal everyday that I want to draw out of the sources; at a historical moment where hair acted as the site of negotiations for plural Punjabi identities, there existed too

³⁶² 'Toilette' phraseology from 'Indian Soldiers Go Into Camp In France And Prepare For The Day When They Will Come Face To Face With The Enemy', *Daily Mirror*, 2 October 1914, pp. 6–7, British Newspaper Archive.

³⁶³ Anand, *Across the Black Waters* (1940), p. 242.

³⁶⁴ 'Indian Soldiers' Fund: Proceedings of General Committee (Book No. 2)', 1915, British Library, Mss Eur F120/2). The order was placed between 7 August–25 September.

³⁶⁵ Das, *Writings, Images, and Songs* (2018), pp. 221–227.



Figure 29.

C. A. Masters, *One Indian Washing the Other, Our Gun Pit in the Right of View, as in No. 1 Snap, Anzac.*, 1915, State Library Victoria, 2577381 <<http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/249898>>. (cropped).

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Details for where it can be found are in the image caption.

Figure 30.

A Sikh Division photographed in C.N., 'The Western Egypt Frontier Campaign: Sikhs, Armoured Motor-Car Brigade Men, and Bedouin Prisoners after Mersah-Matruh', *The Illustrated War News*, 24 May 1916, p. 28, British Newspaper Archive (cropped). Image captioned 'the Sikhs, whose "great dash and courage" was the admiration of the Army, dressing their long hair according to religious custom on return to camp.'

Copyright permissions could not be secured for this image, and so it has been removed for the purposes of adding to the Royal College of Art repository.

Details for where it can be found are in the image caption.

Figure 31.

Unknown (possibly Horace Grant), 'Indian Soldiers Go Into Camp In France And Prepare For The Day When They Will Come Face To Face With The Enemy', *Daily Mirror*, 2 October 1914, p. 6, British Newspaper Archive.

Copyright permissions could not be secured for this image, and so it has been removed for the purposes of adding to the Royal College of Art repository.

Details for where it can be found are in the image caption.

Figure 32.

Unknown (possibly Horace Grant), 'Indian Soldiers Go Into Camp In France And Prepare For The Day When They Will Come Face To Face With The Enemy', *Daily Mirror*, 2 October 1914, p. 7, British Newspaper Archive.



Figure 33.

Lt. John Warwick Brooke, 'An Indian Barber at Work in the Indian Cavalry Camp, Possibly the 9th Hodson's Horse, near Querrieu', 29 July 1916, Imperial War Museum, Q 4071 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205088452>>.



Figure 34.

Unknown (possibly Arthur J. Joliffe), 'Soldier of the Mysore Lancers Having a Shave on the Jordan Plain', 1917, IWM Q 92628 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205336018>>.

these moments of quiet bodily assistance, quite unremarkable as far as grand narratives go because of their quotidian nature, but nonetheless noteworthy for how the materiality of hair and hair care illuminates interpersonal kindness and bodily assistance, rather than isolated spiritual practices. Of particular interest here is the practice of oiling hair. The ISF papers record huge quantities of 'hair oil' sent to Indian Army regiments for 'anointing' hair. An order for 192oz of hair oil in June 1915 rose to 1000oz by the end of the month; 100 bottles of unspecified volume were then ordered across August and September 1915, rising to 2100 bottles from November to January 1916.³⁶⁶ Similar orders continued well into 1916; by the end of 1917, a total of 15,019 bottles of hair oil were being issued annually (predominantly to troops in France) and 86,611 tins of coconut oil (predominantly to troops in other theatres of war).³⁶⁷ In light of this it is perhaps significant that the caption given to the photographs at Figures 28 and 30 describes the men as 'dressing' the hair. There is very little primary material on hair care practices in South Asia and (perhaps consequently) similarly limited scholarship on the histories of South Asian hair care. This makes it very difficult to contextualise these practices historically. For example, Eiluned Edwards has written on the role of hair in contemporary Hindu devotional and cultural practices, and the wider hair trade in India during the early 2000s, while Barbara D. Miller has written on hair oiling practices in braided hair amongst adolescent Hindu women who form part of the Indian diaspora living in the eastern United States in the late-twentieth century.³⁶⁸ However besides focusing on practices almost 100 years after the start of the First World War, both accounts intentionally discuss hair and its associated 'popular customs and vernacular medicine' through very specific conceptualisations both of hair as a pollutant and as part of moral frameworks underpinned by gendered ideals of class, modesty and sexuality, and immigrant identity.³⁶⁹ In the same anthology as Miller, Patrick Olivelle writes on how certain practices of 'hair manipulation' in South Asia 'communicate deeply social meanings',

³⁶⁶ 'Indian Soldiers' Fund: Proceedings of General Committee (Book No. 2)', 1915, British Library, Mss Eur F120/2. The reports referenced are those dated 5-19 June 1915, 19 June-3 July 1915, 7 August-25 September 1915, and 20 November 1915-8 January 1916.

³⁶⁷ 'Fourth Report of the Indian Soldiers' Fund (1 December 1916-31 December 1917)', 1916, British Library, Mss Eur F120/9.

³⁶⁸ Eiluned Edwards, 'Hair, Devotion and Trade in India', in *Hair: Styling, Culture and Fashion*, ed. by Geraldine Biddle-Perry and Sarah Cheang (Bloomsbury Academic, 2008), pp. 149-66; Barbara D. Miller, 'The Disappearance of the Oiled Braid: Indian Adolescent Female Hairstyles in North America', in *Hair: Its Power and Meaning in Asian Cultures*, ed. by Alf Hiltebeitel and Barbara D. Miller (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), pp. 259-80.

³⁶⁹ Edwards, 'Hair, Devotion and Trade in India' (2008), p. 149.

but his focus is on acutely *public* displays of hair manipulation (such as the ascetic's deliberate, visible display of ungroomed hair) and highly ritualised, often one-off, religious ceremonial practices concerning hair (such as tonsuring, and marital or mourning practices).³⁷⁰ As with aspects of Edwards work, however, Olivelle similarly does not account for the day-to-day practices of hair maintenance to the extent that they exist outside of ritualised, religious frameworks. Yet popular narratives around hair oiling practices today, propagated by fashion and beauty publications, is one of intergenerational care: steeped in personal, family traditions with origins dating back to the early-twentieth century and retold by grandmothers down the ancestral line.³⁷¹ Roshni Goyate's poem *Coconut Oil* captures this well, touching on the sense of hair oiling as an interpersonal practice (here between mother and daughter), that is also an intergenerational gift, an offering of care:

Vatika bottle sits in the bathroom /
contents solidified by London's night. /
Mum microwaves it to a clear sap— /
an ancestral ritual improvised.³⁷²

Today's commentary on hair oiling is also markedly gendered; personal accounts and how-to care guides are intended for an audience of women-identifying readers, and present it as a practice historically done exclusively between women. This is also true of the limited scholarship mentioned above (see particularly Miller and her research on women's oiled braiding practices), and indeed the scarce primary sources that speak to how hair was maintained amongst communities. Print media advertisements from, for example, *Voice of India* and later the *Times of India Annual* depict hair oil as a matter of women's (inter)personal – and often intergenerational – grooming, and even the accounts of

³⁷⁰ Patrick Olivelle, 'Hair and Society: Social Significance of Hair in South Asian Traditions', in *Hair: Its Power and Meaning in Asian Cultures*, ed. by Alf Hildebeitel and Barbara D. Miller (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), pp. 11–50 (pp. 15 and 40).

³⁷¹ See for example, Jenny Bailly, 'I Just Fell in Love With the Indian Hair-Oiling Technique', *Allure*, 2020 <<https://www.allure.com/story/indian-hair-oiling-technique>>; Fiona Embleton, 'Why the Ancient Indian Art of Hair Oiling Is the Secret to Healthier Hair', *Vogue Scandinavia*, 2022 <<https://www.voguescandinavia.com/articles/why-the-ancient-indian-tradition-of-hair-oiling-is-the-secret-to-a-healthier-mane>>; Faith Xue and Sophia Emmanuel, 'I Traveled to Jaipur to Discover the Centuries-Old Secret for Long, Shiny Hair', *Byrdie*, 2021 <<https://www.byrdie.com/hair-oiling-indian-tradition-4795886>>.

³⁷² Roshni Goyate, 'Coconut Oil', in *Shadow Work*, 4 BROWN GIRLS WHO WRITE (Rough Trade Books, 2020) <<https://www.thesocial.com/shadow-work-roshni-goyate/>>.

Christian missionaries speak of practices closely associated with hair oiling, without specifying it in detail, as amongst women only.³⁷³ This is somewhat unexpected; these publications listed above were English-language periodicals, directed at British colonialists living in India and elite Indian nationals, such that one might expect the advertisements to reflect prevailing European sensibilities from the period. With this in mind, the popularity of products like Rowland's Macassar Oil amongst both men and women in Western Europe would suggest hair oiling was perceived as a commonplace and gender-indifferent practice.³⁷⁴

Despite the framing of hair oil in India across existing scholarship and primary sources as a distinctly feminine matter, the images above show that hair oiling amongst men in the Indian Army was absolutely something practiced and exchanged between men. Figure 35 similarly disrupts the gender binary-led narrative around hair oiling; the photograph here shows two men, both smiling and seemingly laughing as one helps the other comb his oiled hair. In contrast to Olivelle's discussion of hair in South Asia 'as a public symbol' of social meaning, the practices captured on film and in writing here seem to occupy a space that resists any distinct private/public dichotomy.³⁷⁵ Rather, the images capture the management both of head hair that will be concealed under the standard issue pagri, and facial hair that will be publicly visible even in uniform. The images capture this through interactions and gatherings that (by virtue of being collective) destabilise ideas of bodily hair as an 'either or' private-or-public matter in South Asian cultures. This is of course

³⁷³ See for example the illustrations in the following advertisements: 'Keshranjan - King of Hair Oils', *Voice of India*, 1906 <<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0003196/19061117/064/0020>>, p. 1100, and E.S. Patanwala, *Printed Paper Advertisement, Produced by E.S. Patanwala of Bombay, from 1934 'The Times of India Annual'*, British Museum, EPH-ME.742 <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_EPH-ME-742>. Later advertisements for Jabakusum hair oil also typically featured women, for example Satyajit Ray's 'Comb Fear' advertisement; 'Satyajit Ray: Artist', *Society for the Preservation of Satyajit Ray Archives* <<https://satyajitraysociety.org/artist.html>>. On missionary accounts, Mary Weitbrecht writes repeatedly in 1875 of lengthy hair combing practices by and between women in the communities approached by missionaries; Mary Weitbrecht, *The Women of India and Christian Work in the Zenana* (J. Nisbet, 1875), pp. 43 and 113.

³⁷⁴ Many Rowland's advertisements extol the virtues of Macassar Oil for men and women in their adverts. One dating 1908 states 'Ladies require it to keep the [h]air soft and silky. Men require it to prevent baldness', while others adopt an apparently neutral stance on the intended consumer, simply stating that the product 'long delays baldness'; see 'Advertisement for Rowlands Macassar Oil', *Illustrated London News*, 7 November 1908, p. 652, British Newspaper Archive <<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001578/19081107/192/0034>> and A Rowland & Sons Ltd, *Press Advertisement: Rowlands Macassar Oil*, 1938, History of Advertising Trust, HAT20/2/45/4/2 <<https://www.hatads.org.uk/catalogue/record/6b1068c7-7e2d-4a2a-a8ba-08e275604d26>>.

³⁷⁵ Olivelle, 'Hair and Society' (1998), p. 12.



Figure 35.

Sgt. McConville (No. 2 Army Film and Photo Section, AFPU), 'The Sikhs Are Forbidden by Religion to Cut Their Hair. 1205 Indian Pioneer Coy. Nr. San Angelo', 1 May 1944, Imperial War Museum, IWM NA 14409, <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205529095>>.

complicated further by the role of the camera, capturing – in some instances, such as this thesis, over a century later – intimacies that may not have been solo endeavours, but which were conducted physically away from one's peers (Figure 29), in communal areas of regimental camp (Figures 31, 32 and 34) and even outside one's tent (Figure 33), rather than in more broadly public spaces. For many of these images, the camera seems to have served a general public, providing readers of British print media with visual insights into the vast imperial effort underway in the war. Some of these images were released for commercial interest and gain; Figures 31 and 32, for example, can most reliably be credited to Horace Grant, a Daily Mail photographer who covered military affairs on the Western Front with the aim of publication. However, Official War Photography was often also intended for general public consumption, albeit with the intention of conveying a more deliberate political message. Figure 33, for example, was taken by Topical Press Agency

photographer Lt. John Warwick Brooke, one of two Official War Photographers to be sent to the Western Front. Their instructions were to 'take as many photographs as possible, with as much variety as possible,' and many of the resulting images were used to further British propaganda purposes relating to the success of the British Army and its excellent treatment of imperial soldiers.³⁷⁶

Indeed, the impression of hair oiling as an exclusively solo endeavour is given only through certain images produced in later years by sections of the AFPU, itself the product of a developing film and photographic policy in the British Army that prioritised the role of 'film as a weapon.'³⁷⁷ Figures 36 to 38, likely taken in Egypt and certainly by an AFPU photographer, form part of a series of photographs during the Second World War that purport to show a morning in the life of a Sikh soldier, from sleeping to fully dressed.³⁷⁸ Each photo is accompanied by a handwritten caption, which forefronts the importance of the soldier's hair and directly links this with his faith: 'The Sikh is very proud of his beard and hair.'³⁷⁹ The soldier can be seen combing his hair (Figure 36), his beard (Figure 37, his hair now in a slicked topknot), and oiling his beard, oil bottle in hand (Figure 38).³⁸⁰ Ostensibly he sits alone, but throughout the series his peers can be seen in the background, standing arms crossed (Figure 36) or reclining (Figure 38), looking on apparently bemused at the sight of their colleague executing an otherwise unremarkable aspect of his morning routine for the camera. By isolating the soldier himself and his hair care practices, the composition of the images and caption has the effect of elevating his hair management to something revered and privately personal. This of course contrasts with the impression given through the image at Figure 35 taken by a different AFPU unit, where daily hair management is conducted with the assistance of one's peers. However, this impulse in

³⁷⁶ 'First World War "Official Photographs" (John Warwick Brooke)', *National Library of Scotland* <<https://digital.nls.uk/first-world-war-official-photographs/archive/75171408#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0&xywh=-154%2C-105%2C2807%2C2081>>. See also Das, *Writings, Images, and Songs* (2018), p. 122, on the 'distinguished commercial photographers and agencies' who offered photography services to the Indian Expeditionary Force, and whose published images were 'exploited for propaganda and commercial purposes and published in newspapers.'

³⁷⁷ Kay Gladstone, 'The AFPU: The Origins of British Army Combat Filming during the Second World War', *Film History*, 14.3/4 (2002), 316–31 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3815435>> [accessed 27 July 2022], p. 322.

³⁷⁸ See IWM objects numbered IWM E 4671 to IWM E 4679.

³⁷⁹ See written notes that accompany the images at Figures 36 to 38 on the IWM online catalogue (emphasis added).

³⁸⁰ A trench mirror can be seen in hand at Figure 37; a similar mirror can be seen in the laps and hands of the men being shaved at Figures 32 to 34. For an example of a 'trench mirror', see 'Trench Mirror', 1914, Imperial War Museum, IWM EPH 9323 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30089082>>.

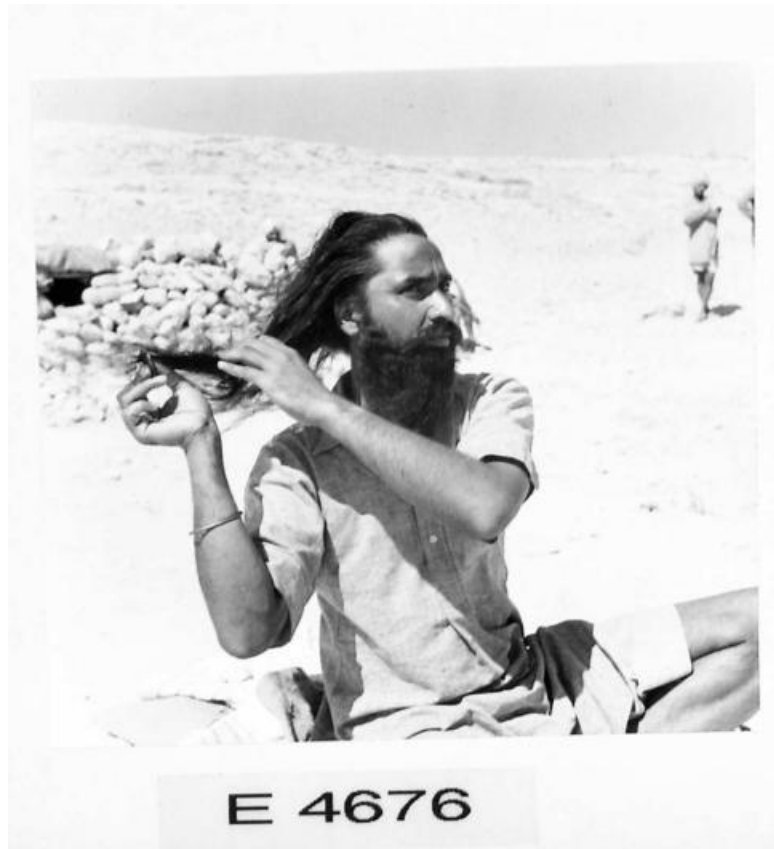


Figure 36.

Lt. Vanderson (No. 1 Army Film and Photo Section, AFPU), 'With the Sikhs in the Western Desert: Pictures of the Various Stages in the Dressing of the Beard and Hair', 1941, Imperial War Museum, IWM E 4676 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205545820>>.

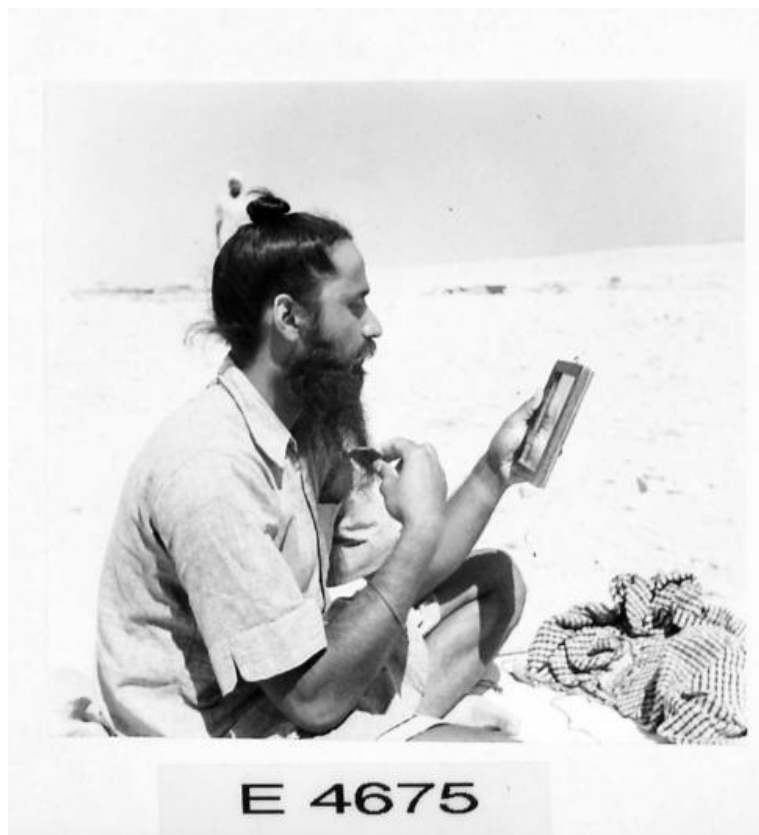


Figure 37.

Lt. Vanderson (No. 1 Army Film and Photo Section, AFPU), 'With the Sikhs in the Western Desert: Pictures of the Various Stages in the Dressing of the Beard and Hair', 1941, Imperial War Museum, IWM E 4675 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205545819>>.



Figure 38.

Lt. Vanderson (No. 1 Army Film and Photo Section, AFPU), 'With the Sikhs in the Western Desert: Pictures of the Various Stages in the Dressing of the Beard and Hair', 1941, Imperial War Museum, IWM E 4674 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205545818>>.

Army photography towards creating a typology of Indian hair along religious lines is in-keeping with the policies explicit in recruitment handbooks that emphasised both the centrality of hair to religion, and – certainly with regard to Sikhism – the nationalist and military-approved expressions of Sikh identity that included hair management and underpinned the handbooks' metrics to measure someone's 'Sikhness'. These images suggest that this ethno-religious framework for understanding Indian hair continued beyond the First World War and into the Second. Indeed, Indian Army veterans interviewed in the 1980s often recalled the encouragement soldiers received from the British to visibly keep a 'firm faith' through attending the religious services provided by the Army.³⁸¹ During these

³⁸¹ S.D. Pradhan and Harvinder Singh Giri, 'III. S. Sant Singh (Sepoy), Village Ramgargh, District & PO Patiala', 1971, British Library, Mss Eur F729/2/4; S.D. Pradhan and Harvinder Singh Giri, 'Interview with Havildar Nagina Singh (No 869)', 1971,

interviews, Lieutenant Colonial Gurbakash Singh even spoke to the awareness amongst soldiers that the British encouraged adherence to religious norms under the belief that it would instil secondary loyalties to the Crown:

The obligation of going to gurdwara [sic] was on account of the fact that the religion teaches the individuals to be loyal and honest to his profession. Since the Britishers [sic] thought that devotion to religion was necessary for their trueness to service [...] they were very particular that Indians including Muslims *must observe these rituals*.³⁸²

Statements like these echo those made by a British officer during the Second World War, who wrote home, 'The Sikhs have many religious customs; we see that they keep them whether they like it or not.'³⁸³ Considered alongside the accounts of men forced to accommodate the administrator-decreed metrics of their faith, the images at Figures 36 to 38 speak to performative identities and heterobodiliness mediated through hair management: plural identities, some performed and some not, inhabited as the same bodiliness. This is not to say that the individual photographed was performing a Sikh identity for the camera, but that the images may be part of a wider tendency amongst British administrators highlighted above to abstract, even fetishize, aspects of the raced body (for example, 'the Sikh's' hair) as a representative of their Orientalised understanding of religions. Most visual evidence suggests hair was not necessarily treated as an individualised medium of worship, or a sacrosanct solo endeavour, but part of the ubiquity of daily life, an exercise in communal care, site of relational interbodiliness with one's peers – but also, at times, a performance for the authorities to meet (or avoid meeting) religious thresholds.

Turning from the application of oil to the materiality of the oil itself, the composition of the oil is unclear. Alongside many references in the ISF records to the provision of 'hair oil' to troops across most theatres of war, there are records of procuring tins of 'cocoanut [sic] oil'

British Library, Mss Eur F729/2/7; S.D. Pradhan and Harvinder Singh Giri, 'Interview with Sepoy Inder Singh', 1971, British Library, Mss Eur F729/2/13; S.D. Pradhan and Harvinder Singh Giri, 'Interview with Lance Naik Kishan Singh', 1971, British Library, Mss Eur F729/2/15.

³⁸² Meena Dutta and Rakesh Dutta, 'Interview with Lt Col. Gurbakash Singh', 1982, British Library, Mss Eur F729/6/6 (emphasis added).

³⁸³ Barkawi, *Soldiers of Empire* (2017), p. 27.

for hair – sometimes specified further as intended 'for the long hair of the Sikhs.'³⁸⁴ This could indicate that different products were distributed according to how the receiving troops were raced in religious terms by the military administrators; coconut oil for Sikh soldiers, generic 'hair oil' for men of other faiths.³⁸⁵ This is complicated, however, by a letter from an Officer in a Salonika-based regiment, which treats hair as a primary mediator of racing men by speaking broadly of hair in terms of that which is Indian and that which is not. Expressing thanks to the ISF for their various gifts, the Officer notes that 'The cocoanut [sic] oil is particularly appreciated as there has been difficulty in procuring *hair oils of a kind suitable for Indians*.'³⁸⁶ Prisoners of War held in the German camps at Wünsdorf and Zossen echo this generic language; in a letter to the ISF, Havildars Dayal Singh and Sundar Singh write, 'Kindly send us *hair oil*. We are badly in need of it.'³⁸⁷ Whilst the suggestion in these letters is that specific oils – including but not limited to coconut oil – were uniquely appropriate to the needs of Indian men's hair, regardless of their religion, the nature of those needs and the oil itself has gone unrecorded. The source of both generic 'hair oil' and coconut oil is not recorded (the ISF reports and vouchers do not list specific suppliers for the types of item procured), making it impossible to explore whether the provision of one, other or both was the result of distribution issues with certain suppliers. It is possible, though, that coconut oil was especially valued for its Ayurvedic properties, having long been recognised as a cooling agent.³⁸⁸ A preference for products with a strong Ayurvedic value could similarly help identify the nature of the black dye provided to Indian Army soldiers who were described by General James Willcocks as 'suffering considerably in appearance' by mid-1915, 'the dyes they used in India having faded, and there being nothing to use in its place.'³⁸⁹ Willcocks's chief concern was aesthetic, and this may have been the main

³⁸⁴ 'Third Report of the Indian Soldiers' Fund (21 November 1915 - 30 November 1915)', 1915, British Library, Mss Eur F120/8.

³⁸⁵ 'Third Report of the Indian Soldiers' Fund (21 November 1915 - 30 November 1915)', 1915, British Library, Mss Eur F120/8.

³⁸⁶ Appendix A to the 'Fourth Report of the Indian Soldiers' Fund (1 December 1916 - 31 December 1917)', 1916, British Library, Mss Eur F120/9. (emphasis added).

³⁸⁷ Correspondence between Havildars Dayal Singh and Sundar Singh, of the 21st and 33rd Punjabis, respectively, and the ISF, dated 13 April 1916, in 'Third Report of the Indian Soldiers' Fund (21 November 1915 - 30 November 1915)', 1915, British Library, Mss Eur F120/8 (emphasis added).

³⁸⁸ Edwards, 'Hair, Devotion and Trade in India' (2008), p. 162; A.K. Samanta, N. Awwad, and H.M. Algarni, *Chemistry and Technology of Natural and Synthetic Dyes and Pigments* (IntechOpen, 2020), p. 128; M.A. Hanif and others, *Medicinal Plants of South Asia: Novel Sources for Drug Discovery* (Elsevier Science, 2019), p. 361.

³⁸⁹ 'Indian Soldiers' Fund: Proceedings of General Committee (Book No. 2)', 1915, British Library, Mss Eur F120/2.

preoccupation of Indian soldiers requesting replacement dyes. Subedar Arbel Singh in *Across the Black Waters* reproaches his junior soldiers when they tease him for dyeing his beard, retorting,

“If you boys took your responsibilities seriously and kept yourselves in trim you could seduce all the *Francisi* girls and rise to be Subedar Majors.” [...] [T]he orderly removed the bandage and disclosed the finely blacked goatee on the Subedar Major’s face [...] who had time enough even on the eve of battle to look after his appearance as if he were in a cantonment.³⁹⁰

This echoes earlier sentiments in the novel; describing the allure of military awards, the narrator recounts the story of the son of a landlord who returned victorious from battle, ‘and the countryside rang with stories of how young he had looked when he rode the bridal horse with his beard dyed in henna.’³⁹¹ Bodily appearance, here, is the site of professional success and the bodily articulation of idealised forms of masculinity, rooted in maintaining ideals of appearance that privilege youthfulness and the absence of visual markers of ageing, like lightening or greying hair. This was likely also a concern of Willcocks; his eagerness to remedy the ‘suffering’ in appearance of his men betrays a wider concern for bodily discipline and uniformity. The 1913 Army Regulations stipulating dress and appearance codes for the Indian Army do not comment on hair maintenance, but the wider 1912 Kings Regulations stipulate that for all soldiers, ‘The hair of the head will be kept short. The chin and under-lip will be shaved, but not the upper lip. Whiskers, if worn, will be if moderate length.’³⁹² In practice, this seems to have been administered with discretion, allowing for accommodations to be made for Indian Army soldiers on the grounds of religious objection. However, the visual language of youth and uniformity was privileged across organised militaries under the control of the British Empire, such that Willcocks’s call for dye feels like an expression of the interest in the ‘discipline of appearances’ that

³⁹⁰ Anand, *Across the Black Waters* (1940), p. 306.

³⁹¹ Anand, *Across the Black Waters* (1940), p. 215.

³⁹² Government of India Army Department, *Army Regulations, India, Volume VII Dress* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing India, 1913); War Office, *The King’s Regulations and Orders for the Army (Re-Printed with Amendments Published in Army Orders up to 1st August 1914)* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office; Harrison & Sons, 1912 (1914)), para 1696.

emerged with the adoption of khaki 'as the universal dress for all British troops overseas' in 1897.³⁹³

On the dye itself, henna has long been used in South Asia as a bodily dye and, combined with indigo powder, can create a black or very dark brown hair dye. Like coconut oil, henna is also recognised for its cooling properties, but in combination with the alkaline properties of indigo is often believed to contribute to the management of hair lice, which alongside body lice was a significant problem for all men engaged in trench warfare (especially those men who could not cut or shave their hair, as in the case of Sikh kes). In plurality then with the foremost concerns of senior Indian (and British) soldiers, the nature of a dye provided to soldiers had potential to serve a functional end, and contribute to the care of front-line (head) lice treatment, as well as enabling the performance of both certain masculinities and the everyday grooming practices that the men would have had access to at home. In the face of British colonial taxonomies of Indian hair along lines of texture, shaping and styling, and the authorities' eagerness to provide dye out of a concern for a disciplined, standardized appearance, the possible use of henna in part for its ayurvedic properties offers an interruption to the colonial logic of hair. Whether this was realised, however, is unclear; without confirmation on the composition of the dye provided, or even from where it was procured, the dye and its potential remain untraceable.

Pagri and Head Wrappings

A pagri is a form of headdress, typically designed out of a single stretch of long, rectangular fabric that is wound repeatedly around the head to bind one's hair, and secured through knotting and tying. Histories of the pagri are plural, overlapping and messy. Despite the wealth of literature examining the histories of the pagri in Sikhism, much less is written on the parallel and interweaving wrappings of pagri, pagh, turban, dastār, kullah, lunghi that were practiced across communities in South Asia in the twentieth century – in part, no doubt, the result of movements outlined above that foregrounded kes and pagri as critical visual markers of so-called authentic Sikhism during this period. The resulting popular understandings of the pagri are as an exclusively Sikh domain, or as visual markers of

³⁹³ Tynan, *Men in Khaki* (2013), p. 5 and pp. 11-12.

distinct aspects of one's identity – such as regional origin, caste, class, occupational rank. This is reproduced in contemporary scholarship on the Indian Army in twentieth-century conflict; Ghee Bowman, for example, in his 2020 book on Muslim soldiers in Force K6, deployed during the Battle of Dunkirk, wrote that the men

often wore a turban or *pagri*. For Punjabi Muslims this came in two parts: a *lunghi* or cloth wound round a conical woven cap called a *kullah*, itself the marker of an Indian Muslim [...] What they did with the end of the *lunghi* was a deliberate signifier of rank. While lower ranks wore the end neatly tucked in, senior [non-commissioned officers], [Viceroy's commissioned officers] and officers wore it spread like a peacock's tail – the tuft that was "beloved of the rural aristocracy of the Punjab".³⁹⁴

The IWM catalogue deploys similar tropes that build on the impulse to categorise. The accompanying captions to both First and a Second World War *pagri* reads:

The dress of the soldier serving in the Indian Army often reflected his race, religion and caste, and none moreso [sic] than his headdress. The turban (*pagri*, or *lungi*) could be worn in a variety of ways to reflect these differences and could either be wrapped directly around the head or around a pointed cap (*khulla*).³⁹⁵

Such worldings no doubt did exist, but this section explores how lenses of bodiliness can disrupt this as the sole account of the *pagri* by drawing out evidence that suggests the *pagri* was used and potentially understood in plural, otherwise ways as well in the Indian Army.

During my primary research for this chapter, I expected this part of this discussion would revolve around discussing the plurality of worldings of the *pagri*. From the negotiation of the *pagri* in secondary literature and the primary accounts of plural political allegiances amongst soldiers, I thought the chapter would shape up as an illustration of how, against a backdrop of emergent and oftentimes conflicting nationalist politics, the *pagri* was mobilised in different ways, and became the site of shifting meaning, such that historians needed to recognise that different soldiers may have worlded their head-wrapping in plural ways at

³⁹⁴ Bowman, *The Indian Contingent* (2020), p. 42 (emphasis in original).

³⁹⁵ *Pagri (36th Sikhs, Indian Army)*, Imperial War Museum, UNI 12270

<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30100086>>; *Indian Army Pagri and Khulla (Second World War)*, 1939, Imperial War Museum, IWM UNI 12899 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30100826>>.

different times. This may have been the case, and the brief overview below is provided such that the rest of the section can be read with this complex and shifting background in mind. However, what emerged from the visual and material sources in the archive was the ubiquity and everydayness of the pagri for many men. As I reflected on these primary materials I was reminded of Gurharpal Singh and Giorgio Shani's work on the relationship between Sikh nationalism and Sikh identity(/ies) construction, and the work of the late Azeezat Johnson. Johnson often wrote of the friction that emerged where academic and anti-racist work encountered the need for self-care and compassion as a Black woman, and work rejected violence and harm as the only mediator of lived experience, refusing 'the colonial grounds that situate the Black presence shaped solely within intersectional oppressions, death, starvation or suffering.'³⁹⁶ Complementary to Johnson's refusal of oppressive binaries as the only analytical frameworks for Black lived experiences, Singh and Shani point out how even histories like those penned by Tony Ballantyne that forefront the interconnectedness of plural historical agencies and iterative, evolving processes, can 'reproduce the hegemony of the Orientalist discourse, which they appear to be critiquing,' by presenting the 'very notion of a distinct 'Sikh' identity itself [as] an Orientalist construction.'³⁹⁷ The result, they argue, is to '[deny] Indians agency in constructing their society.'³⁹⁸ What follows then is not a reparative exercise in trying to locate that agency, but rather an effort to situate the Indian Army pagri as the site of fluid and shifting meaning, that also includes playfulness and ubiquity, cultural cross-dressing and everydayness. In doing so, I am thinking of Azeezat Johnson and the importance of discussing moments of joy and the quotidian, in plurality with the whole spectrum of lived experience.

Although criticised by Singh and Shani for potentially reinscribing Orientalist discourse, Tony Ballantyne's research into the plural articulations of Sikh identity does still provide a helpful outline of the 'polylogic negotiation of identity under the uneven power relations of [British, twentieth-century] colonialism' and heterogenous Punjabi groups. His work distances itself

³⁹⁶Azeezat Johnson, 'New Article with Katucha Bento: Closing This Site and Letting Go', *Azeezat Johnson | Learning through Black Feminism*, 2021 <<https://azeezatjohnson.com/2021/07/05/new-article-with-katucha-bento-closing-this-site-and-letting-go/>>; 'Black Presence: A Dialogue with Azeezat Johnson's Legacy', *RACE.ED*, 2022 <<https://www.race.ed.ac.uk/events/>>.

³⁹⁷ Gurharpal Singh and Giorgio Shani, 'Rethinking Sikh Nationalism in the Twenty-First Century', *Sikh Formations*, 11.3 (2015), 271–82 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/17448727.2015.1120104>>, p. 274.

³⁹⁸ Singh and Shani, 'Rethinking Sikh Nationalism' (2015), p. 274.

from narratives like those written by Bernard Cohn, who saw the pagri as 'constructed out of the colonial context', and Virinder S. Kalra, who critiques Cohn and argued that the significance of the pagri should be understood as an example of Bhabhan hybridity.³⁹⁹ Instead, Ballantyne's work introduces the possibility that the pagri was not just a visual marker of Sikhism in the run-up to the First World War, but that emerging narratives of Sikhism – for which the pagri came to stand as a symbol – were themselves a negotiation between heterogenous indigenous Punjabi identities and a singular vision of 'Sikhism' that marked itself out through difference to Hinduism, in a way that was mutually-beneficial to groups like the Tat Khalsa and to the Crown. Ballantyne points out that this was a period following the publication of M.A. Macauliffe's *The Sikh Religion* (1909) and his accompanying lectures, which emphasised the Gurus' role in reawakening a 'slothful' India, and thus framed Sikhs as the flagbearers for rational, independent being – and mobilised the Panth in opposition to other faiths in India.⁴⁰⁰ This was already an articulation of Sikh identity put in motion through the 1898 publication of *Ham Hindu Nahim (We Are Not Hindus)*, in which Khan Singh similarly traced the connection of specific rituals and symbols with Sikhism. In this context, wrapping a pagri was a function of a heightened, emerging identity politics: it was part of an obligation on the part of the Panth to save India from perceived moral decay and to save Sikhism itself from being subsumed by other faith practices. Despite these high-profile publications, however, there remained a plurality of Sikh groups and identities, such that over 130 designations – some defined by caste, others by the saints and gods to which individuals devoted themselves – were classed as 'Sikh' in the 1901 Census, and this continued in the 1921 Census.⁴⁰¹ For these groups, it is possible that the pagri continued to be worlded less as a non-negotiable aspect of their commitment to reviving Sikhism and the strength of India, and as something entirely different or additional (and unknowable to the historian); a something that is specific to its place and time. Religious objection was certainly the primary cited cause for unrest amongst Sikh soldiers in the First and Second World Wars, in matters related to pagri. A member of the

³⁹⁹ Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity is discussed at length on pp. 236-237 of this thesis. Bernard S. Cohn, 'Cloths, Clothes, and Colonialism: India in the Nineteenth Century', in *European Intruders and Changes in Behaviour and Customs in Africa, America and Asia before 1800*, ed. by Murdo J. MacLeod and Evelyn S. Rawski (Routledge, 1998); Virinder S. Kalra, 'Locating the Sikh Pagh', *Sikh Formations*, 1.1 (2005), 75–92 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/17448720500132557>>.

⁴⁰⁰ Ballantyne, *Between Colonialism and Diaspora* (2006), pp. 54-55.

⁴⁰¹ Ballantyne, *Between Colonialism and Diaspora* (2006), p. 68.

Signalling Troop wrote in June 1916 that steel helmets had just arrived for all regiments, but '[t]he Sikhs decline to wear them'.⁴⁰² Sikh soldiers stationed in Hong Kong in early 1941 as part of the 20th Anti-Aircraft Battery similarly refused to replace their pagri with steel helmets, and were tried by court martial for their refusal; the same issue contributed to unrest amongst Sikh soldiers in motor transport companies, stationed in Egypt in 1939.⁴⁰³ However, Ballantyne notes how by the Second World War migrants from the Punjab often layered their multiple identities 'in terms of caste, religion, "sect", sub-region and village.'⁴⁰⁴ What is important about this is that it affirms how, alongside large-scale efforts from movements to articulate a Sikh identity that foregrounded kes and the pagri, for other Sikh men and women in the first half of the twentieth century their identity was layered in other proportions and patterns, such that perhaps the pagri was not central to their practice of faith. Indeed, Tarak Barkawi has hypothesised that some of the military unrest amongst Sikh soldiers – such as amongst the Signalling Troop in 1916, or the 20th Anti-Aircraft Battery in 1941 – was the result less of universally-felt religious objections amongst soldiers, than fear of 'social opprobrium' if one did not join in.⁴⁰⁵

K.L. Tuteja has also written about the interwar period, charting possible evolutions of the plural ways to world oneself through the 1920s, where part of one's identity is as a 'Sikh' person. Tuteja describes how the formation of the Central Sikh League (CSL) in December 1919 heralded the anti-imperialist awakening of middle-class urban Sikhs, aligning itself with the anti-Crown movements of the Indian National Congress and Muslim League whilst maintaining that the Panth had distinct interests (and challenges) under British rule that were not shared or represented by existing groups.⁴⁰⁶ This was reinforced through the Akali movement, which emerged around the same time, fighting to liberate Punjabi gurdwāras from 'Mahants (priests) and the [British] government', and return control to Sikh administrators.⁴⁰⁷ As the movement gained traction, supporters mobilised along military

⁴⁰² Correspondence between Abdul Alim and Dafadar Majat Ali Khan, dated 30 June 1916, in Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War* (1999), p. 198.

⁴⁰³ Barkawi, *Soldiers of Empire* (2017), pp. 61-62.

⁴⁰⁴ Ballantyne, *Between Colonialism and Diaspora* (2006), p. 75.

⁴⁰⁵ Barkawi, *Soldiers of Empire* (2017), p. 62.

⁴⁰⁶ L. Tuteja, 'Politicization of the Sikhs in Punjab (1919–1925)', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 45 (1984), 564–70 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/44140245>> [accessed 12 November 2020], pp. 564-565.

⁴⁰⁷ Tuteja, 'Politicization of the Sikhs in Punjab (1919–1925)' (1984), pp. 566-567.

lines – drawing on frameworks learned from service in the Indian Army in the First World War – arming themselves with axes, lathis and kirpans, and adopting a uniform that included a black or dark blue pagri.⁴⁰⁸ This was in part a deliberate alignment of the Akali movement with the Tat Khalsa's articulation of Sikhism, and its heavy emphasis on visual markers of the faith. Indeed, both the CSL and the Akali movement mobilised supporters on a platform of Sikh distinctiveness, and it was against this contextual background that the pagri's plurality of meanings continued to evolve. For many Punjabis, and especially politically-active Punjabi Sikhs, wrapping a pagri would have been a core aspect of worlding oneself as an *anti-imperialist* Sikh. Indeed, several veterans of the Indian Army noted in oral history interviews that soldiers during the Second World War were sympathetic to and supported the Akali movement. Quarter Master Ranjodh Singh, for example, speaking of the prejudicial difference in treatment of Indian soldiers as compared with their British peers, recalled that 'soldiers who were dissatisfied started supporting the national freedom movement,' and that 'most of us supported [the Akali movement and Indian National Congress anti-imperialist message] indirectly.'⁴⁰⁹ Sepoy Inder Singh similarly noted that '[t]he Akali movement was gaining importance and the soldiers had their sympathy with the movement,' whilst Lance Naik Sarman Singh recalled that the Akali movement incentivised soldiers already agitating for change.⁴¹⁰ All this is to suggest that soldiers in the Second World War – many of whom would have been recruited from the Punjab, and many of whom similarly would have served between 1914 and 1918 – would likely have been aware of this emergent, shifting symbolism around the pagri, and its implication in anti-British agitation.

It is important to note that militarised anti-imperialist movements were not limited to Sikh-identifying communities. Others also adopted the pagri as part of their group uniform, introducing another layer of additional and otherwise significance to head wrappings with which soldiers would likely have been familiar. The Khaksar youth movement, founded in

⁴⁰⁸ Tai Yong Tan, 'Assuaging the Sikhs: Government Responses to the Akali Movement, 1920-1925', *Modern Asian Studies*, 29.3 (1995), 655–703 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/312873>> [accessed 5 August 2022], p. 665; M. Singh, *The Akali Movement* (Macmillan, 1978), pp. 178 (n30) and 210; Imy, *Faithful Fighters* (2019), pp. 35-37.

⁴⁰⁹ S.D. Pradhan and Harvinder Singh Giri, 'Interview with Quarter Master Ranjodh Singh', 1971, British Library, Mss Eur F729/2/10.

⁴¹⁰ S.D. Pradhan and Harvinder Singh Giri, 'Interview with Sepoy Inder Singh', 1971, British Library, Mss Eur F729/2/13; S.D. Pradhan and Harvinder Singh Giri, 'Interview with Lance Naik Sarman Singh', 1971, British Library, Mss Eur F729/2/8.

1931, 'wore khaki uniforms, carried rifles in parades, adhered to strict military discipline, and carried *belcha*' (a spade-like instruments, significant for the potential they represented for all of humankind to be united on equal terms in their labour).⁴¹¹ Visual sources also suggest that a large proportion of recruits also routinely wore pagri. The Khaksar was, like the CSL and Akali movement, committed to agitating for India's liberation from British rule, but also signalled the crisis of 'Muslim identities in interwar India,' and stood in part as an effort to reclaim Indian Muslims' 'own martial heritage' and reassert specific articulations of 'Muslim masculinity outside of colonial institutions' like the Indian Army.⁴¹² The Khaksar movement peaked just before the Second World War, and by 1942 retained four million members.⁴¹³ Although this sits outside of the timeframe for this project, the Khaksar movement nonetheless illustrates how movements emerging out of the First World War – responding to long-standing grievances exacerbated across the conflict – wore and used the pagri in ways that, contrary to the impression put forward by the Tat Khalsa, had no direct links to Sikhism.

This overview is not to suggest that all men in the Indian Army across the first half of the twentieth century were aware of all meanings being constructed with and represented by the pagri. Rather, it is to emphasise the plurality of these meanings and how the pagri operated as the site of negotiation for plural causes and articulations of faiths and masculinities. Soldiers may have been aware of one, some, none of these, but having a sense of the shifting symbolism and function of the pagri is critical to understanding ways in which recruits may have experienced heterobodiliness in their time in the army: wearing a pagri as a visual symbol of their loyalty to the Crown, whilst understanding the entanglement of the pagri with faith-based identities and emphatically anti-imperialist connotations, which some of them may have supported 'indirectly'.⁴¹⁴ To complement the emerging picture of the pagri as an object that had the potential to be both constructive of one's identity, and also a visual-signifier of that identity it helped construct, the rest of this

⁴¹¹ Imy, *Faithful Fighters* (2019), p. 209 (emphasis in original).

⁴¹² Imy, *Faithful Fighters* (2019), pp. 209-210.

⁴¹³ Imy, *Faithful Fighters* (2019), p. 210; R. Jackson, *Mawlana Mawdudi and Political Islam: Authority and the Islamic State* (Taylor & Francis, 2010), p. 60.

⁴¹⁴ S.D. Pradhan and Harvinder Singh Giri, 'Interview with Quarter Master Ranjodh Singh', 1971, British Library, Mss Eur F729/2/10.

section examines aspects of the pagri that are not obviously aligned with any movement(s). Instead, it asks whether there are aspects of pagri as they were wrapped, worn and used in the Indian Army that indicate its ubiquity and everydayness, rather than a hyper-significant agent of identity formation. This is not an exercise in arguing that any one worlding is more important, convincing, or prevalent than any other amongst the recruits. On the contrary, this section addresses the core research question posed by this doctorate project, by asking how histories of the Indian Army during the First World War might change when the meanings enunciated by and imposed on the pagri are pluralised, where that pluralising allows for the pagri's *ordinariness* (at least for certain recruits in certain times and spaces).

Indications of an ordinariness that might exist in plurality with other significances can be found in the different degrees of bodily engagement with one's pagri. For example, despite the conventional practice of wrapping a turban and the visual and written records showing men's commitment to associated practices like haircare on the battlefield, numerous surviving pagri are held together with (original) stitching, securing the folds in place. This would suggest that the repeated twisting and wrapping of hair and civilian pagri was not always mirrored in military pagri-wearing practices. The images at Figures 39 to 41 show a dark khaki pagri from the First World War, with visible stitching across the top and sides to hold the folds in place, allowing it to be worn quickly and repeatedly, without the need to re-wrap it each time. Figures 42 to 44 show a light khaki pagri with red fringing from the same period but a different regiment, which exhibits similar discrete stitching to hold the folds in place. The practice did not appear to be hidden, between soldiers or from the public eye; self-supporting wrapped pagri can be seen in photographs from across the war. For example, fully-wrapped pagri are propped in front of each of the first three men in the photograph at Figure 31; a similar pre-stitched pagri balances on a tent peg in the background of Figure 33; another sits wrapped and upright, behind a bathing soldier, amidst the rest of his clothes in the photograph at Figure 45. The practice seemed to extend to the Second World War too; next to the sleeping soldier in Figure 46 is an upturned, pre-stitched pagri. Such was the nature of this latter recruit's head-wrapping, it seems the photographer turned to one of his peers to capture a series of images of an Indian soldier wrapping the pagri from scratch (Figure 47). This variation of pagri-wearing practice – both pre-stitched and not – is visible across different styles of pagri too. Scattered on the ground to the left of

the group of men resting at the Marseilles camp in 1914 (Figure 53) are examples of wrapped khulla pagri, clearly pre-stitched and self-supporting. Yet a surviving Second World War khulla pagri held at the IWM (Figure 48) exhibits no puncture marks from a needle or stitching to the various folds, and there are various images taken by the War Office (Figure 49), the AFPU (Figure 50), and others (Figure 51) that show men both collectively assisting colleagues in wrapping long stretches of fabric like this around his khulla cap, and individual soldiers concentrating on wrapping their khulla pagri alone (Figure 52).



Figure 39.

Front view of pagri worn by a member of the 36th Sikhs, Indian Army, c. 1914-1918, Imperial War Museum, UNI 12270 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30100086>> (image author's own).



Figure 40.

View from above of pagri worn by a member of the 36th Sikhs, Indian Army, showing top-sides stitching detail, c. 1914-1918, Imperial War Museum, UNI 12270
<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30100086>> (image author's own).



Figure 41.

View from side of pagri worn by a member of the 36th Sikhs, Indian Army, showing mid-side stitching detail, c. 1914-1918, Imperial War Museum, UNI 12270 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30100086>> (image author's own).



Figure 42.

Front view of pagri worn by a member of the 21st Punjabis, Indian Army, c. 1914-1918, Imperial War Museum, IWM UNI 6202, <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30092140>>.



Figure 43.

Close up of stitching detail on top of pagri worn by a member of the 21st Punjabis, Indian Army, c. 1914-1918, Imperial War Museum, IWM UNI 6202, <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30092140>>.



Figure 44.

Close up of stitching detail on side of pagri worn by a member of the 21st Punjabis, Indian Army, c. 1914-1918, Imperial War Museum, IWM UNI 6202, <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30092140>>.



Figure 45.

Lt. John Warwick Brooke, 'An Indian Soldier Having an Improvised Bath in the Field', September 1916, Imperial War Museum, Q 4126 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205236567>> (cropped).



Figure 46.

Lt. Vanderson (No. 1 Army Film and Photo Section, AFPU), 'Sleeping out in the Open Desert', 1941, Imperial War Museum, IWM E 4671 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205545815>> (cropped).

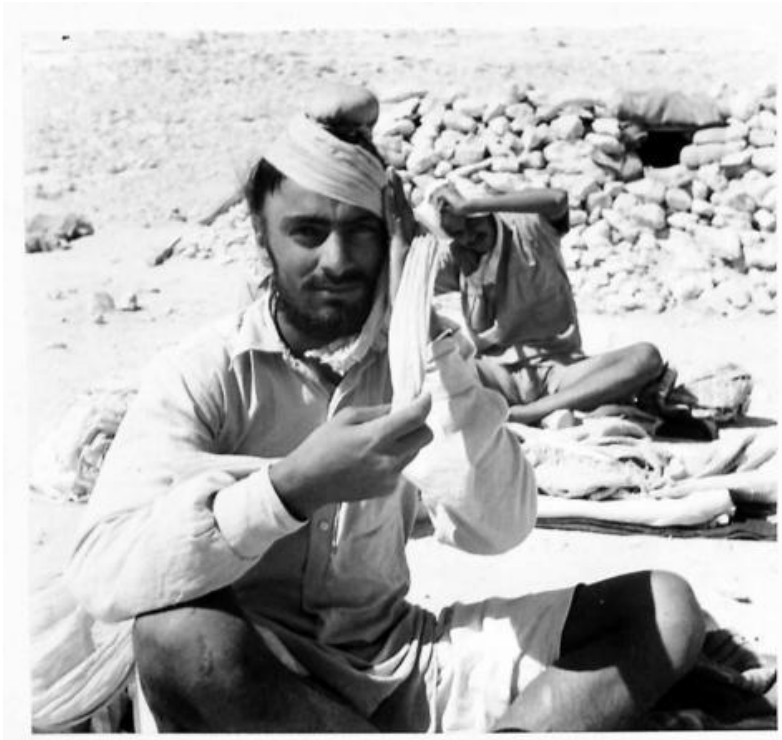


Figure 47.

Lt. Vanderson (No. 1 Army Film and Photo Section, AFPU), 'Putting the Finishing Touches to His Turban', 1941, Imperial War Museum, IWM E 4678 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205545821>> (cropped).



Figure 48.

Pagri and Khulla (Indian Army, Second World War), 1939, Imperial War Museum, IWM UNI 12899 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30100826>>.



Figure 49.

Lt. Lockyear (War Office Photographers), 'An Indian's Toilet. Seven Yards of Material Go to Make an Indian Turban and a Helping Hand from Two Colleagues Is Undoubtedly Appreciated.', 1942, Imperial War Museum, IWM H 21631 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205494179>>.



Figure 50.

Sgt. Johnson (No. 2 Army Film and Photo Section, AFPU), 'Havildar Mirza Khan of Jhelum Helps L/Nayak Sultan Khan of Camelpore with His Turban, Which Is 41/2 Yards Long and Two Feet in Width.', 1944, Imperial War Museum, IWM NA 12683 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205527069>>.

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Figure 51.

Unknown, 'A Soldier in the Indian Army Service Holds One End of a Narrow Length of Cloth in His Teeth as Two Comrades Swathe It Round His Head to Make the Pointed Turban That They Wear', c. 1940, Hulton Archive, JD6090 <<https://www.gettyimages.com.au/detail/news-photo/soldier-in-the-indian-army-service-holds-one-end-of-a-news-photo/3071580>>.



Figure 52.

Lt. Taylor (War Office Photographers), Indian Mule Contingent: 'An India Muleteer Busily Employed Winding His Turban, a Complicated Process', 1941, Imperial War Museum, IWM H 14626 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205483026>>.

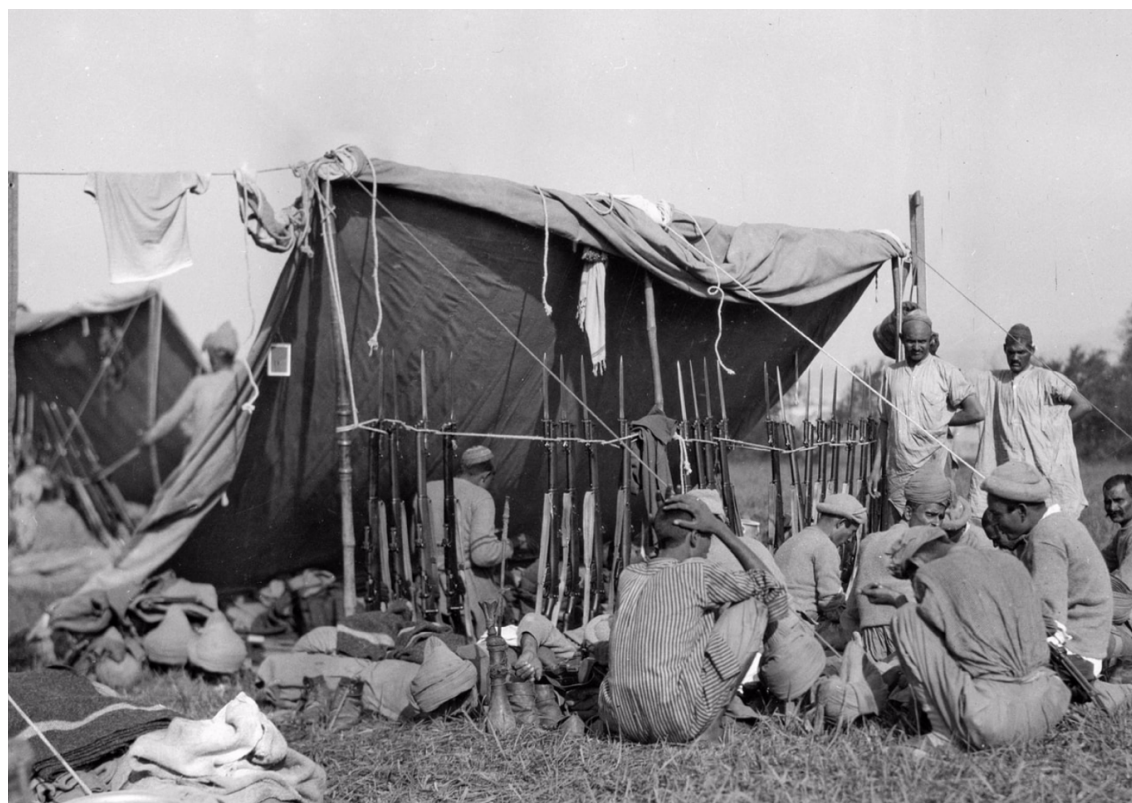


Figure 53.

Horace Grant, 'Indian Troops Seen Here Resting at Their Camp on the Race Course in Marseilles, France, September 30th 1914', 1914, Mirrorpix, 00118456 <<https://www.mirrorpix.com/id/00118456>> (cropped).

What might be learned from this variety of bodily engagements with the pagri? It is important first to outline what cannot be concluded; namely, conclusions as to the attitudes of men with specific faiths, from certain regions or castes. This is the result of ethical difficulties and methodological problems with identifying how photographed men or the owners of objects would have been categorised according to the social taxonomies used by the British military and reflected in the museum archive(s); it is neither possible nor desirable to 'race' these men. Although a number of the images are catalogued with captions or item references that invoke Sikhism, how the men self-identified is not confirmed. Indeed, even those labels based on the men's regimental title (for example, the 36th Sikhs) cannot be used as indicators of the men's faith; the need for a more expansive recruitment drive beyond 'the martial races' in 1917 led to an organisational shift within the Indian Army, such that 'class companies' organised around a particular raced characteristic (such as caste, religion (so-called) or region) broke down, and began accepting recruits from

across India's regional, caste, class and faith-based communities.⁴¹⁵ As a result, there are no firm conclusions here, but the possibilities are important to consider in light of the research discussed above that illustrates the plurality of self-identification and worlding, even amongst communities where the pagri was an integral part of the material culture of their common faith(s). One of these possibilities is that the practice of wrapping one's pagri was not considered by all men to be essential to constructing or visually marking out aspects of one's identity. Clearly there was a preference amongst some men not to wrap their pagri afresh every day, even amongst members of the same regiment (see the two men pictured at Figure 46 and Figure 47). Even if this was exclusively out of convenience, the shift from the time-consuming and bodily practices of wrapping would suggest expediency was at these moments and in these particular spaces prioritised over any significance in the practice of pagri *wrapping*. In the same way, perhaps for other men it was the act of wearing the pagri that was significant, rather than the act of wrapping; as a visual marker, the pagri might stand in plurality for allegiance to the Crown, to a faith system, to any number of the nationalist movements discussed above. For some, then, the act of *wearing* a pagri – in any form – rather than the practice of wrapping may have marked a heterobodily agency, signifying soldierly status, but also for the wearer speaking to plural sympathies and support.

The practices of wrapping and the acts of wearing can become entangled in different ways, however. The AFPU, War Office and associated (likely media) photographers at Figure 49 to Figure 51 illustrate how Indian Army soldiers sometimes turned to their Indian peers for assistance in wrapping the full length of their (khulla) pagri, but of particular interest here are examples of Indian Army soldiers wrapping pagri on their British peers. I consider these instances as quite distinct from the more generalised practice of British officers wearing pagri in the First World War; these are not reflections of uniform policy, inflected with efforts by the British administration to cultivate an esprit du corps amongst their Indian recruits and British officers. Rather, these are junior soldiers, engaged in pagri wrapping, in a moment of apparent playfulness. The photograph at Figure 54, for example, shows British

⁴¹⁵ Dewitt C. Ellinwood, 'Ethnic Aspects of the Indian Army in World War I', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 39 (1978), 823–31 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/44139430>> [accessed 22 August 2022], p. 825.



Figure 54.

Sgt. McConville (No. 2 Army Film and Photo Section, AFPU), 'Dvr. Tommy Lees of 42 Madison Avenue, Derby, Tried on the 8-Yard Long Turban Being Wound Round His Head by a Friendly Sikh. 1205 Indian Pioneer Coy. Nr. San Angelo.', 1944, Imperial War Museum, IWM NA 14407
<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205529093>>.

Army driver Tommy Lees sitting in his jeep, British pattern service cap limply in hand, whilst a group of Indian Army soldiers gather on and around the vehicle to help wrap him a makeshift pagri. The pagri itself is not the same, plain khaki fabric visibly worn by the Indian soldiers; in fact, it appears to be the same pattern as the Indian Army bedlinen seen in Figure 46 (although the photograph is taken on deployment in Italy rather than the North African Campaign). The '8-yard[s]' of patterned fabric can be seen trailing behind the jeep from the hand of one of Lees' stylists, the bulk of it piled on the bonnet awaiting wrapping. This image echoes a passage from *Across the Black Waters*, in which a young French child, André, insists on the protagonist Lalu 'tying a turban on his head like his own.'⁴¹⁶ Author Mulk Raj Anand describes in detail the child's search for a suitable pagri cloth, rejecting the

⁴¹⁶ Anand, *Across the Black Waters* (1940), p. 227.

'bit of old towel' initially given to him by his mother, 'completely dissatisfied with it, having been ostensibly struck with the neat and regular folds of the Dogra's turbans.'⁴¹⁷ He accepts eventually 'a bandage out of the official first-aid box,' but shortly afterwards demands the red scarf being worn by his older sister, whereupon André '[demolishes] the bandage which had made him look like a wounded soldier, and had the few folds of a light little princely pugree tied on his head.'⁴¹⁸ The bedlinen pagri being tied to Tommy Lees and André's bandage-turned-scarf pagri both speak to something beyond moments of cultural exchange. There is no obvious exchange here; Tommy and André are engaged in something approaching cultural cross-dressing, an almost burlesqued version of the scenes at Figures 49 to 51. It is here that this section's theme of ordinariness, and of otherwise ways of understanding the pagri beyond religious and political hyper-significance comes through strongly. The various significations of both the practices of wrapping and the acts of wearing the (pre-stitched or newly-wrapped) pagri are dependent on Indian bodiliness, in the sense of the pagri being worn by an Indian body. However there also exist these examples of playful dress-up where any broader significance of the pagri is suspended (if it was ever 'engaged'). Similarly, an offer of a pagri can customarily across India act as a gesture of welcome, hospitality and acceptance; the act of giving and wrapping a pagri for a peer is a marker of bringing the recipient into kinship with the pagri-giver. In such instances, the pagri acts as a material register of kinship and camaraderie. Miriam Phelan has written about elasticity as a function of shifting meanings of what it is to be Irish and to articulate plural Irish national identities – and this is a helpful concept when considering the plurality of the pagri.⁴¹⁹ For Phelan, elasticity speaks to how the notion of Irishness can be adopted, imposed, suspended and distorted across different spaces and times, and especially across different people whose embodied experience of Irish national identity exists in tension with their own gender and sexual identities. In addition to the possible pluralities of meaning the pagri assumed, then, these plural meanings can also be described as elastic – suspended in certain times and spaces, and also open to change over time. Such elasticity was evidenced above, in the overview of shifting plural meanings of the pagri across the first half of the

⁴¹⁷ Anand, *Across the Black Waters* (1940), pp. 227-229.

⁴¹⁸ Anand, *Across the Black Waters* (1940), pp. 227-229.

⁴¹⁹ Miriam Phelan, 'Dress, Masculinities and Memory: Commemorating the Revolutionary Body in Ireland' (Royal College of Art, 2022).

twentieth century. Thus, even if Lalu and the Indian soldiers at Figure 54 regarded the practice of wrapping and the act of wearing the pagri as having specific religious and/or political connotations, in *these* moments – the 1914 French farmhouse of Anand's testimonio, the jeep in 1944 Italy – the pagri is also a playful medium, a silliness. This elasticity might in part be mediated through the materiality of the pagri itself. It is notable that neither Tommy Lees nor André are given official military pagri; they are dressed in bedlinen, bandages, and women's scarves. The materiality of the pagri stops short of that used for 'authentic' military Indianness, and keeps André and Tommy in the realm of costume, visibly and materially. If these are instances of performance, however, it is unclear what is being performed. Is the effect that André and Tommy are performing certain articulations of Indianness (Sikh, Muslim, nationalist, and the entanglements of these facets of 'Indianness' between 1914 and 1944), but only as mediated by their Indian dressers? Would the effect have been the same if Tommy and André had tied their pagri themselves, rather than having them wrapped for them? Perhaps whatever the effect is, it is the result of an interpersonal bodiliness; it emerges through the collective effort of the Indian Army soldiers, and only through their bodily entanglement in the holding, twisting, wrapping, tugging, tying is the effect and affect constituted.

Understanding this potential for elasticity might also help historians better frame instances in which the pagri performed plural functions, and came to act in ways beyond identity(/ies) construction, signification, and contestation. Camouflage is one such example, as illustrated by the photographs at Figure 55 and 56, taken during the scramble of guerrilla warfare across the later part of the East Africa Campaign. Figure 55 shows five members of the 2nd Kashmir Rifles in 1917, three of whom are standing and appear to be wearing khulla pagri into which sticks and other natural debris have been embedded. Figure 56 captures a similar scene from the same time and place, with four soldiers facing the camera, grasses and sticks tucked into the folds of their pagri. The scenes capture the problems associated with the East Africa Campaign, which in many ways came to be fought along the question of soldierly health and endurance, as much as battle strategy and formal victories. The toll of the Campaign is especially evident in Figure 56: three of the four men wear shorts that are ripped and fraying, their supplies are secured with textile rags, and the arms to their service



Figure 55.

Unknown, 'A Piquet of the 2nd Kashmir Rifles during the East Africa Campaign', 1917, Imperial War Museum, IWM HU 94490 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205129361>> (cropped).



Figure 56.

Unknown, 'Men of the 2nd Kashmir Rifles in Service Kit during the East Africa Campaign', 1917, Imperial War Museum, IWM HU 94491 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205129362>>.

kurta are ripped off entirely or missing large chunks. The use of natural resources as camouflage might thus be explained by necessity rather than design, especially in contrast with images from the Second World War that show pagri covered with standard-issue camouflage nets.⁴²⁰ Regardless, the effect is the same; where the pagri might for some men have been a deliberate, visual signifier of raced identity, here it becomes a medium for concealment. There is an attempt at erasure, not of identity or of any significance constructed out of the wrapping or wearing of the pagri, but of the *visibility* of the pagri and its wearer – and yet this is achieved through appending the bodily with sticks, twigs and feathers. The pagri serves a critical, but utilitarian, function at this intersection of bodily (visible) minimisation and (physical) extension. Similar instances of using the pagri to append the bodily were noted in the international press, and continue to live on in popular memory. *The Leader* newspaper, published out of Melbourne, Australia, describes how men of the 15th Ludhiana Sikhs aided in transporting valuable ammunition through the French trenches by '[a]ttaching their puggarees to the fronts of the boxes' and pulling 'them over or through the dead bodies, all of the party lying flat on the ground.'⁴²¹ Several secondary sources also speak of how pagri came to serve as makeshift gasmasks in the First World War, albeit with no citation for their source; Philip Mason wrote in 1974 that the Indian Army dipped the ends of their pagri in chloride of lime and held this over their mouths, while Bhupinder Singh Holland noted in 2005 that urine was also used.⁴²²

Examples like these point to how the pagri was not exclusively a site of identity(/ies) construction and signification; in plurality with this potential, the pagri was also often a functional tool in the soldierly arsenal, entangled with the bodily through its tendency to append it. It was a pragmatic resource, owing to its proximity to the body and ability to be handled. The pagri's significance could thus be plural and elastic, allowing it the potential to be simultaneously hyper-significant, utilitarian, neither, both or something in-between – with the capacity for the combination of significances to change over time. This is especially

⁴²⁰ For example, Sgt. Christie (No. 2 Army Film and Photo Section, AFPU), '*Bahadur Singh Wears a Camouflage Net over His Turban Whenever He Leaves His Billet, Most of the Indians Do This, Disdaining the Protection of a Steel Helmet*', 1944, Imperial War Museum, IWM NA 10842 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205525422>>.

⁴²¹ 'How the V.C. Is Won: An "Incident" in France', *The Leader* (Melbourne, 31 July 1915), p. 37, via <<http://www.australiansikhheritage.com/the-puggaree>>.

⁴²² Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974), p. 416; Bhupinder Singh Holland, *How Europe Is Indebted to the Sikhs?* (Sikh University Press, 2005), p. 46.

important to remember, given the shifting ecology of meanings around the pagri outside of the military between 1914 and 1945.

CONCLUSION

This chapter asked how otherwise conceptualisations of bodiliness might add to histories of the Indian Army and the experiences of its recruits in the First World War, and has interrogated this question using sources that were divided across themes of the personal and interpersonal. In doing so, the chapter drew specific conclusions about the role of (inter)personal material cultures, but also as a wider point illustrated that opacity is not only useful but necessary in researching and writing about these material cultures. Using bodiliness as an analytical framework allows historians to research lived experiences with a new lens of relationality that does not presume to speak for or replace the subjectivity of the historical subject. As well as providing a fruitful new perspective from which to research the subject matter itself – practices that involve the body – bodiliness as a method allowed me to speak 'nearby' the practices of the Indian Army soldiers, whilst leaving a necessary space of unknowing.

One of the most prominent examples of this across this chapter was the entanglement of non-human agencies in the bodily practices of Indian Army soldiers, and the degree of unknowability when it comes to researching the affect and effect of non-human agents. This featured particularly prominently in the discussion of miniature Qur'ans and mala beads. I argued that both miniaturised Qur'ans and mala beads could be situated in a wider amuletalismanic landscape both in India and the Global North, especially Europe, that are intimately entangled with bodily practices. These bodily practices were essential both for activating the amuletalismanic potential of the miniature Qur'anic texts and mala beads and, in some cases, for imbuing the soldier's bodiliness with the same potential. The section also asked whether the miniature Qur'ans formed part of a wider amuletalismanic landscape. Through an examination of the David Bryce Allies' Bibles against the context of sweetheart tokens and touchwood charms, I concluded that British soldiers and civilians were similarly familiar with and indeed often active users of amuletalismanic objects that engaged their bodiliness. The result is a reappraisal of literature that continues to frame

amuletalistic objects and practices as the preserve of the Global south, and also a need to revise how historians understand British encounters with miniaturised holy texts. The discussion as a whole also illustrated the problems with analytical frameworks that contextualise amuletalistic objects exclusively as religious. In the context of the miniature Qur'ans, the similarities between the miniature Qur'an designs and practices of miniaturisation favoured by the Mughal imperial court and military open up the possibility that these objects were not exclusively Islamic, but also an entanglement of other cultural influences and design styles from different moments in time.

Moving on to a discussion of hair care, hair management, and pagri-wrapping practices, the focus of the chapter shifted from the relationality between material culture and the personal, to material culture and the interpersonal. I noted that primary sources from the colonial archive framed hair in the Indian Army and the pagri as ethno-religious matters, steeped in spirituality. Such spirituality was essentially cast as 'primitive', through descriptions that frame practices as ancient and unknowable that deny the coeval time of Indian faiths with European Christianity.⁴²³ But it is also through the emphasis on spirituality and religious devotion as the primary mediator of the men's identity that further Orientalises them. This chapter pointed to other scholars who have complicated reductive historical narratives that articulated lived experiences around, for example, violence and suffering or as colonial constructs. It drew on such works in drawing out sources that suggest hair and head-wrappings should not be framed *just* as hyper-significant agents in identity(/ies) formation, but also as mediators of interpersonal and interbodily care, playfulness, kinship or even just ordinariness. The chapter emphasised that this was not an exercise in arguing that any one worlding was more important, convincing, or prevalent than any other amongst the recruits, but rather that the material cultures of hair and head-wrapping are plural, with varying degrees of (different) significances amongst soldiers that may vary further in different times and spaces.

The following chapter takes this idea of variability across time and space further. Focusing on the materiality of sound, Chapter 2 introduces how bodiliness as method has wider

⁴²³ Arjana, *Buying Buddha, Selling Rumi* (2020), p. 12.

implications for how the historian encounters the archive and their research practice, which in this case go beyond the bodilinesses of the soldiers themselves.

CHAPTER 2

SOUND(ING), HEARING AND BODILINESS: THE MATERIALITIES OF THE SONIC

On 22 December 1917, Jemadar Rala Singh of the 6th Cavalry, stationed in France, sought to reassure a correspondent in Ludhiana, Punjab, of his wellbeing on the Front Line. Expressing confidence in an imminent victory for the Allied forces (which would signal his return to India), he notes that 'I am always thinking of the Guru's teaching, it is all the same to me what[ever] country I am in. It is possible to meet in correspondence and by exchange of photographs.'⁴²⁴ The value of language for Jemadar Singh here is in its transportive and transformative potential; through language, time and time and space are collapsed and allow for him and his correspondent 'to meet'. Drawing on scholarship from the fields of ethnomusicology, digital sound studies, sonic anthropology and translation studies, this chapter explores how communication in archival forms of sound(ing) has the potential to transcend times and spaces, cultural media, alphabets, and language-systems. It investigates the repercussions of this potential for how design historians understand and engage with sound and the materialities of sounding. What emerges is an enquiry into the colonialities of knowledge, and a disruption on two counts. Firstly, to long-standing methods of historical enquiry that are pedagogically inscribed with European ideas of objectivity, universality, and linearity; secondly, drawing on Hartman, Camp and Sharpe, by exploring a new mode of reaching out towards the unknowability of the lived experiences of the Indian Army men. Through using critical lenses of bodiliness, this chapter proposes otherwise, bodily methodologies that draw on neurodivergent and synaesthetic lived experiences, and thus showcases how autobiography might be used as a mode of encountering and reappraising the archive.

This chapter opens with a section titled 'Cultivating an Affective Ecology', which considers the sonic dimensions of life within the Indian Army, drawing particular attention to the affective dimensions not only of language, but also of sound-creation and practices of listening. Much of the primary material in this section is drawn from recordings made of

⁴²⁴ Correspondence between Jemadar Rala Singh and Harnam Singh, dated 22 December 1917, in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 3 (Dec 1917-Mar 1918)', 1917, British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/827/6 <<http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=IOR/L/MIL/5/827/6>> [accessed 19 May 2020].

Indian Army men held as prisoners of war in the German Halbmondlager camp near Wünsdorf, between 1915 and 1916. In examining those recordings that deal extensively with religious themes the section introduces the idea of (to borrow and expand on Inderjit Nilu Kaur's term) an 'affective ecology' and examines the sonic materialities within that ecology.⁴²⁵ This section goes beyond Kaur's framework, however; by prompting me to think about the bodily materialities of sound and sounding, the combination of Kaur's analytical framework and the Halbmondlager recordings acted as provocation for me to consider the role and materialities of the historian, and the impact of these materialities on any ecology of sound(ing). The result is an exercise in autobiography as history-researching and history-writing methodology, and exploration of how this might allow historians to delink history research from the Eurocentric and neurotypical ways of knowing that dominate the apparatus of academic History, specifically the emphasis on disembodiment of both historian and historical subject, and the unfeeling interrogation of the formal archive. It is this approach therefore that adds further complexity to the examination of bodiliness as a critical lens through which to research the lived experiences of men in the Indian Army, creating an analytical framework that engaged plural overlapping temporalities of race, war, gender identity, and bodiliness itself.

The chapter then moves to the second section, 'Plural Materialities', which explores how design historians might work with instances of historical sound(ing) that inhabits plural materialities. This section draws particularly on the letters sent from and received by men serving in the Indian Army on the Western Front during the early years of the First World War, many of which include passages that echo forms of prayer and popular narratives and almost all of which have gone through plural processes of linguistic and material translation. The section thus considers what happens when design historians encounter sources that have traces of sonic, written and bodily materialities, and whether account needs to be taken of the historian's own role in further complicating these sources.

⁴²⁵ See Kaur, 'When "Unheard Sound" (Re)Sounds' (2016); Kaur, 'Transnational Affects, Transnational Worldings' (2018); Kaur, 'The Sikh Sacred Song Culture' (2019).

The final section to this chapter, 'Bodily Materiality of Metaphor' builds on these discussions to look specifically at the relationship of bodiliness to the use of metaphor in soldiers' letters. The section positions research on the role of bodily experience in cultivating metaphor in dialogue with research on the use of metaphor amongst various Indian communities to process and articulate experiences of trauma. The result is a discussion of how design historians might engage with the plural bodily materialities of language.

Historiographical Positioning

Sound as a research category and an archival source in the context of the Indian Army during the First World War has received some scholarly attention, especially where research draws on the same archival collections and primary sources used in this chapter. Gajendra Singh and Santanu Das, for example, both use the extracts of letters sent to and from Indian Army soldiers contained in the Censor of Indian Mails reports, while Das and Narender Yadav consult the voice recordings made by German authorities at the Halbmondlager prisoner of war camp in Wünsdorf.⁴²⁶ Das also looks beyond the wartime experiences of the soldiers themselves, and has written on the civilian Home Front in India: in particular oral cultures in the Punjab that included folksong as a function of Punjabi women's protest. More recently, scholars of other colonial soldiers during the War have turned their attention to song as a function of protest; Rachel Gillett, for example, has published on the role of song and music-making in Maori anti-First World War activism.⁴²⁷ How these sources are used by scholars, however, varies in how closely it is aligned with the methodological approach and analytical framework proposed in this chapter.

⁴²⁶ Gajendra Singh, 'The Perils of "Oriental Correspondence": Sipahis, Letters and Writing at the Crossroads', in *The Testimonies of Indian Soldiers and the Two World Wars: Between Self and Sepoy* (Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 65–98; Gajendra Singh, 'Throwing Snowballs in France: (Re-) Writing a Letter and (Re-) Appraising Islam, 1915-1918', in *The Testimonies of Indian Soldiers and the Two World Wars: Between Self and Sepoy* (Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 99–128; Santanu Das, "'Life-Writing" from Below: Letters, Poems, Prayers and Songs of Sepoys in Europe, 1914-1918', in *India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images, and Songs* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 203–38; Santanu Das, 'Sonorous Fields: Recruitment, Resistance and Recitative in Punjab', in *India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images, and Songs* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 75–115; Narender Yadav, 'Voices from the Prison: Indian Soldiers in German Prisoners of War Camp, 1915-1918', *Journal of the United Service Institution of India*, 632, 2023 <<https://www.usiofindia.org/publication-journal/Voices-from-the-Prison-Indian-Soldiers-in-German-Prisoners-of-War-Camp-1915-1918.html>>.

⁴²⁷ Rachel Gillett, 'Songs of War and Dissent: Maori Anti-War Activism and Its Cultural Legacy', in *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914–1918*, ed. by Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach (Routledge, 2021), pp. 149–69.

Although he uses language that errs towards a sense of bodiliness and object materiality, Gajendra Singh's work stops short of examining the Indian Army soldiers' letters in relation to the materialities of bodiliness or wider material cultures. He writes that the letters relay 'shared memories [...] [and] truths and knowledges [...] collective memories and spaces', thereby speaking to shared lived experiences that I propose in this chapter can be examined through bodiliness; he even points to the materiality of the letters themselves, which is almost entirely undiscussed in other scholars' works on soldierly correspondence, noting how 'the length of letters was regulated by the thick blue borders of "letter cards" or pieces of paper upon which *sipahis*' letters had to be scribbled.'⁴²⁸ However, Singh ultimately uses the soldiers' correspondence as flat, textual sources. There is research value in this and he draws out some urgent and original contributions to the study of Indian soldiers during the war through doing so, but it means his analysis is limited to using the text as repositories of facts and sentiment. He variously examines the different registers and rhetoric used across letters, arguing that while he does not 'read the letters as "hidden transcripts" [...] a readable "critique of power that [...] had the potential to evolve into overt forms of resistance";' common metaphors and constructs invoked by soldiers (such as *izzat*, *dharm* and *shaheedi*) and even common subjects of letters (such as relationships between Indian Army personnel and European women) became mediums through which soldiers could convey and explore their attitudes, opinions, grievances and successes.⁴²⁹ This approach echoes some of Das's earlier work; in his 2018 book on different cultural forms amongst Indian soldiers in the First World War, Das approaches the same collection of correspondence as a repository of life-writing, and he proposes to 'read them more closely' than other scholars, with particular attention to 'textual [and] formal analysis.'⁴³⁰ However, Das proposes to extend this approach by looking at 'their materiality, their narrative and psychological structures, their literariness' in order to produce 'a more formally and emotionally nuanced understanding' of both soldiers' experiences and the 'underworld of

⁴²⁸ Gajendra Singh, 'The Perils of "Oriental Correspondence": *Sipahis, Letters and Writing at the Crossroads*', in *The Testimonies of Indian Soldiers and the Two World Wars: Between Self and Sepoy* (Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 65–98 (p. 67, emphasis in original).

⁴²⁹ Gajendra Singh, 'The Perils of "Oriental Correspondence": *Sipahis, Letters and Writing at the Crossroads*', in *The Testimonies of Indian Soldiers and the Two World Wars: Between Self and Sepoy* (Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 65–98 (pp. 68, 74, 87 and 98).

⁴³⁰ Santanu Das, *India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images, and Songs* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 204–205.

their consciousness [...] the inner world of the sepoy.⁴³¹ He achieves this examination of the letters' 'materiality' reconceptualising the letters, not as 'transparent envelopes of sepoy experience, but 'palimpsests where, underneath various accretions by different agencies, one can still hear the heart-beat of the sepoy.'⁴³² For Das, the materiality of the letters is in their capacity to function as vessels for layered communities of shared emotion, and it is here that our work is in alignment. Das adopts a similar approach in the same text to the Halbmondlager recordings. Given the conditions in which they were created, Das considers them to have a 'testimonial' value, even where they cannot be read as 'neat allegories or clear parables of the situation.'⁴³³ He even uses the language of tentativeness to call for any interpretation of them 'to be necessarily tentative and incomplete,' which chimes with the tenor and purpose of the methodologies of opacity advanced in this thesis.⁴³⁴ However, Das ultimately understands the recordings to offer suggestions to 'certain structures of feeling,' again highlighting his research focus on the inner world of the soldiers. I do not argue against this interpretation of the recordings, but in this chapter I consider the role of 'affective ecologies' cultivated between soldiers through sound and sound-making to consider the soldiers' bodily materiality, rather than their inner worlds. By looking at forms of prayer and the bodily transformation believed to occur during the performance of prayer, I propose that historians can interrogate both writing (through the letters) and vocalising (through the Halbmondlager recordings) in the archive as having a bodily dimension that has not been discussed in the scholarship on Indian Army soldiers. I also draw on decolonial trauma studies and works on the bodily materiality of metaphor, to argue that the poetics and sentiments expressed in soldiers' letters and camp recordings reflect both a bodily lived experience and the materiality of trauma as an agent in itself. Das begins to touch on this in his work on the Censor of Indian Mails letter extracts; he rightly observes that the references to popular myth and folklore highlights how soldiers' experiences were mediated

⁴³¹ Santanu Das, *India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images, and Songs* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 204-205.

⁴³² Santanu Das, *India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images, and Songs* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 209.

⁴³³ Santanu Das, *India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images, and Songs* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 229-230.

⁴³⁴ Santanu Das, *India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images, and Songs* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 230.

through 'local and regional cultural traditions.'⁴³⁵ I make a similar point in relation to a different register of the letters, and argue that the use of metaphor is regionally and culturally situated as a way of conveying the materiality of trauma and pain. Again, the focus here is on bodily materiality, and on drawing out through my research how sonic primary sources might be reimagined to have a materiality that is entangled with the bodies of soldiers. Just as Das argues that "'[p]oetry" here functions as a way of giving structure to a world of perceptual and metaphysical disorientation,' I identify instances where trauma is conceived of in acutely bodily terms through metaphors of, for example, the heart, weight, agrarian cultures and space.⁴³⁶ My research therefore does not argue against Das's position, but extends his research beyond the soldiers' psychology and consciousness to their physicality, bodily materialities, and lived experiences that complicate any physical/psychological divide. Furthermore, I argue that an examination of bodily materialities must necessarily extend to the materiality of the listening historian; I draw on Black Feminist scholarship and decolonial design history research to suggest not only that bodily materialities are an important subject of research for historians of the Indian Army, but that bodily materiality as method for the historian can offer a new access point for the archive.

Das's work on the different registers of soldiers' letters and voice recordings creates opportunities, therefore, for researchers like myself to explore further bodily registers using otherwise methodologies. It also builds on the more fact-focused, event-driven narratives of Halbmondlager and the recordings. Narender Yadav, for example, has produced an account of the Halbmondlager recording project that details the process of recordings and offers a summary of their context and content, but is ultimately descriptive. Yadav briefly contextualises Halbmondlager, the Royal Prussian Phonographic Commission, the imprisoned soldiers, and the common motifs of their recordings, but the account lacks any of Das's thoughtful interrogation of how historians might use the recordings in ways beyond a literal, textual reading.

⁴³⁵ Santanu Das, *India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images, and Songs* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 213.

⁴³⁶ Santanu Das, *India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images, and Songs* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 215.

Forms of sound and sounding have been interrogated by First World War scholars in contexts other than the Indian Army in Europe, and these accounts are helpful for illuminating the differences and similarities between these scholars' methodological and conceptual approaches and my own. In her chapter on Maori songs that supported and also resisted the War, Rachel Gillett interrogates forms of 'song and cultural performance mobilised by the Maori female leader Te Puea Herangi in New Zealand.'⁴³⁷ Gillett emphasises the cultural specificity of Te Puea's work, and the importance of using recognised musical form and structure in successfully 'articulating community values and political views.'⁴³⁸ Cultural norms like song, argues Gillett, 'functioned as a mode of political intervention' through the mobilisation both of Maori laments by Te Puea and through the targeted use of gender roles in wider community musical performance.⁴³⁹ This chimes with my position that soldiers' letters and Halbmondlager recordings ought to be read in their cultural context, with the result that historians can trace forms of bodily materiality through sonic sources. However Gillett argues that Te Puea's songs, while 'wrapped in illusion and metaphor', were publicly understood as her 'advising her people to resist conception' – and this is one of the key distinguishing features between the subject of Gillett's work and my own.⁴⁴⁰ Te Puea's songs were *intended* to be public and to communicate a thinly veiled, explicitly political message. By contrast, the soldiers' intentions behind their letters and recordings are unclear, making an examination of these sources for their content extremely difficult. In the absence of clear political intention, I therefore propose that methodologies of opacity and tentativeness ought to be used when dealing with sonic sources in the context of the Indian Army. Das has similarly examined forms of protest song that emerged amongst women-led communities away from the Front Line. Das describes the Punjabi

⁴³⁷ Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach, 'Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict: An Introduction', in *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914–1918*, ed. by Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach (Routledge, 2021), pp. 1–33 (p. 22).

⁴³⁸ Rachel Gillett, 'Songs of War and Dissent: Maori Anti-War Activism and Its Cultural Legacy', in *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914–1918*, ed. by Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach (Routledge, 2021), pp. 149–69 (p. 151).

⁴³⁹ Rachel Gillett, 'Songs of War and Dissent: Maori Anti-War Activism and Its Cultural Legacy', in *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914–1918*, ed. by Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach (Routledge, 2021), pp. 149–69 (p. 155–157).

⁴⁴⁰ Rachel Gillett, 'Songs of War and Dissent: Maori Anti-War Activism and Its Cultural Legacy', in *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914–1918*, ed. by Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach (Routledge, 2021), pp. 149–69 (p. 155).

women's folksongs in his work on the civilian Home Front in India as 'a veritable archive of female emotions, pointing to a buried subaltern tradition of female protest.'⁴⁴¹ Das's discussion of these songs is brief, but his argument resonates with Gillett's, in that recognised cultural forms of music and sounding were similarly mobilised by Punjabi women to 'function as protest when other modes of articulation were suppressed.'⁴⁴² Indeed, Das goes further by examining the rhetoric of these songs in comparison to the poetry of 'upper-class nationalist women poet Sarojini Naidu', to suggest that support and opposition to the war was not divided along an axis of gender but of class, resulting in what Das considers 'a transnational poetics of female protest from below.'⁴⁴³ With regard both to Gillett and Das, my work supplements the research conducted into these areas; by focusing less on the explicit or hidden meanings behind the content of the words, and less on the emotional interiority these sources reflect, my work asks instead what historians might learn from these sources when we interrogate the plural forms of materiality with which they are entangled.

Contextualising the collections

As discussed above, this chapter draws predominantly on two bodies of material: the sound recordings made of Indian Army prisoners of war at Halbmondlager, held at the Humboldt-Universität Lautarchiv, and the extracts from soldier correspondence within the Censor of Indian Mails reports, held as part of the India Office Records (IOR) at the BL. The two institutions take a slightly different approach to the framing of their collections and the guidance provided about how researchers should engage with them – in part due to the disruption caused to the BL repository as the result of the October 2023 cyber-attack.

The Lautarchiv describes itself as 'an acoustic collection of around 10,000 shellac records, wax cylinders and tapes' that 'provide an overview of nearly 100 years of phonetic, linguistic and anthropological research in Berlin and show developments in scientific collecting and

⁴⁴¹ Santanu Das, *India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images, and Songs* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 111-112.

⁴⁴² Santanu Das, *India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images, and Songs* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 115.

⁴⁴³ Santanu Das, *India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images, and Songs* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 115.

archiving.⁴⁴⁴ The emphasis in how the collection is framed is on its research value to institutional historians, linguists and anthropologists, and the Lautarchiv's website states that the archive's 'aim is to index the recordings successively and make them accessible for research.'⁴⁴⁵ However the Lautarchiv is also mindful of the 'cultural and science history context [...] [and] political context' out of which the collection emerged, and the archive has provided an accompanying 'attempt at reflexive representation.'⁴⁴⁶ This attempt acknowledges that much of the archive's content was generated 'under duress – from the speaker's point of view – in prisoner of war camps,' and identifies a range of characteristics inherent to the archival database's 'selection procedures, structures and presentation conventions that co-determine what is known about the collection' and impact how the collection can be used and interpreted.⁴⁴⁷ The result is that the Lautarchiv collection is not presented to the public and to researchers as a neutral repository of recordings that reflect the lived experiences of the imprisoned men speaking; rather, the recordings are positioned as artefacts of a unique social, political and academic moment that can be interrogated with this context in mind.

The IOR is an interesting counterpoint to the Lautarchiv and the latter's attempt to embed ongoing, evolving reflexivity into the fabric of the database design and the researcher's encounter with it. This is in part due to the October 2023 cyber-attack on the British Library's computing infrastructure, which has caused an ongoing outage amongst its 'website, online systems and services, as well as some onsite services.'⁴⁴⁸ As a result of the attack, the Censor of Indian Mails reports, held as part of the IOR, are not available online (or at the time of writing by request to view in person) in the way they were during the course of my early doctoral research. The role the reports play in the IOR is thus in flux, and will be determined through how the BL rebuilds itself and any literature to accompany its collections. Currently available, however, are a series of posts from the BL's 'Untold Lives'

⁴⁴⁴ 'The Lautarchiv of the Humboldt-Universität Zu Berlin: Introduction', *Humboldt-Universität Zu Berlin, Lautarchiv* <<https://www.lautarchiv.hu-berlin.de/en/introduction/>>.

⁴⁴⁵ 'The Lautarchiv of the Humboldt-Universität Zu Berlin: Introduction', *Humboldt-Universität Zu Berlin, Lautarchiv* <<https://www.lautarchiv.hu-berlin.de/en/introduction/>>.

⁴⁴⁶ 'Forms of Presentation: Attempt to Arrive at a Reflexive Critique of Representation', *Humboldt-Universität Zu Berlin, Lautarchiv* <<https://www.lautarchiv.hu-berlin.de/en/introduction/presentation/>>.

⁴⁴⁷ 'Forms of Presentation: Attempt to Arrive at a Reflexive Critique of Representation', *Humboldt-Universität Zu Berlin, Lautarchiv* <<https://www.lautarchiv.hu-berlin.de/en/introduction/presentation/>>.

⁴⁴⁸ 'British Library Cyber Incident: Cyber-Attack Update', *British Library* <<https://www.bl.uk/cyber-incident/>>.

blog which claims to share the 'stories of people's lives worldwide' held within the BL's collection, 'providing fascinating and unusual insights into the past and bringing out from the shadows lives that have been overlooked or forgotten.'⁴⁴⁹ The blog use extracts from the letters contained in the reports as diaristic accounts, reflective of the men's experiences; the extracts are described variously as '[t]ouching, funny, sad and at times bawdy,' able to 'describe vividly the suffering the Indian soldiers endured and their longing to return to their families back in India.'⁴⁵⁰ Extracts are provided as standalone accounts of soldierly sentiment and opinions; letters are quoted at length as literal illustrations of 'despondency' and the 'unsettled feelings' and 'anxious mood among the Indian Cavalry.'⁴⁵¹ The role the reports and the extracts of letters play is thus slightly at odds with the role envisioned for them by scholars such as Santanu Das, Gajendra Singh and David Omissi, all of whom engage with the reports as complex products of translational and bureaucratic processes.

My analytical approach thus aligns itself with the embedded reflexivity of the Lautarchiv, and similarly treats the recordings as artefacts whose unfixed nature and content necessarily demand methodologies of opacity. From the perspective of my research, the fact that so little information is available beyond the pro forma data collected by the German authorities means that approaches to the collection that foreground unfixity and tentativeness as method, and also illuminate areas of unfixity and tentativeness within the recordings as objects themselves, are well-suited to a project that seeks to respond to decolonial imperatives. My analytical approach to the Censor of Indian Mail reports, however, is very different to the illustrative and descriptive role the letters are positioned to have – at least in the available blog posts written by the India Office Records curatorial staff. Like Das, Singh and Omissi, I anticipate that each letter was intended to perform its own

⁴⁴⁹ Margaret Makepeace, 'Sharing Stories from the Past, Worldwide: about this blog', *Untold Lives Blog*, 2 September 2011 <<https://blogs.bl.uk/untoldlives/about-this-blog.html>>.

⁴⁵⁰ John O'Brien, 'An Indian Soldier in France during World War I', *Untold Lives Blog*, 2011 <<https://blogs.bl.uk/untoldlives/2011/11/letter-from-an-indian-soldier-in-france-during-world-war-i-1915-the-india-office-records-holds-the-reports-of-the-censor-of.html>>.

⁴⁵¹ John O'Brien, 'Indian Soldier's Letter to a Friend, 1 May 1915', *Untold Lives Blog*, 1 May 2015 <<https://blogs.bl.uk/untoldlives/2015/05/indian-soldiers-letter-to-a-friend-1-may-1915.html>>; John O'Brien, 'Letters from Indian Soldiers on the Western Front, September 1916', *Untold Lives Blog*, 20 September 2016 <<https://blogs.bl.uk/untoldlives/2016/09/letters-from-indian-soldiers-on-the-western-front-september-1916.html>>.

specific function: sometimes descriptive and intended to be literal accounts of a soldier's wartime experience, but sometimes coded, fictionalised, allegorical, intended as written prayer or petitions to a divine power, amongst others. Even allowing space for individual letters to have their own unique function, my research also understands the reports to be products of translational and bureaucratic processes of censorship, such that the overall narrative created by the collections of letter extracts as a whole is partial and cannot speak to the multiplicity of experience amongst the Indian Army troops. Methodologies of opacity once again become important here; by using traces of bodiliness in the materiality of the reports, and bodiliness of the researcher as method, as the 'entry point' to working with these primary sources, this chapter creates a new way of encountering the soldiers that is allows for many different, unfixed interpretations of the soldiers' lived experiences. This unfixity, and tentativeness, responds to the decolonial imperative of plurality that runs across the thesis.

CULTIVATING AN AFFECTIVE ECOLOGY THROUGH THE SONIC

This section examines the role of the sonic in the experience of Indian Army soldiers during the First World War. Drawing on Inderjit Nilu Kaur's models of affective ecologies and individualised forms of word-making ('worlding'), and recent sound studies scholarship that has unsettled how historians can conceptualize sound in primary sources, what follows is an interrogation of how practices of sound-creation, hearing and listening may have contributed to the affective environments in which Indian Army soldiers found themselves during the war – and thus how soldiers also co-created these affective environments. This section opens with a discussion of the politics and material dimensions of translation, which helps situate this chapter's focus on sound(ing) within an interdisciplinary framework that emphasises the pivotal role of bodiliness. It then moves onto specific case studies that examine the use of the term *ik onkār* in primary sources, before entangling this discussion with the question of how the historian's own bodily materiality encounters, changes and affects the researching and writing of histories of sound(ing).

The nature and role of an expanded understanding of translation is critical for examining the role of the sonic in Indian Army soldiers' experiences. This is in part due to processes of translation that took place at the moment of primary source creation, but also due to the

processes of technological translation through which these sources have since gone. This is relevant for this research as most Indian Army soldiers' first-hand accounts exist exclusively as English-language translations. The Censor of Indian Mails files held by the BL record only fragments of letters written by Indian Army recruits *as translated* into English by anonymous Censor staff of British and Indian heritage during the First World War. Furthermore, many of these letters may have gone through a prior further layer of detachment from the original soldier; due to high levels of illiteracy amongst Indian Army rank and file, it is likely that many of these letters were first transcribed by a British or Indian Army officer fluent in both English and the soldier's native language.⁴⁵² Neither the original letters, nor facsimiles, in the original language were retained by the Censor, and historians have since been unable to trace them. As a native English-speaking historian who does not speak or read Punjabi, Gurmukhi, Urdu or Hindi, I am also dependent on the interpretive work of translators – rooted in their own personal, political positionalities – to conduct aspects of this research. Theoretical frameworks for reimagining digitisation complicate this further. Digital sound studies scholars have pointed to the lingering 'artifacts' that haunt recorded sound: environmental and coincidental happenings in the recording space that make audible that which was 'designed to be invisible', be it the whirr of the recording equipment itself or the clamour of a crowd outside the recording room.⁴⁵³ Such traces of the material conditions of recording alter the sonic experience in the recording room, but are also inscribed materially on the recording data, thus affecting the experience of listening to – and interpreting – that recording perhaps years later. The properties of listening are thus material in plural ways, including the 'various layers of the body of the listener, of the performer[s] [...] of the walls and the floor, the furniture or the machinery,' with the result that 'listening as an activity is situated in material and personal, sensorial and performative, as well as technological and historical relations to a given listening environment.'⁴⁵⁴ The inscription of sound-making onto phonographic wax cylinders at Halbmondlager is thus a materialisation of sound(ing), but it is itself also a form of

⁴⁵² Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War* (1999), pp. 4-5; Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 199.

⁴⁵³ *Digital Sound Studies*, ed. by Mary Caton Lingold, Darren Mueller, and Whitney Trettien (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), p. 4.

⁴⁵⁴ Holger Schulze, *The Sonic Persona: An Anthology of Sound*, Music & Sound Studies (New York, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), p. 34.

material translation – as is the phonetic transcriptions of these recordings by Halbmondlager camp officials, the alteration of the recording when digitised, and my own efforts to interpret the digitised file.⁴⁵⁵ This research is thus an interpretation informed by my own personal, environmental and historical relation to the various materialities of sound(ing) discussed across this chapter. In emphasising translation, however, the aim is not to centre the translator; similarly, where this chapter goes on to explore the potential for autobiography as a methodology for historical enquiry, the aim is not to centre the historian. Rather, in order to create space for plural interpretations of the Indian Army soldiers' experience, it is important to understand the politics of translation and the impact this might have had on the primary sources consulted by historians, and historians' understanding of those sources. With regard to autobiography as method especially, the act of bringing emotion, feeling and storytelling into the archival encounter might be personal and person-led, but the broader aim and effect is to challenge the dominant position in academic History that emotional work has no place in research and writing.

What follows is a discussion of the politics of translation, and an illustration of how translational politics are relevant using case studies taken from the sound archive at the Humboldt-Universität, Berlin. These help illustrate the role of the sonic in cultivating an affective ecology around North Indian norms of language and sound, but also how historians might learn from scholarship on translation and sound(ing) in their efforts to access and analyse their sources.

The Politics of Translation

This project situates its understanding of translation – in an expanded sense – in the work that emerged from the so-called cultural turn in translation studies. In the early 1990s, translation theorists Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere spearheaded the call for understanding translation as an entanglement of poetics, ideology and rewriting, and helped frame translation as both a potential site of and agent in inscribing the cultural hegemonies, power imbalance and what would later be termed broader colonial matrices of

⁴⁵⁵ Schulze, *The Sonic Persona* (2018), pp. 5 and 15.

power.⁴⁵⁶ During this period, Gayatri Spivak published an essay on the politics of translation that, by highlighting the importance of rhetoricity to translation, offered a framework for how translators and readers alike might critically continue to engage with translation work.⁴⁵⁷ For Spivak, language is 'only a vital clue to where the self loses its boundaries'; it is not where translation begins and ends.⁴⁵⁸ She instead points to the 'space [of meaning] outside language', the 'silences between and around words', and the importance of a translator's work in accounting for these.⁴⁵⁹ In so doing, Spivak introduces the importance of ambiguity in translation work, the necessary rejection of ideas of equivalence, and choosing instead to conceive of language as exhibiting 'frayages': the blending of meaning, silence, sound and rhetoric with no clear 'exactitude' between the languages at play.⁴⁶⁰ The concept of boundaries and their frayage has been explored across Chapter 1, both in relation to specific objects as plural sites of meaning and also bodiliness(es) as registers for friendship and camaraderie, such that the boundaries between people blurs through intimacy. Throwing notions of fixity and boundary into crisis is however also keenly relevant for this chapter, for several reasons. First, it calls into question the school of thought that governed translation work during the war, which would almost certainly have subscribed to the belief in an equivalence of language that held sway in translation studies until the 1980s and 1990s.⁴⁶¹ But secondly, it affirms the potential for the design historian to reject the pursuit of exactitude, where exactitude is measured by a metric that privileges certain ideas of rational thought, logic and measurable outcomes. Spivak emphasises instead the importance of a comprehensive cultural understanding of the language being translated, in order for translators to understand those spaces of silence and rhetoricity that lend as much meaning to a text as the words themselves. To this end, Spivak points out that the histories of the language, the author's moment, and 'the language-in-and-as-translation' all 'must

⁴⁵⁶ Bassnett highlighted the 'the manipulatory processes that are involved in textual production,' describing translation as 'a primary method of imposing meaning while concealing the power relations that lie behind the production of that meaning.' S. Bassnett, 'The Translation Turn in Cultural Studies', in *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation*, ed. by S. Bassnett and A. Lefevere, Topics in Translation (Multilingual Matters, 1998), pp. 123–40 <<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/857b/0bb281c5d29ddd137919ea6bad2dd31d25ff.pdf>> (p. 136).

⁴⁵⁷ G.C. Spivak, 'The Politics of Translation', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti (London; New York: Routledge., 1992, 2000), pp. 397–416.

⁴⁵⁸ Spivak, 'The Politics of Translation' (2000), p. 398.

⁴⁵⁹ Spivak, 'The Politics of Translation' (2000), pp. 398 and 399.

⁴⁶⁰ Spivak, 'The Politics of Translation' (2000), p. 397.

⁴⁶¹ Bassnett, 'The Translation Turn in Cultural Studies' (1998), pp. 125 and 128.

figure in the weaving [of translation] as well.⁴⁶² There is something bodily here: both in the 'beyond language' sense when speaking about rhetoric and tone (those aspects of communication that go beyond the words themselves and are conveyed only by *how* they are communicated), and also the bodiliness of the translator's personhood. This illustrates the importance for my research of acknowledging the situatedness and positionality of the translator and translation technologies (both as process and the physical mechanics), and myself as historian, as part of the critical evaluation of a source. The ability to comprehend a source text (both language and rhetoric) will vary depending on one's personhood, creating at best the 'site of the exchange of language' and at worst harm to the original text.⁴⁶³ There are parallels here with Spivak's thesis in 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'. In that essay Spivak pointed to the gap between insurgent utterance and comprehension of that utterance; in 'The Politics of Translation', she speaks of the gap between 'the original' text and 'its shadow'. In both instances, the gap might be navigated through understanding the context and rhetoricity of either the insurgent utterance or the source text; there might be 'mistranslations', but these are a failure to account for the 'frayage' of the texture of language and its rhetoricity, rather than a simple error in identifying any 'linguistic equivalent' of a word.⁴⁶⁴ What follows is a discussion of the use of the term *ik onkār* in the recordings made of Indian men held as prisoners of war at Halbmondlager, which engages exactly these questions around the politics of translation.

Ik onkār

Between 1915 and 1918, the Royal Prussian Phonographic Commission produced an ongoing project led by philologist Wilhelm Doegen to record 'the languages and traditional music of soldiers interned in German prisoner of war camps.'⁴⁶⁵ One of the largest of these German camps was Halbmondlager at Wünsdorf. A 'propaganda' camp, Halbmondlager was designed to subject prisoners to intense efforts on behalf of the German authorities to agitate 'anti-colonial uprisings', with a view to undermining the Allied forces' imperial

⁴⁶² Spivak, 'The Politics of Translation' (2000), p. 403.

⁴⁶³ Spivak, 'The Politics of Translation' (2000), p. 401.

⁴⁶⁴ Spivak, 'The Politics of Translation' (2000), p. 401.

⁴⁶⁵ Das, *Writings, Images, and Songs* (2018), p. 227; 'History and Perspective', *Lautarchiv, Humboldt-Universität Zu Berlin*, 2017 <<https://www.lautarchiv.hu-berlin.de/en/introduction/history-and-perspective/>> [accessed 25 June 2020]; Heike Liebau, 'Prisoners of War (India)', *1914-1918-Online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, 2014 <https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/prisoners_of_war_india> [accessed 25 June 2020].

foothold.⁴⁶⁶ Between December 1915 and December 1918, Doegen and colleagues recorded nearly 300 audio samples in South Asian languages across Halbmondlager and a second, nearby camp.⁴⁶⁷ Narender Yadav has pieced together the process through which recordings were made. Imprisoned men were first instructed to 'prepare a script', with or without the assistance of their peers, which was then subject to approval by a Royal Prussian Phonographic Commission subcommittee.⁴⁶⁸ Once approved, the men were then instructed to perform into the phonographic funnel (Figure 57).⁴⁶⁹ Some men told stories, others recited scripture and poetry, some recalled proverbs from their homes villages and towns, sang, or told anecdotes. Their heads and shoulders were often held by one of the attending linguists or technicians, as any movement might affect the nature of the captured recording (Figures 57 and 58).⁴⁷⁰ The research team then completed a form that accompanies recordings in the Humboldt-Universität Lautarchiv, 'detailing the name, age, caste, language, permanent address of the internee, as also the date and type of recording.'⁴⁷¹ Copies of the individual's recording were then prepared as a 'phonetic notation' and 'fair copy', before finally a German translation was made.⁴⁷² One of the key figures in this project was Indologist Helmuth von Glasenapp, a member of the Royal Prussian Phonographic Commission and regular publisher in the German Foreign Office's Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient (Intelligence Bureau for the Orient, NfO). Von Glasenapp 'played a double role in the [Halbmondlager's] field of research as well as in the field of

⁴⁶⁶ Liebau, 'Prisoners of War (India)' (2014), and Jennifer Jenkins, 'Fritz Fischer's "Programme for Revolution": Implications for a Global History of Germany in the First World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 48.2 (2013), 397–417.

⁴⁶⁷ Jürgen Mahrenholz, 'Recordings of South Asian Languages and Music in the Lautarchiv of the Humboldt-Universität Zu Berlin', in *'When the War Began We Heard of Several Kings': South Asian Prisoners in World War I Germany*, ed. by Franziska Roy, Heike Liebau, and Ravi Ahuja (New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2011), pp. 187–206.

⁴⁶⁸ Narender Yadav, 'Voices from the Prison: Indian Soldiers in German Prisoners of War Camp, 1915-1918', *Journal of the United Service Institution of India*, 632, 2023 <https://www.usiofindia.org/publication-journal/Voices-from-the-Prison-Indian-Soldiers-in-German-Prisoners-of-War-Camp-1915-1918.html>; Alaka Atreya Chudal, 'What Can a Song Do to You? A Life Story of a Gurkha Prisoner in World War I', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 43.3 (2020), pp. 392–406 (p. 400), doi:[10.1080/00856401.2020.1752974](https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2020.1752974).

⁴⁶⁹ Narender Yadav, 'Voices from the Prison: Indian Soldiers in German Prisoners of War Camp, 1915-1918', *Journal of the United Service Institution of India*, 632, 2023 <<https://www.usiofindia.org/publication-journal/Voices-from-the-Prison-Indian-Soldiers-in-German-Prisoners-of-War-Camp-1915-1918.html>>.

⁴⁷⁰ Das, *Writings, Images, and Songs* (2018), p. 5.

⁴⁷¹ Narender Yadav, 'Voices from the Prison: Indian Soldiers in German Prisoners of War Camp, 1915-1918', *Journal of the United Service Institution of India*, 632, 2023 <<https://www.usiofindia.org/publication-journal/Voices-from-the-Prison-Indian-Soldiers-in-German-Prisoners-of-War-Camp-1915-1918.html>>.

⁴⁷² Narender Yadav, 'Voices from the Prison: Indian Soldiers in German Prisoners of War Camp, 1915-1918', *Journal of the United Service Institution of India*, 632, 2023 <<https://www.usiofindia.org/publication-journal/Voices-from-the-Prison-Indian-Soldiers-in-German-Prisoners-of-War-Camp-1915-1918.html>>.

political consultation' for the Camp's propaganda arm, and in the absence of a clear methodological statement for the project amidst the Humboldt-Universität recordings, the broader research interests of men like von Glasenapp can help contextualise the tone of the research conducted.⁴⁷³ Along with colleagues, von Glasenapp conducted the 'linguistic research and recording of sound samples' in various camps, including Halbmondlager, and was part of a group investigating 'the relationship between so-called "Aryan" and "non-

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Figure 57.

Unknown, Recordings with Indian Prisoners of War at Halbmondlager, Wünsdorf, Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

⁴⁷³ Liebau, 'Prisoners of War (India)' (2014).



Figure 58.

Unknown, 'Image of Recording in the POW Camp Wahn, 1916, Showing Wilhelm Doegen and Alois Brand', 1916, Lautarchiv, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. This copy of the image was provided by Doegen to Brand in 1925.

Aryan" languages' amongst the prisoners.⁴⁷⁴ It is in this tendency to create binary, homogenous groups that might offer some insight into the policy the governed the Wünsdorf translation work. Ravi Ahuja discusses how the soldiers' experiences 'were framed by their captors through ideologies, policies and institutions' that were 'generated by various political and social agencies.'⁴⁷⁵ These included policies related to immediate military objectives, such as recruiting imprisoned men 'for fighting the Entente armies in separate military formations,' as well as 'establishing long-term political links to the colonies

⁴⁷⁴ Liebau, 'Prisoners of War (India)' (2014); Britta Lange, 'South Asian Soldiers and German Academics: Anthropological, Linguistic and Musicological Field Studies in Prison Camps', in *When the War Began We Heard of Several Kings*, ed. by Roy, Liebau, and Ahuja (2011), pp. 149-184.

⁴⁷⁵ Ravi Ahuja, 'Lost Engagements? Traces of South Asian Soldiers in German Captivity, 1915-1918', in *When the War Began We Heard of Several Kings: South Asian Prisoners in World War I Germany*, ed. by Franziska Roy, Heike Liebau, and Ravi Ahuja (Social Science Press, 2011), pp. 17-52 (pp. 25 and 27).

of other European powers that could be activated whenever expedient.⁴⁷⁶ Related to both of these was the political objective to 'circulate the news of the good treatment of colonial soldiers in German prison camp[s].'⁴⁷⁷ Ahuja argues that these '[i]deological dispositions crystallised [...] into institutional arrangements framing the experiences of South Asian prisoners of war,' and he points to such arrangements as the provision of halal meat, the celebration of Il-ul-Fitr 'sponsored by the camp authorities', and the 'establishment of a multilingual and culturally differentiated propaganda programme' of public sermons, lectures, and multilingual camp journals as examples of this.⁴⁷⁸ Ahuja's writing subsequently calls on historians to contextualise these recordings in their historical and cultural moment, paying attention to resources like the writings of von Glasenapp to contextualise and understand how these materials were generated and why in their analysis.⁴⁷⁹ Indeed, Britta Lange has suggested that 'the content of [the prisoners'] speech was probably peripheral from the researcher's perspective'.⁴⁸⁰ Where the "'objective" goals of their endeavour' were to procure 'the required example[s] of a specific language', Lange states that 'we may assume that the scholars were satisfied if and when the prisoners spoke at all.'⁴⁸¹

Adam Benkato and Veronika Ritt-Benmimoun pick up this thread in their research into historical Arabic dialectics, using the recordings of imprisoned Tunisian soldiers made at Halbmondlager.⁴⁸² Their work is notably distinct from my own in terms of subject-matter and methodology, in the sense that their focus is not on evidence of bodily materialities

⁴⁷⁶ Ravi Ahuja, 'Lost Engagements? Traces of South Asian Soldiers in German Captivity, 1915-1918', in *When the War Began We Heard of Several Kings': South Asian Prisoners in World War I Germany*, ed. by Franziska Roy, Heike Liebau, and Ravi Ahuja (Social Science Press, 2011), pp. 17–52 (pp. 30-31).

⁴⁷⁷ Ravi Ahuja, 'Lost Engagements? Traces of South Asian Soldiers in German Captivity, 1915-1918', in *When the War Began We Heard of Several Kings': South Asian Prisoners in World War I Germany*, ed. by Franziska Roy, Heike Liebau, and Ravi Ahuja (Social Science Press, 2011), pp. 17–52 (p. 31).

⁴⁷⁸ Ravi Ahuja, 'Lost Engagements? Traces of South Asian Soldiers in German Captivity, 1915-1918', in *When the War Began We Heard of Several Kings': South Asian Prisoners in World War I Germany*, ed. by Franziska Roy, Heike Liebau, and Ravi Ahuja (Social Science Press, 2011), pp. 17–52 (p. 33).

⁴⁷⁹ Ravi Ahuja, 'Lost Engagements? Traces of South Asian Soldiers in German Captivity, 1915-1918', in *When the War Began We Heard of Several Kings': South Asian Prisoners in World War I Germany*, ed. by Franziska Roy, Heike Liebau, and Ravi Ahuja (Social Science Press, 2011), pp. 17–52 (p. 33).

⁴⁸⁰ Britta Lange, 'Poste Restante, and Messages in Bottles: Sound Recordings of Indian Prisoners in the First World War', *Social Dynamics*, 41.1 (2015), 84–100 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/02533952.2014.989721>>, p. 96.

⁴⁸¹ Britta Lange, 'Poste Restante' (2015), p. 96.

⁴⁸² Adam Benkato and Veronika Ritt-Benmimoun, 'Voice Archives in Arabic Dialectology: The Case of the Southern Tunisian Recordings in the Berliner Lautarchiv', *The Journal of North African Studies*, 28.5 (2023), pp. 1142–62, doi:[10.1080/13629387.2022.2116011](https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2022.2116011).

through the recordings, not on the recordings' compositional content for what it might offer as commentary on the speaker's wartime or camp experiences as a form of testimonio life-writing. Rather, they examine those recordings for their capacity to reconsider traditional Arabic dialectology, and 'to shed valuable light on language change over time'.⁴⁸³ However, Benkato and Ritt-Benmimoun offer a helpful model in contextualising the Halbmondlager recordings, which is pertinent to my own research. Like Ahuja, Benkato and Ritt-Benmimoun argue that these recordings form 'part of an archive which is formed by and dependent on imperial power relations.'⁴⁸⁴ They describe the recordings 'as "sensitive documents" and cultural-historical artefacts,' rather than raw data, and argue that in delocalising the speaker from his 'recited or sung material', the speaker is 'separated, in the recorded object, from its social and epistemic contexts.'⁴⁸⁵ Drawing on Anette Hoffman's work on the Lautarchiv, Benkato and Ritt-Benmimoun position the imprisoned, recorded speakers as 'voice-only characters in the form of archived recordings that stem from projects of colonial knowledge production,' otherwise described as 'colonial acoustic figures' or 'echo-voices'.⁴⁸⁶ Heike Liebau similarly uses Hoffman's work when navigating the methodological complexities of using the Halbmondlager recordings to trace the trajectory of an individual Gurkha soldier's wartime experience and its relation to a global conflict.⁴⁸⁷ The historian, according to Liebau, 'de-contextualise[s] and then re-contextualise[s] again' the Halbmondlager recordings within their particular research project, compounding the separation of the speaker from their original 'social and epistemic context' by placing them in service of the

⁴⁸³ Adam Benkato and Veronika Ritt-Benmimoun, 'Voice Archives in Arabic Dialectology: The Case of the Southern Tunisian Recordings in the Berliner Lautarchiv', *The Journal of North African Studies*, 28.5 (2023), doi:[10.1080/13629387.2022.2116011](https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2022.2116011) (p. 4).

⁴⁸⁴ Adam Benkato and Veronika Ritt-Benmimoun, 'Voice Archives in Arabic Dialectology: The Case of the Southern Tunisian Recordings in the Berliner Lautarchiv', *The Journal of North African Studies*, 28.5 (2023), doi:[10.1080/13629387.2022.2116011](https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2022.2116011) (p. 3).

⁴⁸⁵ Adam Benkato and Veronika Ritt-Benmimoun, 'Voice Archives in Arabic Dialectology: The Case of the Southern Tunisian Recordings in the Berliner Lautarchiv', *The Journal of North African Studies*, 28.5 (2023), doi:[10.1080/13629387.2022.2116011](https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2022.2116011) (pp. 3 and 4).

⁴⁸⁶ Adam Benkato and Veronika Ritt-Benmimoun, 'Voice Archives in Arabic Dialectology: The Case of the Southern Tunisian Recordings in the Berliner Lautarchiv', *The Journal of North African Studies*, 28.5 (2023), doi:[10.1080/13629387.2022.2116011](https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2022.2116011) (p. 3); Heike Liebau, 'A Voice Recording, a Portrait Photo and Three Drawings: Tracing the Life of a Colonial Soldier', *ZMO Working Papers*, 20, Berlin: Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO), 20 (2018) <<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:101:1-2018082011442984482541>>, p. 11.

⁴⁸⁷ Heike Liebau, 'A Voice Recording, a Portrait Photo and Three Drawings: Tracing the Life of a Colonial Soldier', *ZMO Working Papers*, 20, Berlin: Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO), 20 (2018) <<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:101:1-2018082011442984482541>>, p. 11.

historian's own process of knowledge production.⁴⁸⁸ Indeed, quoting Hoffman, Liebau positions the Halbmondlager recordings as 'the uncertain reverberations of accounts, messages, interventions, commentary and critique that was articulated from subaltern positions in the process of producing an archive of languages.'⁴⁸⁹

This collective tendency – exhibited by Benkato, Ritt-Benmimoun, Liebau and indeed Hoffman – to understand the Halbmondlager recordings as 'mediated, often effaced, *reverberations*' or echoes 'of accounts of the self and the war' is especially pertinent for this thesis and its use of opacity and tentativeness as a deliberate decolonial intervention.⁴⁹⁰ It reinforces that the recordings ought not to be taken at face value as conventional life-writing, or indeed as assertions of agency in reclaiming their narrative in the face of global colonial forces. As discussed in more detail, below, in my examination of Ravi Ahuja's work on comparison and Alaka Atreya Chudal's work on life-writing, I argue that the context of the War, the Halbmondlager camp and the Royal Prussian Phonographic Commission's projects within the camp shifts how historians might understand the recordings as forms of life-writing, and certainly shifts how historians might understand them as articulations of individual agency. When faced with sources that need to be 'analysed as being the result of complex historical processes of knowledge production, reflecting not only the conditions of war and captivity, but also an often highly problematic, racist and colonial past,' methodologies of opacity and tentativeness can be especially constructive as they offer a new, reimagined way of encountering these sources – with all their historical context.⁴⁹¹ Indeed, Liebau suggests that these recordings provide 'a certain intimacy to the historical speaker,' and my research asks what *kind* of intimacy can we, as historians, expect in light of

⁴⁸⁸ Heike Liebau, 'A Voice Recording, a Portrait Photo and Three Drawings: Tracing the Life of a Colonial Soldier', *ZMO Working Papers*, 20, Berlin: Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO), 20 (2018) <<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:101:1-2018082011442984482541>>, p. 11.

⁴⁸⁹ Heike Liebau, 'A Voice Recording, a Portrait Photo and Three Drawings: Tracing the Life of a Colonial Soldier', *ZMO Working Papers*, 20, Berlin: Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO), 20 (2018) <<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:101:1-2018082011442984482541>>, p. 11.

⁴⁹⁰ Heike Liebau, 'A Voice Recording, a Portrait Photo and Three Drawings: Tracing the Life of a Colonial Soldier', *ZMO Working Papers*, 20, Berlin: Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO), 20 (2018) <<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:101:1-2018082011442984482541>>, p. 11 (emphasis added).

⁴⁹¹ Heike Liebau, 'A Voice Recording, a Portrait Photo and Three Drawings: Tracing the Life of a Colonial Soldier', *ZMO Working Papers*, 20, Berlin: Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO), 20 (2018) <<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:101:1-2018082011442984482541>>, p. 11.

the context outlined above.⁴⁹² By examining different registers of bodiliness in the recordings, the research presented across this chapter – to the extent it uses material from the Lautarchiv – proposes new ways of reimagining the audio materials and their encounter with the historian researcher. Bodiliness as a subject-matter and as a methodology are positioned as one approach to recognising the inherently fragmented narratives presented in – and the questions of consent, intentionality and agency presented *by* – the Halbmondlager recordings. Using models of affective sound ecologies, for example, allows me to interrogate how the act of reciting or singing or prayer – the sonic act that was recorded – may have had implications on the speaker's bodily materiality, whilst situating that act and the bodily dimensions in what I refer to as the 'specificity of the Halbmondlager physical and cultural site.'⁴⁹³ Exploring neurodiversity as method similarly allows me to make explicit my role as historian in the de-contextualising-re-contextualising process raised by Liebau, and offering a means of experiencing the intimacy to which she also speaks, whilst being very particular about how that intimacy is created and what it can, and cannot, tell us.

As noted above, the researchers required that the phonographic recordings be recorded in three written forms: a transcription in the speaker's native language, a phonetic romanisation of the original script, and a German translation, although in none of the recordings consulted are the transcribing and translating intermediaries credited.⁴⁹⁴ Whilst administrating linguists prescribed that all texts were to be written down 'in the handwriting style or typeface normally used for the speaker's language,' with the aim of procuring an 'exact correlation between written and spoken language,' the men's propensity to go off script meant that, in practice, 'new transcriptions had at times to be made' after the event of the recording.⁴⁹⁵ Some recorded speakers claim authorship of the narrative spoken –

⁴⁹² Heike Liebau, 'A Voice Recording, a Portrait Photo and Three Drawings: Tracing the Life of a Colonial Soldier', *ZMO Working Papers*, 20, Berlin: Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO), 20 (2018) <<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:101:1-2018082011442984482541>>, p. 11.

⁴⁹³ See page 222 of this thesis.

⁴⁹⁴ Britta Lange, 'Poste Restante' (2015), p. 89.

⁴⁹⁵ Jürgen Mahrenholz, 'Recordings of South Asian Languages and Music in the Lautarchiv of the Humboldt-Universität Zu Berlin', in *'When the War Began We Heard of Several Kings': South Asian Prisoners in World War I Germany*, ed. by Franziska Roy, Heike Liebau, and Ravi Ahuja (Social Science Press, 2011), pp. 187–206 (p. 196); Britta Lange, 'Poste Restante' (2015), p. 89.

Mala Singh, for example, begins his recording 'Mala Singh wrote a sweet story' – while others are silent on this point.⁴⁹⁶ Listening to the original recordings in parallel with the German and occasional English translations, it became clear that there was a consistent interpretation by the German translators of 'ੴ' (Punjabi; romanised as 'ik onkār', pronounced 'ek oan-kar') as 'Om!'.⁴⁹⁷ The concept of ik onkār occurs repeatedly, at the start of either the recording or a distinct section, at which point the speaker invokes the following spiritual grace (here in Punjabi, its romanisation, and in English):

ੴ ਸਤਿ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ (ik onkār sat guru parsād)

Ik onkār, by the grace of the true guru.⁴⁹⁸

In all instances, ik onkār is clearly enunciated in the soldiers' recordings and written in Punjabi script in the associated Punjabi transcription; indeed, the German phonetic transcriptions of the recordings also recognise it (using the phonetic spelling, 'ek onkār'). Yet in the final German translation documents, the interpretation is always 'Om!'. This interpretive choice is significant because of the role each concept in its own right plays in the bodily and sonic aspects of Sikh and Hindu religious practices. It is perhaps not,

⁴⁹⁶ Mala Singh, 'Recording and transcript of Mala Singh (PK 600)' (Wünsdorf, 1916), Lautarchiv, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, PK 600 <<https://www.lautarchiv.hu-berlin.de/en/objekte/lautarchiv/10363/>>. Hereafter, and for all other repeat Lautarchiv references, the full citation will be shortened.

⁴⁹⁷ See the following seven records: Bela Singh, 'Recording and transcript of Bela Singh (PK 589)' (Wünsdorf, 1916), Lautarchiv, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, PK 589 <<https://www.lautarchiv.hu-berlin.de/en/objekte/lautarchiv/10018/>>; Mala Singh (PK 600, 1916), Lautarchiv, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin; Mala Singh, 'Recording and transcript of Mala Singh (PK 601)' (Wünsdorf, 1916), Lautarchiv, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, PK 601 <<https://www.lautarchiv.hu-berlin.de/en/objekte/lautarchiv/10364/>>; Candan Singh, 'Recording and transcript of Candan Singh (PK 608)' (Wünsdorf, 1916), Lautarchiv, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, PK 608 <<https://www.lautarchiv.hu-berlin.de/en/objekte/lautarchiv/10379/>>; Badan Singh, 'Recording and transcript of Badan Singh (PK 612)' (Wünsdorf, 1916), Lautarchiv, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, PK 612 <<https://www.lautarchiv.hu-berlin.de/en/objekte/lautarchiv/10385/>>; Mall Singh and Gurdit Singh, 'Recording and transcript of Mall Singh and Gurdit Singh (PK 619)' (Wünsdorf, 1916), Lautarchiv, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, PK 619 <<https://www.lautarchiv.hu-berlin.de/en/objekte/lautarchiv/10395/>>; Gajan Singh and Badan Singh, 'Recording and transcript of Gajan Singh and Badan Singh (PK 677)' (Wünsdorf, 1917), Lautarchiv, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, PK 677 <<https://www.lautarchiv.hu-berlin.de/en/objekte/lautarchiv/10605/>>.

⁴⁹⁸ A selection of the recordings that follow this pattern include (all from Lautarchiv, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin): Bela Singh (PK 589, 1916); Mala Singh (PK 600, 1916); Mala Singh (PK 601, 1916); Candan Singh (PK 608, 1916); Badan Singh (PK 612, 1916); Mall Singh and Gurdit Singh (PK 619, 1916); Gajan Singh and Badan Singh (PK 677, 1917). I have deliberately retained ik onkār here and not attempted to translate it; as heralded by the discussion of Spivak's work above and as detailed more below, ik onkār is a multifaceted concept and it would flatten the meaning to try and pin its English translation down to any one phrase.

however, surprising in light of the position taken by the men steering the project. In his book *Jainism: An Indian Religion of Salvation*, first published in 1925, von Glasenapp describes Om as the contraction of a 'mantra which [...] plays a great role in the mysticism of all Indian schools'.⁴⁹⁹ Of course, von Glasenapp may simply have coordinated the translations, rather than conducting them himself, however the sweeping statement italicised – made with apparently no urge to discriminate between specific uses amongst different religions or even different communities within religions – would tally with the conflation of all 'so-called [...] "non-Aryan" languages' and the absence of the attentive, responsible methodology espoused by Spivak. Together, this perhaps points to a governing policy for the translation work that prioritised the mass collection of language samples over discerning translation work and the specifics of individual languages and dialects, with the result that confluences of 'mystic' sounds from between different religions abounded.

Owing to the close relationship between Indic faiths and their emergences, there is some debate amongst Indologists, theologians and religious reformers as to the relationship between ik onkār and Om.⁵⁰⁰ However, despite some possible overlap in their origins and meanings, the dominant scholarly position is that they cannot be used interchangeably. The translation therefore represents a specific, if unintentional, theological interpretation on the part of the German translators that conflates distinct sacred, 'cosmic' sounds, and illustrates the importance of Spivak's point about cultural understanding in translation.⁵⁰¹ For the purposes of this chapter, the use of ik onkār is important to understanding the possible affective experiences of those Indian Army soldiers held prisoner in Wünsdorf; however, there is a further question of what historians can learn from the consistent interpretation of ik onkār by the German linguists as something quite distinct. By way of a brief overview of their respective meanings, Om is typically understood within Hindu philosophies as 'a

⁴⁹⁹ H. von Glasenapp and S.B. Shrotri, *Jainism: An Indian Religion of Salvation*, Lala Sunder Lal Jain Research Series (Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1999), p. 410-411 (emphasis added).

⁵⁰⁰ Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia, 'Anti-Feudal Dialectic of Sikhism', *Social Scientist*, 2.8 (1974), 22–26 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/3516312>>; 'Om', ed. by Wendy Doniger, *Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of World Religions*, Merriam-Webster (Merriam-Webster, 1999), p. 826; Arvind Mandair, 'The Politics of Nonduality: Reassessing the Work of Transcendence in Modern Sikh Theology', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 74.3 (2006), 646–73 <www.jstor.org/stable/4094003> [accessed 25 June 2020].

⁵⁰¹ 'Ik Onkar', ed. by Wendy Doniger, *Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of World Religions*, Merriam-Webster (Merriam-Webster, 1999), p. 500.

sacred, mystical syllable' – a 'cosmic sound' – used extensively at the beginning and end of Hindu prayers, chants and meditations to '[encapsulate] all other mantras, or sacred formulas, and represents the totality of the universe.'⁵⁰² It is 'composed of three sounds, *a-u-m* [...] which represent several important triads: the three worlds of earth, atmosphere, and heaven; the three major Hindu gods, Brahmā, Vishnu and Shiva; and the three sacred Vedic scriptures, Rg, Yagus, and Sāma.'⁵⁰³ Arvind Mandair notes that Om is therefore typically expounded in terms of pantheism within Hindu philosophies, whereas ik onkār is usually 'differentiated from [Om] by the numeral 1 (*ik*) which [...] is evidence for the monotheistic nature of Sikhism.'⁵⁰⁴ Its emphasis for Sikhism is not only on 'the oneness of God', the 'Absolute', but also on God's 'in-itself *indeterminate* character, and the practice of speaking ik onkār aloud thus occupies a central role in the affective ecology of the gurdwāra (the Sikh space of worship).'⁵⁰⁵ Like Om, it eludes any one specific meaning; rather, it is taken to represent a singular divine truth and connotes the associated divine characteristics.⁵⁰⁶ A (meta)physical sense of closeness to that divine truth is achieved through reciting sections of the Sikh holy text, the Guru Granth Sahib (GGS), including references to ik onkār which appears in the opening creedal statement and over 100 separate times throughout the GGS.⁵⁰⁷ The practice of reciting manifests 'limitless divine vibrations' known as anhad, which 'make[s] physically perceptible divine vibrations that are otherwise not heard.'⁵⁰⁸ A form of cosmic sound, anhad conceives of 'sound as vibration in a material medium rather than just in the hearing ear,' encapsulating the idea of the sonic as a complex, bodily materiality.⁵⁰⁹ Just as one sounds anhad through reciting scripture, one simultaneously *experiences* it.⁵¹⁰ This is relevant for this project, as it affirms that practices of experiencing knowledge have long been understood by spiritual communities as a bodily

⁵⁰² 'Ik Onkar', ed. by Wendy Doniger, *Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of World Religions* (1999), p. 500; Harpreet Singh, Damanpreet Singh, and Ravinder Singh, 'Mul Mantar: The Sikh Creedal Statement', 2020 <<https://www.edx.org/course/sikhism-through-its-scriptures>>.

⁵⁰³ 'Om', ed. by Wendy Doniger, *Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of World Religions* (1999), p. 826 (emphasis in original).

⁵⁰⁴ Mandair, 'The Politics of Nonduality' (2006), pp. 656-657 (emphasis in original).

⁵⁰⁵ Mandair, 'The Politics of Nonduality' (2006), pp. 656-657; Singh Ahluwalia, 'Anti-Feudal Dialectic of Sikhism' (1974), p. 26 (emphasis in original).

⁵⁰⁶ Singh, Singh, and Singh, 'Mul Mantar' (2020).

⁵⁰⁷ K. Haar and others, *Sikhism, Religions of the World* (Facts On File, Incorporated, 2009), pp. 32, 55 and 81; Kaur, 'When "Unheard Sound" (Re)Sounds' (2016), pp. 3 and 8.

⁵⁰⁸ Kaur, 'When "Unheard Sound" (Re)Sounds' (2016), pp. 3 and 21.

⁵⁰⁹ Kaur, 'When "Unheard Sound" (Re)Sounds' (2016), p. 21.

⁵¹⁰ Kaur, 'When "Unheard Sound" (Re)Sounds' (2016), p. 22.

entanglement with sound (with which sound scholars are only recently beginning to engage).⁵¹¹ This helps tease out one possible aspect of the materiality of sound(ing) in the context of the Halbmondlager recordings: the sonic experience of the men partaking in the recording, and of the historian listening to the digitised file, can be understood as a bodily one (that goes beyond the touch of the camp administrators holding the imprisoned men).

This experience is a particularly pertinent one for exploring otherwise methodologies, in this case interrogating how autobiography might be a method of encountering the archive and using emotion as a 'category' of historical investigation. As discussed at length in my introduction, this methodological complication of the archival encounter was informed by the works of Saidiya Hartman, Tina Campt and Christina Sharpe; I reference their pioneering work in seeking to form some relationality with the Indian Army soldiers by using bodiliness as a method to reach towards the unknowability of the men's experiences.⁵¹² When researching and writing this chapter, I thus began by trying to situate myself and my bodily relationship to the recordings, to understand how this bodiliness might change how I understand the Indian Army soldiers' experiences in the Halbmondlager camp. This developed into recording what Hartman would term my 'deep encounters' with the archive; something felt, rather than followed, an encounter that traces a bodily reaction to the archive as much as the content reviewed in the reading room.⁵¹³ Following Hartman, design historian Livia Rezende has written of her research process and findings at the archives of the Rio de Janeiro Escola Superior de Desenho Industrial, relayed to the reader:

through a different genre, one that emerged from journaling during archival research, a reflexive and poetic account that helped me (there and then) to record and make sense of the entanglements of place making, design education and

⁵¹¹ See for example, Schulze, *The Sonic Persona* (2018), p. 15 ('Sensory experiences of humanoids are material [...] Sounds are corporeal'); N.S. Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound: Singing and Listening as Vibrational Practice*, Sign, Storage, Transmission (Duke University Press, 2015), which understands (musical) sound as an 'intermaterial vibrational practice' that absolutely includes bodily materiality.

⁵¹² Hartman has written of her intention that practitioners in other fields use her work, and I hope that those parts of this thesis that use her work do so with care. See Thora Siemsen, 'On Working with Archives: An Interview with Writer Saidiya Hartman', *The Creative Independent*, 2021 <<https://thecreativeindependent.com/people/saidiya-hartman-on-working-with-archives/>>: 'It pleases me that people can engage the work and yet take it into whatever practice they're involved in. I have friends who are dancers who've worked with my texts in building dance pieces.' For the discussion in my Introduction, see pages 77-78, above.

⁵¹³ Siemsen, 'An Interview with Writer Saidiya Hartman' (2021).

political imagination, and on the archival silences and incompleteness that I encountered.⁵¹⁴

Rezende uses the personal, felt aspects of the archive as a methodological framework built around journaling the experiential ('I don't feel anger or frustration. I am eager to see beyond what is not right, correct, or normative where others would see only mess'), the quotidian ('Objects, like the old floor polisher, here seem at home. Shouldn't a design history archive be inhabited by objects?') and sometimes the humour in the archival encounter ('I am grateful for not spotting cockroaches. I find lots of termites and their debris but no cockroach. I can work here').⁵¹⁵ The personal – in the sense of one's own encounter with the archive, in tandem with the sense of an embodied positionality that we each bring to our deep archival encounter – and the humorous is also discussed by design historian Sarah Cheang in her work on the lived experiences of writer and poet Chiang Yee. Describing a passage from Chiang Yee's *The Silent Traveller in London*, in which Yee's companion S. I. Hsiung speaks of losing his hat when looking up at much taller policemen, Cheang notes:

This vignette of Chiang Yee's made such a vivid, or felt, impression on me that, in my memory of the passage, I thought that there had been an accompanying illustration. Going back to the book some years later, I was astonished to find no little line drawing of Hsiung looking up, his hat rolling away, or Chiang Yee curiously sidling up to the policeman at a safe distance. Instead, I found an image of a very different scene: a befuddled 'Bobby' surrounded by dancing locals on Jubilee night.⁵¹⁶

This re-authorship of the archive through personal memory speaks to another type of bodily encounter with the archive; it is deeply embodied and person-specific. Cheang later cites Patricia DeRocher, who argues that 'experiences are always both "real" and "constructed," at once referring to actual, outward, objective events, but always necessarily filtered

⁵¹⁴ Livia Lazzaro Rezende, "'Deep Encounters' with the Archives: Reflections of a Design Historian in Brazil (in Two Acts)", *RMIT Design Archives Journal*, 11.2 (2021), 11–19

<https://issuu.com/rmitdesignarchives/docs/rda_journal_25_11.2_supply_singlepages_issuu/12>, p. 15.

⁵¹⁵ Rezende, "'Deep Encounters'" (2021), p. 15.

⁵¹⁶ Sarah Cheang, 'Being Chiang Yee: Feeling, Difference, and Storytelling', in *Chiang Yee and His Circle: Chinese Artistic and Intellectual Life in Britain, 1930–1950*, ed. by P. Bevan, A. Witchard, and D. Zheng (Hong Kong University Press, 2022), pp. 37–50 (p. 38).

through our subjective lens as embodied subjects, and further shaped by language and available social narratives.⁵¹⁷ It is this 'murky land between autobiography, documentary, memory, and storytelling' that I aim to draw out by considering the bodily materialities of the historian, and its impact on my research question. It goes beyond emphasising the blind spots of the historian, or in discussing our positionalities as limitations, and instead embraces how embodied experience 'can be an experimental strategy.'⁵¹⁸

With this in mind, it is important to recognise – as discussed in Chapter 1 – that bodiliness is a shifting, iterative thing and to interrogate the impact this can have on the historian researching and writing about materials encountered in the archive. Each time I open up the folder on my laptop that contains the digitised recordings, for example, I am conscious of the passage of time and bodily change I have experienced since I was first sent these recordings in 2020, and the different bodily experiences I continue to have on each re-listen. In 2020, I was in the early stages of pregnancy during the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. I, like many others, was plagued by an anxiety that has not really left, and I sat most days at my IKEA kitchen table that was always slightly too low. Working beside my partner, I listened to the recordings through the headphones that had come with my mobile phone – the quality of which was so poor that I relied far more on the written transcriptions and the translations offered by Punjabi and German speakers who kindly assisted me.⁵¹⁹ It is now late 2022. I work in the room at the top of our house in Brighton, from which I can see one of the hospitals that hosted Indian Army soldiers in the early First World War. It is warm here today, and the seagulls can still be heard beyond my noise-cancelling headphones through which I listen to the Halbmondlager recordings. Amidst these conditions, my headphones relay first the overbearing crackle that dominates all of the recordings. A combination of the initial recording process and audio quality of the wax cylinder played to digitise its content, the crackle masks much of the volume of the speakers' voices, but they

⁵¹⁷ Cheang, 'Being Chiang Yee' (2022), p. 45.

⁵¹⁸ Cheang, 'Being Chiang Yee' (2022), p. 38.

⁵¹⁹ I am very grateful to Gurnesha and Bal Bola for their Punjabi translations, and to Beth Eggleston for her patient work on the German texts. I consider their role, as an academic and material, bodily contribution, later in this chapter.

can still be distinctly made out – along with intermittent coughing, background talking and a held (maybe instrumental?) note that ends some of the recitations.⁵²⁰

However this sonic experience is for me also affected by an entanglement of spatial sequence synaesthesia with other information processing characteristics related to my dyslexia and dyspraxia. Concepts, time, readings, sounds and conversations for me attract a 'location' in my mind's eye that I am unable to shift. For example, when writing or thinking about Chapter 3 of this thesis, I am thrust into my grandparents' dining room from over 20 years ago (Figure 59). The Halbmondlager recordings are, for me, a number of viewpoints from around the house and garden of a childhood friend (Figure 60). These are the images, but also the smells and affective sensations, that are conjured up by my bodiliness when I engage with these sources; they have no particular correlation with the subject matter, but immediate, strong associations with a place is how I process most forms of information. To speak of listening as a material, bodily experience then, for me, is to acknowledge this spatial dimension of listening that brings the recorded men from 1916 into direct conversation with a space I knew circa 2000. In combination with my own shifting bodiliness and bodily relationship to my listening environment, my experience of listening to the Halbmondlager recordings is a developing and plural one. This spatial experience of processing the archival encounter reinforces the broader point made by Rezende, Cheang, and to an extent DeRocher, above, in that deep encounters with the archive and the research that results can be mediated through emotions and embodied experience – here an embodied, neurodivergent lens. However it also raises questions along the lines of those posed by the works of Hartman, Campt and Sharpe; how does this change the relationship

⁵²⁰ Mall Singh and Gurdit Singh (PK 619, 1916) (cough at 0:51, musical note held at the end) and Bela Singh (PK 589, 1916) (background chatter, musical note held at the end); both from Lautarchiv, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

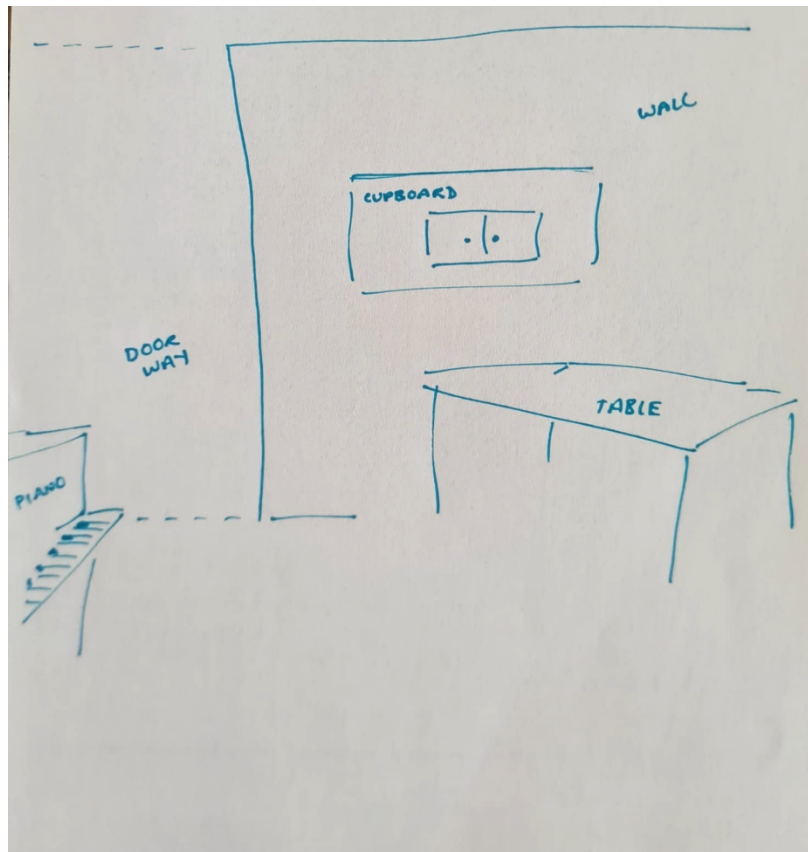


Figure 59.

A sketch of the perspective from which I experience the third chapter of this thesis, owing to a combination of synaesthesia, and dyspraxic and dyslexic information processing tendencies. The space sketched is my grandparents dining room, seen as if sat in the far-left corner, looking towards the wall separating the room from the kitchen (drawing author's own).

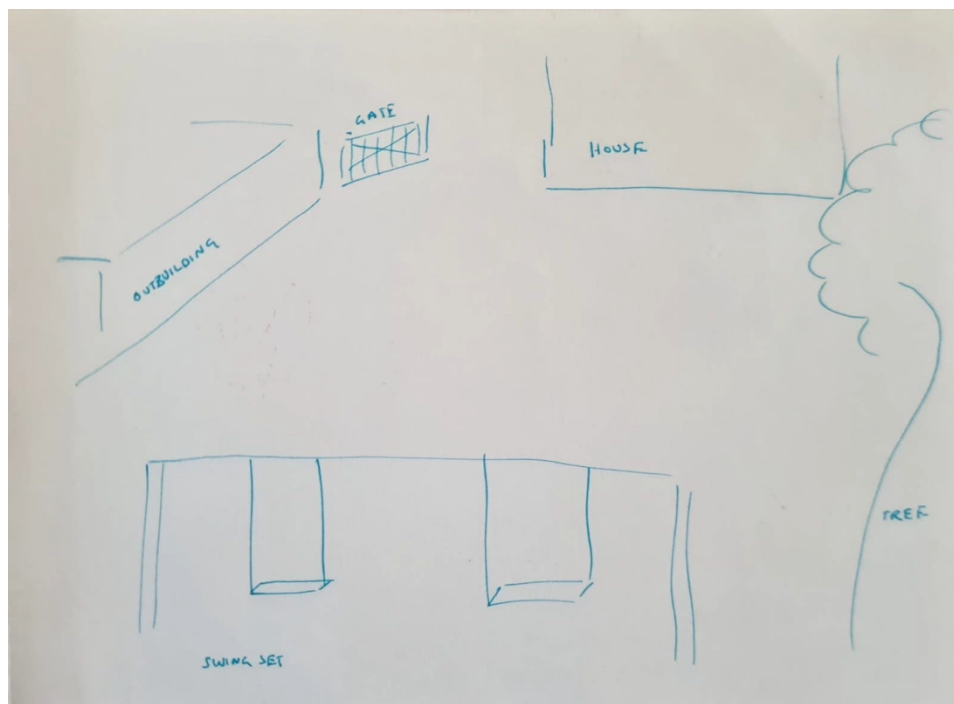


Figure 60.

A sketch of the perspective from which I experience the Halbmondlager recordings, owing to a combination of synaesthesia, and dyspraxic and dyslexic information processing tendencies. The space sketched is the garden of a childhood friend, experienced from a space above the swing set at the foot of the garden (drawing author's own).

of the design historian to the historical subject?

Such questions also sit awkwardly with the dominant narrative of academic History-research and writing methodologies, which tend to be stripped of discussion of emotion and embodiment to present the archival encounter as processed uniformly (even where the physical and discursive archive is itself broadly understood as constructed).⁵²¹ Since the so-called 'sensory turn' in material culture studies in the early 2000s, the fields of anthropology, material culture studies, (digital) sound studies, and archaeology have been engaged with questions of bodiliness and embodied knowledges that begin to touch on the language of neurodiversities as a matter of method.⁵²² However, these debates tend to be limited to the sensory aspects of culture itself – for example, how culture is experienced by society, or the discursive potential of the senses in mediating society's perception of material culture – rather than the role of sensorial experience in the researcher and as an intentional part of their methodology. Indeed, decoloniality and disability studies have been linked, but only insofar as psychologists have begun unpicking diagnostic criteria as being determined by European paradigms of what it means to 'be' and to 'be able'.⁵²³ Questions of what historians – and especially design historians, for whom material cultures are a key primary source – might learn from neurodiverse sensorial experience as method therefore continues to lack any sustained engagement in the field of historical studies. The historian's bodily lens points to structural problems around disciplines, and academic history's reluctance to embrace the body as a living record and a historiographic mediator, in the form of the historian.

⁵²¹ For example, M. Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. by A. Sheridan, *Archaeology of Knowledge* (Routledge, 2002), p. 146, and Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Duke University Press, 2003) <<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ual/detail.action?docID=1167937>>, p. 19.

⁵²² For example, D. Howes, 'Scent, Sound and Synaesthesia: Intersensoriality and Material Culture Theory', in *Handbook of Material Culture*, ed. by Christopher Tilley and others (SAGE Publications, 2006), pp. 161–72 <<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ual/detail.action?docID=1024140>>; Linda Hurcombe, 'A Sense of Materials and Sensory Perception in Concepts of Materiality', *World Archaeology*, 39.4 (2007), 532–45 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/00438240701679346>>; Schulze, *The Sonic Persona* (2018).

⁵²³ Thomas P. Dirth and Glenn A. Adams, 'Decolonial Theory and Disability Studies: On the Modernity/Coloniality of Ability', *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 7.1 (2019), 260–89 <<https://doi.org/10.5964/jspp.v7i1.762>>; Margaret F. Gibson, Izumi Sakamoto, and Hannah Monroe, 'Decolonizing Neurodiversity? Implications for Social Work Education' <https://uwaterloo.ca/scholar/sites/ca.scholar/files/m23gibso/files/caswe-acfts-decolonizing_neurodiversity-june_3-pr-v1-0900.pdf>.

The bodily materialities of the historian – and the contemporary public – have been addressed by Priyanka Basu in her analysis of Philip Scheffner's film *The Halfmoon Files: A Ghost Story*.⁵²⁴ Basu traces the 'elaborate layering of visual and aural techniques of display and absence' deployed by Scheffner in his exposition of the Lautarchiv and archival material related to Halbmondlager, and her interpretation of the filmography and research is instructive for understanding how my own research, and the bodily methodologies proposed here, sit in relation to other experimental works on Halbmondlager. What emerges from her analysis is that the outcome and effect of Scheffner's work is similar to how I experienced the methodologies explored here; however, the objectives of his research and creative output remains slightly at odds with my own. Beginning with these objectives, Basu notes how Scheffner's assemblage of 'archival and contemporary audio and visual materials' were intentionally used to 'interrogate and read its documentary components against the grain.'⁵²⁵ This was achieved, however, through 'attempts to *undo* the original scientific and colonial intentions of its archival elements,' and I would question whether it is possible to unpick or reverse the colonial imperatives with which an archive was produced.⁵²⁶ As discussed above, Adam Benkato, Veronika Ritt-Benmimoun and Heike Liebau have written extensively on the importance of situating Halbmondlager primary sources in their cultural context, to be 'analysed as being the result of complex historical processes of knowledge production, reflecting not only the conditions of war and captivity, but also an often highly problematic, racist and colonial past.'⁵²⁷ Coloniality is inseparable from the Lautarchiv, both in the subject-matter of its content and its archival modes of knowledge production. A more cautious summary of Scheffner's method can be found elsewhere in Basu's analysis, where she describes the film's

desire to *subvert* the original protocols of and otherwise see and hear these archival materials [...] *loosening* sounds and images from their official contexts and

⁵²⁴ Priyanka Basu, 'Archives of German Anthropology and Colonialism in Philip Scheffner's *The Halfmoon Files*', *Third Text*, 33.6 (2019), pp. 727–43 (p. 731), doi:[10.1080/09528822.2019.1667618](https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2019.1667618).

⁵²⁵ Priyanka Basu, 'Archives of German Anthropology and Colonialism in Philip Scheffner's *The Halfmoon Files*', *Third Text*, 33.6 (2019), pp. 727–43 (p. 731), doi:[10.1080/09528822.2019.1667618](https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2019.1667618).

⁵²⁶ Priyanka Basu, 'Archives of German Anthropology and Colonialism in Philip Scheffner's *The Halfmoon Files*', *Third Text*, 33.6 (2019), pp. 727–43 (p. 731), doi:[10.1080/09528822.2019.1667618](https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2019.1667618).

⁵²⁷ Heike Liebau, 'A Voice Recording, a Portrait Photo and Three Drawings: Tracing the Life of a Colonial Soldier', *ZMO Working Papers*, 20, Berlin: Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO), 20 (2018) <<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:101:1-2018082011442984482541>>, p. 11.

standardised formats in order to make them available for interpretation and so that they may impact viewers and listeners *bodily and cerebrally*.⁵²⁸

Where the coloniality of the archive cannot be 'undone', it might be challenged or 'subverted,' through its materials being used in unexpected ways or ways that challenge the epistemological and ontological foundations of the materials itself. Here, Basu positions Scheffner's film as appealing to viewers on an affective level ('bodily and cerebrally') by 'loosening' archival sounds; she goes on to speak, in relation to visual archival material, as 'unravelling' through a directorial choice to foreground 'mediation, accident, and partial truths.'⁵²⁹ Scheffner, Basu explains, uses layering and assemblage to juxtapose archival material, fictionalisation, blank screens, contemporary film footage and audio to create a disjunctive effect of bringing attention to and heightening the emotional qualities of the auditory archival material, including their corporeal impact and abilities in the present to speak to an audience in ways other than how they were intended.⁵³⁰

The result is a filmographic approach that creates opacity and unknowing in the viewer, it forefronts the partial nature of the archive, and either bares the archival gaps explicitly or fills them with narratives created from a blend of fiction and primary research. By not only highlighting the fragmentary nature of the archive and its opacity, but moreover by making opacity one of his primary filmographic techniques through mixing and layering sources, Scheffner develops a form of bodily methodology through film that has, to use Basu's words, corporeal impact. Basu also makes the point that such techniques are inherently disruptive to the coloniality of the archive, and to archival research; she writes that Scheffner reveals '[t]he colonial scene of encounter [...] to be one of technological reproduction, of a colonial mimetic desire to access the other through such representational techniques [as film or audio recording].'⁵³¹ This echoes Gayatri Spivak's work, discussed above, on the problematic search for absolute equivalency in translation work. Where the

⁵²⁸ Priyanka Basu, 'Archives of German Anthropology and Colonialism in Philip Scheffner's *The Halfmoon Files*', *Third Text*, 33.6 (2019), pp. 727–43 (pp. 729 and 731, emphases added), doi:[10.1080/09528822.2019.1667618](https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2019.1667618).

⁵²⁹ Priyanka Basu, 'Archives of German Anthropology and Colonialism in Philip Scheffner's *The Halfmoon Files*', *Third Text*, 33.6 (2019), pp. 727–43 (p. 740), doi:[10.1080/09528822.2019.1667618](https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2019.1667618).

⁵³⁰ Priyanka Basu, 'Archives of German Anthropology and Colonialism in Philip Scheffner's *The Halfmoon Files*', *Third Text*, 33.6 (2019), pp. 727–43 (p. 734), doi:[10.1080/09528822.2019.1667618](https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2019.1667618).

⁵³¹ Priyanka Basu, 'Archives of German Anthropology and Colonialism in Philip Scheffner's *The Halfmoon Files*', *Third Text*, 33.6 (2019), pp. 727–43 (p. 731), doi:[10.1080/09528822.2019.1667618](https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2019.1667618).

search for mimesis is the site of colonial encounter, bodily methodologies that cultivate an affective viewership (rather than a neat narrative 'smoothing over of lacunae') can help disrupt the coloniality of the archive in which the research is situated. By using bodily methodologies that prioritise sensory engagement with the archive and even use neurodiverse lived experience as method, my own research similarly proposes ways of disrupting conventional modes of knowledge production and reimagining how the historian can encounter the historical subject.

My bodily listening experiences informed how far theories of affective ecology have resonated with me, and how natural it feels to place them into dialogue with the Halbmondlager recordings. Inderjit Nilu Kaur argues that reciting scripture within the gurdwāra and between Sikh sacred spaces globally generates a 'transmission of affect' between congregants. Kaur's position is different to other theories of affective economy, such as that proposed by Sara Ahmed, which explicitly focuses on those feelings and emotions that create an affect as the direct result of being circulated, rather than residing 'positively *in* the sign or commodity.'⁵³² For Ahmed, feelings and emotions pick up affective value only as they move between things, including people and objects, whereas Inderjit Nilu Kaur's argument rests on the assumption that the divine does indeed reside positively within the GGS, and that this is experienced through an engagement with scripture.⁵³³ What is circulated is the affect of that experience, on a global level; for Kaur, the 'transnational and global circulation' of these practices affectively links Sikhs around the world, creating an "affective alliance": an organisation of concrete material practices and events, cultural forms and social experience.'⁵³⁴ The result is the design of a cultural space through the materiality of sound, as experienced in a personal, bodily way. What emerged from my own listening encounter with the digital archive was not a transfer of a shared affect with other listeners, but an acutely bodily experience of a spatial quality or association that each recording has innately for me. Thinking about the potential of history research and writing as practice, however, this opens up the potential for historians who process sound spatially

⁵³² Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2014), p. 45 (emphasis added).

⁵³³ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2014).

⁵³⁴ Kaur, 'Transnational Affects, Transnational Worldings' (2018), p. 31.

to share their affective experiences – through sketches similar to those at Figures 59 and 60, or indeed through other ways of conceptualising space.

Using the affective potential of sound as an interpretive aid, specific Halbmondlager recordings might be understood as cultivating an affective ecology between speakers and their peers. Bela Singh, Mala Singh, Candan Singh, Badan Singh, Mall Singh, Gurdit Singh, and Gajan Singh all call on ik onkār in their various recordings, which range from personal histories that resonate with testimonio forms of collective experience, stories set to a sung melody, fables and mythical narratives and pieces that, in written form, echo forms of poetry and structures that can be found in the GGS. I want to hold space for the possibility that this invocation to the divine through ik onkār results partly in a generation of bodily affect, if not the full manifestation of anhad divine vibrations. For these spaces were not gurdwāras; the recordings are being made for the benefit of the anthropological and linguistics researchers administering the recordings. The concept of worldings, outlined in my introduction, is especially useful here, as it can help historians situate this use of particular sonic forms and experiences within the specificity of the Halbmondlager physical and cultural site. The singularity of an 'individual's world making' is central to ethnomusicological studies on sacred affectivities, which tend to emphasise that religious communities are 'heterogeneous [...] with diverse subjectivities as well as multiple forms of belonging,' such that affective ecologies will vary between the communities cultivating affect and between historical moments.⁵³⁵ What, if anything, is being generated by Bela Singh, Mala Singh, Candan Singh, Badan Singh, Mall Singh, Gurdit Singh, and Gajan Singh might be different to the generative sonic affect typically experienced by Sikh congregants, but it might also vary between the men themselves, owing both to their own singular subjectivities and also the different times at which they were recorded. The choice by the German translators to substitute Om for ik onkār thus has a number of potential repercussions. It obscures not only the specifically Sikh ontology and reality to which the men were speaking, but also the bodily materialities of the sound. This bodily experience may not have been anhad as conventionally understood and felt, but the translation as Om

⁵³⁵ Kaur, 'Transnational Affects, Transnational Worldings' (2018), pp. 31-32; Regula Qureshi, 'How Does Music Mean? Embodied Memories and the Politics of Affect in the Indian "Sarangi"', *American Ethnologist*, 27.4 (2000), 805–838 <www.jstor.org/stable/647396> [accessed 5 November 2019], p. 811.

then obscures the plural potential of each speaker's invocation of ik onkār. Drawing on the ethnomusicological discourse that emphasises the generative and plural nature of affectivity, I would as historical translator suggest that each speaker can be understood as partaking in a generative exercise, cultivating a form of affect through sound that is experienced through – maybe singular, maybe collective – bodily materialities. There are repercussions here too for knowledge production. The use of these translations in scholarly articles without an understanding of the distinctions between ik onkār and Om, contributes to the erasure of spiritual specificities, and also to reductive accounts that do not acknowledge the generative potential in the Indian Army during the First World War. Rather than try to explain the translation choice – or to pin down conclusively the intention of the original speakers – historians could instead point to the lack of 'frayage' in language as an example of how meaning and intention in the voices of historical subjects are altered, distorted and fragmented, and in this changed form go on to inform research into the experiences of those same subjects.

PLURAL MATERIALITIES

This section builds on the discussion above, and explores how design historians might work with sound(ing) that inhabits plural materialities. A large proportion of letters exchanged between men serving in the Indian Army on the Western Front during the early years of the First World War include passages that echo forms of prayer and popular narrative, both of which are considered in the discussion that follows. These typically draw on norms of language and sound(ing) from across India, and aim to replicate in written form what would have otherwise been delivered orally. As noted above, many would have been delivered orally to a peer or senior soldier acting as scribe; return letters from soldiers' correspondents in India would likely have been similarly transcribed to a local scribe.⁵³⁶ Letters to and from soldiers were then passed through layers of regimental censorship, likely conducted by senior British commanding officers and Indian non-commissioned

⁵³⁶ Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War* (1999), pp. 4 and 5, which points to the example of correspondence written by Nur Muhammed 'on behalf of the wife of Din Muhammed' to her husband, dated January 1916 (p. 146).

officers, and thereafter censorship at one of seven Indian Base Post Offices (IBPO).⁵³⁷ Those letters that passed the Censor's scrutiny would then be delivered, and likely read aloud to their recipients by a similar regimental or local scribe.⁵³⁸ It is from the Boulogne IBPO that the extracts discussed below are sourced, through their Censor reports.⁵³⁹ The IBPO hosted a team of between four and eight translators, made up 'mainly [of] oriental scholars and old India "hands"' and two Indian postal clerks, led initially by Indian Civil Service member Second Lieutenant E.B. Howell, a former interpreter to an Indian cavalry regiment.⁵⁴⁰ This team collectively read samples of the incoming and outgoing mail and drafted weekly (and later fortnightly) reports on general tone and content.⁵⁴¹

The Censor of Indian Mails reports included translated fragments of letters that were both suppressed and passed inspection, and are the only surviving fragments of Indian Army First World War correspondence, besides individual examples that may exist in private ownership. These fragments have therefore received extensive scholarly attention, and their accessibility as publicly-available documents in the heart of the imperial archive (the National Archives and later the British Library) has meant they have formed the basis of much academic research into the lives of the Indian Army soldiers.⁵⁴² However, my work proposes using them differently; by examining the translated, censored extracts through frameworks of bodiliness, my work listens for their sonic traces, rather than reading them as coded or literal accounts of the men's experiences. What follows then is an examination of these sources as they undergo plural, compounding layers of translation: from oral articulation and transcription, to regimental and IBPO censorship and translation for Censor reports, to being read aloud to the recipient. I consider first those letters that include

⁵³⁷ Hubert Arthur Sams, *The Post Office of India in the Great War* (Bombay (Mumbai): Times Press, 1922), Cornell University Library, p. 99.

⁵³⁸ Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War* (1999), p. 5, which points to examples of correspondence that read 'This letter is for my mother, but I am addressing it to you,' and similar (p. 310).

⁵³⁹ Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War* (1999), p. 6.

⁵⁴⁰ Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War* (1999), p. 6.

⁵⁴¹ Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War* (1999), pp. 6-7.

⁵⁴² See for example the extensive work by David Omissi in publishing a selection of the letters (Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War* (1999)), and the following selection of publications from scholars who have used Omissi's selection and/or the original IOR manuscripts in their research on the Indian Army: Barkawi, *Soldiers of Empire* (2017); Das, *Writings, Images, and Songs* (2018); Imy, *Faithful Fighters* (2019); George Morton-Jack, *The Indian Army on the Western Front: India's Expeditionary Force to France and Belgium in the First World War*, Cambridge Military Histories (Cambridge University Press, 2014); Olusoga, *The World's War* (2015); David Omissi, 'Europe through Indian Eyes: Indian Soldiers Encounter England and France', *English Historical Review*, 122.496 (2007), 371-96; Singh, *Between Self and Sepoy* (2015).

passages reminiscent of prayer forms, and then those letters that include references to forms of popular oral narrative. There is, however, an additional layer of translation that I encountered, which emerges somewhere between IBPO engagement with the letters and receipt by soldiers' correspondents. The research for this chapter was conducted both during the first 2020 lockdown of the Covid-19 pandemic, where access to the Censor of Indian Mails reports was available only online, and also on return to the physical archive when libraries re-opened. My engagement with the reports then was originally through the BL digitised manuscript browser, in which files of loose-leaf reports and appendices have been scanned and can be clicked through (see Figures 61 and 62 for example screenshots); but it was also in-person, physically handling the tissue-paper thin files, their pencil annotations slightly smudged after years of similar use. Similar to the Halbmondlager recordings, there is a question here around the impact of digitisation as a form of material translation, and whether this impacts the historian's encounter with the letter fragments. I deal with this across the discussion of prayer and narrative content.

Prayer

A prominent example of the entanglement of oral practices with written form is the presence in soldiers' letters of prayer, or similar supplications and appeals to a divine force. This often presents itself as a bid for mercy, intervention and repentance in the face of the horrors of war. Two men – one a Punjabi Muslim, the other a Punjabi Sikh – both appeal to God for benevolence and deliverance from the Front Line, writing respectively from English hospitals: 'Oh God, Oh God, Oh God, God be merciful, God have pity, God deliver His people,' and 'I pray "Oh great Guru, who art my real king, send me not back to that place [the Front Line]."'⁵⁴³ Another Punjabi Muslim, writing from what was the North-West Frontier Province to Muksrar Khan, serving in France, made the following 'supplication before the door of God':

"Oh God, break this war asunder
Bring back in safety all who are engaged in it

⁵⁴³ Correspondence between 'a Muhammadan of the Punjab' to 'his brother, an employee on the N.W. Railway in India', dated 18 February 1915, and between 'a Sikh' to 'a friend at the front', dated 12 February 1915, both in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 1 (Dec 1914-Apr 1915)', 1914, British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/825/1 <<http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=IOR/L/MIL/5/825/1>> [accessed 3 March 2020].

Put compunction into the heart of the German King
That he may turn away from war, admit his error
And ask for peace at the hands of the English
Should he not desire peace and seek to continue the war.
Give victory O God, to the English!"⁵⁴⁴

The significance of these appeals lies in their similarity to specific Islamic and Sikh prayer forms. The appeals made by the Muslim soldiers are reminiscent of *du'a* (pl. *ad'iyah*) a form of 'personal petition' to Allah, often translated as 'call, supplication, prayer and request.'⁵⁴⁵ A *du'a* is often recited at the end of ritual *salāt* prayers; it can follow prescribed forms, but it might also comprise a recitation of part of the *Qur'an*, or a spontaneous appeal to God.⁵⁴⁶ The examples in Censor report extracts are more in line with the latter, and form individualised, spontaneous petitions to Allah on behalf of oneself or others, embedded amongst other news from the Front. *Ad'iyah* typically include an acknowledgement of one's sins and a request for forgiveness, so as to absolve oneself of any 'misdeeds' that might prevent them from being answered, and this is present in many letters from Muslim soldiers who confess and petition directly to God for repentance.⁵⁴⁷ One Pathan soldier transcribed his supplication to God as an exercise in seeking collective repentance for himself and his colleagues, writing 'God grant us grace, for grace is needed. Oh God, we repent, oh God, we repent.'⁵⁴⁸ Writing from his station in France, Abdul Majid invoked one of the 99 names of

⁵⁴⁴ Correspondence between (Punjabi Musalman) Dhaman Khan, Sowar, 25th Cavalry, Bannu, N.W.F.P., India, to Muksrar Khan, Sowar, 22nd Cavalry, attached 34th Poona Horse, France, dated 29 July 1916, in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 2 (Aug 1916-Oct 1916)', 1916, British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/826/7 <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=ior!!mil!5!826!7_f001r> [accessed 15 May 2020].

⁵⁴⁵ Richard J. A. McGregor, 'A Sufi Legacy in Tunisia: Prayer and the *Shadhiliyya*', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 29.2 (1997), 255–77 <www.jstor.org/stable/164019> [accessed 3 July 2020], p. 263; Atif Khalil, 'Is God Obligated to Answer Prayers of Petition (*Du'a*)? The Response of Classical Sufis and *Qur'anic* Exegetes', *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures*, 37.2 (2011), 93–109 <https://doi.org/10.5325/jmedirelicult.37.2.0093>, p. 96.

⁵⁴⁶ Niloofar Haeri, 'The Private Performance of "Salat" Prayers: Repetition, Time, and Meaning', *Anthropological Quarterly*, 86.1 (2013), 5–34 <www.jstor.org/stable/41857310> [accessed 3 July 2020], p. 9; Amjad M. Hussain, 'Prayer in Islam', *Discovering Sacred Texts (The British Library)*, 2019 <<https://www.bl.uk/sacred-texts/articles/prayer-in-islam>> [accessed 3 July 2020].

⁵⁴⁷ Abu Ammaar Yasir Qadhi, *Dua The Weapon Of The Believer: A Treatise on the Status and Etiquette of Du'a in Islam* (IslamKotob), pp. 87-88 and 157. See correspondence between Dafadar Alim Khan, 18th Lancers, France, to Maulana Janab Syedali c/o 'The Watan', Lahore, c. September 1916, in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 2 (Aug 1916-Oct 1916)', 1916, British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/826/7 <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=ior!!mil!5!826!7_f001r> [accessed 15 May 2020].

⁵⁴⁸ Correspondence between Sepoy Mir Asghar, 58th Rifles, 'now in hospital in England to his home in the Peshawar Dt', dated 4 April 1915 in Unknown, 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 1 (Mar 1915-Apr 1915)', 1915, British

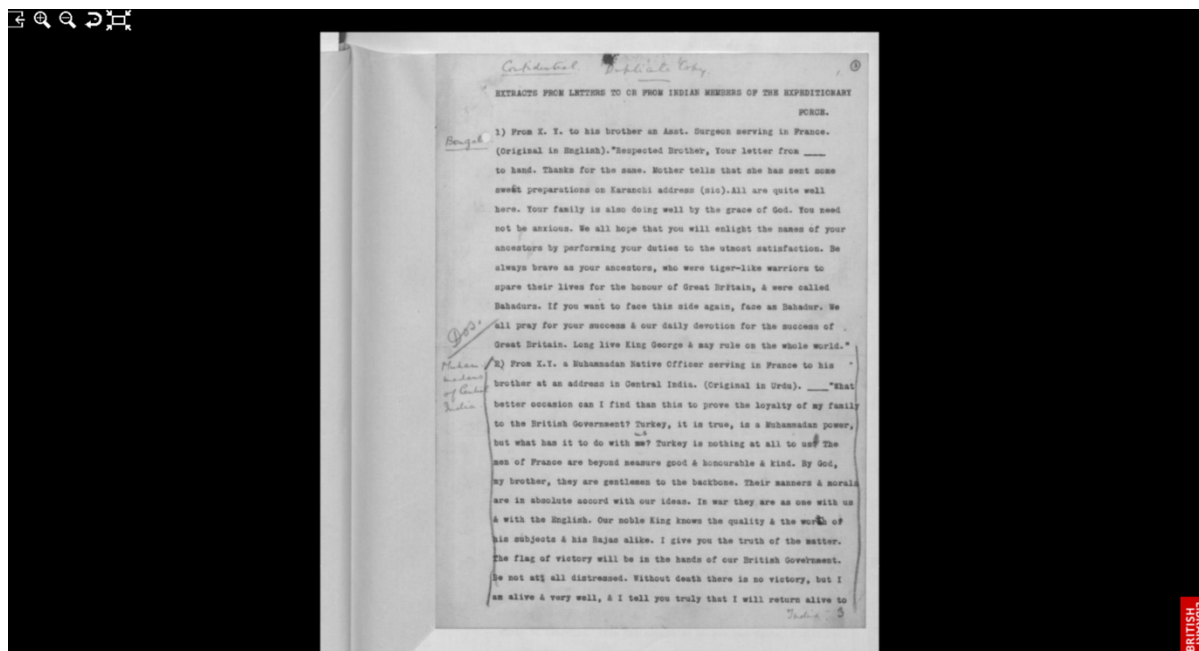


Figure 61.

Screenshot of the British Library digital manuscript reader, showing a scanned page of the 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 1 (Dec 1914-Apr 1915)'. Courtesy of the British Library Board, IOR/L/MIL/5/825/1 <<http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=IOR/L/MIL/5/825/1>>.

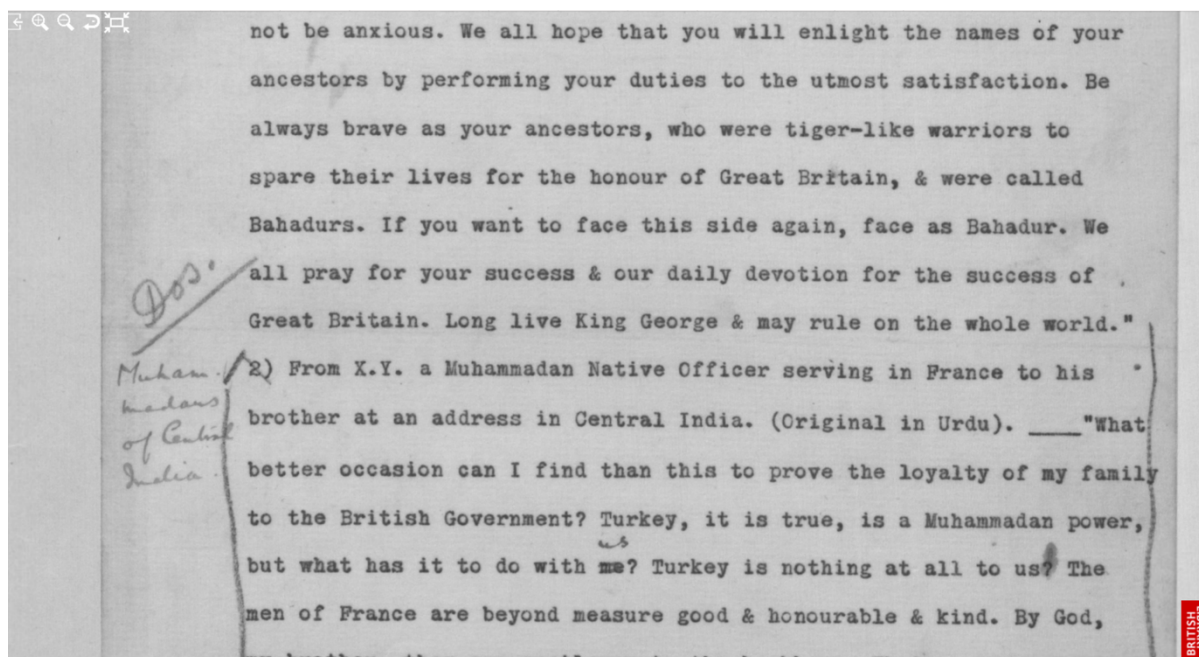


Figure 62.

Close-up of the screenshot of the British Library digital manuscript reader (shown at Figure 61). 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 1 (Dec 1914-Apr 1915)'. Courtesy of the British Library Board, IOR/L/MIL/5/825/1 <<http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=IOR/L/MIL/5/825/1>>.

Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/825/2 <<http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=IOR/L/MIL/5/825/2>> [accessed 19 March 2020].

Allah to supplement his du'a:

Compassionate One! Give us Thy pardon, we are sinners.

"I have spent my life in sin and now I repent

The burden of sin is on my head. Oh God I repent."⁵⁴⁹

The evocation of du'a forms is mirrored in the use of language by Sikh soldiers that bears similarities to the ardas prayer. Like ad'iyah, the ardas performs a petitioning function; the devotee might petition God on a matter specific to them, including seeking guidance, but ardas also typically incorporate a wider call for collective wellbeing for all Sikhs (an aspect of the prayer specifically called the sarbat daa bhalaa).⁵⁵⁰ Furthermore, ardas performs a wider function, which is to recognise, celebrate, and take strength from the suffering and martyrdom of historic Sikh communities, and an extensive portion of a full ardas recitation is thus devoted to remembering the bravery and commitment of these early Sikh followers.⁵⁵¹ As a result, the ardas tends to follow a standardised, long-form structure, but can also be performed in a shortened combination of personal petition with an invocation to God (often a variation of, in English, 'Oh Respected Gurus! kindly help us everywhere') and the concluding Sarbat Daa Bhalaa (in English, 'O God! through the True Guru Nanak, may Your Name be exalted, and may all prosper according to Your will').⁵⁵² The Censor reports include a large number of letters from Sikh soldiers shrouded in petitioning language, which integrate invocations to God and variations on the Sarbat Daa Bhalaa. Examples include a number of entreaties directly to God to be rescued from the front, or for insight into the length of the war. Bugler Lance Naik Hari Kisan asks 'Oh Guru [...] please look up the Holy Book and see when this war is going to finish, count the years and months do,' and Mansingh Rawat despairs, 'Oh Great Lord of All, do as seems best in Thy Almighty

⁵⁴⁹ Correspondence between (Hindustani Muslim) Abdul Majid, 19th Lancers (attached to the Cavalry), France, to Mahomed Salim Khan, Dungeer Lancers, Bikanir, dated 26 December 1917, in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 3 (Dec 1917-Mar 1918)', 1917, British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/827/6 <<http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=IOR/L/MIL/5/827/6>> [accessed 19 May 2020].

⁵⁵⁰ S.H. Singh, *Faith & Philosophy of Sikhism*, Indian Religions Series (Kalpaz Publications, 2009), p. 211. The term can be translated to English as approximate to 'welfare for all' or 'blessings for everyone'.

⁵⁵¹ Singh, *Faith & Philosophy of Sikhism* (2009), p. 211.

⁵⁵² 'Ardas (Sikh Prayer)', 2016 <<https://sadministry.org/ardas-sikh-prayer/?issue=2020-summer/>>. For the translations (selected for its comprehensive explanation of the original Punjabi, the romanisation of the Punjabi, and the English translation), see 'Ardas', *Discover Sikhism*, 2013 <http://www.discoverikhism.com/sikhism/sikh_ardas.html> [accessed 6 July 2020].

providence [...] Remove me from this calamity. When may I hope to die?'.⁵⁵³ Other soldiers include summaries of their orally-delivered prayers, creating written summaries of their supplications and calls for collective Sikh wellbeing made in the trenches or the spaces provided specifically for devotional practices. Letters note for example that 'We bless God continually and pray for his bounty,' 'For the whole Indian Army, regiments of cavalry, and infantry and batteries [...] with a prayer for each bead in my heart, I ask for the welfare of them all,' 'My thoughts are now very much towards my company and I pray always to the Guru for its welfare,' and 'We pray to God day and night that God will grant victory to our king.'⁵⁵⁴

What then might be learned from these shifting materialities of prayer? Formal, if basic, spaces were made available for men of all faiths to partake in worship practices on the Front Line; veterans recall in detail the effort made by the British authorities to accommodate religious practices and differences (albeit, as noted in Chapter 1, often out of a belief that adherence to religious norms would instil secondary loyalties to the Crown), and Army photographers captured the makeshift spaces created for devotional practice (see for example Figures 63 to 65).⁵⁵⁵ It seems likely then that typical, longer form prayers would be made in those spaces that simultaneously functioned as mosque, gurdwāra, temple and church. There is therefore something specific and unexpected about the practice of

⁵⁵³ Correspondence between Bugler Lance Naik Hari Kisan, Kitchener Indian Hospital, Brighton, and Pandit Gopal Dat, Kangra, Dharamshala, dated May 1915, in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 1 (June 1915-Aug 1915)', 1915, British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/825/4 <<http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=IOR/L/MIL/5/825/4>> [accessed 6 July 2020]; correspondence between Mansingh Rawat, 1/39 Garhwalis, to Partab Singh, Ringwari Garhwal, dated 22 September 1915, in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 1 (Sep 1915-Oct 1915)', 1915, British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/825/6 <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=ior!!mil!5!825!6_f001r#> [accessed 6 July 2020].

⁵⁵⁴ Correspondence between Ranjit Singh, 38th Central India Horse (Cavalry), York Place Hospital, Brighton, and 'a friend in India', dated 10 November 1915, in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 1 (Oct 1915-Dec 1915)', 1915, British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/825/8 <<http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=ior/l/mil/5/825/8>> [accessed 19 May 2020]; correspondence between Dharam Singh, California, to Atma Singh, 3rd Skinner's Horse, France, dated 8 October 1915, correspondence between Sub. Major Sundar Singh, Brighton, and Hav. Basant Singh, 1st Sappers and Miners, France, dated 19 October 1915, and correspondence between a Sikh clerk in Somaliland to Basant Singh, Clerk, 47th Sikhs, France, dated 13 October 1915, all in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 1 (Oct 1915-Nov 1915)', 1915, British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/825/7 <<http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=IOR/L/MIL/5/825/7>> [accessed 6 July 2020].

⁵⁵⁵ See for example, Meena Dutta and Rakesh Dutta, 'Interview with Lt Col. Gurbakash Singh', 1982, British Library, Mss Eur F729/6/6; Meena Dutta and Rakesh Dutta, 'Interview with Havildar Prem Singh', 1982, British Library, Mss Eur F729/6/4; S.D. Pradhan and Harvinder Singh Giri, 'Interview with Risaldar Harnam Singh', 1971, British Library, Mss Eur F729/2/3; S.D. Pradhan and Harvinder Singh Giri, 'III. S. Sant Singh (Sepoy), Village Ramgargh, District & PO Patiala', 1971, British Library, Mss Eur F729/2/4.

committing prayer to paper, as it may not have been out of an inability to conduct devotional practices in the ways and spaces with which soldiers were familiar. Bearing in mind how Spivak has problematised the idea of a hearing historian – raising questions of the competency with which anyone beyond the speaker can interpret what is being said or done – the entanglement of any analysis I offer with these translated sources becomes more complex. As discussed above, the material from which I am working has gone through multiple, compounding translations, to which I add by situating the digitised Censor reports in a material culture study. Part of my own translational contribution is impacted by how the affect of engagement is different online to in-person. Clicking through pages sounds very different to the light rustling of paper-thin, ageing print. The letters smell of my office at home, rather than the mustiness of temperature-controlled manuscripts, called up from the archive. Furthermore, I am able to read the translated extracts aloud rather than silently in my head as determined by the BL's requirement for quiet study. Working in the unique moment of pandemic 2020, I am removed from the affectivity of the BL; I encounter it through plural linguistic, colonial and digital translations.



Figure 63.

Ariel Vargas, 'Sikhs on Their Way to a Religious Festival (Gurdwara)', c. 1914-1918, Imperial War Museum, Q 24792 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205265001>>.



Figure 64.

A congregation of Sikh soldiers, emulating the set-up of a typical gurdwara on active service. Ariel Vargas, c. 1914-1918, Imperial War Museum, Q 24790 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205264999>>.



Figure 65.

Muslim soldiers at prayer on deployment in Mesopotamia. Ariel Vargas, '*Mohammedan Indians at Prayer*', c. 1914-1918, Imperial War Museum, Q 24572 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205088434>>.

It occurs to me that this compounds an ongoing palimpsest of disembodiment mediated by these Censor report extracts; they have been removed from the bodiliness of not only the original speaker and scribe, but also the recipient and any further individuals assisting in reading the contents aloud. The letter, or perhaps the process of writing the letter, becomes entangled with the bodiliness of the devotee, and any assisting scribe. A bodily imprint is created; the prayer is not necessarily made by *being written*, but rather the processes of speaking aloud the letter contents for transcription, the transcription itself, and its being read aloud on receipt complicates any clearly-drawn dichotomy between sonic and written modes of communication. There are different moments and forms of prayer enunciation, and indeed different enunciators. As the historian, muttering the Censor report contents aloud under my breath – in my home and then, barely audibly, in the BL Asia & Africa Reading Room – I am then experiencing fragmented correspondence potentially very differently than the spoken articulation of their contents, with all their embodied memory of shared experiences, in-jokes, local folklore, spiritual knowledge, and social circles. In light of this, what is surprising and unexpected about the practice of committing prayer to paper is less the practice itself, and more what it reveals about the enmeshment of plural materialities: sonic, written, and plural forms of bodiliness. What this means for different letter writers of course may be very different, and historians can point to different considerations that may shape how this enmeshment of bodily, sonic and written materialities plays out in the letters of men of different faiths. An extract from a Sikh cavalryman's letter in October 1915, for example, reads simply:

Like Nightingales we've left the woods we know.

May God keep others from the way we go.⁵⁵⁶

The Censor attributes the first line to a 'well-known poem', dismissing the second as 'invented for the occasion.' If, however, the second line is framed within the rhetoric of ardas-style petitioning prayer, the extract becomes an entanglement that shapeshifts over time. Initially it is an entanglement of language forms that were typically delivered orally (poetry and prayer) with the written materiality of a letter. However, that letter would have

⁵⁵⁶ Correspondence between a Sikh in the 6th Cavalry, France, to a Sowar in the 91st Cavalry, Lahore, dated 25 October 1915, in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 1 (Oct 1915-Nov 1915)', 1915, British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/825/7 <<http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=IOR/L/MIL/5/825/7>> [accessed 6 July 2020].

then been orally recited aloud to or by the recipient (and, later, by the historian), transforming the materiality of the written (and archived) letter back into sound(ing).

A similar entanglement of bodiliness(es) with sonic and written materialities emerges when examining those letters from Muslim soldiers that use the language reminiscent of ad'iyah. Ad'iyah can be made silently or aloud; there is no creedal requirement of silence. The translation of prayer into written words therefore seems to go beyond meeting any military operational need to pray at times and in spaces where silence may have been paramount. However, prayer in Islam has a particular constitutive function that builds and reasserts one's sense of Muslim self, '[shaping] the practitioner over time.'⁵⁵⁷ The practice of ad'iyah draws on a 'shared discursive framework' of religious subjectivity formation; although forms of prayer in Islam are acutely structured, with salah being performed five times a day at specific times according to the movement of the sun, as a practice prayer also acts a bodily contribution to the development of oneself as a Muslim and a bodily reassertion of one's commitment to Islam.⁵⁵⁸ If the original prayer might thus be understood as bearing traces of this bodily commitment to faith, the entanglement of historic and historian bodiliness becomes very intimate. The devotee's bodily process of forging his Muslim subjectivity is not made by virtue of having others in attendance, either physically in his space or through the enmeshment of bodiliness(es) as the du'a travels materially as letter through time and space. However there is definitely a shared (meta)physical space here; a correspondent receiving the original letter, the Censor reading and translating and transcribing the original letter, and the historian reading the translated extracts all have different bodily encounters with the devotee's practice.

This entanglement of bodiliness and bodily practices with written materialities might help historians complicate ways of thinking that position writing as a form of permanence, somehow more long-lasting than if the supplication to God were made orally. The language

⁵⁵⁷ Heiko Henkel, 'Between Belief and Unbelief Lies the Performance of Salāt: Meaning and Efficacy of a Muslim Ritual', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 11.3 (2005), 487–507 <www.jstor.org/stable/3804315> [accessed 3 July 2020], p. 489; Tazim R. Kassam, 'The Daily Prayer (Du'a) of Shi'a Isma'ili Muslims', in *Religions of the United States in Practice, Volume 2*, ed. by Colleen McDannell (Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 32–43 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv346rkb.8>>, p. 32.

⁵⁵⁸ Heiko Henkel, 'Between Belief and Unbelief' (2005), p. 491.

of record contributes to this, as historians use the Censors' reports as 'public records' of the soldiers' experiences, as if the equally public oral enunciation of the prayer originally was not itself a record of it having existed.⁵⁵⁹ It reveals an analytical commitment to onto-epistemologies that privilege text and sight as superior access points to knowledge and understanding. Framing soldiers' letters as *physically* preserving prayer falls within this discourse and assumes that prayer delivered orally is somehow more transient or fleeting, as if the prayer begins and ends with its sound(ing). By contrast, in light of the argument above, I would argue that what is preserved here is not the prayer itself, but a mode through which historic and present-day bodiliness(es) were and continue to enmesh. This ties back to the sentiment expressed by Jemadar Rala Singh in the opening paragraph of this chapter. Singh spoke of his conviction that '[i]t is possible to meet in correspondence and by exchange of photographs.'⁵⁶⁰ Letters as meeting points was a common motif of Indian Army soldiers' letters in the First World War, and indeed the Second. Letters from Middle East postings in 1943 and 1944 describe how '[l]etters mean half meetings', 'when we get a letter from you we think as if we have seen you personally,' and '[w]hen I receive your letters here I think that I have seen you'.⁵⁶¹ Such expressions of affect suggest that certain enmeshments of bodiliness with written letters was indeed felt by corresponding soldiers; perhaps this was informed by the plural bodilinesses implicated in the composition and receipt of a single letter. It also points to a bodiliness of memory, specifically the memories of the people with whom the soldiers are corresponding. This aspect of bodiliness interrupts the linear temporal frame proposed by 'modernity/coloniality', and prompts historians instead to consider an (auto)biographical sense of time.⁵⁶²

It is possible to understand this destabilising effect as going beyond the discipline of historical studies. Ravi Ahuja has written extensively on the imprisonment of Indian Army

⁵⁵⁹ See for example Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War* (1999), p. 5.

⁵⁶⁰ Correspondence between Jemadar Rala Singh and Harnam Singh, dated 22 December 1917, in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 3 (Dec 1917-Mar 1918)', 1917, British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/827/6 <<http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=IOR/L/MIL/5/827/6>> [accessed 19 May 2020].

⁵⁶¹ 'Middle East Military Censorship Fortnightly Summaries Covering Indian Troops (Apr-Sep 1943)', 1943, British Library, IOR/L/PJ/12/655; 'Middle East Military Censorship Fortnightly Summaries Covering Indian Troops (Jun 1944-Mar 1945)', 1944, British Library, IOR/L/PJ/12/656.

⁵⁶² A. Quijano, 'Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality', *Cultural Studies*, 21.2-3 (2007), 155-67 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601164353>>.

soldiers in Germany during the First World War, and has also worked specifically on the recordings made at Halbmondlager. Ahuja's focus is not on the materiality of the recordings, but on the use of linguistic devices within them to achieve different outcomes, including those with politically destabilising potential. Ahuja points to the Halbmondlager recordings, as well as the German authorities' reports on any progress in the camp's propagandist aims, as 'particularly useful because they give an inkling of the experiences of men who were for the first time in their life outside the reach of the British imperial state.'⁵⁶³ His key contribution to the work on these recordings, however, is on drawing out how comparison functioned in recordings as a means by which the men made sense of their experiences, communication, and sometimes negotiation. For Ahuja, comparison could operate in different ways and to different ends. As a 'cognitive procedure,' comparison provided the space through which Indian Soldiers could convey their experiences, anxieties and grievances through comparing different European powers.⁵⁶⁴ Highlighting a well-known recording by Sib Singh, in which Singh decries the ignorance of the Indian people, Ahuja points out the

the war had provided scales to assess the relative weight of the King-Emperor [...] British power could be compared to that of its imperialist rivals and this is what Indian soldiers did in letters they sent from Germany, Turkey and France. They pointed out that Germany's population and army were larger, that German trenches were better, that the military was nowhere stronger than in the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁶⁵

Comparison also functioned, so Ahuja argues, as a 'a device of social praxis, of conflict resolution by way of negotiation and sometimes even by way of direct confrontation,' as well as 'a polemic device against discrimination.'⁵⁶⁶ Ahuja traces how imprisoned soldiers

⁵⁶³ Ravi Ahuja, 'The Corrosiveness of Comparison: Reverberations of Indian Wartime Experiences in German Prison Camps (1915–1919)', in *The World in World Wars: Experiences, Perceptions and Perspectives from Africa and Asia* (Brill, 2010), pp. 131–66 (pp. 154–155).

⁵⁶⁴ Ravi Ahuja, 'The Corrosiveness of Comparison: Reverberations of Indian Wartime Experiences in German Prison Camps (1915–1919)', in *The World in World Wars: Experiences, Perceptions and Perspectives from Africa and Asia* (Brill, 2010), pp. 131–66 (p. 156).

⁵⁶⁵ Ravi Ahuja, 'The Corrosiveness of Comparison: Reverberations of Indian Wartime Experiences in German Prison Camps (1915–1919)', in *The World in World Wars: Experiences, Perceptions and Perspectives from Africa and Asia* (Brill, 2010), pp. 131–66 (pp. 156–157).

⁵⁶⁶ Ravi Ahuja, 'The Corrosiveness of Comparison: Reverberations of Indian Wartime Experiences in German Prison Camps (1915–1919)', in *The World in World Wars: Experiences, Perceptions and Perspectives from Africa and Asia* (Brill, 2010), pp. 131–66 (pp. 163–165).

managed to 'increase their food rations, secure a supply with butter, acquire clothes and boots, stop abuses by sentries' by using 'the comparison of treatment meted out by German and British authorities as a means to improve their situation by negotiation.'⁵⁶⁷ Although Ahuja does not speak to any bodily dimension or materiality of the recordings and their contents, his work draws out how the devices used in recordings shifted the locus of a power – in some form – to the Indian soldiers. Even where recordings had no obvious or explicit political objective, such comparisons became 'a way of questioning the hierarchies of the imperial army, as an act of military insubordination.'⁵⁶⁸ This aids the interpretation of Halbmondlager sources in this section – and across this chapter – by illuminating forms of unfixity created by the soldiers themselves. Where Ahuja points to the destabilising effect of Indian soldier's demands and worldviews, articulated through comparison, I would suggest that the recitation of prayer and critically the metaphysical transformations that were created in doing so inherently and tentatively begin to push against the colonial orders of power that rested on entirely different ontological models and religious models. This is not necessarily an intentional assertion of agency, or a deliberate act of anti-imperialism; rather, it is something more subtle, and Ahuja's work helps create a foundational understanding of the destabilising registers of the Halbmondlager recordings.

Narratives

Like the compositions discussed above that echoed forms of prayer practiced across religious communities in India, narratives evocative of popularly known stories were a common feature of written and sonic media created by or with Indian Army soldiers. Many of these were narratives rooted in the practices of North Indian spiritualities and cosmologies, and would have been recounted to the men back home by community leaders or (local and touring) performers. Others, however, were created by soldiers on active duty, or during imprisonment. This section asks whether a similar entanglement of sonic, written

⁵⁶⁷ Ravi Ahuja, 'The Corrosiveness of Comparison: Reverberations of Indian Wartime Experiences in German Prison Camps (1915–1919)', in *The World in World Wars: Experiences, Perceptions and Perspectives from Africa and Asia* (Brill, 2010), pp. 131–66 (pp. 163–164).

⁵⁶⁸ Ravi Ahuja, 'The Corrosiveness of Comparison: Reverberations of Indian Wartime Experiences in German Prison Camps (1915–1919)', in *The World in World Wars: Experiences, Perceptions and Perspectives from Africa and Asia* (Brill, 2010), pp. 131–66 (p. 165).

and bodily materialities was and is at play in the context of letters and recordings that feature these narratives.

Turning first to narratives that emerge out of religious traditions, a great deal of the Halbmondlager recordings and letter fragments translated by the Censor include references to popular scriptural and extra-scriptural narratives that would have been circulated orally in the men's home communities. Badan Singh's Halbmondlager recording is a particularly interesting example, as it blends references to the myth of Gopichand, the Punjabi tragedy of Mirza and Sahiba, and also a direct address to his own parents. His recording opens with the latter two, entreating:

Console yourselves, oh my parents! What has happened to the version of myself that was keeping well? I spun with my girlfriends, then an arrow shot through my jholi, an arrow that (hits) the lover and the beloved.⁵⁶⁹

The direct address to his parents feels like something akin to a sonic letter is being crafted (although there is no suggestion anywhere that Singh might have been led to believe his parents would receive his oral testimony). He speaks directly to them, and 'answers' a question they have apparently put to him. Singh's response, however, blends with well-known North Indian folklore. The story of the arrow echoes the plot of the story of Mirza and Sahiba (popularly titled *Mirza Sahiban*), in which the fate of two eloping lovers is decided when one is shot with an arrow by his new wife's brothers. This is not an uncommon motif; *Mirza Sahiban* is one of four famous Punjabi tragic romances, and others feature across the Halbmondlager recordings.⁵⁷⁰ Folkloric references were also not the preserve of imprisoned Punjabis; Alaka Atreya Chudal has written of the same feature appearing in Halbmondlager recordings of imprisoned Gurkhas, and Adam Benkato and Veronika Ritt-Benmimoun have written that 'a variety of folktales, songs, poems, and even Quran recitations' were recorded by imprisoned men from southern Tunisia.⁵⁷¹ Chudal

⁵⁶⁹ Badan Singh (PK 612, 1916), Lautarchiv, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

⁵⁷⁰ For example, *Sassi Punnān* is recounted in Sundar Singh and Santa Singh, 'Recording and transcript of Sundar Singh and Santa Singh (PK 597)' (Wünsdorf, 1916), Lautarchiv, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, PK 597 <<https://www.lautarchiv.hu-berlin.de/en/objekte/lautarchiv/10359/>>.

⁵⁷¹ Alaka Atreya Chudal, 'What Can a Song Do to You? A Life Story of a Gurkha Prisoner in World War I', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 43.3 (2020), pp. 392–406, doi:[10.1080/00856401.2020.1752974](https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2020.1752974); Adam Benkato and Veronika Ritt-

focuses specifically on a song recorded by an imprisoned Gurkha soldier named Jas Bahadur Rai. She aligns her work methodologically with Santanu Das and Britta Lange, positioning their research as a 'point of departure' to 'explore what we can learn about the person by conducting a closer analysis of his song—by “reading between the lines” of his verses.'⁵⁷² Her work therefore approaches the Lautarchiv materials from a slightly different angle to my own, and indeed from Das's; where Chudal sees the recording as 'a self-life witness in its own right [...] as encapsulating his lived experience as a Gurkha soldier and a POW', I propose historians adopt a more tentative analytical model when interrogating the Halbmondlager recordings. As discussed above, Das proposes that the recordings cannot be read as 'neat allegories or clear parables of the situation,' and I have similarly positioned myself as being hesitant to use read too far into the content of the recordings as direct testimony.⁵⁷³ That being said, Chudal argues that the song is 'also about the social and political spaces that he and his comrades inhabited,' and it is in this social, collective dimension that there emerges methodological overlap between Chudal, Das and my own work; it is here that the historians might treat the recordings, less as testimonials and more as testimonio (discussed in the Introduction).⁵⁷⁴ Drawing on Patricia DeRocher's work on testimonio life-writing forms, the invocation of a popular Nepali narrative form – the lok-gīt – forms the basis on which Jas Bahadur Rai might be understood to have composed a collective life-writing testimonial to 'relay a macrosocial critique in a microsocial, affective register'.⁵⁷⁵ Chudal notes that the lok-gīt 'represented the voice of the public or common man and were transmitted through the oral tradition' in order to 'describe social or personal concerns.'⁵⁷⁶ In this way, Jas Bahadur Rai's lok-gīt begins to function in a similar way to

Benmimoun, 'Voice Archives in Arabic Dialectology: The Case of the Southern Tunisian Recordings in the Berliner Lautarchiv', *The Journal of North African Studies*, 28.5 (2023), pp. 1142–62, doi:[10.1080/13629387.2022.2116011](https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2022.2116011).

⁵⁷² Alaka Atreya Chudal, 'What Can a Song Do to You? A Life Story of a Gurkha Prisoner in World War I', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 43.3 (2020), pp. 392–406 (p. 393), doi:[10.1080/00856401.2020.1752974](https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2020.1752974).

⁵⁷³ Santanu Das, *India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images, and Songs* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 229–230.

⁵⁷⁴ Alaka Atreya Chudal, 'What Can a Song Do to You? A Life Story of a Gurkha Prisoner in World War I', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 43.3 (2020), pp. 392–406 (p. 393), doi:[10.1080/00856401.2020.1752974](https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2020.1752974). See also pages 76–77 of this thesis.

⁵⁷⁵ P. DeRocher, *Transnational Testimonios: The Politics of Collective Knowledge Production*, Decolonizing Feminisms (University of Washington Press, 2018), p. 15. For identification of the song as a lok-gīt, see Alaka Atreya Chudal, 'What Can a Song Do to You? A Life Story of a Gurkha Prisoner in World War I', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 43.3 (2020), pp. 392–406 (p. 401), doi:[10.1080/00856401.2020.1752974](https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2020.1752974).

⁵⁷⁶ Atreya Chudal, 'What Can a Song Do to You? A Life Story of a Gurkha Prisoner in World War I', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 43.3 (2020), pp. 392–406 (p. 401), doi:[10.1080/00856401.2020.1752974](https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2020.1752974).

Badan Singh's. What emerges through the examples of Badan Singh and Jas Bahadur Rai is a potential blend of personal testimony with popular story that would likely have been performed by touring storytellers or recited orally amongst community members, itself giving rise to plural shifting materialities. There are iterative oral recitations of *Mirza Sahiban*, through Singh's articulation for the Halbmondlager phonograph that itself channels the embodied memory of hearing and sounding the story before his military service. This is enmeshed with Singh's enactment of the function of a written letter to his parents, which similarly assumes in referencing the Punjabi narrative that they too have an embodied familiarity with oral storytelling such that the reference will chime with them. Chudal's work illuminates the potential for a similar model of shifting materialities in Ras Bahadur Rai's song. In the tradition of lok-gīt, only the second line in each three-line stanza that 'carries the main content of the song,' and it is here that any 'significant' message might be found.⁵⁷⁷ Such lines include invocations to an unnamed peer: 'What to say, young brother – old brother, what to say – to a heart that has taken flight [home]?'⁵⁷⁸ In addition to her observation that Ras Bahadur Rai was likely drawing on his own embodied memory of lok-gīt performance, she notes that although he recorded his song

in the presence of fellow Gurkhas and German scholars, he directed his song not just to them. Unsure who would listen to it in the future, in the third line he requested a golden bird to take note of what he was saying. In South Asian literature, and in mythology in particular, birds are often assigned the role of messenger. Perhaps, therefore, Jas Bahadur intended the golden bird as a means of ensuring that his message reached back to his homeland.⁵⁷⁹

Whether Ras Bahadur Rai intended for his immediate audience, or a distant recipient of his message, the combination of recognised oral narrative tradition and South Asian rhetorical devices, such as the messenger bird, speak to a chain of communication that rests on shared bodily knowledge and embodied memory. As with the letter fragments discussed above,

⁵⁷⁷ Alaka Atreya Chudal, 'What Can a Song Do to You? A Life Story of a Gurkha Prisoner in World War I', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 43.3 (2020), pp. 392–406 (p.401), doi:[10.1080/00856401.2020.1752974](https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2020.1752974).

⁵⁷⁸ Alaka Atreya Chudal, 'What Can a Song Do to You? A Life Story of a Gurkha Prisoner in World War I', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 43.3 (2020), pp. 392–406 (p.404), doi:[10.1080/00856401.2020.1752974](https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2020.1752974).

⁵⁷⁹ Alaka Atreya Chudal, 'What Can a Song Do to You? A Life Story of a Gurkha Prisoner in World War I', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 43.3 (2020), pp. 392–406 (p.402), doi:[10.1080/00856401.2020.1752974](https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2020.1752974). The line itself is from the first stanza, and reads 'Oh listen, listen, golden bird: under England's command.'

however, there is also the intercepting bodiliness of me, the historian, and also the bodiliness of translators to take into consideration.

My understanding of the Halbmondlager recordings' content is the result of a blend of translations of the Punjabi transcriptions made for me by fluent speakers, and the German or English translations created at Halbmondlager. The assistance provided by Bal and Gurnesha Bola went beyond their generous translation of the Punjabi transcription documents, and drew on their embodied knowledge of Punjabi rhetoricity and religious practice. Reading through the transcription of Bela Singh (Figure 66), for example, Bal observed that the format was reminiscent of changes and breaks in the GGS, in which sections have epithets to mark beginnings and ends of lines; these breaks can also be heard in the recording, marked by Badan's use of 'si' (yes). The section in question, translated to English through a combination of the German administrators' translations, Bal and Gurnesha's reading and translation of the Punjabi, and translations of the German transcription, reads along the following lines:

When we came to the town of Marseille,
We ate well of sweetmeats in this place.
Having eaten, we were all happy.
The Major gave the order; we were placed in the wagon
"Go now, oh lions, into the trenches, go!
Fight against the Germans, why are you running backwards?"
For two months we sat in the trenches,
Some lions who had fought had enough of it.⁵⁸⁰

Recordings like Bela Singh's have typically also been understood by those scholars who have encountered the Halbmondlager recordings as a form of oral life-writing, echoing the language of the Halbmondlager translators who described recitations as personal 'Dichtereien' (poetry, or versification).⁵⁸¹ As discussed above in the context of Alaka Atreya

⁵⁸⁰ Bela Singh (PK 589, 1916), Lautarchiv, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

⁵⁸¹ Translator's note at the end of Gopal Singh, 'Recording and transcript of Gopal Singh (PK 613)' (Wünsdorf, 1916), Lautarchiv, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, PK 613 <<https://www.lautarchiv.hu-berlin.de/en/objekte/lautarchiv/10386/>>. For scholars' treatment of the recordings as life-writing, see Das, *Writings, Images, and Songs* (2018), pp. 4-6 and 230.

Chudal's work on Gurkha soldier Jas Bahadur Rai's recorded song, there may be scope for this where the recordings demonstrate testimonio-style articulations of collective experience through use of the singular narrative. This is especially the case where doing so allows historians to adopt a more tentative interpretive approach than treating the recordings as analogies of the imprisoned men's experiences at Halbmondlager.

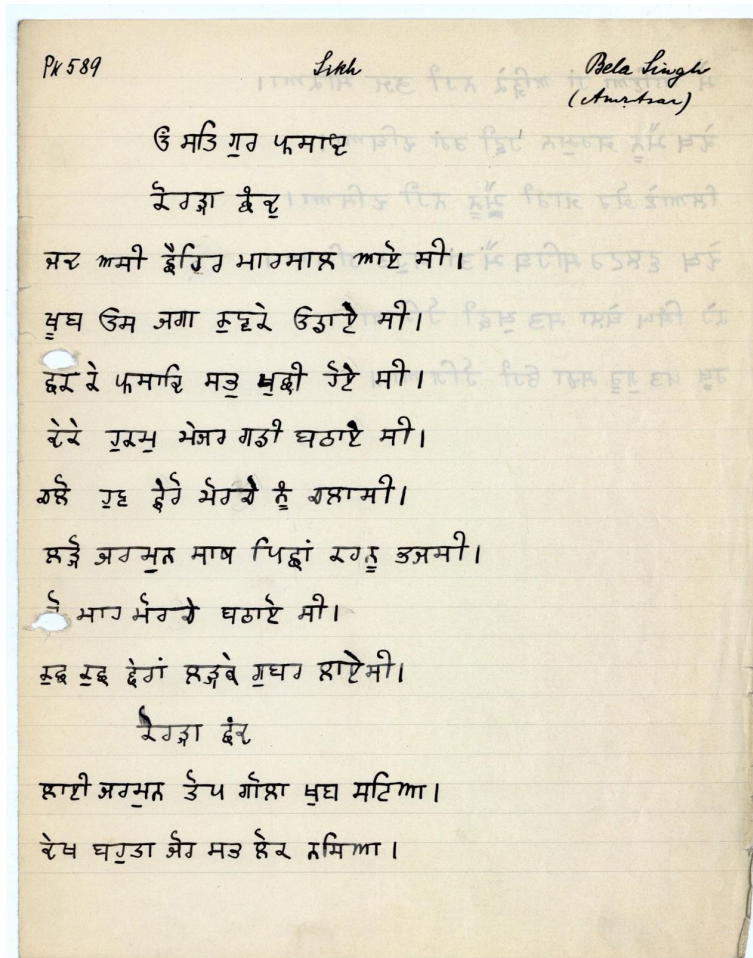


Figure 66.

Punjabi transcription of Bela Singh's testimony at Halbmondlager (PK 589), Wünsdorf, 1916, <<https://www.lautarchiv.hu-berlin.de/en/objekte/lautarchiv/10018/>>, Lautarchiv, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

However I would take these interpretations further by drawing out the intra-acting materialities. As with Censor reports' letter fragments, there emerges with the Halbmondlager recordings a blending of temporalities and bodilinesses from Bela Singh to the Halbmondlager translator(s) and transcriber(s), to myself and Bal Bola. As I listen to Bela Singh's recording, my focus is on the stuttering pauses in the moments he takes perhaps to collect himself, or remind himself of the next verse. I notice the coughs – perhaps an indicator of the cold conditions of the Camp, I wonder, or of smoke from the pipes that appear to have been freely smoked by the German Officers supervising the recordings (see the figure perched on a desk, to the right of Figure 57). By contrast, Bal's embodied spiritual knowledge and familiarity with Punjabi, the GGS and the liturgical conventions of the contemporary gurdwāra informed her interpretation of the cadence and formal structure of the narrative articulated by Bela Singh. This in turn informs my argument that any historical analysis of these sources is implicated by the sounding bodiliness of the speaker in 1916, but also the unique bodily materialities of those hearing in 2020-2023.

THE BODILY MATERIALITY OF METAPHOR

This concluding section to Chapter 2 builds on the discussion in Chapter 1 on the role of non-human agencies in design histories. Chapter 1 asked how design historians might understand objects that engage the bodily, when bodiliness might be entangled and changed by non-human agencies like the divine. What follows is an interrogation of how the Indian Army soldiers framed bodily materialities, and whether design historians need to account for the material effect of other non-human agencies, including trauma. This thesis uses the term trauma broadly, to accommodate the variety of causes and manifestations that exist beyond dominant medical definitions, and draws on decolonial trauma studies to work in a way that recognises trauma theorists' efforts to 'move beyond a Eurocentric trauma paradigm.'⁵⁸² Work in this field has led to suggestions that conceptualisations of trauma – and of healing – are highly localised, and indeed have agentic potential, such that trauma can be understood as going beyond the individual psychological experience and can

⁵⁸² Sonya Andermahr, 'Introduction (Decolonizing Trauma Studies: Trauma and Postcolonialism)', *Humanities*, 4 (2015), 500–505 (pp. 500 and 504) and Justine Seran, 'Australian Aboriginal Memoir and Memory: A Stolen Generations Trauma Narrative', *Humanities*, 4 (2015), 661–75 (p. 665).

instead operate as an agent in itself that affects one's bodiliness.⁵⁸³ For example, Stef Craps and Irene Visser argue that, in turning away from 'the traditional event-based model', whereby trauma is understood as the result of 'a single, extraordinary, catastrophic event,' trauma might be rethought as 'collective, spatial, and *material*.'⁵⁸⁴ Justine Seran goes further and suggests trauma might be understood as a 'transgenerational phantom', something that is beyond the psychological, and instead has its own form of personhood and thus capacities to move and, critically, affect others.⁵⁸⁵ Seran has similarly connected the idea of material trauma with some of the themes explored in Patricia DeRocher's testimonio work. She discusses life-writing, specifically amongst Aboriginal communities in Australia, as forms of 'choral autoethnography', whereby phantomic historical trauma is 'retrieved' and 'passed on' for one's children or grandchildren to work through.⁵⁸⁶ In light of these moves to reframe trauma as having material potential, and being locally-situated, this section of my thesis uses contemporary psychological studies situated in India to examine the traces of possible trauma in the Indian Army soldiers' letters. I propose that this has enormous relevance for design history scholarship, and especially design historians concerned with the body, on the grounds that that such localised and decolonial models of trauma indicate that the men, their bodiliness(es), and their bodily engagement with objects cannot be treated as static.

This discussion can be usefully framed by an overview of recent research into how semantic constructions of trauma and pain in North and West Indian cultures are rooted in material bodily experiences. One 1991 study examined the relationship between medicine and pain conceptualisation amongst members of North Indian communities that predominantly practiced Unanti Tibb, a Perso-Arabic system of medicine that continues to form an 'integral

⁵⁸³ Stef Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 31; Irene Visser, 'Decolonizing Trauma Theory: Retrospect and Prospects', *Humanities*, 4 (2015), 250–65 (p. 252).

⁵⁸⁴ Visser, 'Decolonizing Trauma Theory' (2015), p. 252, discussing the work of Michael Rothberg, 'Decolonizing Trauma Studies: A Response', *Studies in the Novel*, 40 (2008), 224–34 (p. 228) (emphasis added).

⁵⁸⁵ Seran, 'Australian Aboriginal Memoir and Memory' (2015), p. 665. Seran here is reworking the term 'transgenerational phantom', originally used by Nicholas T. Rand, 'Introduction', in *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*, ed. by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

⁵⁸⁶ Seran, 'Australian Aboriginal Memoir and Memory' (2015), p. 664.

part of the national healthcare delivery system' in India.⁵⁸⁷ This study noted that 'metaphors which imbue pain with its sensory qualities' are rooted in 'familiar' physical and emotional experiences.⁵⁸⁸ The concept of 'burning pain' is 'imaged by fire, live coals, and parched chickpeas, its heaviness by a weight or load, especially a load of grain,' and the 'catching-cracking pain of the joints and muscles is like the bursting of a seed, a bud, or a piece of pottery.'⁵⁸⁹ As a result, the way Indian Army men processed bodily experiences during the war may well have been determined in part by their material cultural upbringing. This implies not only that Indian and British soldiers may have processed the same experiences in different bodily ways, but also that language dismissed as metaphor and poetics from Indian Army letters may in fact be rooted in a very material form of bodiliness. A second, 2019-published study into indigenous Pune communities' conceptualisation of trauma similarly found that concepts like 'shock, wound, burden, container [...] can be regarded as primary metaphors reflecting bodily processes that are both experiential and psychophysiological,' and that the ways in which experiences are processed into metaphor are culturally-rooted.⁵⁹⁰ The metaphor of shock was used, for example, to describe 'accidental trauma', like natural disasters, due to cultural conceptions of shock as having a disturbing but short-term character.⁵⁹¹

Authors of these studies have explained 'the continuity of metaphors across the somatic and the affective dimensions of pain' as a product of specific cultural ontologies that reject a dualist model of the body and mind.⁵⁹² The result is that sensory qualities of pain are (and should) not be conceived of in exclusive physical, somatosensory terms, but rather by 'how pain feels, what its rhythms are, how its intensity is marked – all are embedded in a

⁵⁸⁷ Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy, 'Unani System of Medicine: Origin and Development', *Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India (Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine)*, 2022 <<https://ccrum.res.in/UserView/index?mid=1411>> [accessed 12 August 2023].

⁵⁸⁸ Judy Pugh, 'The Semantics of Pain in Indian Culture and Medicine', *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, 15 (1991), 19–43 <<https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00050826>>, p. 25.

⁵⁸⁹ Pugh, 'The Semantics of Pain' (1991), p. 25.

⁵⁹⁰ Karin Rechsteiner, Varsha Tol, and Andreas Maercker, "'It Should Not Have Happened": Metaphorical Expressions, Idioms, and Narrative Descriptions Related to Trauma in an Indigenous Community in India', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being*, 14.1 (2019), 1667134 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/17482631.2019.1667134>>, p. 6.

⁵⁹¹ Rechsteiner, Tol, and Maercker, "'It Should Not Have Happened'" (2019), pp. 4 and 13.

⁵⁹² Pugh, 'The Semantics of Pain' (1991), p. 26.

community's everyday life and language.⁵⁹³ Both of these studies in India were either at the forefront of new cognitive linguistics developments, or describe themselves as influenced by it. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) is one such development that has emerged in the last 40 years, and foregrounds the bodily through its fundamental principle that our conceptual and linguistic systems are grounded by 'physical, cognitive, and social embodiment.'⁵⁹⁴ CMT holds that metaphors are a matter of thought and experience, not language: how humans cognitively understand the world around us is metaphorical – we structure one thing in terms of another – but these conceptual systems are grounded in physical experiences.⁵⁹⁵ As a result, those phrases or expressions deemed metaphors in the popular imagination are merely linguistic 'instantiations' of conceptual metaphors operating at a cognitive level.⁵⁹⁶ In this way, metaphors are more complicated than simply "substitutions" for literal statements.⁵⁹⁷ Rather, they are the product of 'a person's experience in the physical world', whereby one maps 'a concrete, physiological or biological experience [the source domain] onto an abstract' concept [the target domain] and thus shapes how that person conceptualises their experience.⁵⁹⁸ As argued by the studies based in West and North India, this process of conceptualisation is culturally-determined: how we cognize our experiences thus depends on 'cognitively and culturally-rooted conceptual metaphors'.⁵⁹⁹ The result, however, is trauma and pain is conceptualised amongst these communities in acutely bodily terms, and this is reflected in many of the letters between Indian Army soldiers and their correspondents.

The material culture of the everyday, for example, is tangibly enmeshed with Indian Army soldiers' bodily experience of war and the language they use to describe it. Agrarian language, for example, is common to the majority of letters from Indian Army, the vast

⁵⁹³ Pugh, 'The Semantics of Pain' (1991), p. 20.

⁵⁹⁴ Shashikala Naidu, 'Metaphorical Expressions in Indian English: A Cross-Cultural Usage-Based Study' (unpublished PhD, Oklahoma State University, 2009)

<<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.632.9934&rep=rep1&type=pdf>> [accessed 16 June 2020], p. 3; Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors* (1980), pp. 4-6.

⁵⁹⁵ Naidu, 'Metaphorical Expressions in Indian English' (2009), p. 3; Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors* (1980), pp. 14-21 and Chapter 12 'How Is Our Conceptual System Grounded?'

⁵⁹⁶ Naidu, 'Metaphorical Expressions in Indian English' (2009), p. 2, speaking about the grounding theory in Chapter 12 of Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors* (1980).

⁵⁹⁷ Naidu, 'Metaphorical Expressions in Indian English' (2009), p. 13.

⁵⁹⁸ Naidu, 'Metaphorical Expressions in Indian English' (2009), p. 13.

⁵⁹⁹ Naidu, 'Metaphorical Expressions in Indian English' (2009), pp. 8, 10, 14, 35-36 and 42-43.

majority of whom in the early years of the war (from when the letter fragments were most extensively reviewed) were recruited from rural agrarian communities in Northern India. An unnamed, wounded Sikh soldier wrote to a friend that 'the enemy's guns roasted our regiments even as grain is parched.'⁶⁰⁰ Parching is a technique of dry roasting, common to Vedic diets in India since the seventeenth century, but also common to British and British-controlled Indian military rationing in the early-twentieth century.⁶⁰¹ The mapping here then is between the abstract concept of war (target domain) onto the tangible domain of roasting and parching (source domain). Given the prevalence of dry roasting in Indian diets generally and possibly also to trench diets during the war, the concept of regiments being roasted might be understood as based on familiar sensations of bodiliness in the material world. In this way, the 'embodied experience' of being near a fire and an extremely hot roasting or parching pan provided the basis for this soldier to transpose his conceptualisation of that hot, physical scene onto his interpretation of the gunfire.

The language used by the men to convey updates on their personal wellbeing are also distinctly physical. Many of these letters reference the heart, liver, mind, brain, and countenance, all framed as susceptible to pain through heat, heaviness and sharp invasive movement. For example, just as 'the head "weighs down", and the liver grows "hot"' from sadness and grief, so too does the heart 'burn' and feel 'heavy'.⁶⁰² By far the most common of these references are metaphors relating to the heart. These are slightly more complex metaphors than those discussed above, because the mapping brings together abstract target domains with a source domain (the heart) that likely reflects the men's worlding within an ontology that allows for the heart to be a channel for emotions as cognition, and not exclusively the realm of sentimentality as in post-Enlightenment Europe. Thus the casualties in France are described as making 'one's heart tremble.'⁶⁰³ This speaks to the

⁶⁰⁰ Correspondence between 'a Sikh wounded in England' and 'a friend in India', dated 29 January 1915, in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 1 (Dec 1914-Apr 1915)', 1914, British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/825/1 <<http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=IOR/L/MIL/5/825/1>> [accessed 3 March 2020].

⁶⁰¹ Manoshi Bhattacharya, 'A Historical Exploration of Indian Diets and a Possible Link to Insulin Resistance Syndrome', *Appetite*, 95 (2015), 421–54 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2015.07.002>>, p. 436; Kaushik Roy, 'Feeding the Leviathan: Supplying the British-Indian Army, 1859-1913', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 80.322 (2002), 144–61 <www.jstor.org/stable/44230804> [accessed 16 July 2020], p. 150.

⁶⁰² Pugh, 'The Semantics of Pain' (1991), p. 26.

⁶⁰³ Correspondence between Malik Sher Bahadur Khan, Government House, Madras, to Malik Khan Mahomed, Risalder, 9th Hodson's Horse, France, dated 31 July 1916, in in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 2 (Aug 1916-Oct

physical sensation of shaking in fearful or horrifying situations, but the enunciation of the experience as a metaphor of the heart points to the cultural conceptualisation of the heart as the pain processor for psychological trauma. Something similar emerges from letters that write 'our hearts yearn to see [our families'] faces again' and 'my heart is much oppressed', or which speak of things that are 'weighing' and 'graven' on one's heart.⁶⁰⁴ These conjure the ache of pining for home and for family, and the rising pressure of anxiety and panic felt in one's chest when feeling trapped ('oppressed') or pre-occupied by a concern, but also reflect the cultural conceptualisation of the heart as more complex than simply an emotional vessel. Slightly different are those references to the heart that also integrate a container metaphor. One soldier spoke of his gratitude that '[God] implants *in* each man's heart the belief that he will come through all right,' while another begged that 'compunction' be put '*into* the heart of the German King' to stimulate victory for Britain.⁶⁰⁵ These depict the heart as a vessel for faith and morality, which assume that the heart is not just a container for emotion, but for cognising beliefs, and knowing right from wrong. Here the physical root is mapped against the background of a belief system that conceives the heart as more than an emotional metaphor. The core point here is the heart's capacity in India for integrated thought and feeling; container metaphors reinforce the beliefs that thought and emotion are neither mutually exclusive, nor the preserve of specific bodily elements kept distinct for their respective 'rational' and 'emotional/irrational' function, but rather are irrevocably fused together as a composite. Ravi Ahuja's work on comparison, discussed above, is particularly instructive in supporting this interpretive approach.⁶⁰⁶

Where Ahuja argues that imprisoned Indian men used comparison in their Halbmondlager

1916)', 1916, British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/826/7 <<http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=IOR/L/MIL/5/826/7>> [accessed 15 May 2020].

⁶⁰⁴ Correspondence between a soldier and Mahomed Abdulls, Government Cattle Farm, Hissar Punjab, dated 30 August 1916, correspondence between Sher Bahadur, 34th Poona Horse, France, and Fateh Ali Khan, Jhelam District, Punjab, dated 5 September 1916, correspondence between Jemadar Indar Singh, France, and Chattar Singh, Ludhiana, India, dated 15 September 1916, and correspondence between an unnamed 'Pathan' soldier, serving in France, to an unnamed correspondent in Jalandhar, India, dated 10 September 1916, all in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 2 (Aug 1916-Oct 1916)', 1916, British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/826/7 <<http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=IOR/L/MIL/5/826/7>> [accessed 15 May 2020].

⁶⁰⁵ Correspondence between Hemayat Ullah Khan, 6th Cavalry, France, and The Moulvie Sahib, Imam of the Mosque in the West of the village of Daulatpura, Utter Pradesh, India, dated 6 August 1916, and correspondence between (Punjabi Musalman) Dhaman Khan, Sowar, 25th Cavalry, Bannu, N.W.F.P., India, to Muksrar Khan, Sowar, 22nd Cavalry, attached 34th Poona Horse, France, dated 29 July 1916, both in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 2 (Aug 1916-Oct 1916)', 1916, British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/826/7 <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=ior!!mil!5!826!7_f001r> [accessed 15 May 2020] (all emphases added).

⁶⁰⁶ See pages 234-236 of this thesis.

recordings as a means of cognitive processing and understanding their experiences, what I am proposing here is that metaphor was put to similar use in the soldiers' letters. Metaphor becomes the medium through which trauma is communicated, and it points to the physicality of emotional and bodily pain, the bodily materialities of wartime trauma.

The combination of ethnopsychology, trauma research and cognitive linguistics (CMT) can also help historians situate soldiers' letters that frame the changes affected in them by their wartime experiences not as strictly psychological, but as metaphysical and material transformation. Writing from Britain in early 1915, for example, Jamedar Raja Ram Jadhac speaks of depression and concludes that 'I am not what I was', while Clerk Mir Hassan writes that he hopes to see his father and 'refresh my dead heart.'⁶⁰⁷ The following year, Mir Aslam Khan writes from France that 'my brother is dead... now I am dead.'⁶⁰⁸ Kot Dafadar Kasim Ali Khan similarly writes, 'we are dead, and should not be thought of as living,' while Sukh Dyal, removed to the Lady Hardinge Hospital at Brockenhurst, writes to a colleague in the 41st Dogras that 'I am neither dead nor alive.'⁶⁰⁹ Each of these men conceptualise their experiences as resulting in more than a shift in their worldview or emotional state, but in their complete transformation or even death. This is echoed in the Second World War by letters such as that from Subadar Narain Singh Bhandari, who asks that correspondent tell the Quartermaster 'that my name has now been changed, Mota is not now in existence.'⁶¹⁰ What these letters illustrate is the importance of understanding bodiliness to be a dynamic, changing concept. Consequently, just as design historians must account for the unaccountability and unknowability of divine non-human agencies, so too must they hold space for non-human agencies like trauma, where it has the potential to affect the

⁶⁰⁷ Correspondence between Jamadar Raja Ram Jadhac, 107th Pioneers, New Milton, and Kashaba Jadhav, 107th Pioneers, 7th Indian Brigade, France, dated 6 April 1915, in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 1 (Mar 1915-Apr 1915)', 1915, British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/825/2 <<http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=IOR/L/MIL/5/825/2>> [accessed 19 March 2020]. Correspondence between Clerk Mir Hassan, 40th Pathans, France, and his father, 'India', dated 1 December 1915, in Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War* (1999), p. 123.

⁶⁰⁸ Correspondence between Mir Aslam Khan, 19th Lancers, France, and Muhammed Azghar Ali Khan, North-West Frontier Province, dated 27 January 1916, in Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War* (1999), p. 143.

⁶⁰⁹ Correspondence between Kot Dafadar Kasim Ali Khan, France, and Abdul Haq Khan, Uttar Pradesh, dated 27 December 1916, and correspondence between Sukh Dyal, Brockenhurst, England, and Naik Sarjan Singh, 41st Dogras, Persia, dated 18 February 1916; both in Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War* (1999), pp. 154 and 262.

⁶¹⁰ Correspondence from Narain Singh Bhandari from Summary No. CXLIV (24th March to 6th April 1943), undated, in 'Middle East Military Censorship Fortnightly Summaries Covering Indian Troops (Sep 1942-Apr 1943)', 1942-1943, British Library, IOR/L/PJ/12/654.

bodiliness of soldiers – as well as how that bodiliness works with objects, such as the miniature Qur'ans or mala discussed in Chapter 1.

Of particular interest from a methodological perspective for me is the prevalence of metaphors using orientational and spatial language. Amongst these are phrases that draw on ideas of containment ('we cavalymen still live *in* hope'), of spatial distance ('the time is *near*'), or of directional motion ('[a]ll these calamities have *fallen upon* the unhappy people' and 'my countenance is *downcast*').⁶¹¹ As a synesthete who experiences time intensely spatially (see Figure 67), the idea of time being near makes complete bodily sense. I experience time as an undulating tape of distinct units, almost like a hopscotch grid. In my experience, time ebbs and flows, loops and warps across centuries, especially the 20th, and becomes increasingly condensed and tangible from 1991 (when I was born) onwards. For me, time being 'near' can be historical time or impending dates; I am in touching distance of the looping curve of the 1970s, more so than I am the ebb of the early 2000s, which interrupts the linear chronology of models of time espoused by modernity/coloniality. Time is thus very material for me, in the sense that I experience its undulations in a bodily and spatial way. This connects to the argument made above, about the disruption of the modern/colonial, linear temporal frame.⁶¹² In that section, I was discussing how this temporality is disrupted by the bodiliness of the soldiers' memory, as it prompts historians to reckon with an (auto)biographical sense of time when researching and writing about the Indian Army men's experiences. Here, this becomes relevant in what it reveals about the importance of bodiliness as method: by bringing one's own cognitive processing to bear on history research and writing, bodiliness as method also has the potential to disrupt the modern/colonial temporality.

⁶¹¹ Correspondence between an unnamed 'Pathan' soldier, serving in France, to an unnamed correspondent in Jalandhar, India, dated 10 September 1916, and correspondence between Amir Bakhelt, Cavalry Railhead, France to Nor-ud-din Sahib, Attock, India, dated 17 August 1916, both in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 2 (Aug 1916-Oct 1916)', 1916, British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/826/7 <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=ior!!mil!5!826!7_f001r> [accessed 15 May 2020]; correspondence between Jamadar Raja Ram Jadhav, 107th Pioneers, New Milton, and Kashaba Jadhav, 107th Pioneers, 7th Indian Brigade, France, dated 6 April 1915 in in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 1 (Mar 1915-Apr 1915)', 1915, British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/825/2 <<http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=IOR/L/MIL/5/825/2>> [accessed 19 March 2020]. All emphases added.

⁶¹² For my discussion on the interruption of modern/colonial time, see page 234, above.

It is also with this embodied experience of the spatial materiality of time that I have approached the work of Islamic Studies scholar Shahzad Bashir, when considering the use of temporal metaphors in the soldiers' letters. Bashir has consistently called for scholars to dismantle the paradigmatic understanding of Islamic temporalities as a single, linear timeline from the Prophet to the present, and instead recognise the pluralities that exist within Islam as to how the past, present and future is understood.⁶¹³ Bashir instead adopts a multidimensional metric, arguing for 'the multiplicity of Islamic temporal regimes' to be understood as 'a perpetually transformable and transforming three-dimensional web' with 'multiple veins, conjunctions, contradictions, and crossovers' in which 'diverse pasts and futures [fold] into themselves.'⁶¹⁴ His recent work sheds light on these plural articulations of the future across Islamic materials and between Muslim communities and belief systems. These include, for example, a set of Shi'i beliefs around the status and nature of Imams, who

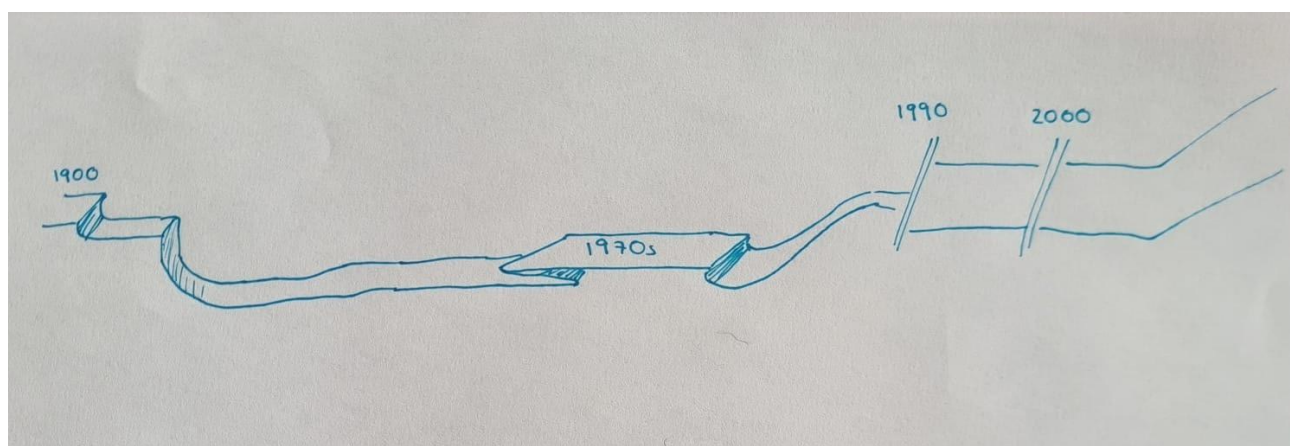


Figure 67.

A sketch of my spatialization of time, from 1900 onwards. From 1900 time drops until the 1970s, which curve upwards. There are breaks at 1990 and 2000, and the years in the decades the follow each of these are much larger, as if magnified. These years are level, on a linear plane, until the present year, from which point time dramatically curves up and away.

⁶¹³ Shahzad Bashir, 'Chapter 2: The Web of History (Inadequacy of Timelines)', in *A New Vision for Islamic Pasts and Futures* (MIT Press / Brown University Digital Publications Initiative, 2022) <<https://islamic-pasts-futures.org/chapters/the-web-of-history/inadequacy-of-timelines/>> (note, this text has been published as a web-based, interactive model that does not include page numbers); Shahzad Bashir, 'Everlasting Doubt: Uncertainty in Islamic Representations of the Past', *Archiv Für Religionsgeschichte*, 20.1 (2018), 25–44 <<https://doi.org/10.1515/arege-2018-0003>>; Shahzad Bashir, 'On Islamic Time: Rethinking Chronology in the Historiography of Muslim Societies', *History and Theory*, 53 (2014), 519–44 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/hith.10729>>.

⁶¹⁴ Bashir, *A New Vision for Islamic Pasts and Futures* (2022), 'Chapter 2: The Web of History (Inadequacy of Timelines)'; Bashir, 'On Islamic Time' (2014), pp. 542 and 522.

are considered the Prophet's 'genealogical heirs' by virtue of being made from the 'same substance', out of which Shi'i Muslims are also made.⁶¹⁵ The act of opposing Imams is considered to reveal one's 'prehistorical constitution', trapping one in a type of past based on the materiality of their bodiliness (specifically its difference to the material composition of the Imams and 'true' Shi'i Muslims). Where one later accepts the Imams 'then their prehistory would be corrected automatically. In this situation the present and the future create different deep pasts before their own materialization.'⁶¹⁶ On this articulation of Islamic time, one's material past, material present, and spiritual future are transformable and unfixed.

Understanding the localised and often community-specific models of time in Islam is especially helpful for the above reference to 'time is near', which comes from a longer extract in a letter from Punjabi Muslim soldier, Amir Bakhelt.⁶¹⁷ I have not tried to trace Bakhelt's identity back to a specific community, against which I might try to identify his understanding of time; rather, I suggest that Bashir's work allows historians to consider whether Amir Bakhelt's letter uses a metaphor rooted in his own embodied experience of time as a devoted Muslim. This example is notable in European conceptualisations of time, it is not exclusive to Islamic models. For example, Lakoff and Johnson have written of how European metaphors for time tend to assume time is a stationary object or space (we *approach* the year ahead, we *move further into* the 1980s).⁶¹⁸ This makes sense against the backdrop of broader capitalist and colonialist agendas that benefitted from producing and commoditizing a spatiotemporal model of time; but this also strengthens the point above.⁶¹⁹ Time forms part of our wider lived ontologies and ways of being in the world, made material through our existence in time. Describing time as being 'near' for me is rooted in a spatial

⁶¹⁵ Bashir, *A New Vision for Islamic Pasts and Futures* (2022), 'Chapter 2: The Web of History (Genealogies)'.

⁶¹⁶ Bashir, *A New Vision for Islamic Pasts and Futures* (2022), 'Chapter 2: The Web of History (Genealogies)'.

⁶¹⁷ Correspondence between Amir Bakhelt, Cavalry Railhead, France to Nor-ud-din Sahib, Attock, India, dated 17 August 1916, in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 2 (Aug 1916-Oct 1916)', 1916, British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/826/7 <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=ior!!mil!5!826!7_f001r> [accessed 15 May 2020].'

⁶¹⁸ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors* (1980), pp. 43-44.

⁶¹⁹ See Harrison J. Schmitt and others, 'Time-Space Distanciation as a Decolonizing Framework for Psychology', *Review of General Psychology*, 25 (2021), 405–21 <<https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:233701645>>; Charles W. Mills, 'The Chronopolitics of Racial Time', *Time & Society*, 29.2 (2020), 297–317 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0961463X20903650>>; Rolando Vazquez, 'Modernity Coloniality and Visibility: The Politics of Time', *Sociological Research Online*, 14 (2009) <<https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.1990>>.

model of time that differs to the linear, stationary model proposed by Johnson and Lakoff, and thus presents the real possibility that the notion of time being 'near' for Bakhtin is similarly rooted in an entirely different model of how and what time is and functions. Scholars have thus made interventions into the concept of time through the scholarship of chronopolitics, proposing that any sort of periodisation is social, and thus merits alternative temporalities across registers of 'gender, ethnicity, class, nation, religion, or race'.⁶²⁰ Metaphors such as 'time is near', situated within their culturally-rooted origins, add to this scholarship as illustrations of the bodily, material dimensions of different temporalities. Indeed, it also raises questions of whether my argument about the shifting, fluid nature of bodiliness during wartime points to a temporality of *war* – which might be experienced differently depending on one's religious or national identities – which might form the focus of future research.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has identified some of the ways design historians might think about sonic materialities in the context of the Indian Army in the First World War. Through a discussion of the different enunciations of bodiliness across different registers of sound(ing) and hearing, this chapter has shown how sources can inhabit plural, shifting materialities that include both those from the moment of source creation to the moment(s) of the historian's encounter. The chapter opened by discussing the affective dimensions of sound created through the invocation of spiritual concepts by soldiers being recorded at Halbmondlager. I discussed how these spiritual, sonic practices might have contributed to the creation of an affective ecology for the soldiers; not mimicking the affect of the gurdwāra, but rather creating something distinct and new that is nonetheless experienced in a profoundly bodily way. This section also introduced my discussion of the impact and position of the historian, using my own bodily experiences as an example in how hearing and experiencing sound can differ not only between people, but also between moments for the same person. However, what began as an enquiry into how the historian's bodiliness might feature in a critical

⁶²⁰ Mills, 'The Chronopolitics of Racial Time' (2020); Charles W. Mills, 'WHITE TIME: The Chronic Injustice of Ideal Theory', *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race*, 11.1 (2014), 27–42 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742058X14000022>>.

framework rooted in bodiliness became a method of disrupting the colonialities of knowledge that underpin the methodologies of historical studies. The chapter proposed models of encountering sound(ing) in the archive that foregrounded the sensorial, the emotional and (dis)ability, and in doing so considered how methodologies grounded in neurodivergent and synaesthetic worldviews have the potential to validate otherwise modes of knowledge production. The result is an original perspective on how design historians might achieve decolonial outcomes in their work.

The second section of this chapter asked how historians might deal with sonic sources, where the materiality is plural and shifting. It focused mainly on soldiers' letters and the compounding processes of oral recitation, transcription, translation, and interpretation through which each letter went – or was intended to go. However it also integrated examples from the Halbmondlager recordings, from imprisoned Punjabis and Gurkhas who drew on recognised forms of popular myth or orally-recited narrative traditions in composing and recording their scripts. This section argued that these compounding, plural processes gave way to an enmeshment of plural bodilinesses, from across historical moments. In this instance, the bodiliness of soldiers imprinted on these sources became enmeshed with my own and the embodied spiritual knowledge of the translators who assisted me with the primary sources. What also emerged across the 'Plural Materialities' section was the potential for bodiliness as a method to disrupt models of linear time. An examination of how soldiers' regarded letters as proxy meeting points with correspondents pointed to an autobiographical model of time that has received limited attention by historians of the Indian Army. This subsequently became a larger theme of Chapter 2; I detailed how synaesthetic experiences of time offer another dimension to bodiliness as method and its potential for disrupting linear temporal frames, and also how plural articulations of time across Muslim communities disrupt the same temporal frame, prompting historians to reconsider how the language of time in soldiers' letters is used.

The final section of this chapter examined the bodily materialities of so-called metaphorical language at play in the soldiers' letters. Drawing together decolonial trauma studies and multiple ethnopsychological studies on the use of language as a means of processing and healing trauma, this section argued the soldiers' material, bodily changes are enunciated

through language in ways that might be read as metaphor, but in fact are rooted in culturally-specific ontologies and material ways of being in the world. This section also drew on research into the destabilising consequences of trauma on bodiliness, and argued that soldiers often used metaphor to describe a complete metaphysical transformation as a result of their wartime experiences. This extended the discussion in Chapter 1, adding to the divine the possibility that trauma might also be conceived of as a non-human agency that has the potential to affect the bodiliness of soldiers. Bodiliness can thus be understood as having the capacity to change over time, and design historians must account for this when they speak of any bodily engagement with objects.

CHAPTER 3

MOVEMENT

Where Chapter 2 considered materialities of the sonic aspects of life in the Indian Army during the First World War, Chapter 3 now turns to the materialities of movement. I have drawn out specific practices involving movement from across the daily lives of men in the Indian Army, most of which resist categorisation into themes like 'worship' or 'sport' because of their entanglement across spheres of significance in the men's lives. I have therefore deliberately not tried to divide them strictly thematically, but instead have split the chapter into three sections. The first, 'Kushti', examines the bodily and environmental (im)materialities in the practice of spiritual discipline and commitment known as kushti. Kushti is often described as a form of wrestling, a physical endeavour that, especially when placed in conversation with the training regimes that involve wooden jori swinging, is framed as historical antecedents of the modern gym. Such descriptions remove kushti from its spiritual context and significance, and in doing so betray an underlying framework of bodiliness used by commentators that rests on corporeality.

This section explains why the primary sources might be thought of as showing iterations of kushti practice, rather than typical military training exercises, and furthermore asks what design historians might learn about the experiences of the men in the Indian Army, by examining the materialities of kushti when alternative models of bodiliness are used. The second section to this chapter is titled 'Comics, Cross-dressing and Cosmic Agency', and develops the approaches taken in the earlier half of the chapter to interrogating the materialities of movement. The practices examined in this section include comic performances to entertain troops, Islamic worship practices at the Brighton Pavilion, and devotional theatre at the Halbmondlager prisoner of war camp in Wünsdorf, Germany. This section explores the processes by which soldiers appear to have drawn on embodied knowledges and ontologies and asks what historians might learn from an examination of the materialities relating to the men's bodiliness, dress and space.

Historiographical Positioning

The first section of this chapter looks to the very limited literature on kushti practice, to research the materialities of movement at play amongst practicing Indian Army soldiers. As the chapter develops in more detail, below, the two most prominent scholars on the histories of kushti are Joseph Alter and Conor Heffernan, who respectively trace the broader spiritual framework in which kushti sits, its strong ties to emergent and evolving senses of Indian nationalism, and the process of cultural appropriation and reappropriation through which kushti and jori swinging were taken and reclaimed across Indian, American and European physical health and Christian value systems.⁶²¹ Whilst Heffernan works on the Victorian period and Alter engages with the complex histories of kushti as part of his work on 1980s kushti akharas, neither looks at kushti during the War or in relation to the wartime Indian Army. My work subsequently builds on their foundational research into the long-standing spiritual framework underpinning kushti, and especially with its entanglement with evolving nationalist identities across India in the run-up to and during the War. By tracing the similarities between kushti and the exercises seen in photographs and film footage of Indian recruits in their military training, behind the Front Line, and in prisoner of war camps, I recontextualise the visual record of Indian Army and offer a corrective to the present archival framing of these practices (often recorded as examples of play or standard military drill). I consider how these practices came into being and how they may have been worlded by the Indian recruits, given the knowledge gained from Alter and Heffernan's work on the palimpsestic identity of kushti and jori swinging, given their 'transatlantic para-colonial appropriation into a nationalist reappropriation.'⁶²² By bringing in this thesis's conceptual framework of heterobodiliness and focusing on the bodily articulation of spiritual identities and nationalist sentiment, I consider the relationship between the use of kushti dress, movement forms, an akhara pit-like space, and the bodily materiality of the practicing men.

⁶²¹ See for example, Joseph S. Alter, *The Wrestler's Body: Identity and Ideology in North India* (University of California Press, 1992) <<http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft6n39p104/>>; Joseph S. Alter, 'Indian Clubs and Colonialism: Hindu Masculinity and Muscular Christianity', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 46.3 (2004), pp. 497–534 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3879472>> [accessed 29 September 2020]; Conor Heffernan, 'What's Wrong with a Little Swinging? Indian Clubs as a Tool of Suppression and Rebellion in Post-Rebellion India', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 34.7–8 (2017), pp. 554–77, doi:[10.1080/09523367.2017.1374248](https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2017.1374248); Conor Heffernan, 'Indian Club Swinging in the Early Victorian Period', *Sport in History*, 37.1 (2017), pp. 95–120, doi:[10.1080/17460263.2016.1250807](https://doi.org/10.1080/17460263.2016.1250807).

⁶²² Joseph S. Alter, 'The Body of One Color: Indian Wrestling, the Indian State, and Utopian Somatics', *Cultural Anthropology*, 8.1 (1993), pp. 49–72 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/656421>> [accessed 29 September 2020], p. 51.

I offer new insights into how Indian Army recruits practicing forms of kushti in these ways, in these forms of dress, and in these spaces, may have articulated plural worldings and identities through their bodies.

Scholarly literature on Indian Army concert parties and entertainment, and Muslim prayer in the context of the Brighton Pavilion hospital, is scarce. Whilst those sections of this chapter that research Indian comics and the scattering of references to Muslim prayer on the Pavilion's East Lawn are therefore neither aligned nor in contest with existing scholarship, research across the whole chapter can be positioned in relation to existing scholarship on space studies and photography in the context of the First World War and, occasionally, the wartime Indian Army. Most of the contributing authors to *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914-1918* (edited by Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach) consider the role of space in the experiences of colonial troops during the War. The work in the volume positions different types of space as being either relatively flat and dual in nature, or more complex and multifaceted. Daniel Steinbach, for example, points to the colonial encounters captured in examples of wartime photography, and argues that a particular image of five men from across countries Africa, Asia and Europe 'captures *the dual nature – or back and forth – of negotiations of relationships and encounters between men from vastly different backgrounds in the context of war.*'⁶²³ Steinbach is not referring to the representation of relationships in photography, but rather himself seems to put forward the suggestion that photographic space – a space that receives a lot of attention in this chapter of my thesis – is the site of diametric colonial exchange and encounter. Anna Maguire, however, in her interrogation of 'pageantry' in different wartime spaces points to complex undercurrents behind space both as experienced and as represented; as discussed in the introduction to Chapter One of this thesis, Maguire described military camps as 'neither the frictionless contact zones nor the "colourful" environments of temporary imperial microcosms' depicted in the accounts of 'white colonial soldiers' or wider 'colonial

⁶²³ Daniel Steinbach, 'Between Intimacy and Violence: Imperial Encounters in East Africa during the First World War', in *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914–1918*, ed. by Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach (Routledge, 2021), pp. 98–122 (pp. 98-99, emphasis added).

discourses'.⁶²⁴ As a volume, however, authors propose that space – howsoever imagined – was changed through the presence of different groups and the shifting power dynamics at play; the nature of space is framed as constantly forming and reforming, but almost always underpinned by an imperial overarching framework that might be temporarily remoulded, but remains ultimately unbroken. Maguire, to this end, concludes that although '[s]egregation and racial discrimination were not comprehensive and absolute,' and the exceptions that 'illuminate that this space could hold both racial hierarchies and offer the possibilities of mutuality and exchange,' colonial troops ultimately 'made sense of their status within the imperial hierarchy and reminded others of their place too.'⁶²⁵ Santanu Das makes the same point in his work specifically on Indian Army soldiers and their relationship to three 'very different sites' (the Western Front, a Mesopotamian hospital, and 'the world stage').⁶²⁶ Das identifies in the archive an 'anti-colonial cosmopolitanism' amongst different types of Indian war experience: that which was not necessarily an all-out nationalist consciousness or 'set political credo', but rather a 'growing resistance to imperial and racist hierarchies.'⁶²⁷ However Das is also very clear that this 'new sense of self' shared between Indian soldiers, patients and intellectuals operated 'outside of the imperial axis of Britain and India *while still being enmeshed in the structures of Empire*.'⁶²⁸

This literature helps me to position my work historiographically in its navigation of colonial subjects' use of and existence in space(s), and the tension around how historians approach the assertion of agency and the development of a sense of self within the context of – to use Das's term – the structures of Empire. This is under scrutiny across this chapter – not

⁶²⁴ Anna Maguire, "'A Pageant of Empire?': Untangling Colonial Encounters in Military Camps', in *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914–1918*, ed. by Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach (Routledge, 2021), pp. 37–56 (pp. 38–39).

⁶²⁵ Anna Maguire, "'A Pageant of Empire?': Untangling Colonial Encounters in Military Camps', in *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914–1918*, ed. by Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach (Routledge, 2021), pp. 37–56 (p. 50).

⁶²⁶ Santanu Das, 'Precarious Encounters: South Asia, the War and Anti-Colonial Cosmopolitanism', in *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914–1918*, ed. by Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach (Routledge, 2021), pp. 125–48 (p. 142).

⁶²⁷ Santanu Das, 'Precarious Encounters: South Asia, the War and Anti-Colonial Cosmopolitanism', in *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914–1918*, ed. by Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach (Routledge, 2021), pp. 125–48 (pp. 142–143).

⁶²⁸ Santanu Das, 'Precarious Encounters: South Asia, the War and Anti-Colonial Cosmopolitanism', in *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914–1918*, ed. by Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach (Routledge, 2021), pp. 125–48 (p. 143, emphasis added).

just in relation to the case studies in 'Comics, Cross-dressing and Cosmic Agency', but also in relation to kushti. My work similarly looks in each case at the imperial web against which Indian Army recruits worlded their experiences the how these worldings relate to and are articulated through their bodily materialities in motion. My research into kushti across different sites considers – like Maguire and Das – how space affected the men's worldings of their practice in light of the entanglement between their bodily materialities as practitioners and the broader spiritual history and nationalist sentiments, embedded as they are (and as noted above) in colonial processes and belief systems. My discussion of prayer on the East Lawn of Brighton Pavilion amongst Muslim patients, too, considers how the perhaps intentional visibility of this site to the public might have affected the men's religious observances. Finally, my research into Indian comic histories (in the context of Figure 84 and practices of physical comic performance to entertain troops) and devotional theatre considers the relationship between dress, space, and how the combination of these in each of these two spaces had the potential to impact and be impacted by bodily materialities. In the context of the comic, the apparently European jester influence and the trappings of senior military uniform detail in the individual's costume, examined against the contextual backdrop of public comedy in India and its function to puncture the pretences of different types of hierarchy, creates unfixity in the site of public performance, both for the spectator and the interpreting historian. My research into devotional theatre at Halbmondlager proves more complex. I point to the role of bodily materiality in space and the transformative, agentic potential of the bodily, of space and of props and dress in devotional Indian theatre; however, this section also reckons particularly with a *photographic* space, given the role of the Halbmondlager photographer Otto Stiehl in creating the visual record that I consult. Santanu Das briefly considered the same images in his work on Wünsdorf, and anticipates the position of his later work when he notes that Stiehl's images are 'obviously embedded within the structures of power and shaped by the orientalist and racist worldview of the time,' but he calls for more nuance in examining such images, noting that this is not the 'sole framework through which to see the photographs.'⁶²⁹ Das briefly attends to the photographs as examples of 'a performance [...]

⁶²⁹ Santanu Das, *India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images, and Songs* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 171.

ready to act out a scene from a mythological play,' and whilst I complicate this account by considering at length the agency of objects, costume, space and the bodily in devotional theatre, what Das is opening up is a conversation around interpretive unfixity in photographic space. He develops this in *Colonial Encounters*, proposing the concept of precariousness. Das asks whether precariousness, understood as 'an aspect of "what is living" through these moments of mutual contact, intersecting with, but not wholly determined, by cultural difference or political instrumentality' might be a useful 'framework to understand these interpersonal wartime encounters.'⁶³⁰ This resonates with my use of the term tentativeness; Das is considering how precariousness, as an interpretive model, allows historians to consider the shifting orientations between stability and instability, vulnerability and chance. He actively engages the concept of fugitivity in sources – as do I in the context of the Halbmondlager photographs – to contend with their unfixity. Both in the context of physical space, then, as well as photographic space, my work chimes with the approach taken more recently by First World War scholars on the unfixity of both the subject of historical enquiry and the interpretive approaches taken to them. My research across this thesis, but particularly in Chapter 3, pushes the existing scholarship methodologically in this regard, by drawing on the approaches proposed by Tina Campt and Allan S. Taylor. Both scholars approach photographs in the archive as generative, and as capable of utterance; by integrating these methodologies from performance studies and Black Feminist scholarship, my research into Halbmondlager suggests new ways of exploring subject-matter and methodological unfixity, and proposed what new insights historians might reach in doing so.

Contextualising the collections

Much of the photographic material consulted across this chapter is held at the IWM, and is credited as being taken by unnamed 'Indian Army Official Photographers'. In the context of the discussion of kushti, examples include Figures 68, 71, and 73 to 76 all of which feature photographs of Indian Army recruits at training depots at Pune, Trimulgherry and other unidentified locations conducting what I propose are iterations of traditional kushti

⁶³⁰ Santanu Das, 'Precarious Encounters: South Asia, the War and Anti-Colonial Cosmopolitanism', in *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914–1918*, ed. by Santanu Das, Anna Maguire, and Daniel Steinbach (Routledge, 2021), pp. 125–48 (p. 127).

practices. However, unlike those images discussed as part of the Contextualising the Collections section in Chapter 1, these photographs are archived within the 'Indian Official Collection', rather than the 'Ministry of Information First World War Official Collection.' There is no generalised collection overview in the way that there occasionally is for other photographic collections, thus obscuring further how the archive positions the collection even as an assembly of artefacts.⁶³¹ The 'Indian Government Collection', for example, highlights that various military units are represented within the collection, as well as general views and specific sites within two Burmese prisoner of war camps.⁶³² The archival description of the collection suggests that the photographs as objects are considered by the archive to hold value as visual records of both regimental histories, tactics of warfare, and the lived experiences of imprisonment. Without something similar for the Indian Official Collection, it is harder to piece together a specific indication on how the IWM sees the role of its photographic contents. Some light can be shed from the research outputs from 'Provisional Semantics', a research project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and conducted across a collaboration between the IWM, Tate, National Trust and the University of the Arts London's Decolonising Arts Institute. Part of the project focused on the analysis and reinterpretation of 'captions for colonial Indian photographs from the Second World War.'⁶³³ The IWM tranche of work specifically considered photographs that 'depict the recruitment process for men joining the Indian Army during the Second World War,' which were 'generated through a combined effort by different departments in India and Britain' and 'retain the traces of the Press and Censorship Bureau of the Ministry of Information.'⁶³⁴ This falls outside the period considered as part of this thesis, but the focus on photography as a function of government and 'as part of a wider effort to document the war [...] and as propaganda in India, Britain and across the Allied nations' resonates with the use of official war photography in this chapter. Furthermore, part of the project included an

⁶³¹ For example, the Indian Government Collection features a general, itemised overview of the black and white images included in the collection, including a record of some of the military units represented in the photographs: Imperial War Museum, 'Collection: INDIAN GOVERNMENT COLLECTION', Imperial War Museum, PC 667 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205000424>>.

⁶³² Imperial War Museum, 'Collection: INDIAN GOVERNMENT COLLECTION', Imperial War Museum, PC 667 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205000424>>.

⁶³³ Helen Mavin, 'Provisional Semantics: Studying Colonial Indian Photographs at the Imperial War Museums', *Historical Transactions: Royal Historical Society*, 18 August 2022 <<https://blog.royalhistsoc.org/2022/08/18/provisional-semantics/>>.

⁶³⁴ Helen Mavin, 'Provisional Semantics: Studying Colonial Indian Photographs at the Imperial War Museums', *Historical Transactions: Royal Historical Society*, 2022 <<https://blog.royalhistsoc.org/2022/08/18/provisional-semantics/>>.

investigation of 'collections through different methods of collaborative working and co-production' to answer questions including:

What methods and approaches that engage intellectually and practically with the 'decolonial' agenda can heritage organisations employ to produce search terms/catalogue entries and interpretations fit for purpose for an evolving digitised national collection?⁶³⁵

The alignment of the Provisional Semantics methodological approach and decolonial imperatives with my own makes the results of the project instructive to understanding how the IWM might position the role of colonial photography, such as that used in this chapter. However, it should be emphasised that the project does not necessarily reflect the official stance of the Museum or how it organises its collections, and the impact of the project on the IWM collection policy beyond the photographs that were used in the project case study remains to be seen.⁶³⁶ Similarly, the project focused on the notion of barriers in relation to colonial photography captions, rather than on the (re)interpretation of the images themselves. However, the IWM's work as part of Provisional Semantics highlighted that legacy cataloguing processes had the tendency to reinscribe coloniality in the fabric of the museum and its collections.⁶³⁷ It also found that the decolonial imperative of pluriversality could be achieved through commissioning care-full and sensitive expert reinterpretations of image captions, which 'fostered a multi-perspectival understanding of war and conflict.'⁶³⁸ Speaking to the photographs' content as well as captioned, co-investigator Helen Mavin wrote that the project 'facilitate[d] a deeper understanding of these images' by creating 'multi-vocal explorations of the content and critically analysing the context for the

⁶³⁵ Helen Mavin, 'Provisional Semantics: Studying Colonial Indian Photographs at the Imperial War Museums', *Historical Transactions: Royal Historical Society*, 18 August 2022 <<https://blog.royalhistosoc.org/2022/08/18/provisional-semantics/>>.

⁶³⁶ The project's final report was published in 2022 with recommendations to galleries, libraries, archives, and museums sector, and it notes that '[t]he new object captions were also captured in IWM collections management system records for the photographs used in the project' – but it is unclear how far the recommendations have been acted on by the IWM as a matter of general collections policy, beyond these specific object captions. See Emily Pringle and others, 'Provisional Semantics: Addressing the Challenges of Representing Multiple Perspectives within an Evolving Digitised National Collection' (Zenodo, 2022), doi:[10.5281/zenodo.7081347](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7081347), p. 16.

⁶³⁷ Emily Pringle and others, 'Provisional Semantics: Addressing the Challenges of Representing Multiple Perspectives within an Evolving Digitised National Collection' (Zenodo, 2022), doi:[10.5281/zenodo.7081347](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7081347), p. 19.

⁶³⁸ Emily Pringle and others, 'Provisional Semantics: Addressing the Challenges of Representing Multiple Perspectives within an Evolving Digitised National Collection' (Zenodo, 2022), doi:[10.5281/zenodo.7081347](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7081347), p. 20.

photographs' production.⁶³⁹ Consequently, although the IWM as a general policy position may not collect and archive the images presented here in ways that work towards that decolonial imperative, as an institution it has produced resources such as this report to communicate to researchers important considerations that ought to be embedded with how they engage with such photographs as those in the Indian Official Collection.

Beyond the uncredited images, this chapter also examines photographs attributed to professional – or semi-professional – government, press and military photographers. Figure 72, for example, was taken by H.D. Girdwood and Figure 84 by Ariel Vargas, who worked variously for the India Office, the War Office, and the press. Figure 70 is attributed to George Westmoreland, a photographer who was primarily enlisted as a soldier and assumed a role as military photographer later. The film from which the still at Figure 77 is taken is attributed generally to the War Office (production sponsor), the British Topical Committee for War Films (production company), as well as Geoffrey H. Malins and Edward G. Tong (production individuals). In the Contextualising the Collections section in Chapter 1, I discussed how the IWM positions photographs that are credited to official governmental or media photographers. The same applies here in respect of these Figures: these attributions allow the historian to contextualise the images as part of a wider governmental agenda, propaganda function, or press narrative.

The other principal body of material referenced in this chapter is a variety of photographs and photographic postcards attributed explicitly within the archive – or attributed retrospectively in scholarly literature – to Halbmondlager official Otto Stiehl. Figures 88 to 90 are each titled 'Vom Frühlingsfest der Inder (From the Indian Spring Festival)' and the collections management data provided by the Museum Europäischer Kulturen (MEK) to the image repository where they are held credit Stiehl as the photographer.⁶⁴⁰ Each image is

⁶³⁹ Helen Mavin, 'Provisional Semantics: Studying Colonial Indian Photographs at the Imperial War Museums', *Historical Transactions: Royal Historical Society*, 18 August 2022 <<https://blog.royalhistoc.org/2022/08/18/provisional-semantics/>>.

⁶⁴⁰ See Otto Stiehl, *Vom Frühlingsfest der Inder (From the Indian Spring Festival)*, 1914, Museum Europäischer Kulturen, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, VIII Eu 27628 a <<https://www.bpk-bildagentur.de>> [accessed 1 November 2021]; Otto Stiehl, *Vom Frühlingsfest der Inder (From the Indian Spring Festival)*, 1914, Museum Europäischer Kulturen, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, VIII Eu 27628 b <<https://www.bpk-bildagentur.de>> [accessed 1 November 2021]; Otto Stiehl, *Vom Frühlingsfest der Inder (From the Indian Spring Festival)*, 1914, Museum Europäischer Kulturen, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, VIII Eu 27628 c <<https://www.bpk-bildagentur.de>> [accessed 1 November 2021].

also described as 'Lager Wünsdorf/Zossen; aus dem Fotoalbum des Otto Stiehl' (Wünsdorf/Zossen camp; from Otto Stiehl's photo album), and is tagged with the key words 'Geschichte / Weltkrieg I / Kriegsgefangene / Deutsche Kriegsgefangenenlager' (History / World War I / Prisoners of War / German prisoner of war camps).⁶⁴¹ Since encountering these images originally in my doctoral research, the MEK has created its own online collection within the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin domain, which also describes Figure 90 as 'Drei Inder in Kleidung für das "Frühlingsfest" (evtl. Rama Navami) posierend aus dem Fotoalbum des Otto Stiehl' (Three Indians in clothes for the 'Spring Festival' (possibly Rama Navami) posing from Otto Stiehl's photo album), and the photo album is given as 'Zossen 1914-17'.⁶⁴² This collections management development situates the set of images much more within the personal photography of Stiehl, echoing the position taken by researcher Margot Kahleyss who has traced the MEK holding of Stiehl's photography.⁶⁴³ Kahleyss describes the two albums of photography held at the MEK as having been produced by Stiehl as a 'personal souvenir' of the war and his time at Halbmondlager, but also as something akin to a diary given his accompanying 'personal comments and contemporary snippets.'⁶⁴⁴ She argues that the albums were intentionally compiled to offer 'interior views' of the camp, which appeared 'allegedly objective', but also notes that 'the photographs were not the result of an official commission' but rather of Stiehl's 'passion for photography and his personal interest in people.'⁶⁴⁵ So positioned within the MEK collections, the images at Figures 88-90 are held out as an on-the-ground insight into everyday camp life and, as Kahleyss notes, as a visual record of 'a specific era of German and Islamic history, i.e. the special treatment of Muslim combatant prisoners of war in Germany during the First World

⁶⁴¹ Translations are provided by myself, in brackets.

⁶⁴² Otto Stiehl, *Vom Frühlingsfest der Inder: Fotografie aus dem Album 'Zossen 1914-17'*, 1914, Museum Europäischer Kulturen (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin), VIII Eu 27628 c <<https://id.smb.museum/object/1025105>>. Translations, again, are in brackets and are my own.

⁶⁴³ Margot Kahleyss, 'Indian Prisoners of War in World War I: Photographs as Source Material', in *When the War Began We Heard of Several Kings': South Asian Prisoners in World War I Germany*, ed. by Franziska Roy, Heike Liebau, and Ravi Ahuja (Social Science Press, 2011), pp. 207–30 (pp. 219-221).

⁶⁴⁴ Margot Kahleyss, 'Indian Prisoners of War in World War I: Photographs as Source Material', in *When the War Began We Heard of Several Kings': South Asian Prisoners in World War I Germany*, ed. by Franziska Roy, Heike Liebau, and Ravi Ahuja (Social Science Press, 2011), pp. 207–30 (pp. 217 and 219)

⁶⁴⁵ Margot Kahleyss, 'Indian Prisoners of War in World War I: Photographs as Source Material', in *When the War Began We Heard of Several Kings': South Asian Prisoners in World War I Germany*, ed. by Franziska Roy, Heike Liebau, and Ravi Ahuja (Social Science Press, 2011), pp. 207–30 (pp. 221-223).

War.⁶⁴⁶ This rests, however, on historians contextualising Stiehl's role as camp officer and photographer within the wider scholarly landscape to understand his position in the camp and puncture any illusion of fully candid photography.

The postcards at Figures 79 to 81 are taken from different collections, none of which cite Stiehl as the photographer. However research by Kahleyss has attributed the photograph at Figure 80 to Stiehl, and the compositional similarities and shared subject matter of the everyday and physical activity suggest that Figures 79 and 81 might also be assumed to be part of his photographic output.⁶⁴⁷ The postcards at Figures 79 and 81 both show imprisoned Indian Army men holding what appear to be joris and smaller 'Indian clubs', which are discussed at length in this chapter. These objects, and the way they are being used in the images, would fit within the handwritten, itemised list assembled by Stiehl of the images contained in the second of his two 'souvenir' photography albums (for example, 'Work and Play' and 'Sport').⁶⁴⁸ Postcards depicting scenes from Halbmondlager have received some scholarly attention, much of which is focused on the propaganda function they performed to the wider German public to illustrate Germany's fair treatment of prisoners of war.⁶⁴⁹ However, the collections in which the postcards at Figures 79 to 81 can be found position the role of these objects in different ways. The postcard at Figure 79 is part of the Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, acquired as part of the estate of merchant Robert Arnaud.⁶⁵⁰ Catalogued with the key terms 'Wünsdorf, Zossen TF; Kriegs-, Truppen- und Gefangenenlager' (Wünsdorf, Zossen TF; War, troops and prison camps), the archive

⁶⁴⁶ Margot Kahleyss, 'Indian Prisoners of War in World War I: Photographs as Source Material', in *'When the War Began We Heard of Several Kings': South Asian Prisoners in World War I Germany*, ed. by Franziska Roy, Heike Liebau, and Ravi Ahuja (Social Science Press, 2011), pp. 207–30 (pp.210-211).

⁶⁴⁷ Margot Kahleyss, 'Indian Prisoners of War in World War I: Photographs as Source Material', in *'When the War Began We Heard of Several Kings': South Asian Prisoners in World War I Germany*, ed. by Franziska Roy, Heike Liebau, and Ravi Ahuja (Social Science Press, 2011), pp. 207–30 (pp. 219-221).

⁶⁴⁸ Margot Kahleyss, 'Indian Prisoners of War in World War I: Photographs as Source Material', in *'When the War Began We Heard of Several Kings': South Asian Prisoners in World War I Germany*, ed. by Franziska Roy, Heike Liebau, and Ravi Ahuja (Social Science Press, 2011), pp. 207–30 (p. 216).

⁶⁴⁹ See for example: Martin Gussone, "'Architectural Jihad: The 'Halbmondlager' Mosque of Wünsdorf as an Instrument of Propaganda'", in *Jihad and Islam in World War I*, ed. by Erik-Jan Zürcher, Debates on Islam and Society (Leiden University Press, 2016), pp. 179–222 <<https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/37513>>, and *Polarized Pasts: Heritage and Belonging in Times of Political Polarization*, ed. by E. Niklasson, Explorations in Heritage Studies (Berghahn Books, 2023), p. 122.

⁶⁵⁰ Figure 79. 'Keulenkampf im Halbmond-Lager in Wünsdorf-Zossen', 1916, Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, Abt. Staatsarchiv Sigmaringen, N 1/78 T 1 Nr. 797 <<https://www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/item/S3NWCMWMRGMYEWSOT4OXWR5ASFMAJI6Q>>.

decontextualises the postcard from its possible propaganda function and indeed the broader context around Stiehl as both camp official and photographer. The digital repository in which an image of the postcard is available links to the Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg catalogue, which categorises it as 'Fotografien und Postkarten' (Photographs and Postcards), an object associated with 'Orte in Brandenburg und Berlin' (Location in Brandenburg and Berlin), 'Zossen (mit Mellen und Wünsdorf)' (Zossen with Mellen and Wünsdorf) and 'Kriegspostkarten' (war postcards).⁶⁵¹ Again, this positions the postcard as a visual record of place and time (specifically, wartime), with no further explanation as to the power dynamics at play in this political, social and cultural moment and space. Figure 80, by contrast, appears as part of the sourcebook that resulted from the Humanities in the European Research Area-funded project 'Cultural Exchange in a Time of Global Conflict', led by Santanu Das. The project's sourcebook sought

not so much to provide a comprehensive 'history' or 'survey' of cultural encounters and exchange occurring during wartime but to showcase the extraordinary diversity – in terms of source material and the nature of interactions – and in turn use that diversity to put pressure on and question the very terms 'encounter' and 'exchange'.⁶⁵²

As a collection, the postcard's role in the sourcebook is to highlight moments of cultural encounter, exchange, and entanglement. This is interrogated further by text accompanying the image in the sourcebook, which describes the dual propagandist purpose of 'postcards, leaflets, newspapers, and radio reports'.⁶⁵³ The project notes that postcards were used to reassure 'prisoners of war [...] that they were being treated better by their German enemies than by their French, British, or Russian rulers,' but also 'to reassure the German public of

⁶⁵¹ *Keulenkampf im Halbmond-Lager in Wünsdorf-Zossen*, 1916, Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, N 1/78 T 1 Nr. 797 <<http://www.landearchiv-bw.de/plink/?f=6-226612>>. Translations in brackets are my own.

⁶⁵² 'Introduction', Cultural Exchange in a Time of Global Conflict: Colonials, Neutrals and Belligerents during the First World War <<https://web.archive.org/web/20210724120135/https://sourcebook.cegoproject.eu/introduction/>>.

⁶⁵³ 'Halbmond-Lager in Wünsdorf-Zossen. Dreibein-Wettlaufen', 1917, Sammlung Karl Markus Kreis, Unna, via Jan Brauburger, 'Halfmoon Camp In Wünsdorf-Zossen. Three-Legged Race', Cultural Exchange in a Time of Global Conflict: Colonials, Neutrals and Belligerents during the First World War <<https://web.archive.org/web/20220217101248/http://sourcebook.cegoproject.eu/items/show/100?tags=Halfmoon+Camp>> [accessed 19 August 2021].

their belief that they were morally superior to their enemies.⁶⁵⁴ Postcards displaying ostensibly happy engagement in 'extracurricular activities', or highlighting the 'general well-being of prisoners of war was one strategy employed by wartime propagandists.'⁶⁵⁵ In contrast to how the postcard at Figure 79 is positioned within the Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, the postcard at Figure 80 is held out as an example of complex cultural production and encounters across different axes: between lateral agents such as the German wartime population and the imprisoned Indian soldiers, and hierarchical relationships such as that between a general population or colonial military and a Government.

Finally, Figure 81 forms part of a digital collection assembled by community history group, Dortmund Postkolonial, originally part of the collection of one Markus Kreis.⁶⁵⁶ The group outline's Dortmund's colonial history and the permeation of that colonial legacy into the fabric of everyday contemporary life in Dortmund. As part of the group's exposition on the broader colonial legacies of the First World War across Germany, a section of its website is devoted to Halbmondlager and identifies postcards as one of the strategies – alongside a media campaign – to promote 'acceptance' of the imprisoned Muslim soldiers held there amongst the German population.⁶⁵⁷ The postcard at Figure 81 is included as an example of such postcards, along with other examples that feature scenes of supposedly everyday life in the camps; these include images of imprisoned men eating and preparing meals, praying, assembled around the barracks, and indeed practicing what seems to be kushti. Like the 'Cultural Exchange in a Time of Global Conflict' sourcebook, Dortmund Postkolonial presents

⁶⁵⁴ Halbmond-Lager in Wünsdorf-Zossen. Dreibein-Wettlaufen', 1917, Sammlung Karl Markus Kreis, Unna, via Jan Brauburger, 'Halfmoon Camp In Wünsdorf-Zossen. Three-Legged Race', Cultural Exchange in a Time of Global Conflict: Colonials, Neutrals and Belligerents during the First World War <<https://web.archive.org/web/20220217101248/http://sourcebook.cegcproject.eu/items/show/100?tags=Halfmoon+Camp>> [accessed 19 August 2021].

⁶⁵⁵ Halbmond-Lager in Wünsdorf-Zossen. Dreibein-Wettlaufen', 1917, Sammlung Karl Markus Kreis, Unna, via Jan Brauburger, 'Halfmoon Camp In Wünsdorf-Zossen. Three-Legged Race', Cultural Exchange in a Time of Global Conflict: Colonials, Neutrals and Belligerents during the First World War <<https://web.archive.org/web/20220217101248/http://sourcebook.cegcproject.eu/items/show/100?tags=Halfmoon+Camp>> [accessed 19 August 2021].

⁶⁵⁶ Figure 81. Detlev Brum, 'Keulenkampf. Halbmond-Lager in Wünsdorf-Zossen', Photographic Postcard, 1916, Dortmund Postkolonial <http://www.dortmund-postkolonial.de/?attachment_id=4029> [accessed 21 August 2021].

⁶⁵⁷ Detlev Brum, 'Kriegsgefangenenlager Wünsdorf-Zossen (bei Berlin): Halbmondlager und Weinberglager', *Dortmund Postkolonial* <http://www.dortmund-postkolonial.de/?page_id=3392>.

the postcard as an illustration of how everyday material culture and ephemera was weaponised as a function of governmental political strategy.

KUSHTI: A STUDY IN HETEROBODILINESS

The first practice involving movement to which this chapter turns is kushti, an ideological system of ethics that is mediated through the bodily, but which has historically been discussed by anthropologists and historians as a form of 'wrestling'. It is important to emphasise its historical and curatorial framing to recognise the tendency of writers in the Global North to translate grammars of movement into European terms of sport, isolating the movement from wider systems of meaning and spiritual knowledge production. For instance, even across historical moments, from the translations of letters sent home from Indian soldiers to the captions of digitised photographs and film footage held by the IWM and BL, men are routinely described as engaging in 'wrestling' or 'play'.⁶⁵⁸ There is an assumption in how these images are framed that the purpose of the practice is singularly competitive and physical, rooted in performance or entertainment. Yet by placing these visual traces of a practice into the context of South Asian ontologies from the period, otherwise possibilities for understanding the sources are made possible.

Indeed, the style of movement captured on film and in photographs – when placed in this ontological context – is strongly reminiscent of the movements that comprise kushti. The exercises conducted in Figures 68, 71 and 75, for instance, exactly mimic forms of 'pair exercise' that are central to kushti training. These include *ban*, in which two practitioners 'stand facing each other about one and a half metres apart. They lean into each other and with their right hands grab hold of each other's left upper arm.'⁶⁵⁹ Both practitioners then 'push back with their left arm and try to dislodge their partner's hand,' as seems to be the case amongst all standing pairs in Figure 68.⁶⁶⁰ The standing pair in Figure 71 appear to be

⁶⁵⁸ For example, see Figure 72, as well as No. 9 Army Film and Photo Section, Army Film and Photographic Unit, *Wrestling in Progress in an Indian MT Regiment*, 1939, Imperial War Museum, IND 2265

<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205195323>>, and correspondence between Hazura Singh, France, and Sirdar Harnam Singh, India, dated 7 February 1916, in Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War* (1999), p. 150.

⁶⁵⁹ Joseph. S. Alter, *The Wrestler's Body: Identity and Ideology in North India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992) <<http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft6n39p104/>>, p. 113 and 'Plate 5'.

⁶⁶⁰ Alter, *The Wrestler's Body* (1992), p. 113.

engaged – or at least preparing to engage – in an unnamed but ‘fairly common exercise’ for kushti practitioners, whereby the pair ‘pull against the back of each other’s head until one or the other gives up or is forced to fall forward.’⁶⁶¹ The men kneeling on the floor in Figures 68 and 71 similarly appear engaged in the daws and pechs typical of kushti training exercises, as photographed by Joseph Alter in his study of 1980s kushti practitioners in Banaras, North India.⁶⁶² The strong parallels between the exercises conducted in Figures 73 and 74 and a core aspect of kushti physical training – the bethak – are discussed below.⁶⁶³

Such reframing of the primary sources problematises the descriptions of the practices as examples of military training drill, wrestling, or play. In contrast to models of wrestling as entertainment or performance, kushti practices have been situated by scholarship as part of regional worldviews that draw on conceptualisations of bodiliness in-keeping with the notion of subjectivity outlined in the introduction to this thesis.⁶⁶⁴ Indeed, scholars of the practice have framed kushti as bound up in an ‘attitude’, an ‘elaborate way of life involving general prescriptions of physical culture, diet, health, ethics and morality.’⁶⁶⁵ This section explores what design historians might learn about the lived experiences of men in the Indian Army during the First World War, by examining the (im)material cultures of kushti amongst soldiers. This discussion is grounded in three specific aspects of (im)material culture: the garments worn by soldiers engaging in what appears to be kushti, the (lack of) built environment in which such practices and exercises took place within the Indian Army, and the use of wooden training clubs called jori.

Dress

Amongst the vast array of photographs in the IWM’s Official Indian Collection, a photograph captioned ‘Troops of the 113th Infantry Regiment wrestling’ (Figure 68) foregrounds a

⁶⁶¹ Alter, *The Wrestler’s Body* (1992), p. 113.

⁶⁶² Alter, *The Wrestler’s Body* (1992), Plates 7 and 8. These plates are available via an ebook version of Alter’s text, available at <https://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docid=ft6n39p104&chunk.id=figures&toc.depth=1&toc.id=&brand=ucpress>.

⁶⁶³ For my discussion of the bethak exercise, see page 281, below.

⁶⁶⁴ For example, Alter, *The Wrestler’s Body* (1992).

⁶⁶⁵ Alter, *The Wrestler’s Body* (1992), pp. 3 and 5.



Figure 68.

Indian Army Official Photographer, 'Troops of the 113th Infantry Regiment Wrestling', c. 1914-1918, Imperial War Museum, Q 52649 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205286231>>.

roughly dug and turned earth pit. The pit, in combination with the practice happening atop it, bears strong similarities to the kushti training pit found in any typical akhara (the gymnasium, the 'spatial and conceptual center of the [kushti practitioner's] life').⁶⁶⁶ Around the far side of the pit a large group of men – some in military uniform, others in plain kurtas, dhotis or pajamas – are gathered, leaving the edge of the pit nearest the Official Indian Army Photographer clear to capture the six pairs of men atop it.⁶⁶⁷ Each of the twelve men wears a variation of plain, cloth garment that sits at the waist, covering the groin. What follows is a contextualisation of dress within kushti practice, and an interrogation of the garment selection, draping, folding, and binding exhibited in the primary sources.

⁶⁶⁶ Joseph S. Alter, 'The Body of One Color: Indian Wrestling, the Indian State, and Utopian Somatics', *Cultural Anthropology*, 8.1 (1993), 49–72 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/656421>> [accessed 29 September 2020], p. 52.

⁶⁶⁷ Alter, 'The Body of One Color' (1993), p. 52.

Kushti as a practice emerged palimpsest-like over centuries of dialogue between the military labour market, Hindu spiritualities, Mughal court conventions, the influence of (and resistance to) nineteenth-century martial race theory, and the appropriation-reappropriation of kushti forms as 'exercise' by colonial authorities and Indian practitioners. Rosalind O'Hanlon has written on the development of 'wrestling' (her term) from the early modern period to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and Joseph Alter has argued that 'wrestling' (his term) was appropriated by the Muscular Christianity movement and re-appropriated back into Indian culture as forms of resistance to the colonial state, in a process of 'transatlantic para-colonial appropriation into a nationalist re-appropriation.'⁶⁶⁸ Norbert Peabody and Connor Heffernan have each written about the intersection of indigenous practices and Persian 'wrestling', and its use as a 'an outlet for displays of Hindu masculinity as distinct from Mughal conceptions of manhood.'⁶⁶⁹ This enmeshment of different influences can be seen across kushti – from garments to akhara design to practice forms – but of particular importance to the context of kushti dress is its long-held place in spiritual discourse and its relationship with Hindu spiritualities, regardless of any one practitioner's commitment to a belief system.

The conventional dress for kushti practitioners is the langot or kaupina, which is treated as a critical expression of the Hindu-influenced ideologies at the core of kushti. The langot is typically a rectangular piece of cloth, sometimes attached to a triangular seat panel, secured either by strings or by twisting the material itself (see, for example, Figures 69 and 70) and used to bind the wearer's genitals during training and dangal competitions. The langot has been intimately entangled historically with the spiritual practice of brahmacharya. As a

⁶⁶⁸ Rosalind O'Hanlon, 'Military Sports and the History of the Martial Body in India', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 50.4 (2007), 490–523 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25165208>> [accessed 29 September 2020]; Alter, 'The Body of One Color' (1993), p. 51. Muscular Christianity was a movement closely aligned with Protestantism that achieved particular popular success in Britain, the United States and Australia. The movement expounded the virtues of physical strength as a vehicle for moral strength, such that sports and physical exercise became a vehicle for improving one's character.

⁶⁶⁹ Norbert Peabody, 'Disciplining the Body, Disciplining the Body-Politic: Physical Culture and Social Violence among North Indian Wrestlers', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 51.2 (2009), 372–400 (p. 377) <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40270331>> [accessed 29 September 2020]; Connor Heffernan, 'Indian Club Swinging in the Early Victorian Period', *Sport in History*, 37.1 (2017), 95–120 (p. 98) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/17460263.2016.1250807>>.

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Details for where it can be found are in the image caption.

Figure 69.

A kushti practitioner (right) wears a typical wrapped langot at the Akhara Gaya Seth, in an image titled 'Plate 11. "Hanuman Shrine: Akhara Gaya Seth"' reproduced from Joseph. S. Alter, *The Wrestler's Body: Identity and Ideology in North India* (University of California Press, 1992).



Figure 70.

The individual on the far left wears a form of langot as part of his bathing routine. George Westmoreland, 'Indian Troops of the 7th (Meerut) Division Bathing in the River Auja', Summer 1918, Imperial War Museum, Q 12494 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205195232>> (cropped).

concept, brahmacharya has been framed by anthropologists researching kushti in North India as synonymous with celibacy and models of self-control, but its conceptualisation in Vedic scripts and wider Hinduism is rather more complicated, referring to the first of four life phases and the conduct one exhibits on the path to spiritual liberation.⁶⁷⁰ Wearing the langot in the context of the wider spiritual landscape of kushti has thus historically represented a commitment to a broader journey towards learning to live a life of Dharma. The articulation of this phase of life through self-restraint is relevant to the kushti practitioner no matter their faith, though, as practitioners tend to 'regard semen as the quintessential fluid of life [...] the very cornerstone of their somatic enterprise. It is the source of all energy, all knowledge, all skill.'⁶⁷¹ The protection of one's strength-giving semen and the curbing of sexual impulse is 'literally and figuratively' bound up in the langot, which becomes central to the 'disciplinary mechanics' of the kushti student.⁶⁷²

This conventional practice of dress(ing) is however not mirrored exactly amongst the men of 113th Infantry Regiment (Figure 68), where a variety of draped, wrapped and tied garments is visible. Two men standing second and fourth from the right appear to be wearing something closest to the langot. Yet the two men standing on the far left and the individual standing farthest to the right appear to be wearing a single garment that incorporates cloth twisting to form a short, wrapped dhoti. Another practitioner, standing third from the left, wears a cloth twisted according to typical langot designs, but wrapped over a more fulsome garment (the two garments distinguished by their lighter and darker contrast in the black and white image). Indeed, images from across India and France at the same time suggest modified langot proxies with greater coverage were not an uncommon practice across regiments practicing forms of kushti on the Indian Home and Western Fronts. Men of the 1st Battalion, 9th Bhopal Infantry Regiment (Figures 71) and 6th Jat Light Infantry (Figures 72) in 1914 and 1915 can be seen wearing more fulsome garments that reach the top of the thigh and do not appear to have been secured through string ties, or methods of twisting and

⁶⁷⁰ Alter, *The Wrestler's Body* (1992), p. 96; J.G. Lochtefeld, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, Volume 1, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Hinduism* (2 Volume Set) (Rosen, 2001), p. 120.

⁶⁷¹ Henry Zimmer, *Hindu Medicine* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1948), in Alter, *The Wrestler's Body* (1992), p.129.

⁶⁷² Joseph S. Alter, 'Empowering Yourself: Sport, Sexuality and Autoeroticism in North Indian Jori Swinging', in *Subaltern Sports: Politics and Sport in South Asia*, by James H. Mills, Anthem South Asian Studies (London: Anthem Press, 2005), pp. 47–60 (p. 56); Alter, *The Wrestler's Body* (1992), p.129.



Figure 71.

Indian Army Official Photographer, 'Troops of the 1st Battalion, 9th Bhopal Infantry Regiment Practising Wrestling', c. 1914-1918, Imperial War Museum, Q 52606
<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205286192>>.

binding. I argue here that design historians can use this variety of dress materialities to better understand the experiences of Indian Army recruits, beyond just the Sikh contingencies on which much scholarship focuses – especially when these sources are encountered using an analytical framework that allows for heterobodiliness. I focus on the potential experiences of Bengali Hindu men in the Indian Army, in large part owing to the availability of primary material relating to the worlding of kushti which is dominated by the experiences of practitioners whose intersections of faith and regional identities fall within this cross-section. In the face of extensive secondary literature that focuses on the wartime experiences of the Sikh soldier, what might otherwise be considered a limitation in the availability of primary material becomes an opportunity to create a context of kushti and specifically kushti dress, the langot thus becomes a site of intervention in the conventional historical narrative. It creates space for the plurality of Bengali (and/or) Hindu soldiers,

moving away from the impression of the Indian Army as populated entirely by Sikh men – and indeed complicating the idea that any man serving in the army could have his identity and sense of self reduced singularly to his religion.



Figure 72.

H.D. Girdwood, 'Wrestling Matches, Jats at Play [near Merville, France]', 1915. Courtesy of the British Library Board, Photo 24/(143) <<https://imagesonline.bl.uk/asset/151254/>> © British Library.

I developed the term heterobodiliness to describe the potential for the same subject to experience plural, synchronous worldings. As outlined in the introduction, heterobodiliness builds on the idea that corporeality is but one articulation of embodiment. Prompted in part by Édouard Glissant's model of errantry, heterobodiliness allows for the same person to 'wear different hats' through the same practice. Errantry is used by Glissant to speak about networks of relation between different points of one's identities; there is no centre or periphery, rather there is just relation between different poles and positions.⁶⁷³ Errantry is therefore not a shuttling between distinct experiences, identities or senses of self; it is the plural experience of things that exist in relation to one another. As with errantry, 'one is [...]at every moment in relation to the other [...] the thought of errantry is also the thought of what is relative.'⁶⁷⁴ Through its prefix, *heterobodiliness* speaks to the potential that men in the Indian Army may articulate their consciousness and ways of being in the world through their bodiliness in plural ways that relate to each other (just as errantry allows for an articulation of plural, co-existing and interrelated identities). The same action, the same practices involving movement, can have plural, synchronous meanings and functions. Through heterobodily analytical frameworks, design historians can learn from the material cultures of the Indian Army without reducing the men's individual and collective lived experiences to universals, and/or reproducing the well-trodden military history trope of the colonial army soldier as the subject of a 'culture clash': a conflicted victim of colonial authority who struggled to retain his sense of wellbeing and selfhood in the face of 'modernity'.

To understand how heterobodiliness might help the examination of kushti dress, it is important to understand the plural meanings of kushti in the first decades of the twentieth century. Kushti practices have been understood in anthropological literature as manifesting various forms of 'somatic protest' by practitioners in the face of the colonial state.⁶⁷⁵ Although the core focus of his work is on the harnessing of kushti practices in 1987 by practitioners as 'an example of a project of disciplined resistance to this corrosive, somatic control' of postcolonial state power, Joseph Alter's interviews with practitioners and akhara

⁶⁷³ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (1990), p.18.

⁶⁷⁴ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (1990), pp. xvi (translator's note) and 18 (Glissant's text).

⁶⁷⁵ Alter, 'The Body of One Color' (1993), p. 51; Peabody, 'Physical Culture and Social Violence among North Indian Wrestlers' (2009), p. 374.

members speak to the philosophical lineage that has underpinned kushti since the end of the nineteenth century. His focus is on illustrating the importance of strength in kushti culture as a cultural vector, bound up in values of 'duty, devotion and morality', rather than exclusively a physical attribute. He adopts the conceptualisation of a person as 'a thinking, feeling, and acting microorganism of ideological values' that is not subject to the same mode of state domination as the person whose sense of self is grounded in a demarcation between the docile body and dominant mind.⁶⁷⁶ To be a kushti practitioner is to 'lead a certain type of life and to develop what is called "a body of one [colour]"', that is to say a bodiliness that in 'texture, essence, energy, strength, and balance' has been developed by the practitioner who devotes the development of his character to a regimen that defies any Cartesian duality.⁶⁷⁷ Alter asks:

what is the relationship between power, knowledge, and the body in an arena where Cartesian dualism does not operate and where individualism has a different history? What are the consequences of various disciplinary techniques when the mind-body totality is able fundamentally to resist docility?⁶⁷⁸

Alter is laying the groundwork here to embark on an exploration of how the 'modern' wrestler utilises kushti as a resistance to hybridised modes of control in post-Independence India. However, I would ask the same questions to different ends in the context of kushti at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁶⁷⁹ What might be learned about the experiences of kushti practitioners as soldiers when they practiced in the context of a war between European colonial states that were fundamentally predicated on a post-Enlightenment logic? Tying one's langot, or a variation thereof, becomes not just a practice of dressing as part of one's presence in the war and service to the British, but an exercise in enacting a philosophical lineage and configuration of the self that is both integral to kushti and also rejects the ontology represented and espoused by the colonial state. The bodiliness of the kushti-practicing soldier and the act of dressing for training becomes a heterobodily

⁶⁷⁶ Alter, *The Wrestler's Body* (1992), pp. 92-93; Alter, 'The Body of One Color' (1993), p. 50.

⁶⁷⁷ Alter, 'The Body of One Color' (1993), pp. 51-52.

⁶⁷⁸ Alter, 'The Body of One Color' (1993), p. 50.

⁶⁷⁹ On which, see G.C. Spivak, 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography', in *Selected Subaltern Studies*, ed. by G.C. Spivak and Guha, R. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 3-32, as cited in Alter, 'The Body of One Color' (1993), p. 50.

medium through which both compliance with and resistance to colonial forces synchronously exist.

The langot and dhoti variations visible across Figures 68, 71 and 72 speak also to sartorial manifestation of the physical culture movement that emerged in the 1860s and gained real traction in the swadeshi agitation that followed the 1905 Partition of Bengal.⁶⁸⁰ There is, again, an enmeshment here of nationalist sentiment, regional politics, faith, class and a resistance to the ascription of western values of masculinity within the framework of martial races. This is an enmeshment that cannot be disentangled by the historian. Nor should it be; each of these factors will likely at different times have played a slightly different part, to a slightly different degree, in the worlding of physical culture – and specifically kushti within that culture – between individuals who practiced kushti.⁶⁸¹ Where the above discussion outlined the act of fashioning a langot as commitment to the ontologies underpinning kushti, there is also an entanglement of tying the kushti garment visible in these photographs with the role kushti came to play to nationalist politics before and after the First World War. In the context of this discussion, the Partition of Bengal in 1905 should be considered against the backdrop of an Indian Army recruitment strategy – and general principle of colonial governance – that privileged a hierarchical framework of so-called martial races. The differentiated strata of Indian 'races' emerged out of the 1857 Indian Rebellion and worked quickly to mark out Hindu men – especially Bengali Hindu men, who were amongst the primary agitators in the 1857 Rebellion – as non-martial on the grounds of 'weakness, ill-discipline, and effeminacy.'⁶⁸² Of course, 'effeminacy' in this context was understood as the counterpart to a European conceptualisation of masculinity. In part as challenge to this state-sponsored representation, in part as response to it by those who had internalised the message, and in part as contribution to wider political efforts calling for self-rule, the Hindu Physical Culture Movement privileged 'building strong bodies to gain

⁶⁸⁰ Conor Heffernan, 'What's Wrong with a Little Swinging? Indian Clubs as a Tool of Suppression and Rebellion in Post-Rebellion India', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 34.7–8 (2017), 554–77 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2017.1374248>>, p. 566.

⁶⁸¹ O'Hanlon, 'Military Sports and the History of the Martial Body in India' (2007), p. 519.

⁶⁸² R. McLain, 'Measures of Manliness: The Martial Races and the Wartime Politics of Effeminacy', in *Gender and Violence in British India* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137448545_3> [accessed 6 August 2021]; Heffernan, 'What's Wrong with a Little Swinging?' (2017), p. 566.

greater economic and social prestige.⁶⁸³ Akharas to this end promoted kushti as 'a means of rediscovering Hindu masculinity'. Such calls were able to flourish into the 1880s under a colonial eye that paid less scrutiny to public physical movement and so-called 'sport' gatherings than to explicitly political demonstrations, making akharas a 'relatively protected space for exchanging ideas.'⁶⁸⁴ Narratives of 'spiritual capital' were also infused into these incentives for kushti practice, with 'religious figures' touting the development of a strong physicality to Hindu salvation; figures like Swami Vivekananda promised practitioners that 'you will understand the [Bhagavad] Gita better with your biceps, your muscles, a little stronger'.⁶⁸⁵

In this context of compounded, shapeshifting nationalist sentiment embedded within the akhara and kushti practice, the langot and dhoti gained particular symbolic potency. Central as it was to kushti practitioners' commitment to brahmacharya, the langot thus became the intersection of masculine ideals embedded in Hindu spirituality, and efforts to subvert colonial narratives of Bengali Hindu masculinities through kushti. Similarly the dhoti, years before it was adopted by Mahatma Ghandi as an act of solidarity with communities in rural India, was reappropriated in Bengali public consciousness as the 'ultimate symbol' of the early swadeshi movement, and a 'visible sign of protest' against colonial rule.⁶⁸⁶ This lends a new perspective to these visual sources: when encountered with a heterobodily lens, the garments have political potential. The inhabitation of plural worldings, where one might be devoted to one's duty as a colonial army soldier, but is also sympathetic to and supportive of a politics that aims to dismantle the very foundations of that martial duty, is further supported by interviews with Indian Army veterans, which confirm latent nationalist sympathies amongst the troops. Havildars Nagina Singh and Nand Singh, Sepoy Inder Singh, and Quarter Master Ranjodh Singh each speak of the silent growth of anti-British feeling amongst soldiers notwithstanding their soldierly commitment to the colonial state. Nagina

⁶⁸³ Heffernan, 'What's Wrong with a Little Swinging?' (2017), p. 566; O'Hanlon, 'Military Sports and the History of the Martial Body in India' (2007), p. 519; Alter, 'The Body of One Color' (1993), p.61.

⁶⁸⁴ Heffernan, 'What's Wrong with a Little Swinging?' (2017), p. 566; O'Hanlon, 'Military Sports and the History of the Martial Body in India' (2007), p. 519. Heffernan, 'What's Wrong with a Little Swinging?' (2017), pp. 566-567.

⁶⁸⁵ Heffernan, 'What's Wrong with a Little Swinging?' (2017), p. 567.

⁶⁸⁶ Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India* (Hurst, 1996), p. 60, cited in Simona Vittorini, 'Representing the Nation: Competing Symbolic Repertoires in India' (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2006) <<https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/29237/1/10731332.pdf>> [accessed 5 August 2021], pp. 98-99.

Singh, for example, observed on the topic of discriminatory pay practices and failure of the British to 'fulfil their promises' to the Indian people, that '[w]e had many ideas in our hearts but could not do anything. We had to be loyal to our ruler or king in any case.'⁶⁸⁷ Both Nand Singh and Inder Singh speak of having their 'ideas changed' and/or getting 'new ideas' on self-rule during their service, as the result of meeting people from different countries and cultures during their deployment, but emphasise their parallel soldierly duty, without framing this as a conflict.⁶⁸⁸ Major Bachan Singh and Lance Naik Sarman Singh make similar remarks during their interviews, both noting that Indian soldiers developed 'new ideas' from the people and places encountered while on active service such that even those soldiers 'who had no courage to speak before the British, started protesting against them in connection with their salaries and other issue,' and began thinking about 'some reforms [to] the contemporary set-up'.⁶⁸⁹ Inder Singh commented that 'soldiers had their sympathy with the [Akali] movement', but that soldiers nonetheless 'had to remain loyal to the [British] government, while Nand Singh observes that 'we were changed to a greater extent,' such that the 'curtain of fear' was removed and 'we became more bold and strong [...] The anti-British feelings were growing in each soldier at the time of the end of this war.'⁶⁹⁰

Both Inder Singh and Nand Singh explicitly confirm the move by many soldiers after the war – and the completion of their obligations and duties as soldiers – to support the call for self-rule. Nand Singh states that 'the soldiers supported the masses' in their 'demonstrations against [the British]', while Inder Singh recalls that 'after coming back from the war we raised the voice against the disparities. We wanted to remove the British rule. [...] After the war we became anti-British. The war had changed our ideas.'⁶⁹¹ Quarter Master Ranjodh Singh echoed these recollections in his interview, stating that

⁶⁸⁷ S.D. Pradhan and Harvinder Singh Giri, 'Hav Nagina Singh (No 869)', 1971, British Library, Mss Eur F729/2/7.

⁶⁸⁸ S.D. Pradhan and Harvinder Singh Giri, 'Hav Nand Singh (No 752)', 1971, British Library, Mss Eur F729/2/16; S.D. Pradhan and Harvinder Singh Giri, 'Sepoy Inder Singh', 1971, British Library, Mss Eur F729/2/13.

⁶⁸⁹ S.D. Pradhan and Harvinder Singh Giri, 'Interview with Major Bachan Singh', 1971, British Library, Mss Eur F729/2/12; S.D. Pradhan and Harvinder Singh Giri, 'Lance Naik Sarman Singh', 1971, British Library, Mss Eur F729/2/8.

⁶⁹⁰ S.D. Pradhan and Harvinder Singh Giri, 'Sepoy Inder Singh', 1971, British Library, Mss Eur F729/2/13 and S.D. Pradhan and Harvinder Singh Giri, 'Hav Nand Singh (No 752)', 1971, British Library, Mss Eur F729/2/16.

⁶⁹¹ S.D. Pradhan and Harvinder Singh Giri, 'Hav Nand Singh (No 752)', 1971, British Library, Mss Eur F729/2/16; S.D. Pradhan and Harvinder Singh Giri, 'Sepoy Inder Singh', 1971, British Library, Mss Eur F729/2/13.

The people of India [...] started new national freedom movement. The Akali movement and Congress Movement were gaining momentum. So the soldiers who were dissatisfied started supporting the national freedom movement. Most of us supported indirectly.⁶⁹²

As David Omissi has observed, the vocabulary of nationalism might not have been available to a largely rural fighting populace during the war, whose literacy would likely have been confined to the ability to recognise and follow scripture.⁶⁹³ However these interviews confirm that the principles of nationalist politics were clearly understood and embedded in the consciousness of many soldiers like those shown in Figures 68, 71 and 72, regardless of their background. The practice of kushti for many Bengali Hindu men in the late nineteenth century thus had the potential to represent a multi-layered practice of colonial resistance. In donning one's langot or dhoti and entering the makeshift akhara pit, one might have heterobodily experiences: submitting to the authority of the Army, whilst dressing oneself in a garment inscribed with conceptualisations of Hindu masculinity and/or calls for self-rule that challenged the very foundation of British authority.

This argument gains further complexity with the introduction of images at Figures 73 and 74. It became clear during the course of my research into the history of kushti that the wide, deep-knee squats pictured here were derivatives of the bethak. The bethak comprises one of two exercises that form 'the core wrestling vyayam [physical training] regimen,' for a kushti student, and its proper execution should '[produce] a mental state not unlike that of a person who has gone into a trance through the rote recitation of a mantra or prayer.'⁶⁹⁴ As the men in Figures 73 and 74 appear to be demonstrating, the bethak comprises setting the feet at 'at forty-five degree angles and heels about fifteen to twenty centimeters apart,' such that one can squat down and 'jump slightly forward onto the balls of one's feet while lifting the heels clear off the floor.'⁶⁹⁵

⁶⁹² S.D. Pradhan and Harvinder Singh Giri, 'Quarter Master Ranjodh Singh', 1971, British Library, Mss Eur F729/2/10.

⁶⁹³ Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War* (1999), p. 19.

⁶⁹⁴ Alter, *The Wrestler's Body* (1992), pp. 103-104. See also Alter, 'The Body of One Color' (1993), p. 56.

⁶⁹⁵ Alter, *The Wrestler's Body* (1992), p. 103.



Figure 73.

Indian Army Official Photographer, 'Recruits during a Physical Training at the Central Gymnasium in Poona (Pune)', c. 1914-1918, Imperial War Museum, Q 52604
<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205286190>> (cropped).



Figure 74.

Indian Army Official Photographer, 'Troops of the Royal Artillery during a Physical Training at the Depot in Trimulgherry', c. 1914-1918, Imperial War Museum, Q 52584
<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205286171>>.

Alter and Heffernan have written on the transnational 'transmutation' of kushti and its associated exercises: the complex, almost palimpsest-like process by which they were alienated from the wider way of life with which kushti was historically entangled, and instead exported by The British (especially the military) and then reappropriated in a modified form back into Indian bodily culture by the late 1800s.⁶⁹⁶ Through a short explanation of this process and exposition of the dress shown in these images, historians might again draw on models of heterobodiliness to help understand the experience of an Indian Army recruit fulfilling the requirements of his military training programme, whilst also subscribing to the overarching ideological tenets of kushti and having an awareness that such subscription itself was charged with anti-colonial sentiment. Heffernan has traced the colonial appropriation of jori swinging – an exercise fundamental to kushti practitioners' training that uses wooden jori clubs – into 'Indian club swinging' through European medical professionals, the military and the British general exercising public, all of whom treated club swinging as an end in itself rather than part of a systemic, less still spiritual, practice.⁶⁹⁷

Alter adds to this analysis an international dimension, noting how 'Indian club swinging' gained popularity across the Atlantic, developing 'through didactic [...] opposition to the kinds of gymnastic drill invented by the British Army, modified by German and Swedish physical culturists, and refined and popularized by Simon Kehoe and other "Muscular Christians" in the United States.'⁶⁹⁸ This process allowed jori to be stripped of their indigenous meaning(s) and 'reimbued with new Eurocentric understandings of exercise,' before being reclaimed by the Hindu Physical Culture Movement as a site of anti-colonial resistance, as discussed above.⁶⁹⁹ This is important because it points to a wider role of colonial militaries, international Christian networks and European medicine in what Alter calls the transformation of 'a transatlantic para-colonial appropriation into a nationalist re-appropriation.'⁷⁰⁰ Kushti and exercises foundational to its practice were being decontextualised and 'taught' to Indian Army recruits as forms of military drill, thus not only

⁶⁹⁶ Joseph S. Alter, 'Indian Clubs and Colonialism: Hindu Masculinity and Muscular Christianity', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 46.3 (2004), 497–534 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3879472>> [accessed 29 September 2020], pp. 501-502. See also Heffernan, 'What's Wrong with a Little Swinging?' (2017) and Heffernan, 'Indian Club Swinging' (2017).

⁶⁹⁷ Heffernan, 'Indian Club Swinging' (2017), p. 103.

⁶⁹⁸ Alter, 'Indian Clubs and Colonialism' (2004), pp. 501-502.

⁶⁹⁹ Heffernan, 'Indian Club Swinging' (2017), p. 103.

⁷⁰⁰ Alter, 'The Body of One Color' (1993), p. 51.

stripping the indigenous meaning(s) from a practice that holds a very specific, spiritual significance and which moulds practitioners very conceptualisation of selfhood, but enmeshing that 'stripped back' practice in the British colonial martialisation project. It is with this in mind that I would draw attention to the presence and absence of footwear in these images. All but one of the men at Figures 74 are performing the bethak barefoot; the individual on the far left is wearing shoes, but stands slightly detached and further towards the foreground than his peers. By contrast, the men in Figures 73 performing the same bethak do so in what appear to be light-coloured buckle-fastened shoes reminiscent of brogues. These shoes appear sporadically across a collection of images from the Pune training facilities, including photographs of men watching a kushti-style drill exercise (Figure 75) and 'jumping the bag' (Figures 76). They are notably different to the standard-issue, leather B5 lace-up boots worn elsewhere on the Pune site and more broadly by Indian Army recruits on active service. These shoes have proved very difficult to trace. There is no mention of white or light tan shoes, brogues or footwear other than boots in the 1913 Indian Army dress regulations, and no record of similar items across the many papers that make up the IOR collection on 'Clothing, Equipment and Uniform (1860-1938)' for the period of the war.⁷⁰¹ However, a combination of object analysis and comparison, and archival research into the IOR administration reports from the Army Clothing Department in the years leading up to the war, opened up the possibility that these shoes were linked to the highlander brogue, worn by regiments raised for the British Army in Scotland and deployed to India across the nineteenth century.⁷⁰²

Typically black, leather brogues with a large buckle across the front were a standard aspect of Scottish regimental dress during this period.⁷⁰³ They echo the design of the buckled brogues worn across Figures 73 and 74, but especially those worn by the man conducting a bethak on the far left in Figure 73. This link emerged initially through my research into the long-term role Scottish regiments had played in the British Army's military presence in India

⁷⁰¹ Government of India Army Department, *Army Regulations, India, Volume VII Dress* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing India, 1913); 'Clothing, Equipment and Uniform (1860-1938)' (India Office Records), British Library, IOR/L/MIL/7/4956-5103.

⁷⁰² For example, see *Regimental Band of One of the Scottish Mounted Regiments (Possibly Lothians and Berwickshire Yeomanry)*, 1899, Imperial War Museum, Q 72124 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205316998>>.

⁷⁰³ See for example, the pair of brogues, date unknown, held at the Gordon Highlanders Museum, item number GH4205.5.



Figure 75.

Indian Army Official Photographer, 'Indian Troops Wrestling', c. 1914-1918, Imperial War Museum, IWM Q 52613 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205286198>>.



Figure 76.

Indian Army Official Photographer, 'Indian Troops While Jumping the Bag at the Central Gymnasium in Poona (Pune)', c. 1914-1918, Imperial War Museum, IWM Q 52610 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205286195>>.

even before the First World War. The 75th and 92nd (Highland) Regiments of Foot (precursors to the Gordon Highlanders, and the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders) fought for the British as part of the 1857 Indian Army Rebellion and on the British Army's behalf during other territorial skirmishes in North-West India across the end of the nineteenth century. A battalion of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders remained in India until 1871, and its 2nd Battalion was stationed in Pune, where these images were taken, when war broke out in 1914. In the same year, an additional regiment (the Calcutta Scottish Volunteers, later the Calcutta Scottish) was raised as part of the British Indian Army during the mobilisation of Commonwealth resources.⁷⁰⁴ Indeed, recent research conducted into Scottish emigration to India as part of the transnational textile production network, and the exchange of styles of tartan and madras textile patterns, further suggests that the influence of Scottish dress norms may even have been active in India from the beginning of the eighteenth century.⁷⁰⁵ It was then that Scottish workers began migrating to India through East India Company employment and to establish trading and manufacturing posts, often taking advantage of the surge in tartan's popularity following King George IV's 1822 visit to Edinburgh.⁷⁰⁶

Indeed, despite the absence of any reference to any type of footwear beyond boots in the First World War IOR papers, administration reports produced by the Director of Army Clothing in 1905 provide a link between Scottish emigration and the footwear sported by wartime recruits in Pune.⁷⁰⁷ Amongst the appendices recording the goods purchased from

⁷⁰⁴ 'The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders', *National Army Museum (Regiments and Corps)* <<https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/queens-own-cameron-highlanders>>; 'Cameron Highlanders', *Inverclyde's Great War (McLean Museum & Art Gallery)* <<https://www.inverclydeww1.org/regiments/cameron-highlanders>>; Kim Stacy, 'Summary of the Commonwealth Scottish Regiments', *Scottish Military Historical Society* <<https://web.archive.org/web/20061118154633/http://www.btinternet.com/~james.mckay/commonwr.htm>>.

⁷⁰⁵ Teleica Kirkland, 'Tartan: Its Journey Through the African Diaspora', in *Scotland's Transnational Heritage: Legacies of Empire and Slavery*, ed. by Emma Bond and Michael Morris (Edinburgh University Press, 2022), pp. 23–37 (especially p. 26); G. J. Bryant, 'Scots in India in the Eighteenth Century', *The Scottish Historical Review*, 64.177 (1985), 22–41 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25530110>> [accessed 9 May 2023]; Bashabi Fraser, 'The Scottish Jutewallah: A Study of Transnational Positioning in Personal Narratives', in *Within and Without Empire: Scotland Across the (Post)Colonial Borderline*, ed. by C. Sassi and T. van Heijnsbergen (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), pp. 136–49; Matthew P. Dziennik, 'Whig Tartan: Material Culture and Its Use in The Scottish Highlands, 1746–1815', *Past & Present* 217: 1 (2012), 117–47.

⁷⁰⁶ Kirkland, 'Tartan' (2022), p. 26.

⁷⁰⁷ Lieutenant-Colonel H.R. Marrett, *Administration Report of the Operations of the Army Clothing Department for 1904-05* (Calcutta: Government of India, 1905), British Library, IOR/L/MIL/17/5/1838 (Appendix C).

which local suppliers by the Alipore and Madras factories that manufactured army dress during these years, the 1904-1905 administration report notes that a total of 5,831 pairs of 'highland' shoes were purchased; this comprised 3706 'ordinary' style, 69 'magazine' style, and 2056 'gymnasium' style.⁷⁰⁸ Perhaps these were for Scottish soldiers serving under the auspices of the British Army in India, perhaps these were for Indian recruits already working for the British via the East India Company, under the three presidency armies; it remains unclear. However the fact that highland shoes were in local manufacture at the turn of the twentieth century demonstrates the likely movement of Scottish military styles to Indian military settings. Their subsequent appearance in Figures 73 to 76 would also make sense according to the British colonial logic of martial personhood at the time. Like the martial race discourse adopted by the British across their taxonomies of Indian men during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, so too were Scottish men considered within the British colonial imaginary to have some inherent martiality.⁷⁰⁹ Dressed in their respective regimental tartans, it is possible that aspects of a romanticised Scottish warrior aesthetic – such as associated footwear – might also have informed the dress of Indian volunteers recruited and in training locally at the Pune sites, where Scottish regiments had been and continued to be stationed.

Shoes aside, the fact that the men in Figures 73 and 74 wear identical dress is still interesting. The men all wear a plain, light-coloured shirt with short-to-mid length sleeves, and darker, knee-length shorts. There is a regimental disciplining here, or at least an attempt at it: an imposed order of dress to which all men must subscribe, which in turn makes the absence of shoes, whatever style, by the men in Figures 74 especially notable. Efforts by the colonial state to fashion Indian recruits' bodies also extends beyond the imposition of a regulation training uniform; the men complete their bethaks (shoes or no shoes) in neat lines, creating a spatial visualisation of state control. The absence of shoes in Figure 74 disrupts this. The significance of practices conducted barefoot across India in the early-twentieth century is multifaceted; it incorporates ideas of caste ideology, class hierarchy, indigenous pedagogical practice, and potentially the legacies of earlier East India

⁷⁰⁸ Lieutenant-Colonel H.R. Marrett, *Administration Report of the Operations of the Army Clothing Department for 1904-05* (Calcutta: Government of India, 1905), British Library, IOR/L/MIL/17/5/1838 (Appendix C).

⁷⁰⁹ Kirkland, 'Tartan' (2022), p. 24.

Company policies on footwear. It also incorporates the conceptualisation of the earth as an agentive force in Indian (specifically Hindu) ontologies. The earth is 'imbued with generative powers' and wields a 'force and vigour' that is transmissible through barefoot connection.⁷¹⁰

Electing to complete one's training programme – bearing in mind the enmeshment of that training programme with exercises rooted in indigenous, spiritual practices of movement – in the mandated spatial arrangement but without the mandatory footwear ruptures any neat narrative of recruits' whole-hearted subscription to the universal, individualist and anthropocentric cosmology espoused by the colonial state, or indeed any one indigenous cosmology. This heterobodily potential is played out in soldiers' letters, especially through the dialogue between ancestral honour systems and duty to the 'King Emperor'. In a letter to his brother, serving in France, an unnamed soldier implores his brother to:

enlight [sic] the names of your ancestors by performing your duties to the utmost satisfaction. Be always brave as your ancestors, who were tiger-like warriors to spare their lives for their honour of Great Britain, & were called Bahadurs. If you want to face this side again, face as Bahadur.⁷¹¹

The use of animalistic descriptors ('tiger-like warriors') and sense of inherent warrior qualities by 1915 had strong roots in martial race discourse, which incorporated convenient aspects of indigenous identities into an ever-changing, administrative policy of control. Notions of a warrior heritage and associated references to ancestral bravery drew on a sense of North Indian identities that grew especially out of resistance to seventeenth-century Sikh oppression. Whilst acknowledging the enmeshment between these indigenous and colonial narratives, such a letter demonstrates how senses of self that aligned with regional, caste and spiritual identities co-existed for men alongside their sense of self as colonial subjects with a commitment to supporting an imperial power. The use of 'Bahadur' is especially interesting in this regard. David Omissi defines it as a 'a great or distinguished person,' and the 'official title of a member of the Order of the British Empire'.⁷¹² Indeed, as a title it was awarded from 1911 with a medal as 'a symbol of honour and respect' to

⁷¹⁰ J. Jain-Neubauer, *Feet & Footwear in Indian Culture* (Bata Shoe Museum Foundation, 2000), p. 53.

⁷¹¹ Correspondence between X.Y. and 'his brother an Asst. Surgeon serving in France), undated, in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 1 (Dec 1914-Apr 1915)', 1914, British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/825/1 <<http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=IOR/L/MIL/5/825/1>> [accessed 3 March 2020].

⁷¹² Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War* (1999), p. ix.

civilians and military personnel 'for faithful service or acts of public welfare' in the interests of the British Empire.⁷¹³ The unnamed soldier uses the term, as does a Pathan soldier in Brighton, who instructs his brother:

Do exactly as I did. I have saved my life, and also have become a "Bahadur" [...] I hope that by God's mercy I have succeeded in magnifying the name of the whole Khatak clan. Do your best to save your life and do not act like an idiot.⁷¹⁴

The brothers' correspondence appears to recognise the value in achieving a certain level of authority and recognition in the colonial state as a matter of self-preservation and bringing honour on their community. Their primary concern is to 'magnify' the Khatak reputation whilst staying alive, rather than their imperial service; but the latter is critical to achieving the former. The author thus inhabited a plurality of identities that centred his positions in both the Khatak community and in the colonial military, respectively. Contrary to literature that depicts such Indian Army soldiers as a mercenary peasant force, motivated by lure of consistent pay over seasonal labour models, heterobodily models complicate the intentions and worldings of the men serving, without reducing their lived experiences to one of conflict, confusion or complicity.⁷¹⁵

The (lack of) built environment: the pit

Central to the spatial layout and associated 'geomantic aura' of any akhara is the arena on which members practice kushti as part of their extensive daily training regimen.⁷¹⁶ The 'pit' is one of the foundational akhara elements that work synchronously and collectively with other elements of the built environment to create 'a picturesque integrated whole'.⁷¹⁷ This wholeness is an affective environment rooted in the 'interdependence of natural elements' – the earth of the pit, the roots of nearby trees, the air flow of the akhara complex, and the

⁷¹³ Jim Carlisle, 'The Indian Title Badge: 1911-1947', *The Journal of the Orders and Medals Society of America*, 52.1 (2001), 17–19 (p. 17).

⁷¹⁴ Correspondence between 'a Pathan' in Brighton Hospital and 'his brother Harzat Shah (129th Baluchis)', dated 12 April 1915, as reprinted in Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War* (1999), pp. 53-54.

⁷¹⁵ For example, see the descriptions of Indian Army soldiers as 'illiterate peasants [...] most were willing labour migrants looking to make the most of the economic opportunities created by the colonial encounter' (Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War* (1999), p. 1), and 'soldiers [who] struggled to balance their multiple loyalties to family, community, nation and empire,' (Imy, *Faithful Fighters* (2019), p. 10).

⁷¹⁶ Alter, *The Wrestler's Body* (1992), p. 26.

⁷¹⁷ For 'pit' terminology, see Alter, *The Wrestler's Body* (1992), pp. 30-31.

water of the akhara well – that render the akhara a 'self-contained [...] world unto itself.'⁷¹⁸ This sense of self-containment and isolation is central to the successful practice of kushti, allowing for practitioners to conduct themselves away from the distractions of daily life, and also augmenting the akhara's spiritual charge: an 'environment of religiosity', where 'exercise and wrestling are acts of devotion to a way of life'.⁷¹⁹ Practitioners occupy a 'shared moral universe' that is reflected in the spatial layout and use of the akhara, including the pit.⁷²⁰ The role and significance of the pit thus goes beyond that of a space for practice; it works relative to other key physical and affective dimensions of the akhara to create an appropriate space for kushti as a devotional, ideological practice. The pits used by men in the Indian Army, however, were separated from this environment, created instead as training apparatus in training camps on the Indian home front, as recreational facilities across Europe in base camps, and in a German prisoner of war camp. This section therefore examines what might have been the effect of this lack of built environment on the worlding of men in the Indian Army, both as users and spectators of activities on these temporary pits, especially when these spaces were used in combination with the varied kushti dress described above. The discussion here focuses specifically on what might be learned from an examination of pit design – including its composition – and of the wider geographical and contextual space in which the pit was made.

On the first of these, the style of pits and their apparent textural quality is one of the immediate visual differences between the available images of kushti practices across the Indian Army in the First World War. Even from an exclusively visual analysis, where the defined edge to the pit in Figure 68 suggests it was dug from the surrounding terrain, the pits in Figures 72 and 77 are identifiable not by their construction, but through the arrangement of onlookers. The same is true of the space allowed for two men at the Halbmondlager prisoner of war camp in Figure 78. The terrain on which they are stood appears to be the same compacted, unchurned earth visible in other images of the camp, implying that the curved edge of spectators to the back of the image and of the pit is the

⁷¹⁸ Alter, *The Wrestler's Body* (1992), pp. 30-31; Alter, 'The Body of One Color' (1993), pp. 27 and 30.

⁷¹⁹ Alter, *The Wrestler's Body* (1992), pp. 27, 30 and 35.

⁷²⁰ Nita Kumar, *The Artisans of Banaras: Popular Culture and Identity, 1880-1986* (1988), p. 114, cited in Peabody, 'Physical Culture and Social Violence among North Indian Wrestlers' (2009), p. 377.



Figure 77.

Still from 'With the Indian Troops at the Front Part I', 1916, Imperial War Museum, IWM 202-1 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1060022700>> at 00:04:07.

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Details for where it can be found are in the image caption.

Figure 78.

Unknown, 'Indian POWs Wrestle at Zossen (Wuensdorf)', 1915, Western Michigan University, <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/wwi_pow_camps/805/> (cropped).

only boundary to the pit surface.⁷²¹ By contrast, the pit in Figure 71 comprises clearly churned earth but its limit is less easy to identify, given how close spectators are standing to the pit edge. Nonetheless, close inspection reveals a form of fencing erected around the outer perimeter of the earth. Attached to a single wooden post to the left of the photograph (and presumably to others along the perimeter of the pit) is a thick strip of wire or rope, behind which the majority of spectators sit or stand. Only three men, dressed all in a light-coloured long-sleeved kurta and dhoti or trousers distinct from the darker standard service uniform of a fourth man, stand in front of this barrier.

The significance to these distinct pit qualities itself lies in the significance of pit orientation and composition within the akhara environment. Much of this was laid down in the *Malla Purana*, a thirteenth century Sanskrit text that offers an overview of the various dimensions to the practice of the Jyesthimalla 'wrestling caste', and which advises on the necessary qualities of pit earth.⁷²² The English-language summary provided by editors of a published copy of the purana notes that the text insists the earth must be 'pleasing to see and soft as that required for seed laying [...] a hand high and levelled. It should [also] be worshipped.'⁷²³ Although not listed in the original text, the editors also note that practitioners in Gujarat contemporary to the publication – just under 50 years after the war – would still sieve the earth to remove any 'injurious objects' such as gravel or thorns from the pit. Buttermilk, oil, red ochre, turmeric, rose petals or perfume would then be mixed into the churned earth, which was subsequently watered every three days; the ongoing practice of treating the pit in this way was also confirmed by akhara members in their interviews with Joseph Alter.⁷²⁴ The deliberateness and intentionality of the pit earth care thus takes on an almost ritualistic quality. Like the repetition of exercises conducted each morning by the devoted kushti student, the practice of tending to the composition and quality of the pit is as much part of

⁷²¹ See for example the terrain in the image *Muslim POWs at Prayer at Zossen (Wuensdorf)*, 1915, Western Michigan University <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/wwi_pow_camps/803/>.

⁷²² Alter, *The Wrestler's Body* (1992), p.31, and *Mallapurana: A Rare Sanskrit Text On Indian Wrestling Especially As Practiced By The Jyesthimallas*, ed. by Bhogilal Jayachandbhai Sandesara and Ramanlal Nagarji Mehta, Gaekwad's Oriental Series, 144, 1st Edition (Baroda: Oriental Institute: Baroda, 1964) <<https://www.scribd.com/document/518788308/Malla-Purana>>.

⁷²³ *Mallapurana*, ed. by Sandesara and Mehta (1964), p. 21

⁷²⁴ *Mallapurana*, ed. by Sandesara and Mehta (1964), p. 26; Alter, *The Wrestler's Body* (1992), p.31.

kushti practice as the matches taking place atop it.⁷²⁵ This incorporation of devotional rites throughout all aspects of participation in the practice is an example of devotional observance found across Indian spiritual pluralism that resists any neo-colonial distinction between rites along peripheral-central lines. Parallels can be drawn, for example, with the care taken over ablutions and the orientation of one's prayer mat in Islam, or the preparation of sandalwood paste for anointing consecrated images in Jainism; these acts are themselves part of prayer and wider practices of worship.⁷²⁶ The act of tending to the pit earth similarly cannot be distinguished as more or less significant from the practice of kushti matches; both are bound up in the devotional ecology of kushti. In the environmental religiosity of the akhara, such ritual '[does] not indicate that formal religion subsumes akhara life,' but rather 'provide[s] a strong baseline for the construction of personal identity,' with the result that a practitioner's sense of self as a kushti student is rooted as much in his attendance to material aspects of his practice (like the pit earth) as to the development of his bodily skill.⁷²⁷ Yet this bodily skill is also cultivated in direct relationship with the quality of the pit earth. After exercising, the practitioner typically 'rubs his body with the earth of the akhara to dry his perspiration,' in an effort to regulate the pace at which his body cools, giving the earth a therapeutic property and purpose that factors into other areas of a practitioner's training regimen.⁷²⁸ Similarly, additives such as turmeric are regarded as imbuing the earth with a power and augmenting it with healing properties, such that the earth takes on a function in the ecosystem of kushti practice beyond merely filling in the pit. There emerges a reciprocal relationship between the practitioner's bodily health and the earth: just as the earth absorbs the sweat and heat of the practitioner, so too does the practitioner absorb the power of the pit earth.⁷²⁹

How then might the Indian Army soldier-kushti practitioner – accustomed either to practicing in or attending as spectator to matches in a pit that has been carefully maintained – reconcile the practice before him on roughly churned earth, grass or dirt terrain, with the

⁷²⁵ Alter, *The Wrestler's Body* (1992), p.35.

⁷²⁶ N. Shah, *Jainism: The World of Conquerors*, Jainism: The World of Conquerors (Sussex Academic Press, 1998), I, p. 176-178.

⁷²⁷ Alter, *The Wrestler's Body* (1992), p.36.

⁷²⁸ Alter, *The Wrestler's Body* (1992), pp. 38-39.

⁷²⁹ Alter, 'The Body of One Color' (1993), p. 52.

early-twentieth century worlding of kushti? This question assumes of course that the pits have not been blessed in the way outlined above; although unlikely, given the conditions of war, it is not impossible. The available official unit War Diaries for the 1/113th Infantry, photographed in Figure 68, are limited to operational records and strategy, and any granular detail pertaining to the pits seems also to have escaped the interest of both Censor reports on soldiers' letters home, and post-War interviews with Indian Army veterans.⁷³⁰ One way into this question then is to consider the relationality of bodily-to-place: the dynamic between the bodiliness of the soldier, and both the (un)built environment of the pit and affective environment of the training camp. Seyed Maziar Mazloomi, Syed Iskandar Ariffin, and Raja Nafida Raja Shahminan have called this 'on human/place bonding.'⁷³¹ This builds on a well-established environmental psychology concept of 'sense of place', which describes to 'the symbolic, spiritual, and emotional aspects of the relationship between individuals and their environments,' acknowledging the 'interplay of affect and emotions, knowledge and beliefs, and behaviors and actions in reference to a place.'⁷³² There is an obvious limitation with this concept in the context of this project, which is that 'on human/place bonding' draws in language ('human') and grammar (the oblique stroke '/') a distinction between the human and non-human. This is itself 'one of the "colonial legacies of European modernity",' and is immediately challenged by the credence given by kushti practitioners to the pit as an 'agentive entity' in its own right.⁷³³ However, if the idea of 'on human/place bonding' is brought into dialogue with ontologies of matter that locate agency in things beyond the human, perhaps design historians can interrogate these makeshift pits as a

⁷³⁰ 'War Diaries of the 113th Infantry (1st Battalion)', 1917, The National Archives, Kew, WO 95/5213/8 <<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/380cfabd134e4eb5814e37b1d709474a>> [accessed 1 December 2020]; 'War Diaries of the 113th Infantry (1st Battalion)', 1918, The National Archives, Kew, WO 95/5213/9 <<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/86d8b865a9274625adb6fc1f03f5bf03>> [accessed 1 December 2020]; 'War Diaries of the 113th Infantry (1st Battalion)', 1918, The National Archives, Kew, WO 95/5213/10 <<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/622c90c554ad48df92a356c023d585e5>> [accessed 1 December 2020].

⁷³¹ Seyed Maziar Mazloomi, Syed Iskandar Ariffin, and Raja Nafida Raja Shahminan, 'Impact of Architecture on Sense of Place and Public Perceptions in Contemporary Mosques in Malaysia', *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, 31.3 (2014), 233–53 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/44114606>> [accessed 27 October 2020], p. 235, quoting H. Casakin and M. Billig, 'Effect of Settlement Size and Religiosity on Sense of Place in Communal Settlements', *Environment and Behavior*, 41.6 (2009), 821–35, and *Place Attachment*, ed. by I. Altman and S.M. Low (New York: Plenum Press, 1992).

⁷³² Mazloomi, Ariffin, and Shahminan, 'Impact of Architecture' (2014), p. 235.

⁷³³ Philip Armstrong, cited in Peta Hinton, Tara Mehrabi, and Josef Barla, 'New Materialisms/New Colonialisms' (COST Action IS1307 New Materialism: Networking European Scholarship on 'How Matter Comes to Matter', 2015) <https://newmaterialism.eu/content/5-working-groups/2-working-group-2/position-papers/subgroup-position-paper_-new-materialisms_new-colonialisms.pdf> [accessed 11 October 2021].

question of intra-acting agencies. In this context, space ought to be made for agencies amongst the practicing men, the substance of the pits, and the immaterial 'symbolic, spiritual, and emotional aspects' of the pit that create an affective environment with its own agentive potential. This last agency is important, and extends the discussion across this thesis around forms of non-human, immaterial agency that have a role to play in the researching and writing of design histories. If affect and emotion are understood as having agencies (as argued in Chapter 1 in relation to hair maintenance and playful pagri-wrapping, and in Chapter 2 in relation to affective ecologies and trauma) then perhaps the 'bonding' described by Mazloomi, Ariffin, and Shahminan is less an output than an agentive entity itself. The idea that a space and its affectivity might have agency as much as a space's physical limits makes sense in the context of the akhara, the central role of which is to be designed in a way that cultivates the affective environment and shared moral ecology needed in that space for effective kushti practice. Perhaps then these makeshift pits, entangled with their dislocation from the typical akhara environment and the affect of the specific new locations, but also inflected with nostalgia of the pits from home, created a 'bonding' that was generative rather than a diluted form of the affective environment of a purpose-built akhara.

A number of factors complicate this generative, complex bonding. The section on dress, above, adds to this reframing of the pits as having their own complex agentive potential. I argued above that the shifting, plural meanings behind the variations of dress worn by Indian Army men practicing forms of kushti in the visual sources were implicated in kushti's lengthy history as a form of 'somatic protest'.⁷³⁴ What emerges is an entanglement of worldings, giving rise to an affective environment likely very different to the one carefully cultivated across most akharas – but unknowable to the historian. For each kushti student-soldier who sets foot on one of these makeshift pits, his own unique positionality and worldings become entangled with the pit in ways that would vary from man to man, from site to site. It is therefore important to acknowledge the site-specificity of these spaces and the contributions this may have made to men's worldings of their practices. The images and film stills above show kushti practice taking place variously at training camps on the Indian

⁷³⁴ Alter, 'The Body of One Color' (1993), p. 51.

Home Front (Figures 68, 71, and 73 to 76), behind the Front Line in France (Figure 72 and Figure 77), and a German prisoner of war camp (Figure 78). Historians can suggest ways in which each of these sites may have differed affectively, and use this as point of comparison with the typical akhara, but here is where I begin to feel the limits of history researching and writing. I am comfortable placing the materialities of these practices captured on film and in photographs into conversation with existing research and scholarship on kushti; this contextualises what has been recorded and retained in the archive, and problematises captions and accounts of these sources as examples of play and sport, or which privilege tropes about the mercenary, or conflicted and culture-shocked, Indian soldier.⁷³⁵ Furthermore, by using models of heterobodiliness, historians of military experiences are encouraged to pluralise their accounts and recognise the scope for soldiers' worldings to be different and changing: both between the men and, as regards individuals, between spaces and time. The nature of these plural, shifting worldings is fugitive, known conclusively only to the men. As discussed in my Introduction, I intentionally did not conduct oral history interviews as part of my research, for two methodological reasons. The passage of time was the first, more practical reason and limitation; the war ended over 100 years ago and most (if not all) veterans of the war have since passed. However, the second reason was my concern to interrogate what can be learned from the public, colonial archive through methodologies of opacity; what happens when historians reimagine how they interpret existing sources, rather than seek to generate new ones (such as, oral histories with veterans' family members)? What I have proposed then in this section of Chapter 3 is how historians might use bodily analytics to reach new conclusions about the experiences of the Indian Army soldiers (here, the possibility of plural, shifting worldings), whilst also working with the nature of those worldings as opaque, even fugitive, sites of knowing.

Jori

To conclude this discussion on the materiality of kushti, the final section to this chapter focuses on three photographic postcards, each depicting Indian Army men at Halbmondlager using large wooden clubs (Figures 79 to 81). These clubs are visually very similar to those used in jori swinging, a practice that bears a close relationship with kushti

⁷³⁵ See n715.

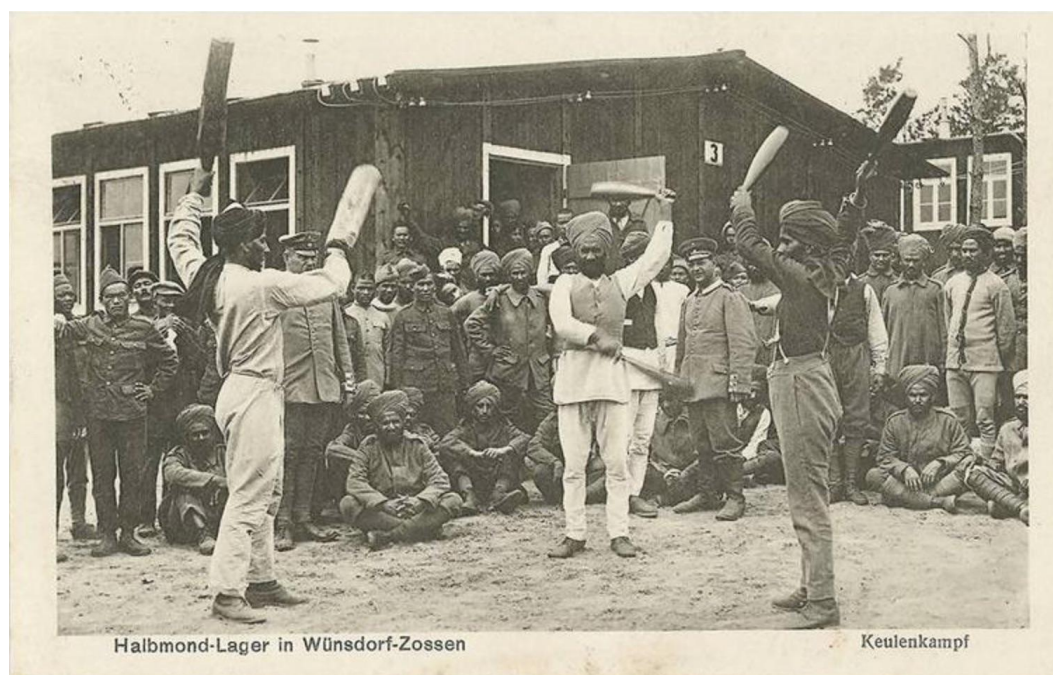


Figure 79.

'Keulenkampf im Halbmond-Lager in Wünsdorf-Zossen', 1916, Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, Abt. Staatsarchiv Sigmaringen, N 1/78 T 1 Nr. 797 <<https://www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/item/S3NWCMMWRGMYEWSOT4OXWR5ASFMAJI6Q>>.

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Details for where it can be found are in the image caption.

Figure 80.

S&G and SIB, '*Halbmond-Lager in Wünsdorf-Zossen. Dreibein-Wettlaufen*', 1917, Sammlung Karl Markus Kreis, Unna, via Jan Brauburger, 'Halfmoon Camp In Wünsdorf-Zossen. Three-Legged Race', *Cultural Exchange in a Time of Global Conflict: Colonials, Neutrals and Belligerents during the First World War* <<https://web.archive.org/web/20220217101248/http://sourcebook.cegcproject.eu/items/show/100?tags=Hal+fmoon+Camp>> [accessed 19 August 2021].)

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Details for where it can be found are in the image caption.

Figure 81.

Detlev Brum, 'Keulenkampf. Halbmond-Lager in Wünsdorf-Zossen', Photographic Postcard, 1916, Dortmund Postkolonial <http://www.dortmund-postkolonial.de/?attachment_id=4029> [accessed 21 August 2021].

and the ecology of the akhara. Archival records however, along with captions printed directly onto the postcards themselves, describe the images in terms that range from 'club fight', 'club performance', 'British Muslim prisoners perform[ing] with Indian clubs', to 'Hindu troops', and 'Dancing Sikhs'.⁷³⁶ This section argues firstly that such images should be understood as depicting jori (as opposed to 'Indian clubs', or accessories to 'dancing'), and secondly that the use of jori clubs in Halbmondlager hold a fugitive state of meaning.

In the mid-nineteenth to early-twentieth century, joris comprised heavy wooden clubs 'shaped like an inverted cone with a wide, flat base' that '[tapered] up to a narrow collar'.⁷³⁷ The emergence of jori as a practice, and the origin of jori designs, is typically explained as

⁷³⁶ For 'club fight' (*keulenkampf*, in German), see Figures 79 and 81. For 'club performance', see *Keulendarbietung indischer Kriegsgefangener* (trans. *Club Performance by Indian Prisoners of War*), 1915, bpk-Bildagentur, 30028238 <<https://www.bpk-bildagentur.de>> [accessed 4 November 2021]. For the internally inconsistent caption that describes the men in Figure 79 as both 'British Muslim prisoners perform with Indian clubs' and 'Hindu troops', see *Indian POWs with Indian Clubs at Zossen (Wuensdorf)*, 1915, Western Michigan University https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/wwi_pow_camps/808/ and for a description of them as 'Sikh troops', see The Adventures of Sir Kukri and Company, 'From the Western Front to Eastern Europe, the Gurkhas of "Halbmondlager" (WW1 POW Camp)', *Sir Kukri & Co: Exploring History through the Gurkhas & the Kukri (Khukuri) Knife*, 2015 <<http://sirkukri.blogspot.com/2015/09/from-western-front-to-eastern-europe.html>> [accessed 15 December 2020].
⁷³⁷ Alter, *The Wrestler's Body* (1992), p. 109; Alter, 'Sport, Sexuality and Autoeroticism in North Indian Jori Swinging' (2005), p.50; Heffernan, 'Indian Club Swinging' (2017), pp. 97-98.

the product of cultural exchanges across 'the trade, military, and political networks of Islamic conquest,' during Mughal imperial rule.⁷³⁸ Possibly a derivative of the 'war clubs' that featured in ancient Sanskrit literature, by the mid-nineteenth century joris were swung in pairs, albeit one at a time.⁷³⁹ The pair would be 'stood up,' rested on each shoulder of the practitioner, before each jori was lifted alternately, swung 'back and down in a pendulum arc behind the back,' before coming to rest once more on the shoulder.⁷⁴⁰ By the turn of the twentieth century, jori swinging was considered a competitive practice in its own right, whilst also remaining fundamental to kushti as a core exercise for strengthening the shoulders and arms. It was also a site of both cultural colonisation and later the reclamation of jori swinging as an overtly anti-colonial practice of resistance.⁷⁴¹ The process of cultural colonisation and reappropriation is especially pertinent to these sources, given the variation of clubs visible and the purposes to which they appear to have been put at Halbmondlager. To the far left of the foreground in Figure 79, for example, a man swings wooden clubs that are noticeably distinct from those being swung by his two companions. Compared to the roughly hewn, longer, wider clubs of uniform width on the far left, the men in the middle and to the right hold shorter, slimmer clubs that curve from a narrow circular base to a wider shaft and then narrow again to a long, thin neck. These are European 'Indian clubs', a derivative form of club that played a major role in the physical exercise regime underpinning Muscular Christianity across North America and Europe by 1840.⁷⁴² Alter and Heffernan have both argued that the development and use of 'Indian clubs' in this movement was an example of 'emptying sport', whereby exercises were 'stripped of their traditional capital and replaced with new and diverse meanings' by the colonial state.⁷⁴³ In the case of Muscular Christianity, the result was to 're-invent and adapt' the clubs for the purpose of curing physical and moral 'European problems' –including anxieties around growing 'deficiencies' in heteronormative gender identities – reframing clubs within the European conceptualisation of 'sport', and in so doing stripping them of the ancestral martial and spiritual framework within which they existed since Mughal rule.⁷⁴⁴

⁷³⁸ See especially Heffernan, 'Indian Club Swinging' (2017), pp. 97-98.

⁷³⁹ Alter, 'Sport, Sexuality and Autoeroticism in North Indian Jori Swinging' (2005), p. 51.

⁷⁴⁰ Alter, 'Sport, Sexuality and Autoeroticism in North Indian Jori Swinging' (2005), p. 51.

⁷⁴¹ Alter, *The Wrestler's Body* (1992), p. 109.

⁷⁴² Alter, 'Sport, Sexuality and Autoeroticism in North Indian Jori Swinging' (2005), pp. 48-49.

⁷⁴³ Heffernan, 'What's Wrong with a Little Swinging?' (2017), p. 562, and Heffernan, 'Indian Club Swinging' (2017), p.103.

⁷⁴⁴ Heffernan, 'What's Wrong with a Little Swinging?' (2017), p. 562, and Heffernan, 'Indian Club Swinging' (2017), p.103.

A key element to this nineteenth-century disavowal of jori's South Asian meanings by North American and European medical, military and religious institutions were the changes in how the new clubs were used. This was in part the result of the shift in club design. Where jori might each weigh up to 70 lbs, Indian clubs would typically weigh no more than 4 lbs and thus lent themselves to a different form of movement. Jori practitioners would rest one jori on either shoulder and implement the same long arc movement described above, whereas Indian club users in Britain and America were instructed to use a variety of circular motions, either overhead or to the side (see Figures 82 and 83), incorporating popular German and Swedish calisthenics of the period.⁷⁴⁵ The combination of varied form and use of Indian Clubs, as compared with standard jori, raises a number of questions with regard to Figures 79 to 81. Why do jori and Indian clubs both appear? What is the effect of the movement styles of all three men in Figure 79 (across, as well as in a circular motion to the side of, the body), rather than traditional jori swinging? What might be understood from the separation of jori into single instruments in Figures 80 and 81? Integral to attempting to answer these questions is an analysis of the purpose of these images, how they came to be featured on postcards, and the relationship between this contextualisation and the power dynamics at play in photography. Photographic postcards featuring scenes from Halbmondlager were produced and sold for public consumption across Germany, in an effort to convey to both the German public and colonial subjects beyond the Camp that a high standard of care and cultural sensitivity was being extended to colonial soldiers imprisoned under the German flag.⁷⁴⁶ Constructing such an impression was central to the efforts of the administrating NfO, which sought to agitate anti-British sentiment amongst the imprisoned Indian Army men

⁷⁴⁵ Heffernan, 'What's Wrong with a Little Swinging?' (2017), pp. 562 and 564-565; and Alter, 'Indian Clubs and Colonialism' (2004), pp. 502 and 513; Peabody, 'Physical Culture and Social Violence among North Indian Wrestlers' (2009), p. 387.

⁷⁴⁶ Margot Kahleyss, 'Indian Prisoners of War in World War I: Photographs as Source Material', in *When the War Began We Heard of Several Kings*, ed. by Roy, Liebau, and Ahuja (2011), pp. 207-30 (pp. 224-225); Olusoga, *The World's War* (2015), pp. 252-254.

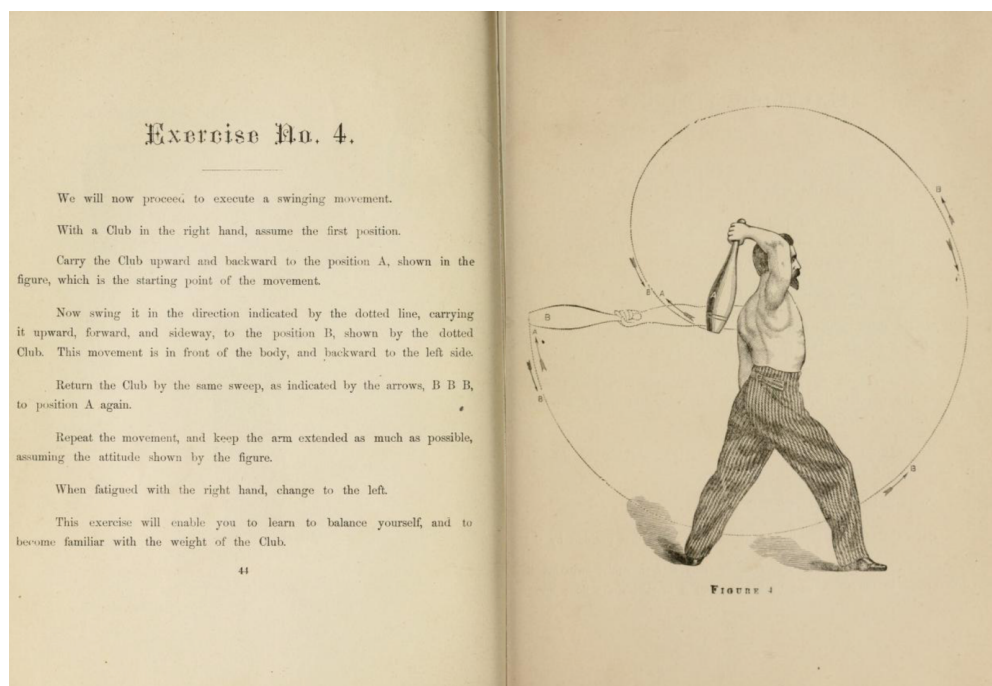


Figure 82.

'Exercise No. 4' in S.D. Kehoe, *The Indian Club Exercise: Explanatory Figures and Positions. Photographed From Life; Also General Remarks on Physical Culture* (New York: Frederic A. Brady, 1866), Contributor University of California Libraries
<<https://archive.org/details/indianclubexerci00kehorich/page/44/mode/2up?ref=ol&view=theater>>.

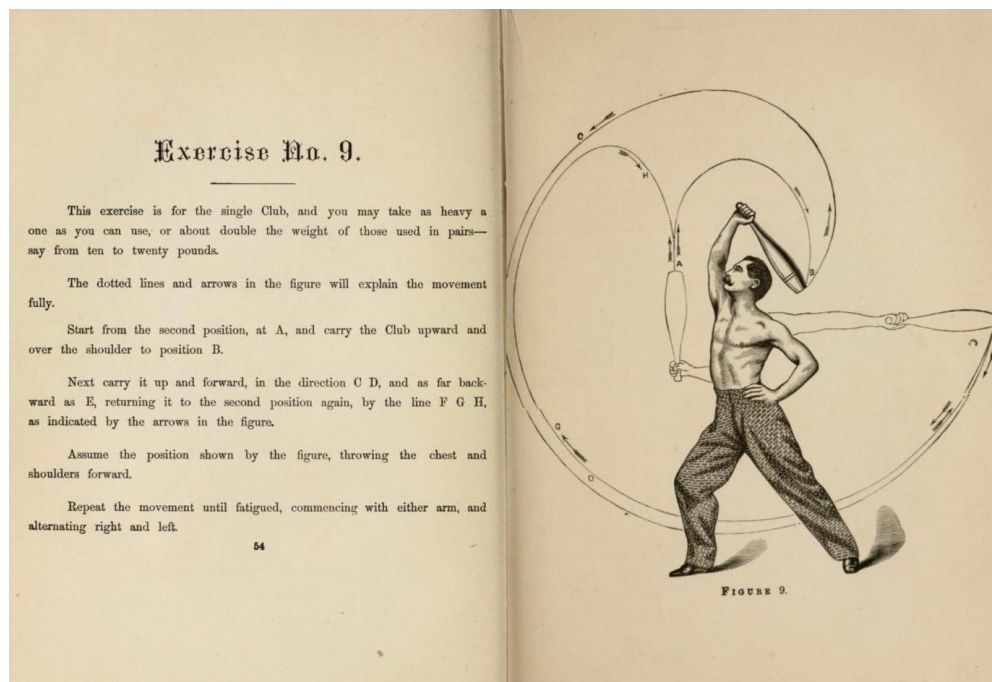


Figure 83.

'Exercise No. 9' in S.D. Kehoe, *The Indian Club Exercise: Explanatory Figures and Positions. Photographed From Life; Also General Remarks on Physical Culture* (New York: Frederic A. Brady, 1866), Contributor University of California Libraries
<<https://archive.org/details/indianclubexerci00kehorich/page/54/mode/2up?ref=ol&view=theater>>.

(and especially imprisoned Muslim soldiers, amongst whom the NfO heavily promoted jihadist literature) to encourage desertion to the Central Powers. A large part of the execution of this propagandist strategy was through the facilitation of religious ceremonies and other 'cultural and physical activities' for the imprisoned men, and it is therefore likely that such occasions formed the subject of photographs intended for broader propagandist publication.⁷⁴⁷

There is a wide literature on the relationship between photography and power, supplemented more recently by enquiries into the relationship between colonial photography and power, some of which is helpful in approaching the present discussion.⁷⁴⁸ The majority of work in this field holds that colonial imagery is inherently violent, not least because of the often humiliating and dehumanising circumstances in which it was coordinated by colonialists and the pervasive colonial gaze that lives on in perpetuity, cemented in the act of photographing as much as the physical photograph. Susan Sontag, for example, describes the professional photographer and documentarist as an 'armed' Baudelaireian flaneur.⁷⁴⁹ She sarcastically positions them as 'connoisseur[s] of empathy' who by 'reconnoitring, stalking, cruising [of] the urban inferno [...] "apprehends"' the subject of their photography 'as a detective apprehends a criminal.'⁷⁵⁰ Rachel Ama Asaa Engmann similarly situates photography within the enmeshment of coloniality and modernity, explaining that she has:

⁷⁴⁷ Max Freiherr von Oppenheim, 'Appendix to Vol. 2, "Denkschrift Betreffend Die Revolutionierung Der Islamischen Gebiete Unserer Fiende"' (Memorandum on Revolutionizing the Islamic Territories of Our Enemies), October 1914, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, R20938, as cited in Heike Liebau, 'The German Foreign Office, Indian Emigrants and Propaganda Efforts among the "Sepoys"', in *When the War Began We Heard of Several Kings*, ed. by Roy, Liebau, and Ahuja (2011), pp. 96–129 (p. 102); Liebau, 'Prisoners of War (India)' (2014).

⁷⁴⁸ On photography as archive and the archive as a discursive practice embedded in power systems, see Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge* (2002), and 'The Archaeology of Photography: Rereading Michel Foucault and The Archaeology of Knowledge', ed. by David Bate, *Afterimage*, 35.3 (2007), 3–6 <<https://doi.org/10.1525/aft.2007.35.3.3>>. On colonial photography and power, see James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (Reaktion Books, Limited, 1997) <<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/rcauk/detail.action?docID=1583054>> [accessed 14 October 2021], Rachel Ama Asaa Engmann, 'Under Imperial Eyes, Black Bodies, Buttocks, and Breasts: British Colonial Photography and Asante "Fetish Girls"', *African Arts*, 45.2 (2012), 46–57 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/23276801>> [accessed 15 October 2021], and Karina Eileraas, 'Reframing the Colonial Gaze: Photography, Ownership, and Feminist Resistance', *MLN*, 118.4 (2003), 807–40 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3251988>> [accessed 14 October 2021].

⁷⁴⁹ Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, Penguin Classics (Penguin Books Limited, 2014), p. 43. For Baudelaire's exposition of the flâneur, see C.P. Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life*, trans. by P.E. Charvet, Penguin Great Ideas (Penguin Books Limited, 2010).

⁷⁵⁰ Sontag, *On Photography* (2014), p. 43.

come to view colonial photographs – circulated extensively and trafficked indiscriminately as a “tool of the empire” and a technology of both representation and power — as material signatures [...] within the shifting ethnoscaples, ideoscapes, and mediascapes (Appadurai 1990) of capitalist modernity and colonialism.⁷⁵¹

Whilst I agree with these positions that situate photography as an imperial technology, much of the existing literature implicitly creates binaries that are not necessarily helpful to history researching and writing, especially efforts with decolonial objectives. The first of these is the binary created between the colonial photographer and photographed that is treated as metonymic for a dichotomy of perpetrator and victim. By reducing the relationship of photographer and photographed in this way, the literature emphasises a violence perpetrated by the colonialist behind the camera *on* the person in front of it, leaving little to no space for discussing the photographed subject as anything other than a victim. Christopher Pinney's work on the relationship between photography and anthropology has gone some way to complicate this framing of colonial photography.⁷⁵² In charting how early-twentieth century Europeans weaponised subjects' fascination with or rejection of photographic technology as evidence of primitivism, Pinney discusses instances where the act of being photographed was both harnessed by indigenous subjects to their advantage, or used to disrupt the colonial photographer's aims and expectations. Examples include the work of ethnographer Julius Lips, who wrote in 1937 – while exiled in the United States from Nazi Germany – of his fascination with the arrogance of the 'white explorer'.⁷⁵³ Lips writes of his efforts to act 'out of scientific curiosity and respect for dignity and individuality of these other peoples' by collating an archive of images that form the focus of Pinney's discussion: images 'in which colonized peoples recorded their “censure, buffoonery, astonishment, misunderstanding”,' as an 'opportunity for the colonized to “take vengeance upon his coloniser”' by repurposing the colonial technology as a vehicle for mockery.⁷⁵⁴ Pinney goes on to describe photographs issued around 1910, taken by

⁷⁵¹ Engmann, 'Under Imperial Eyes' (2012), p. 46, citing Arjun Appadurai, 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy', *Public Culture* 2.2 (1990), i-24.

⁷⁵² Christopher Pinney, *Photography and Anthropology* (Reaktion Books Limited, 2011) <<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/rcauk/detail.action?docID=851003>>.

⁷⁵³ Julius Lips, *The Savage Hits Back*, trans. by Vincent Benson (Yale University Press, 1937), p. xx.

⁷⁵⁴ Julius Lips, *The Savage Hits Back*, trans. by Vincent Benson (Yale University Press, 1937), p. xx-xxi; Pinney, *Photography and Anthropology* (2011), p. 9.

commercial photographer James Ricalton of Muslims praying in a mosque in Ahmedabad. Contrary to 'most Mahommedans', writes Ricalton, who are 'savagely opposed to being photographed,' the men in his own images 'are apparently indifferent' to the camera and its practice.⁷⁵⁵ Pinney uses Ricalton's words to make a separate point about the power of colonialism over bodies, but I would suggest that these praying men might also be understood as confounding the objective of the colonial photographer. Their indifference refuses the 'pervasive European desire to go to all extremes to expose the allegedly primitive refusal to be photographed'; they defy the ongoing cultivation of 'a colonial genre' of photographs about 'resistance to photography', shrugging off the camera's presence.⁷⁵⁶

Positioning those involved in the practice of colonial photography within a dichotomy of violent colonial photographer and victimised colonised subject has further repercussions. By treating colonial photography as inherently violent, the myriad forms of colonialism enacted by multiple different imperial entities become flattened into a unitary project. Furthermore, by treating colonial photographs as products of a photographer/photographed relationship, the impulse to treat the images as readable photographs is also fostered. Engmann is right to emphasise (citing bell hooks) the importance of 'the perspective from which looking occurs' and of countering 'the seduction of images that threaten[s] to dehumanize and colonize.'⁷⁵⁷ Yet the literature's preoccupation with privileging sight (looking, reading, the colonial gaze) as the primary mediator of imagery speaks to Foucauldian tradition of analysing power; one that is deeply embedded in a Eurocentric epistemology that conceptualises sight as a function of thought and knowing. John Rajchman for example, discussing Michel Foucault's exposition of how things are made 'seeable' under a system of power, states that '[t]o see is always to think, since what is seeable is part of what "structures thought in advance". And conversely, to think is always to see.'⁷⁵⁸ Pinney has critiqued this as a framework for interrogating photography, arguing that 'photography as a

⁷⁵⁵ James Ricalton, *India through the Stereoscope: A Journey through Hindustan* (New York: Underwood & Underwood, 1937) <<https://htext.stanford.edu/dd-ill/stereoscope.pdf>>, p. 45, as cited in Pinney, *Photography and Anthropology* (2011), p. 74.

⁷⁵⁶ Pinney, *Photography and Anthropology* (2011), p. 75, including a quotation from Patricia Spyer, 'The Cassowary Will (Not) Be Photographed: The "Primitive", the "Japanese" and the Elusive "Sacred" (Aru, South Moluccas)', in *Religion and Media*, ed. by Hent de Vries and Samuel Weber (Stanford, 2001), p. 306.

⁷⁵⁷ Engmann, 'Under Imperial Eyes' (2012), p. 47.

⁷⁵⁸ John Rajchman, 'Foucault's Art of Seeing', *October*, 44 (1988), 89–117 <https://doi.org/10.2307/778976>, p. 92.

technical practice characterized by contingency and uncontrollability was over-scripted by state-dominated narratives which inserted power into the social.⁷⁵⁹ He argues that photography examined using such frameworks might only ever '[act] as an insidious agent of state power,' lacking any identity beyond (quoting John Tagg) 'the epiphenomenal reflection of the power that informs it.'⁷⁶⁰ Instead, Pinney argues for greater attention to be paid to the 'dialogic space that frequently emerges during the process of picture-making.'⁷⁶¹ Adopting the term 'visual economy' rather than 'visual culture', he aims to create space for the possibility that photography was a site of myriad identity formations, if not equal power.⁷⁶²

With this in mind, what follows is a questioning of how to incorporate analytical methods that examine the practices and legacies of colonial photography without falling into reductive binaries of power, and without searching for agency.⁷⁶³ My starting point for this approach is Karina Eileraas, who works with the images taken by Marc Garanger in Algeria under French colonial rule. She argues that there is scope to understand the forcibly unveiled Algerian women in the 'nationalist and colonial imaginaries' of Garanger's photographs as 'participat[ing] in and misrecogniz[ing] the melancholic racial and sexual fantasies at play.'⁷⁶⁴ Eileraas uses this idea of misrecognition as a process of 'strategic disidentification' from the photographer's intentions.⁷⁶⁵ This is not 'a distancing from the false,' but rather an attempt to 'provocatively employ fantasy, as an inevitable element of history, memory, and identity, in one's own becoming,' to carve out space for the dispossessed photographic subject to articulate their own forms of quiet resistance.⁷⁶⁶ To a degree, Eileraas's work thus becomes a search for agency that is not the aim this thesis, and much of her analysis follows a framework that centres attempts to speculatively 'read' the

⁷⁵⁹ Christopher Pinney, 'Crisis and Visual Critique', *Visual Anthropology Review*, 32.1 (2016), 73–78 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/var.12094>>, pp. 74-75.

⁷⁶⁰ Pinney, 'Crisis and Visual Critique' (2016), pp. 74-75.

⁷⁶¹ Christopher Pinney, 'Introduction: "How the Other Half..."', in *Photography's Other Histories*, ed. by Christopher Pinney and Nicolas Peterson, Objects/Histories (Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 1–16. (p. 14).

⁷⁶² Pinney, 'Crisis and Visual Critique' (2016); Michael Nolan, 'An Egalitarian Gaze: Photographic Representations of Working People in Britain, 1919- 1939' (unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Huddersfield, 2020) <<https://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/35301/1/FINAL%20THESIS%20-%20Nolan.pdf>>, p. 18.

⁷⁶³ For 'photographic inscription', see Eileraas, 'Reframing the Colonial Gaze' (2003), p. 811.

⁷⁶⁴ Eileraas, 'Reframing the Colonial Gaze' (2003), p. 810.

⁷⁶⁵ Eileraas, 'Reframing the Colonial Gaze' (2003), p. 811.

⁷⁶⁶ Eileraas, 'Reframing the Colonial Gaze' (2003), p. 811.

photographed women's intentions and emotions. She writes, for example, that '[a]lthough they were required to confront the camera in full frontal view for purposes of identification, many women *managed to customize* this posture [...] some women use their hands to draw their clothing more closely toward them in a *self-protective gesture* [...] one woman drapes her arm her chest and knees in a posture that *seems to signal audacity and defiance*'.⁷⁶⁷

Instead, I have tried to take this conceptualisation of photography as occupying a potentially 'playful and shifting' space with the spirit of Tina M. Campt's subtly different position on 'identification photography'.⁷⁶⁸ Examining 'photographic archives of the African Diaspora', Campt chooses to *listen* to images, to 'challenge the equation of vision with knowledge by engaging photography through a sensory register that is critical to Black Atlantic cultural formations.'⁷⁶⁹ Campt's method similarly understands photographs as 'instances of rupture and refusal,' but through a 'haptic mode of engaging the sonic frequencies of photographs.'⁷⁷⁰ Her method of archival interrogation rests emphatically and unapologetically on the interpretation of photographs' frequencies by the viewer, and chimes with my approach in Chapter 2 of working *with* the role played by my own bodiliness, when working as a historian. Rather than reading a disarming of the colonial gaze and the photographer's intentions into the Halbmondlager photographic postcards, therefore, I have tried to marry these approaches and extend the methodologies from earlier chapters in dialogue with those proposed by Campt and Eileraas.

In the context of the Halbmondlager photographic postcards, these shifting practices of object swinging and the different materialities of jori and Indian clubs sit awkwardly against the fundamental propaganda purpose of the postcards. This is not photography for government-mandated identification papers, as in the case of Eileraas and Campt's primary sources. However, the images were likely taken by Otto Stiehl, first lieutenant at the nearby Zossen camp and from June 1917 second-in-command of headquarters and in charge of Halbmondlager. Stiehl also acted as unofficial photographer across both the Zossen and Wünsdorf sites, who produced an ethnographic photographic study based on his personal

⁷⁶⁷ Eileraas, 'Reframing the Colonial Gaze' (2003), p. 817 (emphasis added).

⁷⁶⁸ Campt, *Listening to Images* (2017), p. 5.

⁷⁶⁹ Campt, *Listening to Images* (2017), pp. 6 and 8.

⁷⁷⁰ Campt, *Listening to Images* (2017), pp. 5 and 8.

photographs that racialised the 'types' of men imprisoned at his camps.⁷⁷¹ The camera at Halbmondlager was thus an instrument of propaganda and personal orientalist curiosity on Stiehl's part. My interest here lies in the smiles that can be seen across the men's faces in all three postcards. Where Eileraas characterises the relationship between photographed and photographer through a vocabulary of struggle, the accommodation of cultural practices to appease imprisoned men makes the interrogation of the Halbmondlager images more complex. For example, in Eileraas's identity negotiations are 'arduous' and 'an ongoing struggle', the women's body language is 'confrontational', 'audacious' and 'defiant', assuming 'an aggressive, hostile, even scathing quality,' and their expressions locate a 'subversive rupture' in the process of photographic composition and interpretation.⁷⁷² The Halbmondlager images are not necessarily joyful, and my argument is not that these smiles are necessarily evidence of happiness or a wider subversive intent on the part of the men. Rather, they acted as my own point of access to the images; the smiles can reveal something and simultaneously complicate how the historian relates to and inscribes meaning onto these images. For me, the smiling men highlight the unexpectedness of articulating a resoundingly anti-colonial practice like jori in front of a camera that operates in a prisoner of war camp as a profoundly imperial tool.

This broader spiritual and political landscape to which jori were a key part, outlined above, quietly unsettles how these images might be received. An important aspect of this, beyond jori swinging's entanglement in resisting imperial agendas, is the agency of the jori that disrupts anthropocentric European ontologies. Interviews with kushti practitioners, relaying generational, embodied knowledges of the practice and its wider spiritual landscape, speak of the personification – even deification – of joris within specific akhara and communities.⁷⁷³ Reflecting on these interviews, Alter notes:

The *jori* in *jori akharas* are not simply weighted clubs. They are, most significantly, named and artfully decorated. They possess an identity of their own, and that

⁷⁷¹ Otto Stiehl, *Unsere Feinde. 96 Charakterköpfe Aus Deutschen Kriegsgefangenenlagern (Our Enemies: 96 Faces with Striking Features from German POW Camps)*, (Stuttgart, 1916), Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen, Ae 1003 <<http://idb.ub.uni-tuebingen.de/opendigi/Ae1003>>.

⁷⁷² Eileraas, 'Reframing the Colonial Gaze' (2003), pp. 813 (arduous, ongoing struggle), 837 (confrontational), 817 (audacious, defiant), 827 (aggressive, hostile, scathing, and subversive rupture).

⁷⁷³ Alter, 'Indian Clubs and Colonialism' (2004), and Alter, 'Sport, Sexuality and Autoeroticism in North Indian Jori Swinging' (2005), pp. 47–60.

identity is linked to the place they hold in the local history of swinging [...] As a consequence of being named, *jori* take on a life of their own, and they are virtually personified in the minds of local enthusiasts, who speak of them in highly personal terms. A number of men explained to me that at an earlier time [...] *jori* were not just personified but were regarded as divine beings. They were bathed, decorated, and clothed much as are temple deities.⁷⁷⁴

Alter implies that the conceptualisation of *joris* as having a unique selfhood as a consequence of their creation, design or role in a practitioner's success at a *dangal* is part of a long-standing belief system around object agency that would have rung true in the popular consciousness of *jori* swingers during the First World War. Indeed, he observes that even in contemporary *jori* swinging, there is still no standardized weight category for *dangal* competitors; instead, 'competitions revolve around specific named pairs', thus illustrating the defining significance of a pair's own selfhood in shaping the competitive sphere.⁷⁷⁵ By all accounts, the same was not true of the Indian clubs used during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries across the Global North. Popular manuals conceived of the clubs as exclusively functional and described them in terms of their impact on the practitioner's body, emphasising their 'simplicity' in a way that necessarily erased any inscription of club agency. An 1866 manual on 'Indian Club Exercise', for example, notes that the 'essential property' of Indian club swinging is in 'expanding the chest and exercising every muscle in the body concurrently,' and that on account of their 'simplicity and convenience, they are unsurpassed by any other kind of apparatus.'⁷⁷⁶ This raises the question of how the pairs of *jori* and of Indian clubs were conceptualised in the scene shown at Figure 79, by both the three practicing men and their audience. The pair of *jori* on the far left appear roughly hewn, as if they are makeshift products of a creator maximising the limited available materials in the camp. If this is correct, it would be in-keeping with the worlding of *jori* for that pair to be treated as having assumed its own subjecthood that is specific to and

⁷⁷⁴ Alter, 'Indian Clubs and Colonialism' (2004), p. 505 (emphasis in original).

⁷⁷⁵ Alter, 'Sport, Sexuality and Autoeroticism in North Indian *Jori* Swinging' (2005), p.51.

⁷⁷⁶ S.D. Kehoe, *The Indian Club Exercise: Explanatory Figures and Positions. Photographed From Life; Also General Remarks on Physical Culture* (New York: Frederic A. Brady, 1866), Contributor University of California Libraries <<https://archive.org/details/indianclubexerci00kehorich/page/54/mode/2up?ref=ol&view=theater>> [accessed 23 August 2021] (pp. 7 and 18).

reflective of its Halbmondlager creator and the conditions of its creation. How this subjecthood of the objects themselves relates to the differentiated, atypical practices to which they were being put across the images demands detail into that specific worlding of the jori by its creator and/or users that is not available. However, by interrogating these practices with the agentic potential of the jori in mind, historians can suggest ways that examining the bodily dimensions of these movement practices may add to the histories of the Indian Army during the First World War.

One possibility is that by using the jori across and around the body in the same calisthenic-style movements used by his Indian club-wielding peers, the individual on the far left of Figure 79 has stepped into what Heffernan calls the English club swinging 'habitus'.⁷⁷⁷ There emerges an intersection of jori and Indian clubs, and of the differing world views that corresponded with each. Heffernan has pointed out how the two swinging techniques, with the distinct designs and weight ranges of club, created two 'markedly different physique[s]': the large muscles of the Indian jori swinger, in contrast to the 'more sinewy builds' generated by Indian club swinging amongst European and American practitioners, with the result that a visible marker of racial difference was cultivated through different swinging practices.⁷⁷⁸ Treating the different physiques as signifiers for the belief systems underpinning the two swinging practices, such an entanglement as that seen in Figure 79 begins to echo ideas of hybridisation of the bodily and of the worldviews each physicality represented. However, as discussed below, the use of bodiliness as method begins to unsettle this canonical postcolonial framework. Following Homi Bhabha's work on ambivalence and hybridity, the corporeal body of the man to the far left photographed in Figure 79 would cease to be the neat site of what were perceived to be physical signifiers of racial difference. For Bhabha, ambivalence is a product of hybridization, which itself is the result of the enunciation of colonial power.⁷⁷⁹ Colonial power, according to Bhabha, asserts itself through a process of disavowal, marking out the 'colonised' and their culture through narratives of otherness and inferiority. Yet the 'act of enunciation' of colonial power

⁷⁷⁷ Heffernan, 'What's Wrong with a Little Swinging?' (2017), pp. 562 and 564.

⁷⁷⁸ Heffernan, 'What's Wrong with a Little Swinging?' (2017), pp. 554 and 564.

⁷⁷⁹ See Homi K. Bhabha, 'Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817', in *The Location of Culture* (Taylor & Francis, 2012), pp. 145–74.

gradually cultivates a hybridised peoples, whose self-identity grounds itself in part in the colonial image; they become '*almost the same* [as the coloniser] *but not quite*'.⁷⁸⁰ The result for Bhabha would be a destabilisation of colonial authority; where the coloniser once asserted its power through an enunciation of difference to 'the colonised', through this process of hybridisation that difference disappears. By adopting indigenous jori for colonial Indian club exercises, the soldier in Figure 79 defies either of the two categories of physique Heffernan has marked out and treated as absolute. In doing so, he enunciates through his movement practice the cultural hybridisation to which Bhabha points, inscribing in his swinging practice a destabilisation of colonial power (if not an active or intentional resistance to it). However, how might historians understanding of cultural hybridisation be expanded if otherwise methodologies of photography analysis are brought to bear on instances of it? For example, looking to Tina Campt's work, what 'alternative modalities for understanding' emerge in relation to the Halbmondlager images by *listening* to their affective frequencies?⁷⁸¹

Ironically, I returned to these images most thoughtfully after re-reading Campt's chapter on *stasis* in photography. She positions this as an alternative to 'seeing' stillness in photography; rather one *feels* stasis, the state of 'tensions produced by holding a complex set of forces in suspension.'⁷⁸² Where Campt feels stasis in a series of Christian missionary portraits of Black South African women, I feel the sense of playfulness, even ludicrousness, in Figures 79 to 81. There is something tongue-in-cheek about the way both men in the foreground 'arena' of Figure 81 are holding the roughly-carved jori, facing each other with focused eye contact and posed in anticipation apparently of an attack, while the onlookers stand relaxed and laughing at the scene. There is no sense of a pugnacious crowd, egging on their preferred combatant. Something similar is true of the three-legged race in Figure 80. The kerfuffle and confusion of the men participating in the race – especially the knotted brow and apparently self-aware, even self-deprecating, grimace of the man third from the left – together with the solo Indian Army soldier wielding an individual jori at the rear of the

⁷⁸⁰ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (2012), p. 127 (emphasis in original).

⁷⁸¹ Campt, *Listening to Images* (2017), p. 72.

⁷⁸² Campt, *Listening to Images* (2017), pp. 51 for definition of stasis and p. 52 for what it requires of the historian: 'stasis requires us to listen to the infrasonic frequencies of images that register through *feeling* rather than visual sound' (emphasis added).

group creates an almost farcical setting for the jori to appear. I attend to both of these images through registers of play and silliness but, like Campt, am conscious not to confuse this with articulations of agency by the men (or indications that colonial structures have been destabilised, as proposed by Bhabha). Indeed, like Campt's missionary photographs, the Halbmondlager images were taken within the wider context of the Camp's anthropological mission to study and taxonomise its Indian and African prisoners.⁷⁸³ The women in the portraits discussed by Campt are identified by their adornments:

They classify [the women] according to jewellery, headdress, hairstyle, and skin markings, thus appropriating their subjects' chosen adornments of self-fashioning as references to their place in an ethnographic catalogue.⁷⁸⁴

The Halbmondlager prisoners are similarly classified by both their location ('Halbmond-Lager in Wünsdorf-Zossen' is printed at the bottom left of each postcard) and by appended objects and limbs ('Keulenkampf' (*club* fight, Figures 79 and 81), 'Dreibein-Wettlaufen' (*three-legged* race, Figure 80). But again, as Campt notes, historians should be cautious of using the affective registers (here, playfulness) as evidence of the photographed individuals' intention to subvert the power dynamics that underpin indexical projects like those pursued by European ethnographers in the camp. The images are neither 'inherently transgressive enactments of resistance nor thoroughly abject supplicants', and instead Campt prompts historians to reflect on what might be gained from 'uncoupling the notion of self-fashioning from the concept of agency'.⁷⁸⁵ The same applies here; what might be gained from uncoupling the playful register I have identified through 'listening' to the images' affective frequencies from any notion of agency?

Asking this question unsettles existing postcolonial scholarship, like Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and ambivalence. The image should not be interpreted exclusively as an example of agency, or of cultural hybridisation. Using the framework proposed by Campt, the Halbmondlager photographic postcards might be understood as localised enunciations of a practice that has a profoundly anti-colonial resonance, but which in *that* moment and in

⁷⁸³ Campt, *Listening to Images* (2017), p. 50.

⁷⁸⁴ Campt, *Listening to Images* (2017), pp. 54-55.

⁷⁸⁵ Campt, *Listening to Images* (2017), p. 59.

that place was less a deliberate enunciation of somatic nationalism and more a moment of familiarity and camaraderie. Indeed, I would rework a separate point made by Campt and argue that a different 'order' of refusal emerges here. This refusal is not aimed at the idea of colonial difference, or at the Camp administrators' authority through an outwardly mocking use of the jori. Rather the refusal comes through the men and the historian refusing the terms of photography.⁷⁸⁶ We collectively refuse the visual; to propose an otherwise understanding of the images, one has to *feel* them. Here the disruptive potential of otherwise methodologies becomes more pronounced. Not only do the images speak to ontological worldviews that likely challenge those held by the creators and consumers of the postcards, but the practices shown create unfixity for the historian. This way of engaging with the archive and reaching out towards the experiences of the men themselves is thus another illustration of bodiliness as subject-matter and method; it depends on a haptic encounter that complicates existing methods of analysing images of the Indian Army in the First World War. The following section of Chapter 3 develops this idea of unfixity in relation to bodiliness and still imagery. By examining dress and still photography of various practices involving movement, I examine how the images may be heard as containing forms of 'cultural resonance' that speak to the photographed men worlded their experiences.

COMICS, CROSS-DRESSING AND COSMIC AGENCY

Having examined different material aspects of the practice of kushti, this chapter now turns to other practices involving movement conducted by soldiers in the Indian Army during the First World War. These include further aspects of spiritual practice, but also forms of entertainment – and the slippage between the two that destabilises distinctions based on strict categories around the nature of the movement. The first case study revolves around a photograph of a man dressed in a two-tonal outfit, a conical, tasselled hat, and holding what appeared to be the makings of a second hat and a small chair constructed of cigarette boxes (Figure 84). By placing this image into dialogue with scholarship on comic forms that already existed and that began to emerge in India during the period, and with other primary sources

⁷⁸⁶ Campt talks about photographic subjects 'refusing the very terms of photographic subjection,' in relation to identity photography that 'rupture[s] the sovereign gaze of the regimes that created them' (Campt, *Listening to Images* (2017), p. 5). I have deployed this idea of visual refusal in a slightly different sense here.

on forms of entertainment amongst Indian Army soldiers on active service, I ask how interrogating materialities of the bodily and of dress might complicate the account of Figure 84 offered by the archive. The second study concerns the bodily construction of a space for prayer amongst Muslim soldiers being treated at the Brighton Pavilion in the early years of the war. Where various images and film footage exist for the makeshift gurdwāra provided for Sikh patients at the Pavilion, no such visual record exists of the space made on the East Lawn for Muslim patients. I ask how, in the absence of visual evidence, traces of bodily materiality and the unbuilt environment might help historians learn more about this environment of devotional practice. The final case study emerges from images taken at the German prisoner of war camp, Halbmondlager. Much has been written about the mosque built at Halbmondlager, and the efforts to design a cultural space to accommodate Islamic worship practices. However, my concern here is a series of photographs likely taken by unofficial camp photographer Otto Stiehl of imprisoned men in makeshift outfits and bodily adornments, described as celebrating a spring festival. Through an examination of the men's dress(ing), and spiritual practices and ritual celebrations in Indian cosmologies from the period, I suggest ways that historians might understand these images, but also develop the argument threaded across this thesis: pointing to further ways in which the immaterialities of bodiliness and divine agencies might have a role to play in the researching and writing of design histories.

Interpretive pluralities in the comic

At first glance, the soldier in Figure 84 appears to fit within an entertainment typology widely deployed across the Allied military camps in 1916 Salonika. Other photographs in the IWM Ministry of Information First World War Official Collection feature similar scenes, with men dressed in costumes that are redolent of European clowning and jester traditions. In one photograph, two men stand in a depressed earthen arena, dressed variously in striped trousers and oversized suit-style jackets, large bowler and crumpled flat hats, their mouths and eyes circled in classic Auguste clown white paint (Figure 85). In a second, another duo can be seen, music sheets in hand, singing and gesticulating in oversized full-body Pierrot clown costumes, with gathered frilly cuffs, large ruffles around their necks and gathered, ruffled textile flowers on their chest (Figure 86). It is possible that these men formed part of



Figure 84.

Ariel Vargas, 'An Indian Soldier from a Transport Unit Dressed as a Clown Entertains the Crowd at a Sports Meeting near Salonika in May 1916', 1916, Imperial War Museum, Q 32062 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205297636>>.

a Pierrot Troupe: combatants with a professional history in entertainment, whose connections to the industry may have helped them secure items (such as these costumes) for the purposes of concert parties to entertain troops.⁷⁸⁷ The costumes in the second photograph are constructed in alternate shades between the two men; where the bodysuit of the man on the left is dark, the bodysuit worn by the man on the right is light, where the former's textile flower is light, the other's is dark and so on. Nestled amongst these images, the photograph at Figure 84 has been read – and I deliberately use this term to emphasise the curatorial focus on the visual – by the IWM as another example of clowning

⁷⁸⁷ 'The Proliferation of Pierrot Troupes in the Battle Field', *The University of Sheffield: National Fairground and Circus Archive* <<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/nfca/researchandarticles/pierrottroupe>> [accessed 2 February 2022].

performance. This section, however, takes a closer look at the photograph in the context of bodily and dress materialities of public comedy in (especially northern) India at the turn of the twentieth century, and of comic entertainment in military concert parties. It examines the critical role of unfixity in these comic lineages and the methodological obstacles posed by an absence of movement in the archive. In doing so, this section asks whether new perspectives might be brought to the photograph, and the comic practices it speaks to, through analytical frameworks that allow co-creational, generative worldings.

At the turn of the twentieth century, three characters – the vidusaka, vita, and bhānd – had emerged from closely-intertwined genealogies to perform specific comic functions in North Indian public theatre.⁷⁸⁸ Each merits a brief overview, as each illustrates in subtly different ways an unfixity that contributes to how the image at Figure 84 has the potential to challenge European ontologies, and in turn the interpretations rendered by historians. By the outbreak of the First World War, the vidusaka and vita characters were staple figures in public renditions of Sanskrit drama. Their role was to embody, individually or as part of a pair, the cosmic tension between Vedic deities Asura and Indra through their respective bodilinesses and wordplay.⁷⁸⁹ For the vidusaka, this was achieved through his role as companion to the dramatic hero and, critically, as 'comic foil' to the hero's quest.⁷⁹⁰ For every remark made by the hero, the vidusaka would give 'incomprehensible, foolish and indecent retorts', puncturing the solemnity of the hero's speech and actions with his vulgarity and rudeness.⁷⁹¹ The vidusaka also acted as a function of reckoning, using humour to hold 'a mirror up to the foolish' and point out the incongruities, corruptions and absurdities of political, social and religious institutions.⁷⁹² The vita, by contrast, embodied both hero and vidusaka function; he tended not to appear with a companion, but would

⁷⁸⁸ Claire Pamment, *Comic Performance in Pakistan: The Bhānd*, Palgrave Studies in Comedy (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017).

⁷⁸⁹ F.B.J. Kuiper, *Varūna and the Viduṣṣka: On the Origin of the Sanskrit Drama* (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie, 1979), pp. 210, via Pamment, *The Bhānd* (2017), p. 72.

⁷⁹⁰ Pamment, *The Bhānd* (2017), p. 70.

⁷⁹¹ Tatjana Elizarenkova, 'F. B. J. Kuiper: Fundamental Directions of His Scholarly Work', *Numen*, 34.2 (1987), 145–78 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/3270083>>, p. 171.

⁷⁹² M.L. Varadpande, *The Vidusaka in Indian Folk Theatre* (New Delhi: Sangeet Natak Akademi, 1974) <<https://www.indianculture.gov.in/vidusaka-indian-folk-theatre>>, p. 61.



Figure 85.

Ariel Vargas, 'Clowns 'Shrapnel' and 'Sturm Ritz' Perform in a Circus Arranged by the Regiment de Marche d'Afrique at Salonika, Febraury [sic] 1916', 1916, Imperial War Museum, IWM Q 31752
<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205297357>>.



Figure 86.

Ariel Vargas, 'Two Members of 8th Royal Scots Fusiliers Concert Party Singing a Duet in an Open Air Theatre, Salonika, April 1916', 1916, Imperial War Museum, Q 31862
<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205297452>>.

rather operate as a 'microcosm' of the cosmic struggle between chaos and order.⁷⁹³ This is played out in his tendency to challenge institutions of power, whilst sitting comfortably within or alongside them. There is thus an ambiguity to the vita and an unpredictable shuttling between his functions to respect and puncture authority, creating a 'topsyturvydom' to his identity in which the audience is invited to share.⁷⁹⁴ In this way, the vidusaka and vita resist any attempts to characterise them exclusively as sites of rebellion or anti-authority and encourage the audience to join them in this refusal. In terms of narrative, they sit typically within the realm of the king's court or the patron's favour, they are both routinely, implicitly presented as Brahmins and thus enjoy the benefits of caste privileges, and consequently uphold institutions of power whilst simultaneously mocking wider paradigms of authority as it suits them. The third character, the bhānd, has traditionally occupied a shifting space outside of specific religious cultures and engages in a constant process of 'self-transformation'.⁷⁹⁵ Like the vidusaka and vita, the bhānd has across the historical record 'jostle[d] the power hierarchies to expose and destabilise their ideological underpinnings'.⁷⁹⁶ Working for the most part as a 'comic male duo', comprising an 'authoritarian "straight man"' and the 'chaotic and more radical clown', bhānds would together mix high praise for their patron with satirical puncturing of hierarchies.⁷⁹⁷ Like the 'topsyturvydom' of the vita's shifting allegiances and priorities, the bhānd was not implicitly anti-authoritative, but by virtue of his refusal to concede allegiance or resistance to any one benefactor he confounded rigid colonial categories of entertainment and comedy, occupation, and status. This is further reinforced by accounts from the Mughal period through to the twentieth century of bhānds' ability to engage with practices of naql, a form of imitation and mimicry, that 'disorientate[d] the orthodox religious order' and subverted the 'gendered universe' held up by colonial cosmologies as sacrosanct.⁷⁹⁸ Writing of performers identified as bhānds in the court of Akbar, the Kashmiri poet Mullah Ghanimat Kashmiri observed:

⁷⁹³ Pamment, *The Bhānd* (2017), p. 78.

⁷⁹⁴ Pamment, *The Bhānd* (2017), p. 71.

⁷⁹⁵ Pamment, *The Bhānd* (2017), pp. 6, 42 and 69.

⁷⁹⁶ Pamment, *The Bhānd* (2017), pp. 6 and 42.

⁷⁹⁷ Pamment, *The Bhānd* (2017), pp. 6 and 22

⁷⁹⁸ Anjali Gera Roy, 'Naql, Iqtida, Muarada, and Javab g'oi, Sariqa, and Mahumda Sariqa in the Hindi Masala Film', *MSCO Working Paper Series*, 2016 <<https://www.otago.ac.nz/mfco/otago626811.pdf>>, pp. 2 and 23.

They are expert in imitation and dance [...] With their art, they can turn into a man or woman, or a young child. They are sometimes Muslim, sometimes people of other faiths, sometimes Kashmiri, sometimes foreigners, sometimes seductive Indian girls and sometimes old peasants [...] sometimes masters and sometimes sweet-talking young boys, sometimes pregnant women, sometimes crazy, and sometimes fairies [...] they can impersonate anyone, from any land, class or any sect.⁷⁹⁹

This is pertinent to the discussion of Figure 84, as it speaks not only to the unfixity of identities and functions in comic roles in India, but also to bodily transformation, articulated through physical characterisation and movement. Understanding these genealogies of Indian comic performance opens the possibility that the soldier pictured can be encountered not – as the photograph's archival caption would suggest – as mirroring British expectations of a clowning or jester tradition by dressing in a costume reminiscent of European clown acts. Yet there is a methodological issue here, in the static nature of the image. The above figures of Indian comedy during this period relied heavily on their physicality for comic effect. The photograph at Figure 84 however seems to capture the performer outside of the stage, before or after his performance. His back is turned to the few people also caught by the camera, who are scattered sparsely in the distant background in a way that suggests they were observing more the process of photographing the moment than the performance itself. Conventional historical modes of enquiry would regard the image as a snapshot of a moment, but through the introduction of interdisciplinary scholarship historians might pluralise this interpretative approach. Allan S. Taylor, for example, builds on performance studies discourses that challenge the 'reductionist' view of live performance that demands in-person corporeality, rendering photography and similar recording methods as the performance 'leftovers'.⁸⁰⁰ Instead, he argues that 'images can "say", "utter" or "do", and a performance "'speaks" as a still image', if photography is viewed less as a mode of documentation and part of a generative, emergent process.⁸⁰¹ This

⁷⁹⁹ M. A. Ghanimat, *Nairang-e-Ishq [The New Colours of Love]* (Lakhna'u: Munshi Nole Kishore, 1925), pp. 18-19, in Pamment, *The Bhānd* (2017), pp. 44-45.

⁸⁰⁰ Allan S. Taylor, 'Performance, Photography, Performativity: What Performance "does" in the Still Image' (unpublished PhD Thesis, University of the Arts London (UAL), 2017) <https://www.academia.edu/36799635/PERFORMANCE_PHOTOGRAPHY_PERFORMATIVITY_WHAT_PERFORMANCE_DOES_IN_THE_STILL_IMAGE>, p. 2.

⁸⁰¹ Taylor, 'What Performance "does" in the Still Image' (2017), pp. 5 and 39.

has strong parallels with Camppt's work; both allow the historian to encounter archival images as active, enunciating agents, offering new modes through which the historian can engage with the photographed events and people. Indeed, Taylor argues that photography has traditionally been understood as articulating a switch in temporal registers – from a moment-in-time performance to the image viewed after the fact – but that this understanding can be pluralised if performance photography is reframed as 'unveiling' further facets of the practice caught on camera.⁸⁰²

Taylor's work operates in a slightly different context to my own; he focuses on performance art where photography is purposefully entangled in the performance. However, his approach to images echoes my own framing of historical research as an encounter between artefact and historian, and also introduces the possibility that part of the practice photographed continues to evolve through its consideration by the historian. Taylor uses the language of citation: pointing to how an image 'projects through time [...] the cultural resonance[s] of the actions produced by the body' (essentially, the projection of cultural citations).⁸⁰³ This offers an otherwise method of approaching the image at Figure 84 than as a static image to be read, where the absence of movement would become an insurmountable methodological problem. If the aim is not to identify conclusively what cultural citations might be at play, approaches like Taylor's and Camppt's allow historians to encounter static images as resonating artefacts, and to imagine the enunciation of cultural citations that may have occurred (and changed) over time from the point of photographing through to the historian's encounter. In the context of Figure 84, perhaps there is space to understand the image as the product of intra-acting worldings, whereby European and Indian comic forms are both at play in the performer to create something new, depending on how the performance is worlded by the performer and also his audiences and the encountering historians. This is not about showing that the soldier intended to enunciate bodily citations of the vidusaka, vita, bhānd, or British comic forms. Rather, the discussion below draws out different aspects of the image and suggests cultural citations that may have operated and continue to operate in relation to it, leaving it deliberately open-ended

⁸⁰² Taylor, 'What Performance "does" in the Still Image' (2017), p. 162.

⁸⁰³ Taylor, 'What Performance "does" in the Still Image' (2017), p. 163.

(opaque) as to how any intra-action of these citations may have been worlded by the performer and his audience.

The first of these features is the dress worn by the soldier. Sanskrit treatises on drama, and numerous histories and critical discourses on Sanskrit theatre since, emphasise the importance of a vidusaka's physicality and comical bodiliness. The *Nāṭyaśāstra*, a Sanskrit treatise on performing arts dated to somewhere between the 2nd century BCE and the 2nd century CE, insists that the vidusaka must 'be a dwarf with protruding teeth, bald, hunchbacked, lame with distorted facial features, yellow eyes, with a funny gait and incoherent talk.' None of these typical costume or prosthetic bodily features are visibly perceptible.⁸⁰⁴ On the other hand, whilst a mid-twentieth century study of the vidusaka describes the character's physicality similarly, it also notes that vidusakas have sometimes painted their faces 'with stripes of colour'.⁸⁰⁵ The soldier photographed at Figure 84 appears to have smeared the side of his face turned away from the camera with a light-coloured paint or powder, in-keeping with this vidusaka form and also with the alternating pattern of contrasting tones seen across his outfit. My point here is not to argue through identifying even the smallest indicators that the soldier may be trying to project the norms and features of Indian comic theatre. Rather it is that by contextualising the performance in the lineage of public comedy with which many Indian soldiers would have been familiar, whatever the effect or character intended by the soldier performing, the absence of (m)any material features typical of the vidusaka character does not preclude the performer, his audience at the time, and even the historian from encountering the performance as drawing on Indian comic traditions. The exercise in listening to the sonic frequencies of the images and feeling their cultural resonances suggest that the soldier occupies a tosyurvy space that has the potential both to mingle and resist comic forms. Indeed, there are questions of resource management and improvisation here; perhaps the design and effect of the costume was governed by the material (un)available to him in Salonika. Yet placing the analytical models of worldings and cultural citation of images into dialogue suggests ways that the performer and his audience drew on their embodied knowledge of public theatre

⁸⁰⁴ Elizarenkova, 'F. B. J. Kuiper' (1987), p.173.

⁸⁰⁵ G.K. Bhat, *The Vidūsaka* (Ahmedabad: The New Order Book Co., 1959), Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 891.432 Bha <<https://indianculture.gov.in/flipbook/28708>> [accessed 4 November 2021], p. 57.

to situate the performance before them in ways that are not articulated by a visual reading of the photograph.

Indeed, much of the soldier's costume is reminiscent of European clowning and jester traditions. The alternating shades of patchwork fabric that make up his bodysuit are similar to the costumes typical of nineteenth-century Harlequinade performances in Britain; his conical hat, constructed as it seems to be from paper, could well have been inspired by one of the many Pierrot clown troupes popular across Britain and indeed as wartime concert party entertainers at the time.⁸⁰⁶ There are also signs of classic concert party acts, which were prevalent amongst Indian and British Army soldiers and would routinely feature junior soldiers humorously impersonating their senior officers. Of particular interest here then are those elements of the soldier's costume that incorporate sartorial markers of military service. On the soldier's shoulders are fabric epaulettes – designed in the same alternating shades as the rest of his costume – and a stand-and-fall collar, both of which can be seen on the service dress jackets of British officers to both the British and Indian Armies.⁸⁰⁷ One might argue that militarised features such as these were inevitable if the costume was pulled together using available fabrics, which may have been standard issue uniform spares. However, the use of alternating shades for the epaulettes tabs, epaulette buttons, and between the two collar halves suggest that these were intentional, purpose-made elements to a costume, and not recycled features from uniform scraps. The strap across the soldier's chest, with notches for a buckle fastening, similarly seems to play the role of the cross-brace in a Sam Browne belt, which formed part of the standard pattern Indian Army officer's uniform and can be seen sported by British officers in Salonika at the time of the photograph at Figure 84.⁸⁰⁸ It feels likely that these features of the soldiers' costume would

⁸⁰⁶ For examples of similar pointed hats in Pierrot troupe costumes, see the extensive collection of images in photographs, programmes, newspapers, postcards, and score sheets collected from the first two decades of the twentieth century at 'Seaside Follies Archive', *Seaside Follies* <<https://seasidefollies.co.uk/archives/>> [accessed 4 February 2022].

⁸⁰⁷ For example, see the collars and epaulettes on the jackets worn by these British officers of the 15th Sikhs regiment: H.D. Girdwood, *Record of the Indian Army in Europe during the First World War: Group of British & Indian Officers, 15th Sikhs [Le Sart, France], Standing in a French Farmyard, 24th July 1915*, 1915, British Library, Photo 24/(76) <<https://imagesonline.bl.uk/asset/151187>> [accessed 4 February 2022]. See also this example of a British Army officer jacket available at the IWM: C.I. Samuels, London, *Jacket, Service Dress, 1907 Pattern: O/Rs, British Army, 1914*, Imperial War Museum, IWM UNI 2111 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30094231>>.

⁸⁰⁸ Government of India Army Department, *Army Regulations, India, Volume VII Dress* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing India, 1913), pp. 16 and 82. An example of a regulation Sam Browne belt and cross-brace can be seen

have been understood by the audience as reflecting features of their superior officers' uniforms. Indeed, American soldier Scott Gilmore described the Gurkha soldiers alongside whom he fought as 'great mimics, of each other and their officers', noting that at company and battalion entertainments, 'we Westerners could count on seeing ourselves on stage, with sharp caricatures of mannerisms and idiosyncrasies.'⁸⁰⁹ Speaking of the entertainment arranged for the celebration of Hindu festival Dussehra, 4th Gurkha Rifles Officer John Masters similarly observed the 'horrifyingly accurate caricatures of English tribal customs' put on by the Gurkha soldiers in his regiment.⁸¹⁰ Although both men are recollecting their service in the Second World War, concert parties and similar evening entertainments were routinely organised by Indian Army soldiers between 1914 and 1918. Figure 87 for example shows a concert party put on by Indian Army soldiers amidst the Mesopotamia Campaign, featuring a similarly dressed man in a conical hat, and Indian soldiers with their faces whitened. It is therefore likely that, given the same scarcity of equipment for entertainment, similar forms of ribaldry were deployed amongst troops.⁸¹¹

There emerges then a sense of transformation around the soldier photographed at Figure 84. Just as the bhānd can 'turn into' anyone, of any gender, 'from any land, class or any sect', the soldier might be understood (by himself, the audience or the historian) as drawing on not only the multivalent modes of the vidusaka, vita and bhānd – characters who themselves resist fixity – but also on existing concert party conventions to impersonate senior officers. Independent of his actual performance, his dress alone is such that he might be put in dialogue with these conventions and subsequently understood as mocking military pretension and conventions, puncturing the patronising hierarchies of racialised military order by revealing their absurdity, whilst also remaining complicit in that absurdity through his status as a combatant. The result is an interpretive plurality, for the performer, his audience and the historian. All may world the performer differently, depending on their

at the IWM: *Belt & Cross Brace, Sam Browne Equipment: Officer's, British Army*, 1914, Imperial War Museum, EQU 2346 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30015473>>.

⁸⁰⁹ S. Gilmore and P.D. Davis, *A Connecticut Yankee in the 8th Gurkha Rifles: A Burma Memoir*, Association of the U. S. Army Book Series (Brassey's, 1995), p. 93, as discussed in Barkawi, *Soldiers of Empire* (2017), p. 183.

⁸¹⁰ J. Masters, *Bugles and a Tiger* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1956), p. 152, as discussed in Barkawi, *Soldiers of Empire* (2017), p. 183.

⁸¹¹ See for example, *Soldiers Concert Party 1914-1918*, British Pathé, 1878.45 <<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/soldiers-concert-party>> [accessed 3 February 2022].



Figure 87.

Unknown, 'Performers of an Indian Concert Party at the Royal Ordnance Corps Theatre, Baghdad', 1917, Imperial War Museum, HU 95840 <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205025311>>.

embodied knowledges of comic theatre and the time and space of the performance. Thus, rather than frame the soldier photographed as shuttling between characters from north Indian theatre and European clowning norms, historians can understand the soldier and his act as creating through his bodiliness and dress a space of performance that subverts rigid categories and binaries of colonial modernity. These would include conceptualisations of gender, race, caste and class at the core of European ontologies, even where the functions of the soldier as performer and the characters to whom he is nodding were not intentionally anti-colonial. Indeed, by virtue of having the potential to merge these comic forms, the soldier wields a potential to puncture colonial hierarchies, paradigms and pretensions, whilst also sustaining them. The image at Figure 84 thus resists any sort of interpretive fixity; it serves as an example of how bodiliness (as subject matter, in the form of the soldier, and as method, through the process of listening to the photograph's sonic frequencies and cultural resonances) can hold space for pluralities in history researching and writing.

'How strangely the East has come to the West': sacred spatialities at the Brighton Pavilion

On 16 July 1915, *The Indiaman* newspaper published an article titled 'The Indian Wounded,' the descriptive emphasis of which painted an image of balmy seaside bliss for the Indian Army soldiers who had arrived to be treated in Brighton. 'The golden sunlight,' the writer observes, 'was clasping the lovely gardens of the Pavilion by the sea, and all was well with the Indians.'⁸¹² This was not an unusual tone for the press coverage of Brighton's hospitals for the Indian Army, which tended to portray the Indian soldier's experience of Brighton generally as one of wide-eyed wonder at the architecture and gratitude for his (social and medical) treatment.⁸¹³ The article goes on to outline various devotional practices across the Pavilion site, noting that:

[o]n the upper balconies lay Sikh soldiers listening with rapt delight to their brethren chanting the verses from their Holy Book. In a tent beautiful with flowers a tall Sikh read the Granth over which he waved a rod of white roses. At some distance away and out of sight on a green sward by the Dome the soldiers of Islam were gathering for their evening prayer, their faces turned towards Mecca across the sea.⁸¹⁴

This reference to the specifics of activities undertaken at the Pavilion – especially religious activities – was common for the local press, which covered with particular fascination and much exoticism the funerary rites of Indian Army patients.⁸¹⁵ It is however a notable gap in existing scholarship on Indian soldiers in Brighton in the war, which tends to be structured around the fragments of letters sent by inpatient soldiers that survive in the Censorship of Indian Mail reports.⁸¹⁶ The result is an extensive literature that emphasises the men's

⁸¹² 'The Indian Wounded', *The Indiaman*, 16 July 1915, British Library, MSS Eur F143/96, p. 40.

⁸¹³ For example, 'Indian Hospitals', *London Evening Standard*, 27 August 1915, British Library, MSS Eur F143/96, which speaks of how the 'ornate drawing room of the Pavilion, with magnificent crystal candelabra overhead, and soothing nurses' must reassure the 'dusky, distraught warrior, waking from horrid dreams'. It goes on to describe how '[t]here is something Delhi-esque about the architecture,' which the writer posits 'maybe [...] appeals to the Indians.'

⁸¹⁴ 'The Indian Wounded', *The Indiaman*, 16 July 1915, British Library, MSS Eur F143/96, p. 40.

⁸¹⁵ See for example: 'Life in Hospital', *The Hereford Times*, 30 December 1914, British Library, MSS Eur F143/96; 'The Pavilion as a Hospital', *Brighton and Hove Society*, 11 January 1915, British Library, MSS Eur F143/96; 'An Indian Funeral: Strange Rites on Sussex Downs the Burning-Ghat', *Evening Mail*, 18 October 1915, British Newspaper Archive.

⁸¹⁶ For scholarship on Indian soldiers in Brighton during the War that use the letter extracts as a core primary source, see: Das, 'Indian Sepoy Experience in Europe' (2014); Douglas d'Enno, *Brighton in the Great War*, Your Towns & Cities in the Great War (Pen & Sword Books, 2016); Hyson and Lester, "'British India on Trial'" (2012); Omissi, 'Europe through Indian Eyes' (2007); Andrew Tait Jarboe, 'Healing the Empire: Indian Hospitals in Britain and France during the First World War', *Twentieth Century British History*, 26.3 (2015), 347–69 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/hwu066>>; Gajendra Singh, 'Mirrors of Violence: Interracial Sex, Colonial Anxieties and Disciplining the Body of the Indian Soldier during the First World War', in

reaction to the spectacular architecture, local women, the restriction on their movement, and anxieties about returning to the Front Line, yet offers little in the way of insight into how their days were spent.⁸¹⁷ In the context of worship this is a significant absence, both to the study of the (im)materialities of the body (given the pivotal role of bodiliness in devotional practice), and to the wider study of the men's experiences in the war (especially given the concern amongst Indian Army soldiers on the Front Line about meeting their spiritual obligations).⁸¹⁸ The Censor's reports across 1916 are littered with correspondence between Muslim sepoys and their senior comrades, family members and imams seeking clarification on spiritual matters, especially as regards fasting during Ramadan and daily prayer.⁸¹⁹ What follows then is an examination of what might be learned about the experiences of men in the Indian Army through the material cultures of spiritual practice at the Pavilion hospital site in Brighton.

To the extent that it touches on spiritual practices, much of the existing scholarship focuses on the provision of a gurdwāra for Sikh patients. This is likely in part due to the prominence the makeshift gurdwāra takes in several oft-cited written and visual sources. A small booklet produced by the Corporation of Brighton, titled 'A Short History in English, Gurmukhi and Urdu of the Royal Pavilion Brighton and a Description of it as a Hospital for Indian Soldiers', is one such example. Given to each Indian Army soldier on their discharge from hospital, the booklet notes that 'the Sikhs have improvised a temple' in the Pavilion grounds using 'a

Anxieties, Fear and Panic in Colonial Settings: Empires on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown, ed. by H. Fischer-Tiné (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 169–97 <<https://exeter.academia.edu/>> [accessed 10 October 2019].

⁸¹⁷ For example, Omissi speaks about the soldier's wonder at the Pavilion architecture and British hospitality, and their (restricted) engagement with local women (both Omissi, 'Europe through Indian Eyes' (2007)), as well as their anxieties about returning to the Front Line (David Omissi, 'The Indian Army in Europe', in *Colonial Soldiers in Europe, 1914-1945: 'Aliens in Uniform' in Wartime Societies*, ed. by Eric Storm and Ali Al Tuma (Routledge, 2015)). Gajendra Singh speaks of the soldiers' complaints about the restrictions on their movement and their relationship with local women (Singh, 'Mirrors of Violence' (2017)).

⁸¹⁸ On the former, see Chapter 2 of this thesis. On the latter, see for example correspondence between Dafadar Alim Khan, 18th Lancers, France, to Maulana Janab Syedali c/o 'The Watan', Lahore, c. September 1916, in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 2 (Aug 1916-Oct 1916)', 1916, British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/826/7 <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=ior!!mil!5!826!7_f001r> [accessed 15 May 2020].

⁸¹⁹ See correspondence between Mitha Khan, 18th Lancers, France, and Moulvi Mahomed Hyat Khan, Punjab, dated 2 July 1916, and correspondence between Lal Din, 1st Indian Cavalry Division, France, and Manlair Karim Bakhah, Sialkot, dated 14 July 1916; both in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 2 (Jul 1916-Aug 1916)', 1916 British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/826/6 <<http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=IOR/L/MIL/5/826/6>> [accessed 6 May 2020]; correspondence between Dafadar Alim Khan, 18th Lancers, France, to Maulana Janab Syedali, Lahore, undated, in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 2 (Aug 1916-Oct 1916)', 1916, British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/826/7 <<http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=IOR/L/MIL/5/826/7>> [accessed 15 May 2020].

large marquee tent.⁸²⁰ This tent-gurdwāra is pictured in the only photograph of any religious practice amongst the Indian Army patients in Brighton and a Sikh patient staying at the former workhouse on Elm Grove (renamed the Kitchener Indian Hospital) expresses in a letter his gratitude for its construction.⁸²¹ Aside from arrangements made for separate cooking facilities, however, less has been said about the facilities provided for Muslim patients; most sources note only that space was made on the Eastern Lawn of the Pavilion for prayer.⁸²² Yet traces of the materiality of worship by Muslim patients are imprinted across the archive, not least in the bodiliness of their practice. A reporter for the *Brighton Herald*, covering the royal visit to Brighton in August 1915, gave the following account, emphasising the sonic aspects of the men's practice and the physical movement and stillness with which the men were engaged:

'The party then crossed over to the eastern lawn, where they saw something that made one realize again how strangely the East has come to the West in these times of upheaval. This was the Mohammedan praying tent. The ground outside was spread with the slippers of the worshippers. The curtain draping the entrance of the tent was thrown back to permit their Majesties to look inside at the strange and impressive scene. In the dim light of the tent could be seen men in white sitting cross-legged on the praying cloths, around what at first sight would pass for an altar, beside which an attendant stood motionless like a bronze statue. The sound of chanting filled the air.'⁸²³

⁸²⁰ Corporation of Brighton, 'A Short History in English, Gurmukhi & Urdu of the Royal Pavilion, Brighton and a Description of It as a Hospital for Indian Soldiers' (King, Thorne and Stace Printers, Brighton, 1915), Royal Pavilion & Museums, Brighton & Hove, 28166 <<https://dams-brightonmuseums.org.uk/assetbank-pavilion/action/viewAsset?id=28166&index=158&total=616&view=viewSearchItem#>>, p. 13.

⁸²¹ *Sikh Soldiers in a Gurdwara (a Sikh Shrine) in the Grounds of the Royal Pavilion, 1915*, 1915, Royal Pavilion & Museums, Brighton & Hove, HA928172 <<https://dams-brightonmuseums.org.uk/assetbank-pavilion/action/viewAsset?id=783&index=95&total=166&view=viewSearchItem#>>; the photograph appears to have been taken from the same angle as a short film that was taken at the same time to commemorate a royal visit to the Indian soldier hospitals in Brighton, which also shows the entrance to the gurdwāra; see Unknown, *1915 Royal Visit to Royal Pavilion Hospital Brighton*, 1915, Surrey History Trust, SASE Title ID 8433 <<https://youtu.be/Yw2ltM5yGW4>> [accessed 2 July 2020]. Omissi, 'Europe through Indian Eyes' (2007), p. 379.

⁸²² For example, Joyce Collins, *Dr Brighton's Indian Patients, December 1914-January 1916* (Brighton: Brighton Books, 1997), p. 7, as cited in Karen Leenders, 'A Hazardous Experiment': The First World War and Changing British Civilian and Military Attitudes to the People of India' (unpublished PhD, University of Sussex, 2018) <<http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/id/eprint/78272/1/Leenders%2C%20Karen.pdf>> [accessed 10 October 2019], p. 64.

⁸²³ 'The Royal Visit to Brighton', *The Brighton Herald*, 28 August 1915, British Library, MSS Eur F143/96.

A nurse, working at one of the hospital sites when it first opened its doors in December 1914, also speaks to the bodiliness of preparing for worship but also gives a sense of the built and unbuilt spaces of worship. Exclaiming, 'oh! the messes they make morning and evening with their ablutions. An orderly always has to go round afterwards with a mop,' the nurse suggests that the ablution space was inside – either within the Pavilion or in a temporary hut, similar to those constructed for cooking purposes – on a surface that could be mopped, presumably disconnected from the outside area on the Eastern Lawn reserved for daily prayer.⁸²⁴ This decision to erect a space for prayer on the Eastern Lawn is especially curious given early discussions around the possibility of constructing a mosque in the grounds of the Kitchener Indian Hospital site. *The Islamic Review* was a periodical published by the Shah Jahan Mosque in Woking, and edited by the mosque's imam Maulvie Sadr-ud-Din, who notes in the April 1915 issue that he had been invited to Brighton to discuss this possibility.⁸²⁵ The Pavilion itself could have similarly served as a temporary mosque space. The same issue of *The Islamic Review* speaks highly of the Pavilion's 'Moorish (Muslim) style,' which for a visiting Muslim patient the editor suggests 'recalls [...] the plane of civilisation to which the Muslims had attained.'⁸²⁶ The Arabic inscriptions that feature on two of the Pavilion's 'innumerable columns' that face Ka'Ba in Mecca are described as 'impart[ing] a sanctity to the atmosphere of the place, and an inconceivable pleasure to the Muslims to whose lot has fallen the proud privilege of residing there.'⁸²⁷ This of course speaks to the agentive reality of inscription and words – the material and the immaterial – and the belief amongst senior members of the British Muslim community at the time in the ability of non-human (im)materialities to sanctify space; but it also adds to the question of why were daily prayers not then taken inside? Letters from the Front complain of the absence of a designated sacred space in which to worship; Jemadar Nur Mahomed wrote in August 1916 to his Maulvi in Peshawar that 'We had the Id [Eid] prayers in the trenches [...]

⁸²⁴ 'Life in Hospital', *The Hereford Times*, 30 December 1914, British Library, MSS Eur F143/96..

⁸²⁵ *The Islamic Review and Muslim India (April 1915)*, ed. by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din and Maulvie Sadr-ud-Din (The Mosque, Woking, Surrey, 1915) <https://www.aaiil.org/text/articles/islamicreview/1915/04apr/islamicreview_191504.pdf> [accessed 1 November 2020], p. 166.

⁸²⁶ *The Islamic Review and Muslim India (April 1915)*, ed. by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din and Maulvie Sadr-ud-Din (The Mosque, Woking, Surrey, 1915) <https://www.aaiil.org/text/articles/islamicreview/1915/04apr/islamicreview_191504.pdf> [accessed 1 November 2020], p. 166.

⁸²⁷ *The Islamic Review and Muslim India (April 1915)*, ed. by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din and Maulvie Sadr-ud-Din (The Mosque, Woking, Surrey, 1915) <https://www.aaiil.org/text/articles/islamicreview/1915/04apr/islamicreview_191504.pdf> [accessed 1 November 2020], p. 167.

About 30 of us said our prayers out in the open with nothing over our heads and no strength to do anything.'⁸²⁸ The choice to erect a temporary tent outside when the head of the Muslim faith in Britain was endorsing the orientalist Pavilion and its interior decoration therefore seems peculiar and deliberate.

One explanation for this is the overwhelming concern amongst the British authorities for the visibility of the Indian patients' wellbeing. Correspondence between the Commissioner for Sick and Wounded Indian Soldiers in France and England, Sir Walter Lawrence, and Secretary of State for War, Lord Herbert Kitchener, reveals their anxieties about the 'the mood and general condition of the Indian soldiers,' not least because of the political capital attached to visually-contented Indian Army patients.⁸²⁹ Indeed the Viceroy of India, Lord Hardinge – who had been a vocal supporter of using recruiting soldiers from India as a means of cementing support amongst Princely State rulers – wrote of the potential endowed in positive 'recollections of the returning soldiers' with regard to their hospitalisation 'to increase British "prestige" in India, and "also the attachment the lower classes have to the Sirkar [Government]."'⁸³⁰ With this in mind, the creation of a space on the Eastern Lawn for Muslim patients to observe their daily prayers seems calculated to render them visible to observers on the street, and more importantly fellow patients who would write (and some of whom eventually return) home. The materiality of the Muslim patients' bodily movement thus becomes complicated; already historically entangled with colonial registers of martiality, race, and masculinities, the Muslim body (and its visibility) in prayer operated as currency for British imperial objectives and propaganda. The practice of movement as worship – outside – became a signifier of difference but also, so far as the British authorities were concerned, a performance of Indian soldierly satisfaction and an illustration of the British empire's benevolence and generosity towards its imperial subjects.

⁸²⁸ Correspondence between Jemadar Nur Mahomed, 38th C.I. Horses, to Maulavi [spelling in original] Absan-ud-din Khan, Peshawar, dated 9 August 1916 in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 2 (Aug 1916 – Oct 1916)', 1916, British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/826/7 http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=ior!!!mil!5!826!7_f001r [accessed 15 May 2020].

⁸²⁹ Correspondence between Lawrence and Kitchener, dated 27 April 1915, EUR/MSS/F143/65, as cited in Samuel Hyson and Alan Lester, "'British India on Trial': Brighton Military Hospitals and the Politics of Empire in World War I", *Journal of Historical Geography*, 38.1 (2012), 18–34 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/J.JHG.2011.09.002>>, p. 24.

⁸³⁰ Correspondence between Hardinge and Lawrence, dated 14 April 1915, EUR/MSS/F143/73, as cited in Hyson and Lester, "'British India on Trial'" (2012), p. 24.

The materiality of soldiers' bodiliness might be complicated further, however, when placed within the wider spiritual frameworks that inform devotional practices in Islam.

Writing at the outbreak of war, *The Islamic Review* spoke specifically on the redundancy of the built environment, in response to concerns about how to observe one's religious obligations while on active service. 'A Muslim holds his church wherever he goes,' wrote the editor; 'aisles and buildings of particular design are not absolutely indispensable.'⁸³¹ Instead, it is the bodily act of worship – an intentional movement – that renders a space sacred. Julie Marsh, in a write-up of a site-specific examination into the 'performativity in Muslim prayer spaces,' echoes this, noting that '[a] mosque community is not a fixed object, but is continually in the process of being made by the everyday practice of Islam.'⁸³² A sense of space and place is thus imbued with a sacred value by virtue of the generative movement and bodiliness of practitioners; by using the makeshift prayer space on the Eastern Lawn, Muslim patients created a sacred space iteratively that was both site-specific and site-irrelevant. This bodiliness includes of course the intra-action between the materiality of collective worshipping bodies and the agentive objects used in devotional practice. Particularly instructive in this context is the work of Minoo Moallem, who has written on the Islamic prayer mat as a mediating device that 'territorializes prayer by creating a material boundary between the sacred and the profane.'⁸³³ She argues that 'prayer rugs incorporate spatiality into everyday modes of being in the world' and 'channel individual moments in time and space.'⁸³⁴ The *Brighton Herald's* description of patients 'sitting cross-legged on the praying cloths' speaks to the provision of prayer mats for patients.⁸³⁵ Placed into conversation with Marsh and Moallem's research and the prevailing contemporary views about religious observance from *The Islamic Review*, this account reinforces the suggestion that the sacred emerges at the point of engagement between objects like the prayer mat

⁸³¹ *The Islamic Review and Muslim India (December 1914)*, ed. by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din and Maulvie Sadr-ud-Din (The Mosque, Woking, Surrey, 1914) <https://www.aail.org/text/articles/islamicreview/1914/dec/islamicreview_191412.pdf> [accessed 1 November 2020].

⁸³² Julie Marsh, 'Assembly: Performing the Materiality of Muslim Prayer Spaces', *Scene*, 6.2, 133–51 <https://doi.org/10.1386/scene_00014_1>, p. 1.

⁸³³ Minoo Moallem, 'Praying through the Senses: The Prayer Rug/Carpet and the Converging Territories of the Material and the Spiritual', *Conversations: An Online Journal of the Center for the Study of Material and Visual Cultures of Religion*, 2014 <https://mavcor.yale.edu/sites/default/files/article_pdf/moallem_minoo_pdf.pdf>, p. 5.

⁸³⁴ Moallem, 'Praying through the Senses' (2014), p. 5.

⁸³⁵ 'The Royal Visit to Brighton', *The Brighton Herald*, 28 August 1915, British Library, MSS Eur F143/96.

and the (collective and singular) bodily, both in movement and stillness. The materialities of the bodiliness of Muslim patients at the Brighton Pavilion – when considered through bodily frameworks that account for the men's belief systems, as well as the well-trodden imperial perspective – can thus offer insights into the experiences of the men who stayed there. Heterobodiliness is one such framework: the patients' bodiliness was simultaneously a function of British imperial strategy, a function of religious observance and the mechanism through which sacred spatialities were created.

'Parading as gods'? Bodiliness as a function of devotional theatre at Halbmondlager

The concluding section to Chapter 3 continues this discussion on the role of bodily movement in creating sacred spatialities. It focuses on the materiality of the bodily – and indeed appended bodiliness – in the celebration of festivals by men in the Indian Army, specifically men imprisoned at Halbmondlager. This instance of festival celebration is therefore especially interesting, not only because of its location in a prisoner of war camp but also because visual evidence survives of the celebration activities (Figures 88 to 90). I had occasionally come across references in the Censor of Indian Mails reports to the men's efforts to mark their religious calendars with something approaching a festival celebration, but have not to date found any British visual sources with which to pair these accounts from the Censor, thus making the Halbmondlager images all the more valuable.⁸³⁶

Captioned 'From the Indian Spring Festival,' the images at Figure 88 to 90 depict around 60 prisoners, photographed together (Figure 89) and in smaller groups (Figures 88 and 90), clad in what appears to be occasion-specific dress. Literature scholar Santanu Das described the image at Figure 88 as a 'particularly remarkable photo' that 'shows the men [...] with painted faces, false beards, elaborate head-dresses and improvised weapons, parading as gods and ready to act out a scene from a mythological play,' including one prisoner 'cross

⁸³⁶ See correspondence between Ram Seran Das, Rouen, France, and his mother, India, dated August 1915, in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 1 (Aug 1915-Sep 1915)', 1916, British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/825/5 <<https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=IOR/L/MIL/5/825/5>> [accessed 2 December 2022]; correspondence between Radha Kishan, Brighton, to a friend, India, dated 20 October 1915, in 'Reports of the Censor of Indian Mails in France: Vol 1 (Oct 1915-Nov 1915)', 1915, British Library, IOR/L/MIL/5/825/7 <<http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=IOR/L/MIL/5/825/7>> [accessed 6 July 2020], as found in Myrvold, 'Hindu Soldiers in Europe During the First World War' (2020), pp. 182-183.

dressed as a goddess, complete with nose-ring.⁸³⁷ Yet the further I sought to understand the context of these images and the content of the 'mythological play', the more it seemed that one of the most interesting aspects of these images is how they blur the lines between worship, narrative and the concepts of drama and performing arts. Heike Liebau, for example, points to several examples of holy festival celebrated across different regional and religious groups imprisoned at Halbmondlager, noting that the Hindu festival of Dassehra '[o]ften [...] includes the performance of parts of the classical poem Ramayana.'⁸³⁸ As a result, Das's description of them as examples of cross-dressing and dramatic arts seems only a partial account of the images. As I became more convinced that these images depicted practices entangled with devotional worship, I became less sure exactly what might be the subject of the men's worship – or whether it is even possible, or appropriate, to try and ascertain this. For whilst the images may indeed be 'remarkable' for the fact that such celebrations were facilitated by the men during a period of imprisonment, various features of the celebrations were not unique to their iteration in the camp. Outdoor retellings of mythological stories as a central component to spiritual celebration were not uncommon across India at the turn of the twentieth century.⁸³⁹ Nor were fluid approaches to dressing across a binary understanding of gender that had 'consolidated and hardened in Britain' from the eighteenth-century.⁸⁴⁰ What follows then is not an attempt to identify the festival at hand, or pinpoint the narratives being enacted by the men. Instead I discuss aspects of the photographed images in conversation with features of spiritual celebration and devotional theatre from India during the period that forefront agencies of objects, immaterial forces and the bodily. In doing so, this section draws together threads from across the thesis – including the role of non-human agencies in history research and writing, and the relevance of bodiliness and opacity – to showcase how otherwise methodologies can introduce new interpretations of sources inflected by non-human agencies.

⁸³⁷ Das, *Writings, Images, and Songs* (2018), p. 171.

⁸³⁸ Heike Liebau, 'A Voice Recording, a Portrait Photo and Three Drawings: Tracing the Life of a Colonial Soldier', *ZMO Working Papers*, 20, Berlin: Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO), 20 (2018) <<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:101:1-2018082011442984482541>>, p. 5.

⁸³⁹ See for example *Scene from the Rama Lila*, 1900, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge, P.23446.RDG <<https://collections.maa.cam.ac.uk/photographs/316718>>.

⁸⁴⁰ J. Hinchy, *Governing Gender and Sexuality in Colonial India: The Hijra, c. 1850–1900* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 56.



Figure 88.

Otto Stiehl, 'Vom Frühlingsfest der Inder (From the Indian Spring Festival)', c. 1915-1917, Museum Europäischer Kulturen, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, VIII Eu 27628 a.



Figure 89.

Otto Stiehl, 'Vom Frühlingsfest der Inder (From the Indian Spring Festival)', c. 1915-1917, Museum Europäischer Kulturen, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, VIII Eu 27628 b.



Figure 90.

Otto Stiehl, 'Vom Frühlingsfest der Inder (From the Indian Spring Festival)', c. 1915-1917, Museum Europäischer Kulturen, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, VIII Eu 27628 c.

The first of these features to be discussed in relation to the Halbmondlager photographs is so-called cross-dressing, particularly the practice of queering bodily and dress practices during the festival of Holi. Although widely known for its colourful paint-throwing practices, the celebration of Holi has received less popular attention for the procession that typically precedes it, and associated regional games and re-enactments. Prem Chowdhry speaks to the historic and ongoing traditions of 'bawdy, sexual, highly erotic songs and dances performed by the low-caste men,' who during the festival of Holi 'masquerade as women in

an exaggerated manner [...] and make lewd demands of their high-caste male patrons to get money.⁸⁴¹ Images of rās lila performances from around 1900 similarly illustrate young male actors dressed as the goddess Radha and Krishna's accompanying gopis (Figure 91), and writers from the period make observations that support Chowdry's position. British ethnographer William Crooke for example wrote in 1914 of parade customs from across Western and Central India that featured gender fluid costume characterisation. One parade across Bombay included 'a line of carts full of men disguised as dancing-girls, monkeys, and the like'; another took place in Poona, where 'boys dressed as dancing-girls take the place of women at the Holi festival' to perform Lathmar Holi (discussed below).⁸⁴² There are a number of imprisoned soldiers in Figure 88 (second from the left), Figure 89 (on the first full row, standing second and fourth from the left) and Figure 90 (central figure) who appear to be wearing outfits similar to those worn by the actors in Figure 91, which might echo the observations made by Crooke and transcribed into humanities scholarship by authors like Chowdry. Dress across both sets of images includes long, full skirts, head-coverings, long swathes of fabric draped and wrapped around the individuals' torso, shoulders and arms. As noted above, this is not to argue that the men photographed must have been participating in a Halbmondlager Holi procession, or a rendition of the Radha and Krishna tale, but to illustrate how existing religious celebrations (with which the imprisoned men may have been familiar) already challenged gendered dress practices through facial make-up and dress. This is also supported by the accounts written by anthropologist and legal scholar Leonhard Adam, who Heike Liebau notes visited Halbmondlager and other German prisoner of war camps as part of his study into 'Nepalese rites.'⁸⁴³ Of his observations of imprisoned Gurkha soldiers, Adam wrote that '[i]n October 1918, I took part in the great Durga Festival (Dasahara) of the Gurkhas as their guest [...] Some of the soldiers were dancing, disguised as nauch-girls while the drum [sic] was resounding.'⁸⁴⁴ Such dress practices therefore have

⁸⁴¹ Prem Chowdhry, 'Popular Perceptions of Masculinity in Rural North Indian Oral Traditions', *Asian Ethnology*, 74.1 (2015), 5–36 <www.jstor.org/stable/43610650> [accessed 7 November 2019], p. 25.

⁸⁴² W. Crooke, 'The Holi: A Vernal Festival of the Hindus', *Folklore*, 25.1 (1914), 55–83, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1255349> [accessed 3 November 2021], pp. 73, 75–76.

⁸⁴³ Heike Liebau, 'A Voice Recording, a Portrait Photo and Three Drawings: Tracing the Life of a Colonial Soldier', *ZMO Working Papers*, 20, Berlin: Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO), 20 (2018) <<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:101:1-2018082011442984482541>>, p. 8.

⁸⁴⁴ Leonhard Adam, 'A Marriage-Ceremony of the Pun-Clan (Magar) at Rigah (Nepal)' in *Man: A monthly record of anthropological science*, XXXIV, 1934, pp. 17–21 (p. 17), cited in Heike Liebau, 'A Voice Recording, a Portrait Photo and

the potential to be worlded as more complicated than simply aspects of camp theatre, as Das suggests, and instead be understood as enunciations of devotional practice.

However, it is worth noting here that there is something uncomfortable from a methodological standpoint about trying to identify examples of cross-dressing from photographs in the colonial archive, not least because doing so inevitably demands that I apply assumptions about a gender binary and its expression through dress onto images that resist any sort of firm conclusion, at the risk of reaffirming colonialities of gender. It is critical then to understand instances of so-called cross-dressing as happening within a logic of gender that was not universally framed as a binary in the way it increasingly was in Europe at the time. The above examples of festival and celebratory practice are one such example, and the criminalisation of the hijra community through the 1871 Criminal Tribes Act similarly points to the efforts made by the governing colonial authorities to address the 'threat' to 'colonial social order' posed by peoples in India whose embodied gender expression challenged colonial logics of gender and sexuality.⁸⁴⁵ The 'porous and fluid boundaries of colonial categories' that shaped enforcement under this law have been extensively researched by Jessica Hinchy, who argues that whilst 'neither the colonial government nor middle-class Indians were interested in' efforts to 'assimilate' hijras into 'mainstream society' across the nineteenth century, localised police enforcement was varied and sometimes sympathetic.⁸⁴⁶ Indeed, the moral panic around gender and sex that emerged amongst elite Indians as 'a product of shifting class dynamics in north Indian society' sits in tension with the centuries of literature across South Asia that unsettle the notion of gender, describe a spectrum of gender expressions, and suggest this was met by the wider public with a similar spectrum of attitudes.⁸⁴⁷ It is important then to recognise, when using terms such as 'cross-dressing' and attempting to identify instances of cross-

Three Drawings: Tracing the Life of a Colonial Soldier', *ZMO Working Papers*, 20, Berlin: Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO), 20 (2018) <<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:101:1-2018082011442984482541>>, p. 8.

⁸⁴⁵ Hinchy, *The Hijra* (2019), pp. 8, 27 and 50.

⁸⁴⁶ Hinchy, *The Hijra* (2019), pp. 190, 201 and 268.

⁸⁴⁷ Hinchy, *The Hijra* (2019), p. 11. Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai have argued that same-sex relationships and love was often 'trivialised, viewed as inferior to love between men and women, or ignored,' but also 'romanticised and to some degree encouraged', while Puranic and Katha literature create much ambiguity around gender and attraction through tales of 'cross-dressing'; see Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai, *Same-Sex Love in India: Readings from Literature and History* (Palgrave Macmillan US, 2016), pp. xviii, and the section entitled 'Sex Changer, the Forest and the Undoing of Gender' (p. 17).

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Figure 91.

Unknown, 'Group Photograph with Two Young Boys Dressed as Radha and Krishna in the Middle, and Two Older Men as Gopis Standing on Each Side.', 1900, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge, P.51543.RDG <<https://collections.maa.cam.ac.uk/photographs/344815>>.

dress, to do so within the context of a broader understanding of the conceptualisations of gender across India at the turn of the twentieth century. This is not, of course, to assume that everyone outside of the elite socio-economic Indian circles believed that gender was a construct, or that gender might exist outside of a male/female binary. Rather, it introduces how different overlapping systems of South Asian 'philosophy' and 'religion' mapped gender and sexuality in profoundly non-binary terms, especially in the arena of religious practices and 'performance'. The result is that, at the time the Halbmondlager images were taken, the 'cross' in cross-dressing was not necessarily bilateral, but rather had the potential to be plural and variegated in a way that is otherwise to European gender norms. The dress practices photographed at Halbmondlager are therefore not necessarily costume. With this in mind, whilst the photographed dress practices bear similarities to celebrations across the spiritual calendar, they are perhaps better described as an entanglement of dress, devotional practice and gender expressions, rather than cross-dressing.

This introduces well the role of the sticks, especially those held by the men in various degrees of decoration across Figure 88 to 90; the second feature of the Halbmondlager photographs that can be discussed in relation to Indian festivals. Crooke's account of Holi 'observances' in Poona went on to note that the men dressing across genders and spiritual praxis perform:

a baton dance [...] in which twenty or thirty young men move in a circle to the sound of a drum and pipe, each armed with a bludgeon, which they clash alternately against the sticks of the dancers before and behind them.⁸⁴⁸

The references to 'bludgeons' and 'sticks', in combination with the same seen in the Halbmondlager photos and the ongoing thread of challenging (from the perspectives of European administrators) the relationship of gender to dress practices, are reminiscent of the regional observance of Lathmar Holi. Borne out of Hindu legend, according to which Lord Krishna teased the goddess Radha and her (women) friends on Holi to such an extent that they drove him away with lathis (sticks), Lathmar Holi has become part of the annual Holi celebratory landscape, and sees women (or men dressed 'as' women) chase away men from their own or neighbouring villages with lathis.⁸⁴⁹ These are not just 'improvised weapons', as Das claims, but an integral tool to a specific aspect of Holi celebration. Crooke actually seems to touch on this aspect of the Holi festival, although he characterises it as a 'sexual conflict', recounting the scene in the following terms:

The men arm themselves with branches of trees and form a ring, while the women with stout lathis or staves, and with saris [...] drawn over their faces, fiercely assault the ring and break it, soundly belabouring the men [...] Finally they return to the village in pairs, the man chanting a song, and the woman, when he has finished, driving him on a few paces.⁸⁵⁰

⁸⁴⁸ Crooke, 'The Holi' (1914), pp. 75-76.

⁸⁴⁹ David Mason discusses these practices in the context of its theatrical recreation on stage during Holi rās lila performances, see D.V. Mason, *Theatre and Religion on Krishna's Stage: Performing in Vrindavan*, Palgrave Studies in Theatre and Performance History (Palgrave Macmillan US, 2009), p. 12.

⁸⁵⁰ Crooke, 'The Holi' (1914), p. 70.

The presence of lathis compounds the idea introduced across earlier chapters of an intra-action between the human and the non-human, and raises the question of how objects like lathis (as with jori, or miniature Qur'ans, or mala beads) are used in celebrations, appending the bodily in material form and indeed affecting the surrounding unbuilt space. In so doing, I suggest here, the sticks and other material objects are part of a wider practice that uses (appended) bodily movement to create a sacred spatiality in the unbuilt environment. From the mid-nineteenth century, the production and performance of *râs lila* (short plays, typically comprising various forms of sound-making, including prose, dialogue and song) became popular across the Holi celebratory period and the weeks that follow it. Descriptions of *râs lila* from the 1860s, for example, emphasise the use of geographic elevations as 'ready-made stage[s]' on which to erect 'rude attempts at scenery' for players who act and sing, 'accompanied by an orchestra of tom toms [...] till late at night, or early in the morning, and for weeks and months afterwards.'⁸⁵¹

There is a close proximity between Hindu theatre and devotional practices, such that these plays were not just forms of entertainment, but agentive devotional devices that aimed to make the 'unmanifest manifest.'⁸⁵² Like *kushti*, bodiliness and bodily movement was the material function of these devotional practices. In the context of *râs lila*, actors are considered to be the embodiment of divinity; the actor is 'a type of divine incarnation' and along with his peers on stage collectively 'incarnate the divine world in which Krishna is supposed to exist.'⁸⁵³ The act(s) of becoming a character in the performance – donning performance dress, taking up associated props, adorning oneself with make-up or fake bodily features like wigs and beards and then enacting a narrative through one's bodiliness – are more than entertainment. For *râs lila* actors, they are both the invocation and evidence of God.⁸⁵⁴ As Mason notes elsewhere, '[t]he presence of God' in *râs lila*

⁸⁵¹ John Robson, *Selection of Khyāls or Marwari Plays* (Beawar: Beavar Mission Press, 1866), pp. vi-vii, as cited in Kathryn Hansen, 'The Birth of Hindi Drama in Banaras, 1868–1885', in *Culture and Power in Banaras: Community, Performance, and Environment, 1800-1980*, ed. by Sandria B. Freitag, Asia Studies. Cultural Studies (University of California Press, 1992), p. 69.

⁸⁵² Mason, *Theatre and Religion on Krishna's Stage* (2009), p. 3.

⁸⁵³ D.V. Mason, *The Performative Ground of Religion and Theatre* (Routledge, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315202709>, p. 111.

⁸⁵⁴ Mason explains that the 'strongly asserted physical attributes and gestures' required of performers were often achieved using 'fright wigs and Santa beards.' This observation is interesting given the dramatic beards, apparently fake, worn by several men in Figures 88 and 89. See Mason, *Theatre and Religion on Krishna's Stage* (2009), p. 11.

performances is considered absolute; '[h]is appearance there does not happen by way of trance of mystical projection, but simply *is* in a way that devotees regard as literal.'⁸⁵⁵ The lathi are thus props to accompany the storytelling, but may also possess a generative agency so that the holder from prisoner of war-actor is the vehicle for divine presence. This also lends new ways to understand the fake facial hair seen on two of the crouching men in Figure 88 (both of whom also appear in Figure 89), the masks, and the crown-like head pieces worn by each of the individuals in Figure 90. Crooke, for instance, described men in Bombay dressed as monkeys. The exaggerated and stylised features of the masks worn by the men in the front row of Figure 89 chime with this; the teeth and curled edges to the wide mouth on the mask to the far right are reminiscent of paintings, models and masks created around the same time of God Hanuman in his monkey form.⁸⁵⁶ Using a heterobodily model allows otherwise understandings of objects like these masks; rather than props in a 'mythological play', they become an agentive part in spiritual praxis, helping transform the wearer into a heterobodily site of soldier and divine presence.

This conclusion however makes the composition of Figures 88 to 90 all the more curious; the shoulder-to-shoulder, uniformly positioned arrangement of the imprisoned men across each image feels deeply constructed, when considered against the context outlined above of movement-heavy devotional 'performance' practices. Once again, there are resonances of a Camp't's idea of stasis, operating at what she might term 'different orders of tension' to the portraits of Black men and women in *Listening to Images*.⁸⁵⁷ For an occasion that was clearly marked by movement (in the acts of dressing themselves, and the 'performance' itself), the poses struck by the grouped men feel especially like an interruption to the event. I feel this particularly strongly when considering the pose of the man in Figures 88 and 89,

⁸⁵⁵ Mason, *Theatre and Religion on Krishna's Stage* (2009), p. 2 (emphasis in original).

⁸⁵⁶ See for example the wide mouth on the image of Hanuman in *Composite Five-Headed Vaiṣṇava Deity. The Five Faces Represent (from Left to Right): Varāha, Garuḍa, Hanumān, Narahsiṃha and Kalki.*, 1826, British Museum, 1962,1231,0.12.2 <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1962-1231-0-12-2>; *Figure (Hanuman). Made of Wood.*, 1800, British Museum, 1880.1025 <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1880-1025>. See the wide mouth and teeth in *Hanumān Standing in Pratyaliḍha.*, 1850, British Museum, 1993,0806,0.18 <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1993-0806-0-18>; *Monkey Mask (Hanuman)*, 1900, Truman Warner Anthropological Collection, Western Connecticut State University, ms048_058 <https://archives.library.wcsu.edu/omeka/items/show/65?advanced%5B0%5D%5Belement_id%5D=50&advanced%5B0%5D%5Btype%5D=is+exactly&advanced%5B0%5D%5Bterms%5D=Monkey+Mask+%28Hanuman%29>.

⁸⁵⁷ Camp't, *Listening to Images* (2017), p. 63.

who crouches in the foreground in each, holding up to the camera an unidentifiable piece of paper on which another image seems to be printed. Aside from the men's gaze, this act of showing the object is the only real engagement with the camera; it is the only attempt to give the camera a clearer look at what is being used, worn or held. It is as if the event has been paused and this man in particular has broken some fourth wall. This does not feel like an 'act of refusal', as it is for Camp's images – although there is perhaps something about the Halbmondlager photos that speak to the articulation of devotional practices as an effort towards 'purposely being, staying, and maintaining themselves right here, in this place.'⁸⁵⁸ Rather, it feels like an enunciation of fugitivity, and of opacity. The men have been photographed – with or without their consent – but the nature of what is being photographed is not entirely revealed to the photographer or to historians looking back on it. This is evident in the vague captions to the photographs themselves ('From the Indian Spring Festival') which give no cultural specificity, and indeed in the scholarship that has also examined these images.⁸⁵⁹ By using an analytical model that allows for heterobodiliness, which is designed to account both for practices that ebb and flow across categories of performance and for the non-human dimensions of practices involving movement, the men in the Halbmondlager photos might be encountered by the historian as cultivating a sacred spatiality. However, they might also be encountered as (to borrow Camp's terminology) inaudible: refusing not necessarily the authority of the Halbmondlager administrators or coloniality generally, but refusing unrestricted access to what is being photographed.⁸⁶⁰ This conclusion is the result of blending bodiliness as a subject-matter focus (the importance of bodiliness to devotional practice, like Lathmar Holi and rās lila) and method (listening to images). It reveals how otherwise methodologies like bodiliness become part of the apparatus of opacity: perhaps Figures 88 to 90 are a part of Holi, perhaps not, but what is of interest here is the capacity in Hindu worldings for space to be made for the presence of God through the intra-action of human bodiliness and object materialities.⁸⁶¹

⁸⁵⁸ Camp, *Listening to Images* (2017), p. 65.

⁸⁵⁹ See the conclusion that the men are performing a 'mythological play': Das, *Writings, Images, and Songs* (2018), p. 171.

⁸⁶⁰ Camp, *Listening to Images* (2017), p.

⁸⁶¹ Mason, *The Performative Ground of Religion and Theatre* (2018), p. 111.

CONCLUSION

Chapter 3 has investigated how historians might research and write histories by examining the materialities of movement. Through an examination of kushti, comic entertainment, prayer and devotional 'theatre' across different spheres of the Indian Army during the First World War, the chapter demonstrated how bodiliness as a subject matter for historical research, but also as methodology, can yield new interpretations of primary sources that have received much critical, scholarly attention.

The chapter opened with a detailed study of three material aspects to the practice of kushti. Having used the scholarship on kushti to position the primary sources within the specific spiritual context and political moment of early-twentieth century kushti, I drew on the model of heterobodiliness developed across this thesis to suggest how the langot worn by Indian Army soldiers during training or on active service might have been worlded. This included acting as a device for enacting pluralities of masculinity, and related, synchronous acts of resistance against the colonial administrative state and/or the ontological position upon which it rested. I developed this through a discussion on the (un)built environment across two spaces and moments: the nature of the pits on the Home and Western Fronts, on which the practices took place, and the context of jori swinging in the Halbmondlager prisoner of war camp. Both of these sections discussed how the relationship between the bodily and the (un)built space may have been generative and site-time-space-specific. The result was an analysis that shifts away from an assignment of both anthropocentric and materialist agency, creating space for an agency that is fluid, context-dependant, and unpredictable – possibly ungraspable by the historian. Indeed, the discussion of jori swinging at Halbmondlager introduced a sustained exercise in listening to the affective registers of images, deploying the otherwise methodology proposed by Tina Campt. I suggested how doing so unsettled canonical postcolonial scholarship, like Homi Bhabha's models of hybridity and ambivalence, and illustrated how otherwise methodologies that blend bodiliness as subject-matter and as method can produce new interpretations of the sources, and also new methods of encountering the archive and the men represented within it. I thus proposed that the images reflected moments of familiarity and camaraderie, rather than politically-charged enunciations of anti-colonial masculinities, and that

attending to the image's haptic registers compels historians to recognise how we – along with the photographed subjects – collectively refuse the visual terms of photography.

Chapter 3 then turned to a selection of shorter case studies. The first – the comic – served as the focal point for a discussion around how historians might interrogate the materialities of movement where the primary source is a still image. Using performance studies scholarship that interrogates the roles of still imagery, this section interrogated how analytical models that frame photographs as performing ongoing cultural resonances might be helpful in the context of an Indian Army soldier apparently preparing to entertain a crowd, or having recently concluded his act. The section identified the possible influences forms of comedy and public entertainment prevalent both across India and military concert parties during the period might have had on the individual and his audience. The aim was not to identify conclusively what cultural citations are at play in the image, but rather to firstly how design historians might use such models allow historians to imagine the enunciation of cultural citations, and to indicate how these may have been differently worlded by different men.

The chapter then moved on to discuss the role of bodily movement through prayer in creating sacred spaces for Muslim soldiers at the Brighton Pavilion. Where Chapter 1 focused on physical materialities (miniature Qur'ans, mala beads, hair and pagris) and associated non-human agencies, and Chapter 2 on the bodiliness of sound as a function of generating affective ecologies, here I proposed how of the men's bodiliness performed plural functions. Drawing on accounts of the material culture at the Pavilion site, and primary sources from the period that speak of the generative nature of bodiliness in conducting one's prayers, this section argued that bodily materialities had the potential to create something that is immaterial – a sacred spatiality – that emerges through the fact of movement, rather than physically in-built form. This section also considered how the orientation of the Pavilion and the use of the East-facing lawns might have served a convenient propaganda function for the British, complicating the role and effect of movement within the grounds. I proposed heterobodiliness as a helpful analytical framework here, arguing that it allowed historians to position the men's bodiliness as

simultaneously a function of British imperial strategy, a function of religious observance and the mechanism through which sacred spatialities were created.

The final case study interrogated three images of imprisoned men at Halbmondlager in makeshift outfits and bodily adornments. Rather than trying to identify which festival or religious occasion was being captured, this section placed the images into dialogue with scholarship and primary sources recounting features of religious celebrations across India from the period. In doing so, the section held human bodiliness as having the potential to conjure and intra-act with the divine, but it also illustrated further ways to incorporate bodiliness as a methodology into research topics that concern the non-human. In attending to the frequencies of the images, I argued that methodologies like Camp's allow the historian to preserve the opacity of certain sources that resist audibility, and remain fugitive. Like other sections in this chapter, and indeed across the whole thesis, the discussion of the Halbmondlager 'Spring Festival' photographs pointed to further ways in which the immaterialities of bodiliness and divine agencies, and bodiliness as an intentional mode of historical enquiry, can offer new insights in the researching and writing of design histories.

CONCLUSION

This thesis opened with an overview of the Standing with Giants installation at Hampton Court Palace in November 2021, and I return to it here as I outline my key findings and original contributions to knowledge. I have always been intrigued by the installation's name – Standing with Giants – and the implications for the visitors' experience. There is an emphasis on corporeal bodiliness (standing), and a heroizing of the soldier that similarly draws on both corporeal and metaphorical scale (giants). I have often wondered, since starting this doctorate project in September 2019, what it means to be heroized in this way and whether it is helpful or appropriate to immortalise the men who fought in the Indian Army in these terms. As detailed across the thesis, and summarised below, one of the key findings that emerged from my research was the importance of ordinariness, of ubiquity, even in relation to significant or sacred practices, spaces and objects. From the research question, 'How can the study of material culture add to the histories of the men that served in the Indian Army during the First World War?', this thesis has explored potential methodological frameworks for researching and writing histories that offer plural, otherwise interpretations of Indian Army soldiers' experiences during the First World War. What follows is an overview of the key findings and original contributions to knowledge made by this thesis, and thoughts on possible further avenues of research.

KEY FINDINGS AND ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

Methodologies of opacity and the insurgency of researching otherwise

Histories of the Indian Army during the First World War have, to date, not been researched and written through a sustained study of material culture, and the development of such a study is therefore one of the primary original contributions made by this thesis. But how these studies are researched and written has been equally important. The introduction to this thesis gave an overview of what I have termed a methodology of opacity. I explained that the term captures my objective to place postcolonial and decolonial scholarships into dialogue, to develop an original working model for otherwise forms of history research and writing. This model introduces plural interpretations of the historical record and

intentionally holds space for what is unknowable – or at least that which cannot be conclusively determined – to the historian. This has been my response to the questions posed by postcolonial and decolonial scholars of whether it is possible to reach towards the experiences of the men in the Indian Army; it is not necessarily an exercise of reading autonomy and assertions of agency into the men's practices. Instead, it marks a move towards researching and writing otherwise as a form of insurgency. This has been one of my key original contributions to knowledge, articulated through my original framework of bodiliness as a subject matter of historical enquiry and as a methodology in itself, and the use of bodiliness to explore new modes of relationality with the historical subject. This is where the 'otherwiseness' of my work is articulated: in using bodiliness in these different ways to connect with the men who form the focus of my research. This is discussed further in the following section, but one of the results is that this thesis might be positioned as something close to an activist history. As discussed in the introduction, the conclusions drawn through these otherwise approaches to material culture have allowed me to research and write nearby the lived experiences of Indian Army soldiers; in all their plurality and resistance, these conclusions are a deliberate effort to embrace history as emotional and opaque.⁸⁶²

Bodiliness: bodily materialities as subject-matter and bodiliness as method

As regards the materialities of bodiliness as a research category, I identified across this thesis three different registers of bodiliness that can be found in archival collections. These were bodiliness as a personal and interpersonal metric (Chapter 1), the bodiliness of sound(ing) (Chapter 2), and the bodiliness of movement (Chapter 3). The findings from each of these chapters is summarised below, along with an explanation of the wider significances of these findings, and how they make original contributions to the existing scholarship on the Indian Army during this period. I have also chosen to interweave in this discussion the original contributions made by, and the key findings reached through, bodiliness as an otherwise *method*. Taking each of the materialities of bodiliness and bodiliness as method in turn would obscure how 'subject matter' and 'method' are entangled, especially within

⁸⁶² On writing 'nearby', see Chen, "'Speaking Nearby'" (1992).

this thesis. I have therefore endeavoured to provide below a reflection on how these two dimensions of bodiliness interact across the thesis.

Chapter 1 argued that soldiers' bodiliness shifted between individual and collective, but also that these bodilinesses ought to be understood in relation to the human and non-human agencies with which they intra-acted. In doing so, Chapter 1 brought military design histories into dialogue with concepts from new materialism, Chicana feminisms and Islamic studies that research from the position that agency exists in things beyond the human, and that allow for complex, plural subjectivities. In doing so, this thesis adds to the existing canon of European and American scholarship on the non-human. It is not an exercise in rejecting or critiquing the work of these scholars, but rather offers a new angle through which to explore material culture that takes forward similar calls by scholars like Bruno Latour and Tim Ingold to 'slip into, [and] envelope ourselves within' a 'metamorphic zone', in which human and non-human agencies 'correspond' with one another.⁸⁶³ For this thesis, this new angle is methodologies of opacity, including bodiliness and relationality.

The chapter demonstrated how design histories can understand bodiliness as a shifting thing, and can discuss the impact of intangible as well as tangible material cultures on the bodiliness of historical subjects. For example, Chapter 1 opened with the case studies of miniature Qur'anic texts and mala beads. It proposed that these objects could be understood as amuletalismanic devices that become agentic when activated by bodily practices, conducted by the soldier, to utilise the power of divine forces. It also argued that some of these bodily practices that engage the amuletalismanic Qur'ans and beads were necessary for imbuing the soldiers' bodies with auspicious and protective blessings from the same divine forces. I concluded that the result was an entanglement of bodiliness, immaterial divine forces and agentic objecthood that remains under-researched in histories of the Indian Army in the First World War, thus showing the contribution that can be made to histories of the Indian Army soldiers through otherwise approaches. The chapter went on to illustrate that this entanglement formed part of a wider cross-cultural

⁸⁶³ Bruno Latour, *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, trans. by Catherine Porter (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2017), pp. 58 and 139; Tim Ingold, *Correspondences* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2020) <<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uai/detail.action?docID=6356735>>, p. 7.

landscape of amuletalismanic practices, which challenged the prevailing, Orientalist narrative in contemporary primary sources and indeed recent histories of the Indian Army that such practices and objects were exclusively religious, and the preserve of a 'superstitious' Global South. This discussion positioned the chapter as an intervention in scholarship that both infantilises spiritual praxis in the Global South and denies it the coeval time of western modernity/coloniality. The chapter used bodiliness to challenge the existing scholarship's tendency to locate objects used in practices that involve a spiritual figure or higher power within a binary of 'religious or not'. This can be seen with the discussion of possible Mughal influence on the miniature Qur'ans: Mughal imperial court and military material cultures, whilst also embedded in Mughal-era Islamic belief systems, were closely entangled with forms of bodily adornment and processes of miniaturising bodily forms through visual and material arts. By examining how bodiliness was articulated across plural cultural practices, the chapter opened up a discussion on how the design of miniature Qur'ans may have been informed by broader Mughal trends in craft and design, rather than exclusively because of a common faith. This contributed further to showing how enquiries into bodiliness can complicate existing interpretations of designed objects, and indeed the interaction between different material cultures.

Chapter 1 went on to consider Indian Army soldiers' hair care and pagri-wearing practices, and argued that an important part of understanding these practices is aspects of interpersonal care and ordinariness. This was especially significant as an original contribution to knowledge, as it nuanced histories of the Indian Army built on British primary sources that frame Indian Army men's hair and pagris as exclusively ethno-religious matters. Part of this is the tendency amongst histories of the Indian Army to give the most attention to Sikh soldiers, and even imply that the Indian Army was predominantly Sikh (a tendency no doubt itself informed by the legacies of martial racism). By placing staged official war photography into dialogue with oral histories of Indian Army veterans, and interrogating archived examples and photographic evidence of pre-wrapped and stitched pagris, I concluded that this narrative of hyper-significance around Indian hair and head-wrapping was cultivated in part by the British administration's approach to bodiliness. Furthermore, this section of Chapter 1 showed how an examination of primary sources through a bodily lens made additional interpretations possible. The chapter did not aim to

disprove that hair and pagri management and styling could be formative components for constructing and visually signifying identities. Rather, it argued that they could in certain spaces and at certain times act as mediators of interpersonal and interbodily care, playfulness or could even lack any meaning altogether. Just as the chapter problematised scholarship that frames miniature Qur'ans and mala beads as exclusively religious items, Chapter 1 thus concluded by nuancing how hair, hair-management and hair-dressing can be the bodily site of a heterobodiliness that need not be a negotiation between conflicting identities (such as loyal to the British Crown versus radical nationalist, or Sikh versus non-believer). Instead, hair can be the site of a heterobodiliness that captures the fluid dynamics of interpersonal kindness and friendship or collegueship, which blur the boundaries between bodiliness rooted in individualism and strict borders drawn around one person's physical body and another's. By interrogating the materiality of bodiliness through hair, I concluded that these primary sources also capture the ubiquity of specific hair and pagri-wearing practices, thus offering new insights into the lived experiences of Indian Army soldiers. In plurality with hair as the site of identity formation and conflict, the materialities of hair can also be incredibly everyday and ordinary, without a necessarily spiritual meaning.

Chapter 2 examined the materialities of bodiliness through sound(ing), focusing particularly on the original contributions that reimagine bodiliness as changeable over time. Drawing from scholarships across ethnomusicology, digital sound studies, sonic anthropology and translation studies, Chapter 2 explored the sonic dimensions of life within the Indian Army, including the affective dimensions not only of language, but also of sound-creation and practices of listening. In this chapter I also explored bodiliness as method, focusing on the radical potential of autobiography as a mode of encountering the archive. Positioning itself nearby a theoretical lineage that includes Black feminist studies and areas of design history that have integrated the same, Chapter 2 gave particular attention to the historian's bodiliness in these sound(ing) practices, and proposed that this can offer a new mode of engaging with the subjects of historical research. Combining critical historiography and history writing with an intensely personal practice that articulated personal experience as a neurodivergent historian and time-space synesthete, I considered the relationship between the bodilinesses of people across time involved in the creation of an archival source, and the effects of this relationship on researching and writing histories. I also highlighted here two

instances where bodiliness as subject matter and as method overlapped. This emerged out of the soldiers' discussion of letters as enmeshed with their own bodilinesses such that the letters were treated as proxy physical meetings. Their discussions raised questions about the bodiliness of memory and relationships, and illustrated how bodiliness as subject matter interrupted the modern/colonial temporal frame that it pitched as linear and universal. An interrogation of the bodiliness of these letters prompted me instead to consider an (auto)biographical sense of time. This re-emerged in my exploration of bodiliness as method in Chapter 2; by using synaesthetic experiences of time in historical research, it became clear that bodiliness as method also had the potential to disrupt the modern/colonial temporality. Encountering the archive in this way produced an analysis that demonstrated how practices of sound-making, hearing and experiencing sound can differ not only between people, but also between moments for the same person. This added to the chapter's argument that the invocation of spiritual concepts by soldiers being recorded at Halbmondlager may have created an affective environment for the soldiers that was not fixed, but could constantly evolve. The interbodily and spatial process of sound-making was both specific to the time and place of the recording, and informed in part by how the bodilinesses of the people involved shifted over their own time. This offered a further working example of how bodiliness – as a research category of historical enquiry and as research method – can yield new insights into the lived experiences of the men in the Indian Army, and also to design history praxis.

Chapter 2 went on to argue that sources can inhabit plural, shifting materialities that include both those from the moment of source creation to the moment of the historian's encounter, and asked how historians might deal with sonic sources where the materiality is plural and shifting. It focused on soldiers' letters and the compounding processes of oral recitation, transcription, translation, and interpretation through which each letter went – or was intended to go. This section argued that these compounding, plural processes gave way to an enmeshment of plural bodilinesses, from across historical moments, including the bodilinesses of the original speakers, transcribers, Censors, correspondents, myself and the translators who assisted me with the primary sources. This contribution to the scholarship on the Indian Army during this period therefore complicates the idea of primary sources as fixed, and instead demonstrates how they might be understood as always in a process of

becoming – a process the historian then necessarily partakes in and contributes to. By having this discussion, Chapter 2 explained the two ways in which an introduction of subjectivity and positionality through bodily models can be a positive 'critical juncture' for historians. The first is through the implicit resistance it poses to the colonialities of knowledge that position history research and writing – especially the guidance for training new historians – as something approaching an empirical or objective process. The second, is through how the intentional incorporation of subjectivity, embodied knowledge and feeling into one's research and writing practices can open up new modes of reaching out and connecting with the people about whom histories are written.

Chapter 2 concluded by examining the bodily materiality of metaphor, drawing on research into the role of material culture and embodied experience in creating metaphorical language to argue that the soldiers' uses of metaphor were themselves enunciations of bodiliness. I concluded that this profoundly local and bodily dimension of metaphorical language and pain-processing may mean that Indian and British soldiers processed the same experiences in different bodily ways, such that the language in Indian Army letters dismissed as poetics may in fact be rooted in a very material form of bodiliness. Drawing on research into the destabilising consequences of trauma on bodiliness, I went on to argue that soldiers might be understood as using metaphor to describe a complete metaphysical transformation of their subjectivity as a result of their wartime experiences. This built on my earlier argument that bodiliness is subject to change over time, and argued that trauma might be one such force that produces a shift in one's bodiliness, and thus in how one experiences and 'worlds' sound(ing). This argument also extended the discussion in Chapter 1, adding to the divine the possibility that trauma might also be conceived of as a non-human agency that has the potential to affect the bodiliness of soldiers. I concluded that historians must therefore take account of this capacity for bodiliness to change when they speak of bodily engagement with material culture.

Chapter 3 examined the bodily materialities of practices involving movement shared by soldiers from the Indian Army during the war. Building on the scholarships of Tina Campt and Karina Eileraas the chapter examined a range of case studies and, drawing specifically on photographs, I argued that bodiliness as an analytical framework can offer new insights

into images that appear to render movement *still*. Both scholars suggest photography occupies a potentially fluid and changing space, and where Campt argues that photographs can be examined through their 'sonic frequencies', my approach examined photographs through bodiliness and heterobodiliness.⁸⁶⁴ Through the first case study – kushti – I discussed how engaging with ideas of bodiliness compels historians to reappraise a range of primary sources that have been consistently captioned by public archives as instances of 'wrestling' or 'play'. By interrogating the forms of movement conducted by the soldiers in these sources, I proposed that what was being shown were in fact 'exercises' derived from the practice of kushti, and showed how this new understanding of the photographed practice might change historians' understanding of both the images and the lived experiences of the men featured in them.

Turning first to dress, I considered the langot-style garment worn by soldiers in those training practices that resembled kushti. Situating the garment within the wider spiritual and political context of kushti, I explored how the langot might have been worlded amongst soldiers in the Indian Army. This included the possibility that the langot might have acted for some as a device for enacting pluralities of masculinity, and related, synchronous acts of resistance against the British and more broadly against European colonialities of being. Using heterobodiliness, I argued that these interpretive pluralities might be understood by historians as existing even within the same soldier, whose embodied experience of the practice and dress(ing) was an enmeshed one articulated across different registers. By using a bodily lens, the act of dressing oneself developed an entirely new and more complex meaning. Rather than simply an exercise in wearing standardised military uniform, the garments became sites through which fluid forms of regional masculinities and anti-colonial politics could be articulated.

These ideas were explored in a second context, by examining the nature of the pits on which the practices took place. I considered the importance of the materiality of the pit in a typical kushti akhara, and the visible differences as compared to the arenas on which soldiers were photographed. In doing so, I proposed that soldiers may not have sought to

⁸⁶⁴ Eileraas, 'Reframing the Colonial Gaze' (2003); Campt, *Listening to Images* (2017).

reconcile these differences and indeed may not have considered the space or the practice as existing within the same worlding as conventional kushti. I argued instead for the relationship between the bodily and the (un)built pit space to be understood as generative, site-time-space-specific. Bodiliness thus became both a mechanism through which the men themselves generated new meaning around the displaced, kushti-adjacent spaces, and also the analytic through which historians might also reach toward some degree of understanding these new meanings.

The last aspect of kushti examined in Chapter 3 was jori and the practice of jori swinging. I argued that the photographs presented in this section – and how the historian might encounter and engage with them – had an unsettling potential. I attended to the extensive scholarship on the complexities of analysing colonial photography, and argued that using bodiliness as an analytical method can add to and complicate existing postcolonial scholarship that would position the primary sources as examples of cultural hybridity and ambivalence (per Homi Bhabha). Drawing on the works of Christopher Pinney, Karina Eileraas and Tina Campt, I proposed that listening to the photographs of the imprisoned men at the Halbmondlager prisoner of war camp might encourage historians to feel the registers of play and silliness embedded within them. This was not, I concluded, necessarily an articulation of agency, such as a sign that the men were intentionally resisting or destabilising the colonial order. Given the regional, nationalist politics and ideas of non-human agency taken to be embedded in both jori as artefact and jori swinging as bodily practice, it is of course possible that the images speak to both anti-colonial attitudes and ontological positions that defy human-centredness. However, I suggested that a different order of refusal emerges when we consider the implications of using bodiliness as method: one whereby the men and the historian collectively refuse the visual terms of photography. Instead, by listening to and feeling them in a bodily sense, historians might access these registers of silliness, ubiquity and play that unsettle canonical postcolonial theoretical frameworks.

Chapter 3 then turned to three shorter case studies. The first – the comic – argued that analytical approaches emerging out of performance studies scholarship are helpful for historians to acknowledge and imagine the enunciation of cultural citations at play in still

photography, whilst recognising that these cultural resonances are subject to different worldings and change over time. Turning next to practices of prayer at the Brighton Pavilion in the early years of the war, Chapter 3 argued that bodily materialities had the potential to create something that is immaterial – a sacred spatiality – that emerged through the fact of movement, rather than in physically built form. It also highlighted how the orientation of the Pavilion and the use of the East-facing lawns made the soldiers' worship practices especially visible to local residents in a way that served the British Army and British government's public image. I argued that heterobodiliness is a helpful analytical framework here, allowing historians to position the men's bodiliness as simultaneously a function of British imperial strategy, and a function of religious observance and the mechanism through which sacred spatialities were created. The final case study of Chapter 3 interrogated images of imprisoned men at Halbmondlager in makeshift outfits and bodily adornments. It illustrated how spiritual practices rooted in characterisation and movement as devotional theatre were embedded in worldviews that conceptualised gender differently to the dominant European gender binary, and which also held human bodiliness as having the potential to conjure and intra-act with the divine. However, this final section went further and attended to the ongoing fugitivity of these images of the imprisoned men dressed as if for a religious celebration. I argued that bodiliness as subject-matter and as method overlap profoundly in examining these images; the men might be interpreted as cultivating a sacred spatiality, but they might also be interpreted as remaining inaudible to the historian. This concluding section to Chapter 3 therefore proposed two things. The first is that the (im)materialities of bodiliness and divine agencies as a subject matter can offer new ways of interrogating those subjects at the heart of new materialist discourse, illustrating how design historians might engage with non-human agencies whilst also integrating indigenous worldings of knowledge and being. The second is that my engagement with these photos offers a working illustration of how otherwise methodologies can produce new interpretations of well-used primary sources, whilst also preserving their opacity where those sources remain fugitive.

AVENUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH – AND FINAL REMARKS

This project began as a study of the pluralities of material culture in the Indian Army in both the First and Second World Wars. Indeed, some of the original source material that I encountered on the Second World War has been used in the thesis, to help inform my analysis of material relating to First World War Indian Army experiences. However, a sustained study that included both wars, and the interwar period, proved too broad a topic for a single doctorate project. Further research into Second World War experiences could expand the argument I have put forward, that bodiliness could be understood as an evolving site of unfixity, changed by non-human forces such as the divine and also traumas. Given that many men who served in the First World War returned to fight in the Second, a comparative study could ask whether the experiences of returning veterans ought to be analysed using a different metric, on the basis that the bodilinesses of some may have been changed by the impact of the traumas from the First World War. If so, historians might consider whether those men's bodily engagement with material cultures would also be different to that discussed in this thesis. Furthermore, the meanings of various material cultures discussed in this thesis also changed during the interwar period, especially those relating to military uniform, the pagri, and bodily hair and physicality. Placing these shifting meanings in dialogue with the possible changing bodilinesses of Second World War recruits would produce an instructive and original study. Finally, given the importance of bodiliness (in the sense used across this thesis) to these possible avenues of further research, any future projects would likely encounter some of the challenges of working with otherwise analytical models and decolonial objectives that I encountered while researching and writing this thesis. To this end, and by way of concluding remarks, I have identified some of these challenges and the approaches I took to resolve them.

One of the major challenges of this work was the ease with which it is possible to fall into unintentional new binaries in attempting to deconstruct old ones. It took, for example, much thought and considered discussion with my supervisors on how bodiliness as method might in fact allow historians to work with both postcolonial and decolonial theory, when the trajectory of the scholarship that underpinned my thinking on bodiliness was often geared towards critiquing early Subaltern Studies scholarship. I returned consistently to Walter Mignolo's positioning of decoloniality as an 'option', reminding myself that it offers

an 'and and' approach to working with theoretical frameworks, rather than an 'either/or' of decoloniality *or* something else.⁸⁶⁵ Other challenges included identifying how to work with materials from the colonial archive, and the extent to which this can be done otherwise without simply expanding the existing disciplinary canon to include my research topic. By deploying methodologies of opacity, using analytical frameworks of (hetero)bodiliness, and demonstrating the unfixity of primary sources, I have tried to work with these materials critically and sensitively, imagining plural interpretations of the source material and holding them lightly – offering them 'on-and-with', to use Édouard Glissant's phrase, and 'nearby' to use Trinh T. Min-ha's.⁸⁶⁶ Similarly, by deploying autobiography as a mode of encountering the archive in Chapter 2, I sought to delink the researching and writing of histories from the neurotypical pedagogies used by default in the academy, and demonstrate an otherwise method of research. Doing so added further complexity to the examination of bodiliness as a critical lens through which to research the lived experiences of men in the Indian Army, creating a framework that accounts not only for the bodilinesses of the men traced by the archive, but also of the historian.

Each of these experiences in writing this thesis point to the complexities and challenges of producing a thesis with decolonial objectives. As I noted in the introduction, this project does not claim to have met this objective 'perfectly'. Instead, it sits with the discomfit and problems this posed, and offers the work as a discontinuous interruption to history research and writing in a way that might contribute to ongoing efforts in decolonising history as a discipline.

⁸⁶⁵ *Globalization and the Decolonial Option*, ed. by Mignolo and Escobar (2010), p. 15.

⁸⁶⁶ Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (1990), p. xiv; Chen, "'Speaking Nearby'" (1992).

APPENDIX A. LIST OF MEN

This appendix lists those men attached or related to the Indian Army who are directly referenced in this thesis. I have endeavoured to provide a location and/or regimental affiliation, where it was listed in the original source; however, I have not reproduced the full citations provided by the host archives (which can be found in full throughout the thesis), in an attempt to give space to the contribution made by these men to my research without framing them through their place in the archival record. Also listed is the context in which I encountered the men (as photograph, film, sound recording, or oral history interview). The names are listed in alphabetical order, as determined by the descriptions I have given them.

'A Jemadar of a Sikh Regiment at a specialist School', and an unnamed correspondent (correspondence, dated 11 June 1944)

'A Muhammadan of the Punjab' and 'his brother' (correspondence, dated 18 February 1915)

'A Pathan', Brighton, England, and his brother Harzat Shah, 129th Baluchis (correspondence, dated 12 April 1915)

'A Sikh clerk' in Somaliland and Basant Singh, Clerk, 47th Sikhs, France (correspondence, dated 13 October 1915)

'A Sikh wounded in England' and 'a friend in India' (correspondence, dated 29 January 1915)

'A Sikh' and 'a friend at the front' (correspondence, dated 12 February 1915)

'A Sikh', 6th Cavalry, France, and 'a Sowar', 91st Cavalry, Lahore (correspondence, dated 25 October 1915)

Katherine Irani, 'Discontinuous Interruptions' (PhD thesis)

'A soldier' and Mahomed Abdulls, Government Cattle Farm, Hissar Punjab (correspondence, dated 30 August 1916)

'Bahadur Singh' (photograph, 1944)

'X.Y.' and 'his brother an Asst. Surgeon serving in France' (correspondence, c. December 1914 to April 1915)

Abdul Alim and Dafadar Majat Ali Khan (correspondence dated 30 June 1916)

Abdul Majid, 19th Lancers, France, and Mahomed Salim Khan, Dungeer Lancers, Bikanir (correspondence, dated 26 December 1917)

Amir Bakhelt, Cavalry Railhead, France and Nor-ud-din Sahib, Attock, India (correspondence, dated 17 August 1916)

An unnamed 'Pathan' soldier, France, and an unnamed correspondent in Jalandhar, India (correspondence, dated 10 September 1916)

An unnamed Havildar (correspondence, c. 16th June to 29th June 1943)

An unnamed Havildar attached to the Central Mediterranean Forces and an unnamed correspondent (correspondence, c. 25th August to 7th September 1943)

An unnamed Sepoy, Cattle Stock Coy., Egypt, to an unnamed correspondent (correspondence, dated 16 May 1943)

Badan Singh, POW Wünsdorf (recording, dated 5 January 1917)

Badan Singh, POW Wünsdorf (recording, dated 9 December 1916)

Bela Singh, POW Wünsdorf (recording, dated 8 December 1916)

Bugler Lance Naik Hari Kisan, Brighton, and Pandit Gopal Dat, Kangra, Dharamshala
(correspondence, c. May 1915)

Candan Singh, POW Wünsdorf (recording, dated 9 December 1916)

Dafadar Alim Khan, 18th Lancers, France, and Maulana Janab Syedali, Lahore
(correspondence, c. September 1916)

Dafadar Shah Jahan Khan, France (correspondence with 'a friend', dated 12 September
1915)

Dharam Singh, California, and Atma Singh, 3rd Skinner's Horse, France (correspondence,
dated 8 October 1915)

Firoz Khan and Jemadar Said Muhammed Khan (correspondence dated 13 October 1915)

Gajan Singh, POW Wünsdorf (recording, dated 5 January 1917)

Gopal Singh, POW Wünsdorf (recording, dated 9 December 1916)

Gurdit Singh, POW Wünsdorf (recording, dated 11 December 1916)

Havildar Basant Singh, 1st Sappers and Miners, France (correspondence, dated 19 October
1915)

Havildar Mirza and Lance Naik Sultan Khan (photograph, 1944)

Havildar Nagina Singh (1971, interviewed)

Havildar Nand Singh (1971, interviewed)

Havildar Prem Singh (1982, interviewed)

Havildars Dayal Singh, 21st Punjabis, and Sundar Singh, 33rd Punjabis (correspondence with the ISF, dated 13 April 1916)

Hazura Singh, France, and Sirdar Harnam Singh, India (correspondence, dated 7 February 1916)

Hemayat Ullah Khan, 6th Cavalry, France, and the Imam of the Mosque 'in the West of the village of Daulatpura', Utter Pradesh, India (correspondence, dated 6 August 1916)

Jamadar Raja Ram Jadhac, 107th Pioneers, New Milton, England, and Kashaba Jadhav, 107th Pioneers, 7th Indian Brigade, France (correspondence, dated 6 April 1915)

Jamadar Raja Ram Jadhav, 107th Pioneers, New Milton, England, and Kashaba Jadhav, 107th Pioneers, 7th Indian Brigade, France (correspondence, dated 6 April 1915)

Jemadar Hasan Shah (correspondence with 'a woman in the Punjab', dated 19 September 1916)

Jemadar Indar Singh, France, and Chattar Singh, Ludhiana, India (correspondence, dated 15 September 1916)

Jemadar Nur Mahomed, 38th Central India Horse, France, and Maulavi Absan-ud-din Khan, Peshawar, India (correspondence, dated 9 August 1916)

Jemadar Rala Singh and Harnam Singh (correspondence, dated 22 December 1917)

Lal Din, 1st Indian Cavalry Division, France, and Manlair Karim Bakhah, Sialkot, India (dated 14 July 1916)

Lance Naik Kishan Singh (1971, interviewed)

Katherine Irani, 'Discontinuous Interruptions' (PhD thesis)

Lance Naik Sarman Singh (1971, interviewed)

Lt Col. Gurbakash Singh (1982, interviewed)

Mahomed Latif Khan, France (correspondence with Sayed Abdullah Shah, dated 28 December 1917)

Mala Singh, POW Wünsdorf (recording, dated 8 December 1916)

Malik Sher Bahadur Khan, Madras, and Risalder Malik Khan Mahomed, 9th Hodson's Horse, France (correspondence, dated 31 July 1916)

Mall Singh, POW Wünsdorf (recording, dated 11 December 1916)

Mansingh Rawat, 1/39 Garhwalis, asnd Partab Singh, Ringwari Garhwal (correspondence, dated 22 September 1915)

Men of the 1205 Indian Pioneer Corps 'nr. San Angelo', Italy, in May 1944 (photograph, 1944)

Mir Aslam Khan, 19th Lancers, France and Muhammed Azghar Ali Khan, NWFP (correspondence, dated 27 January 1916)

Clerk Mir Hassan, 40th Pathans, France, and his father, 'India' (correspondence, dated 1 December 1915)

Kot Dafadar Kasim Ali Khan, France, and Abdul Haq Khan, Uttar Pradesh (correspondence, dated 27 December 1916)

Sukh Dyal, Brockenhurst, England, and Naik Sarjan Singh, 41st Dogras, Persia (correspondence, dated 18 February 1916)

Katherine Irani, 'Discontinuous Interruptions' (PhD thesis)

Mitha Khan, 18th Lancers, France, and Moulvi Mahomed Hyat Khan, Punjab
(correspondence, dated 2 July 1916)

Nadar Khan, France and Raja Zaman Ali Khan, North-West Frontier Province
(correspondence, dated 10 December 1916)

Naik Nizam-ud-Din, Brighton, England (correspondence with 'a friend', dated 26 April 1915)

Narain Singh Bhandari (correspondence, c. 24th March to 6th April 1943)

Quarter Master Ranjodh Singh (1971, interviewed)

Radha Kishan, Brighton, England, and 'a friend', India (correspondence, dated 20 October 1915)

Ram Seran Das, Rouen, France, and his mother, India (correspondence, dated August 1915)

Ranjit Singh, 38th Central India Horse, Brighton, and 'a friend in India' (correspondence, dated 10 November 1915)

Risaldar Harnam Singh (1971, interviewed)

Said Ali and Faqir Khan (correspondence dated 5 October 1915)

Santa Singh, POW Wünsdorf (recording, dated 8 December 1916)

Sepoy Inder Singh (1971, interviewed)

Sepoy Mir Asghar, 58th Rifles, England, and 'his home in the Peshawar Dt' (correspondence, dated 4 April 1915)

Katherine Irani, 'Discontinuous Interruptions' (PhD thesis)

Sepoy Sant Singh (1971, interviewed)

Shah Nawaz Khan and Doctor Sahib Khan (correspondence dated 22 October 1915)

Sher Bahadur, 34th Poona Horse, France, and Fateh Ali Khan, Jhelam District, Punjab (correspondence, dated 5 September 1916)

Sowar Dhaman Khan, 25th Cavalry, NFWP, and Sowar Muksrar Khan, 22nd Cavalry attached to 34th Poona Horse, France (correspondence dated 29 July 1916)

Subedar Major Sundar Singh, 33rd Punjabis (various correspondences, dated 1915)

Sundar Singh, POW Wünsdorf (recording, dated 8 December 1916)

The unnamed 'Adivasi Tribal Men' taking part in Holi, Kavant, Gujarat, India (photograph, 2020)

The unnamed 'Jats', near Merville, France (photograph, 1915)

The unnamed attendees and participants in a performance of the Rama Lila, Uttar Pradesh (photograph, 1900)

The unnamed children and men participating in a rās lila production, Uttar Pradesh (photograph, 1900)

The unnamed India Muleteer tying his pagri (photograph, 1941)

The unnamed Indian POWs at Halbmondlager (photographs, 1915-1917)

The unnamed kushti practitioner, Akhara Gaya Seth (photograph, c. 1980s)

The unnamed man attached to an Indian Army transport unit, Salonika, Greece
(photograph, May 1916)

The unnamed man bathing in France (photograph, c. July to November 1916)

The unnamed men assisting each other in oiling their hair (photograph, c. 1914-1918)

The unnamed men assisting each other in oiling their hair (photograph, c. 1944)

The unnamed men assisting each other with washing their hair in Gallipoli (photograph, c. 1915)

The unnamed men assisting one another with shaving their facial hair, Querrieu, France
(photograph, dated 29 July 1916)

The unnamed men assisting one another with shaving their facial hair, Jordan (photograph,
c. 1917)

The unnamed men at a French camp, preparing their hair and assisting one another with
shaving their facial hair, and included in a newspaper article on Indian Soldiers (photograph,
dated 2 October 1914)

The unnamed men at a Pune physical training camp (photograph, 1914-1918)

The unnamed men attached to 7th (Meerut) Division, bathing in the River Auja (photograph,
dated Summer 1918)

The unnamed men attached to the 2nd Kashmir Rifles, East Africa (photograph, 1917)

The unnamed men attached to the Royal Indian Army Service Corps, collectively tying a
pagri (photograph, 1942)

The unnamed men attached to the Royal Indian Army Service Corps, likely in South East England, collectively tying a pagri (photograph, c. 1940)

The unnamed men bathing, either at Gallipoli or the Sinai Peninsula (photograph, c. 1915)

The unnamed men carrying the GGS in procession and at worship, while on active service (photograph, c. 1914-1918)

The unnamed men held as POWs at Halbmondlager, Wünsdorf (photograph, c. 1916-1917)

The unnamed men held prisoner at an unnamed German POW Camp (photograph, c. 1914-1918)

The unnamed men in the 'Western Desert', ostensibly engaged in hair management (photographs, 1941)

The unnamed men of the 1st Battalion, 113th Infantry Regiment (photograph, c. 1914-1918, and who featured in War Diaries across 1917 and 1918)

The unnamed men of the 1st Battalion, 9th Bhopal Infantry Regiment (photograph, c. 1914-1918)

The unnamed men of the Indian Corps, France (film, 1916)

The unnamed men of the Royal Artillery, Trimulgherry (photograph, 1914-1918)

The unnamed men on the Indian Home Front at an unnamed training facility (photograph, c. 1914-1918)

The unnamed men resting at a Marseilles camp (photograph, 30 September 1914)

The unnamed men tying a pagri on Tommy Lees (photograph, 1944)

The unnamed performers of an Indian Concert Party at the Royal Ordnance Corps Theatre, Baghdad (photograph, 1917)

The unnamed soldiers held prisoner at Halbmondlager, who painted the various watercolours entitled *Gansch Ji*, *Garfwoti*, and *Mahabirji* (all 1914)

The unnamed soldiers in the grounds of the Royal Pavilion, Brighton (photographs, 1915)

The unnamed, racially categorised individual men featured in Otto Stiehl's 1921 publication *Unsere Feinde. 96 Charakterköpfe aus deutschen Kriegsgefangenenlagern* (*Our Enemies: 96 Faces with Striking Features from German POW Camps*)

Unnamed correspondents (correspondence, c. 16th June to 29th June 1943)

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