

Police Gurdwaras of the Straits Settlements and the Malay States (1874-1957)

Arunajeet Kaur

Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Sikh migrants to Malaya, who came under the auspices of the British Empire, were first policemen and were later followed by other Sikhs from the Punjab, who took up other professions in the host land. Gurudwara construction and the history behind these Gurudwaras are reflective of the stationing of Sikh police regiments in the respective Malay States and also the settlement patterns of Sikh communities in Malaya. The prolific construction of Sikh Gurudwaras in Malaya demonstrate 'hotspots', where more Gurudwaras were constructed, such as in Perak, Selangor and the Straits Settlements, that were to further encourage Sikh communal activities and culture in Malaya. This article describes the construction and significance of Gurudwaras in Malaya.

Murphy (2012, 189) writes that 'Places and objects related to the Gurus were important in the precolonial historical imaginary. They provided evidence of a history of relationships in the past—parallel to that narrated within the textual historiography - that constructed the community around the Guru, the Sikhs, in the ongoing present. The landscape of the Sikh past was commemorated by the establishment of Gurdwaras ...' Murphy evidently refers to Gurdwaras affecting the landscape and historiography of the geographical location of the Punjab. Turning to the context of the colonial historical imaginary of the Straits Settlements and the Malay States, the role of Sikh auxiliaries, policemen, watchmen and Sultanate Royal Guard was crucial in the dotting the landscape of Malaya with Gurdwaras that provided a history of relationships between the colonizers and colonized, the Indigenous communities and the immigrant societies (Gullick & Gale, 1986) as well as the creation of a legacy of Sikh past in Malaya as in travel and settlement in the various territories of the Federated Malay States, Unfederated Malay States and the Straits Settlements.

Mohamed Dali (2012,104) writes that 'Tanah Melayu' (Malay Land) first witnessed activity concerning Sikhs when a 100 of them were utilised as soldiers on the side of Tengku Kudin in the Selangor Civil War of 1871. However, it was only on 28th September 1873 when Captain Tristan Speedy arrived in Perak with 110 Punjabis and Pathans armed with Krupp guns to police the state that most historians take as the first recorded event of the arrival of Sikhs to Malaya (Annual Reports of the Native States, 1886-1891). Subsequently, the first four states to face British intervention, Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang employed Sikhs in their individual state police forces. In 1896, when the Federated Malay States was formed, the police forces of the four states mentioned were merged into one unit. The Sikhs, formed thirty to forty percent

of the Federated Malay States police force (Kaur, 2009, 1). This percentage does not include the numbers made up by the Sikhs of the Malaya States Guides, a paramilitary unit that served in suppressing riots amongst Malayan Chinese and any episodes of insurrection against the British. In the Unfederated Malay States of Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, Terengganu and Johore, where British administration was restricted to a position of advising the Sultan, the Sultans themselves employed Sikhs as guards. The Straits Settlements had a Sikh contingent to police the colony, which was only disbanded after the Second World War. The Sikh Contingent consisted entirely of Sikhs. Through employment in the police forces, Sikhs had come to be resident in all parts of Malaya and one of the consequences of this was an establishment of Gurdwaras wherever they were resident in the Malay States. This article focuses on the reason for the establishment of police Gurdwaras, the documentation of the establishment of police Gurdwaras in the various parts of Malaya and the consequences on community and Sikh religion as practised in Malaysia henceforth. Why focus on Sikh police Gurdwaras? It is because Sikh policemen were the first to arrive in Malaya and the most significant community of Sikhs in fund raising and community building. There were Gurdwaras that were established by Sikhs working in tin mines, in the railways, as bullock cart owners, businessmen but they too were present in Malaya due to the pioneering efforts of Sikh policemen. The successful employment of Sikhs as policemen led many to return to the Punjab with stories of opportunities to be had in this part of the world. Also it was the strict adherence to Khalsa *rahit* within the Sikh police regiments /contingents that was to influence religious code and conduct in Malaysian *Sikhi* to the present day.

Colonialism, Recruitment, Religion and Gurdwaras

Why were Sikhs chosen to be policemen in Malaya and the Straits Settlements? The question highlights larger issues concerning colonialism, Empire building and the knowledge that British officials and scholars, namely orientalist held of colonised people. The British military personnel, who were serving within the network of the various territories of the Empire, were influenced by ideas of human evolution that emerged out of the Enlightenment period in Europe and were prone to differentiating the colonised people according to various stereotypes. There emerged the categorisation of people by the British according to 'Martial Classes' versus 'Criminal Tribes'. The Sikhs together with a selected number of ethnic Indian groups were classified as 'Martial Classes'. As a result of this classification Sikhs were to be in service in the Colonial Army and as Auxiliary forces in various parts of the Empire.

Being classified as a 'Martial Class' brought Sikhs into the Malayan context as well. The British felt that they found the Malays and the Chinese 'unsuitable' in constitution and character to fulfil the position of security for which the Sikhs were migrated out of the Punjab to accomplish in Malaya. In hiring Sikhs the British also had practical concerns in keeping a newly acquired colony under control by hiring a group of people unfamiliar to the local population to maintain

security so that the British could be assured of Sikh allegiance to the Colonial masters and not to the newly displaced indigenous rulers.

The British impression of the Sikhs had been formed through numerous opportunities of contact. From the times of Maharajah Ranjeet Singh being a Sikh ruler of a vastly conquered empire having Europeans on the payroll of his army (Oberoi, 1994, 361) to the Anglo Sikh Wars of 1845 and 1848, the British were aware of the martial prowess of the Sikh people. However, it was only with the 1857 mutiny when Sikh regiments of the Punjab Irregulars and the Punjab Frontier force had remained steadfast (Tan, 2002, 10) to the British that Colonial policy was formulated by the way of the Peel Commission. It was concluded that it was impractical to have an all European army or to import peoples from other colonies to manage the Indian subcontinent. The British decided to organize their army according to 'divide and rule' whereby the dominance of high caste Brahmins and Rajputs in the Indian Army was to be offset by the generous recruitment of Punjabi Sikhs, Muslims and Pathans. The Martial Races Doctrine was largely a practical construct of governance (Kaur, 2009, 15) which was a colonial attempt in ensuring the loyalty of its subjects who were to safeguard and assist in acquiring new territories and assets but it came to be very quickly to be couched in theories of Social Darwinism and Aryan Supremacy. The 'Martial Races' were deemed uniquely firstly, as a result of European doctrine of biological determinism and advocated belief that 'blood was widely regarded as the substance responsible for the transmission of hereditary features so that all members of a particular race would be endowed with the same qualities (Caplan, 1998, 89). Secondly, these races were seen as descendants of Aryan invaders and therefore considered to be purer in terms of race and ritual.

The British understood that the Sikhs stood apart in that the Sikh is 'a religious and not racial designation' (Bingley, 1899, 16) and that the Sikhs were originally Hindus who adopted the teachings of Guru Nanak. But they were considered martial for two reasons; the British laid emphasis on hiring Jat Sikhs indicating that even within the recognised groupings of the martial races, differentiation was practiced in sub grouping the Sikhs along caste and region and as long as the Sikhs were predominantly made of the 'biologically superior race of the Jats' (Bingley, 1899, 1) they were classified martial. The British understood that the Sikhs preserved a martial demeanour due to their religious belief and loyalty to the *Khalsa* brotherhood affirming that if the Sikh had been initiated via baptism of the Sikh tenth guru, it did not matter if he was of the Aryan stock, he would still make a prized fighter (Bingley, 1899, 38). For this reason, Richard Fox (1985) states that the British laboured hard to maintain 'the religious conformity of the Sikh recruit so as to determine that only pure Sikhs were in the employ of the army and the various colonial police forces.'

For this reason, the British administrators and military personnel assured that Sikh police and military soldiers had their religious obligations fulfilled as part of regimental standard operational procedure. Very often the units had their own *granthis* (Sikh priests) and place of worship (Gurdwara) on barracks or camp to ensure daily and ceremonial ritual and practice.

Life of a Sikh Policeman in Malaya

‘Every three months, men gathered in the open grounds in front of the Pearl’s Hills Barracks (Singapore) and a measuring stand was put up. People who wanted to be recruited were asked to line up. Myself (clerk) and the OC, Subedar and Sergeant major would inspect the line. The OC would pick up the men that passed the selection, which was based on height and chest measurement. One had to be 5.9 inches tall and have a chest measurement of 38/40 inches. ...after this, the selected men would be put through a medical examination...After this final process men would be brought before a magistrate to take an oath. Subsequently they were also marched to the Contingent Gurdwara where they took oaths of honesty and faithfulness ...They were also baptised the Sikh way (took *Amrit*) to affirm their sense of loyalty...

[Oral History Interview with Chanan Singh Sidhu conducted by the Singapore National Archives]

The above interview demonstrates that Sikh ceremony was part of police work and life in Malaya and hence the establishment of Gurdwaras in the Malay States and Straits Settlements was a necessary part of livelihood and social etiquette for the Sikh policemen stationed in all parts of Malaya. The next section will demonstrate that wherever the Sikh policemen were stationed, a police gurdwara was established dotting the social and cultural landscape of Malaya.

Establishment of Police Gurdwaras

Police Gurdwaras which were a requirement for service for Sikh personnel were set up immediately after the arrival of Sikhs in the Straits Settlements or Perak/Malay States (being the first Malay State to employ Sikh police). Turning to the Straits Settlements consisting of Singapore, Penang and to a lesser degree Malacca, the Sikhs who arrived from the Punjab in 1881 constituted the Sikh Police Contingent and were stationed at the Pearl’s Hill Barracks (Singapore). They remained a crucial security arm for the colonial authorities until they were disbanded after the Second World War in 1947. Their uniform consisted of khaki shorts, blue shirts and turbans with a badge. The men came from the districts of Ferozepur, Amritsar, Jullundur, Hoshiarpur and Ambala (Sidhu, Reel 6, NAS). The Pearl’s Hills Barracks consisted of four to five big halls. The Sikhs lived in these halls with forty to fifty men assigned to each hall. There was the kitchen, Sergeant major’s quarters, Subedar’s quarters, long bathrooms with water tanks and a canteen that served beer and alcohol for the men as well as a Sikh Gurdwara on the grounds.

The recruitment practices and enforcement of rigorous religious disciplinary standards by the British for the Sikh policemen necessitated the establishment of a Gurdwara within the precinct of the Sikh Police Contingent’s barracks at Pearl’s Hill. The Sikhs recruited as policemen had to undergo a baptismal ceremony, as ordained by the tenth Sikh Guru, *Amrit Sanchar*. The Sikh code of

conduct, forbidding the removal of hair, was also strictly enforced with the policemen facing inspection during parade. Any Sikh policeman caught trimming his hair was reformed through religious ceremony. The Sikh policemen, who were generally uneducated rural folk, were also required to read and learn their mother tongue, Punjabi or the language of the Sikh Scriptures, *Gurmukhi*. The British having witnessed the Sikhs up close during their days in the Indian Army were well aware of the Sikh inclination for prayer and allowed for morning and Sunday services. For these purposes a Gurdwara was established at the Pearl's Hill barracks. An educated, ranked army personnel usually a Sikh Sergeant was appointed as the Sikh Police Contingent's priest, *Granthi/Giani* while a senior Sikh police officer was nominated as President of the *Gurdwara*. The Sikh *Granthi* was paid a salary like any other Sikh policeman from British Government funds.

The Sikh Police Contingent Gurdwara was built together with the barracks and was in existence since the inception of the Contingent in 1881. For a long while, the Gurdwara was a single storey, wooden structure with a zinc roof. In the 1930s, when quarters for married men were built on the barracks, the Sikh Police Contingent Gurdwara was also converted to a more permanent structure. This *Gurdwara* was to serve as a place of worship for even civilian Sikhs who were allowed on barracks during Sundays and certain portions of the weekday (Sidhu, Reel 7, NAS). The Sikh Police Contingent Gurdwara was the first Sikh Gurdwara in Singapore and remained the main Gurdwara for the local Sikhs until 1912. The civilian Sikhs were given the permission to conduct their own ceremonies at this Gurdwara. Although Sikh weddings were rare at the Police Contingent Gurdwara, since most Sikhs before the 1930s chose to get married in the Punjab or came as bachelors, mainly thanksgiving ceremonies were held. Also, young Sikh children were sent to the Police Contingent *Granthi* for instruction in *Gurmukhi* or the Sikh religion. During the Second World War this Gurdwara witnessed a disruption in services as the building faced damages due to heavy Japanese bombardment. When the Sikh Police Contingent was disbanded in 1945 by the British, the Gurdwara was closed down and its property distributed to the Silat Road Gurdwara. However, the religious practices, and rigorous religious standards as maintained by the Sikh Police Contingent Gurdwara was to influence the administration and politics of subsequent Sikh Gurdwaras and institutions in Singapore.

The Sikh Police Contingent was also responsible for the establishment of the Police Gurdwara Silat Road in 1924 (Sidhu, Reel 7, NAS). Later it came to be known as the Silat Road Gurdwara. There were several reasons for the establishment of this *Gurdwara*. Firstly, besides the Pearl's Hill, Sikh Police Contingent Gurdwara, there had been another lesser-known Sikh police Gurdwara at Anson Road. Not all Sikhs that were recruited as part of the Contingent were stationed at Pearl's Hill. Some were posted for duty at the Singapore Docks. The Tanjong Pagar Dock Company, had built their barracks at Anson Road, which included a Gurdwara. In 1913, when the Singapore Harbour Board was formed to take over the Tanjong Pagar Dock Company, these barracks were demolished together with the Gurdwara. The Dock police

was then offered an alternative site for the construction for a Gurdwara at Silat Road. Secondly, the Sikh police were keen in building a lodging area for Sikh relatives and friends who might have been travelers, transiting through Singapore. As the police barracks were limited quarters, they could not offer hospitality to these travelers by giving them accommodation. The Silat Road Gurdwara was intended to have served as a place of worship and as a lodging area for these travelers and Sikh newcomers who would not have had immediate arrangements for accommodation.

In December 1922, the Singapore Harbour Board leased the land at Silat Road to the Police Contingent (Singh, Reel 13, NAS). Thereafter there was much negotiation with the government over the ownership of this land, which was only settled after the Second World War with the property finally vested in the hands of the local Sikh community (Singh, 1984, 43). The Sikh Police Contingent took the lead in raising funds and organizing the construction of the Silat Road Gurdwara. The Sikh Police Contingent personnel donated a month's salary towards building fund. Wasawa Singh Thoorkot, a policeman with the Sikh Contingent played a vital part in raising funds for the Gurdwara (Sidhu, 2003, 406). Appeals for funds were made throughout the region and apart from Singapore itself, donations were received from Shanghai (as there was a Sikh police Contingent stationed there), Hong Kong, Manila, Jakarta, Bangkok and Malaya. The collection of funds from parts of the East and South East Asia revealed a level of networking amongst the Sikh diasporic communities in the Eastern colonies since the early 20th Century. Construction of the *Gurdwara* was completed in 1924 at the cost of 54,000 Straits Settlement dollars. The Police Gurdwara Silat Road was declared open by a British officer; the Inspector General of Police with the attendance of the Gurdwara President *Sudedar* Sunder Singh (Sidhu, 2003, 406) and other Sikh policemen. As the Gurdwara was instituted with the help of the British government, it was subsequently governed by its own act, the Silat Road Gurdwara Ordinance (Singh, 1984, 44).

The Silat Road Gurdwara was the first Sikh place of worship in Singapore designed to emulate the Gurdwaras on the Indian subcontinent with domes and arches. The Gurdwara served out its function as a half-way house for sojourners, however by the 1930s it began to suffer from neglect and disrepair. This was because the Sikhs in Singapore, by that time, had become factionalized according to the various geographical areas of origin from the Punjab, namely into the *Majha*, *Malwa* and *Doaba*, instead of cooperating for the upkeep of joint Sikh Institutions. By 1937, the Silat Road *Gurdwara* Board of Trustees had come about, comprising of equal representations from the various factions; three members of the *Majha* Sikhs, three members of the *Malwa* Sikhs, three members of the *Doaba* Sikhs and a tenth member was to represent the Singapore Police Force as well as the Naval Police Force.

During the War years (1942-1945) the Silat Road Gurdwara played a crucial role. Several rooms in the annex to the Gurdwara, which had previously been used by travelers, were now used to accommodate war widows and orphans. Besides shelter, these widows were also to benefit from provisions and necessities donated by the Sikh community to the Gurdwara. In turn, these

widows did *sewa* (service) such as cleaning the premises and cooking at the Gurdwara. With the Japanese surrender, these war widows and orphans were provided with a free passage back to India.

During the 1950s, the Silat Road Gurdwara was again to face neglect. There were no funds to repair the building, neither were attempts made to hire a proper Sikh *Granthi* (priest) to carry out the required religious duties. As a result, the Gurdwara seldom had a congregation. The Sikhs that did attend to the Gurdwara were those residing in and around the Gurdwara premises. Due to poor attendance at the Gurdwara, *langar* (distribution of food from the free kitchen which is a feature of Sikh practice) was seldom cooked. Instead left over food from the Sunday services at the Central Sikh Temple was brought to the Silat Road Gurdwara for distribution.

This situation was to change in the late 1960s. A *samadh* (shrine) dedicated to the historical Sikh prisoner Maharaj Singh, which was situated on the grounds of the Singapore General Hospital located in College Road, was moved to the Silat Road Gurdwara on 12th October 1966 (Singh, 1998, 13). Since then, Sikhs have begun to congregate at this Gurdwara as it is believed that the *Samadh* has wish fulfilling properties. Sikhs as well as non-Sikhs regularly commit themselves to religious vows and conduct *Akhand path* (continuous recitation of the *Guru Granth Sahib* for the duration of 48 hours) at the Silat Road Gurdwara. With the increase in popularity and collections in donations, the Gurdwara committee has undertaken renovations of this Gurdwara several times, with the most extensive being in the early 1990s, comprising the construction of the Bhai Maharaj Singh Memorial and the Sikh Heritage Center. Currently, this Gurdwara is the only one in Singapore whereby *langar* is prepared and served on a daily basis to devotees. Due to its historical significance, on the 14th of November 1999, the Singapore Heritage Board declared the Gurdwara as a Historical Site.

Besides the Sikh Police Contingent, a group of Sikh security guards working for the British Construction Company M/s Topham Jones and John Jackson, building the Naval Base at Seletar, were responsible for establishing a Gurdwara on the Seletar Naval Base. This Gurdwara was set up in 1925 and was a simple wooden structure. In the 1930s, these Sikh security guards came to be known as Additional Police Constables (APC) and were stationed at the Naval Base at Sembawang hence the Gurdwara at Seletar was moved to Sembawang Road. The Gurdwara was known as the Police Gurdwara and was situated on the Naval Base at Sembawang. In 1938, the Naval Base Police Force was formed absorbing all the APCs with the Sikhs constituting the largest division. When the Sikh police acquired new quarters at Canberra Road, the police Gurdwara was shifted from Sembawang Road to Block 88 in Canberra Road. Sikh police personnel frequently performed the religious duties and ceremonies of the Gurdwara without the help of a *Granthi*. Like the Sikh Police Contingent at Pearl's Hill, the Sembawang Naval Police Gurdwara was also to service the Sikh civilian population living in the Sembawang area in its earlier days. But as security tightened on the Naval Base and due to skirmishes between the Sikh policemen and the Sikh civilian population over control of certain religious

practices in the Gurdwara, the Sikh civilian population was compelled to start their own Gurdwara at Sembawang, outside the Naval Base. This second Gurdwara started off being known as *Guru Khalsa Sabha*. Hence there were two Gurdwaras in the Sembawang area mainly due to personal differences that occurred in the management of the Police Gurdwara.

During the Second World War, the Naval Base was evacuated and the Police Gurdwara was closed. In 1945, the Naval Base Police Force was reorganized and the Police Gurdwara resumed operations out of its previous location of Block 88 Canberra Road. In 1950, the Police Gurdwara was to move to the Armament Depot as most of the Sikh policemen were resident in that area. In 1960 this Gurdwara moved again to new premises at View Road and was registered with the government as the 'Naval Police Sikh Temple'. This Gurdwara was to close down permanently in 1971 when the British transferred the Naval Base to the Singapore Government and the Naval Police Force was disbanded.

The *Guru Khalsa Sabha*, the other Gurdwara in Sembawang that serviced the Sikh civilian population was to continue. The *Guru Khalsa Sabha* was established in 1936. It started off as a one-room atap house in a village at 13th mile Sembawang. This Gurdwara played a key role in facilitating social service amongst the non-Sikhs as well as promoting the Sikh religion within the community, especially for the Sikhs living in the Northern region of the island. The Gurdwara started a youth wing; *Sikh Naujawan Sabha* of Sembawang which held religious instruction in *kirtan* (hymn singing) and *Gurmukhi/paath* (Punjabi language, prayer and scripture) classes. In 1980, the *Guru Khalsa Sabha* was renamed the Sembawang Sikh temple.

The Sikh security forces were responsible for another Gurdwara in Jalan Kayu. In the 1930s, Sikh Additional Police Constables serving the Seletar Royal Air Force base located at Jalan Kayu converted a hall on their barracks into a prayer room. This was to be the precursor to the Jalan Kayu Gurdwara that was formed in 1947 when the British disbanded the Sikh police force on the Seletar Air Base. The Sikhs living in the Jalan Kayu area converted a wooden house in a nearby village, donated by Kehar Singh into a Gurdwara. They also built six adjoining rooms to be leased out so as to provide for the Gurdwara expenses. The Gurdwara in Jalan Kayu was registered as a place of worship with the government only in 1958. The congregation at this Gurdwara was never large. It was mainly to service the Sikhs living in the area. In the 1990s the Jalan Kayu area was marked for development and Gurdwara was closed down.

The Straits Settlements police had one contingent stationed in Penang at Fort Cornwallis. A room in the Fort was allocated for Sikh prayers and a Sri Guru Granth Sahib was installed in this room making it the first Gurdwara in Penang. In 1896, the Malayan States Guides which were formerly part of the disbanded first Battalion Perak Sikhs (1884-1896) were also stationed at Fort Cornwallis and held Sikh prayer at congregation at the mentioned prayer room/Gurdwara within the Fort. In 1927, the headquarters of the Straits Settlements Police was built in Patani Road Penang. Within the new premises, a building was also allocated to the Police Sikh Contingent as a Gurdwara. However the main

Gurdwara in Penang remains the Wadda Gurdwara Sahib Penang originally known as the Diamond Jubilee Sikh Temple. Although the Wadda Gurdwara was built to service the general congregation of Sikhs in Penang of which a significant number were watchmen, dairy farmers and Penang had also become a major transit centre for Sikhs travelling into East Asia from India the Sikh police Guard and the Malayan States Guides had a central role to play in the construction of the Wadda Gurdwara. Apart from donating a portion of their salaries towards the construction of the Gurdwara, the idea of establishing this Gurdwara coincided with the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of Queen Victoria in 1897. It was decided during the Diamond Jubilee celebrations conducted by the Sikh community in Penang that a Diamond Jubilee Sikh Temple be designated in Penang. By 1899, a committee was set up to raise funds for the project and E. A Gardner, the Chief Police Officer in Penang was elected its president (Sidhu, 2003, 158). After which Colonel Walker, Commandant of the Malay States Guides was to lay the foundation stone of the Diamond Jubilee Gurdwara in 1901 amidst much celebration and ceremony. The involvement of British officers in the establishment of Gurdwaras that were not within barracks was also revelatory of the close ties the Sikhs maintained with the colonizers in Malaya in the recognition and preservation of their ritual and faith.

Within the Malay States, it was Perak that was to witness the first policing tour of duty by the Sikhs. In the 1880s, it was the Sikhs who were bullock cart drivers and dairy farmers who took the lead in building one of the first Gurdwaras in Perak in Club Road. Despite the first police post in Telok Anson opened in 1877, the Sikhs in the police force only established a police Gurdwara in the barracks in 1892. The Malay States Guides stationed in Taiping were a paramilitary police unit to deal mainly with Chinese secret society clashes in the tin mining areas of Perak. In 1896, Walker established the Malayan States Guides and also became its first commandant. The Malayan States Guides had a Gurdwara located next to the parade ground in Taiping. This Gurdwara was complete with regimental Granthis and the regular performance of the Amrit ceremony for new recruits. Regular inspection at lineup was to ensure that the Sikh troops maintained their *rahit* and did not take to smoking and trimming their beard. There were other branches of the policing units consisting of Sikhs that also requested permission and land to build Gurdwaras in Perak. Such as in the early 1930s, the Sikh railway police and employees of the Federated Malay States built Gurdwara Sahib Railway, Ipoh.

Subsequently a pattern emerges in the Malay States whereby wherever even a few Sikh policemen are stationed for police duty, a Gurdwara is established. At the end of the 19th Century, the Federated Malay States (FMS) Police were stationed at Bluff Road, Kuala Lumpur currently known as Bukit Aman. The FMS government built a Gurdwara for the Sikh police at Number 3 Jalan Parliament. The second police Gurdwara at Kuala Lumpur was built at High Street in 1898 by the FMS police. In the late 1880s, the Sikh policemen together with Sikh cowherds, farmers and watchmen stationed at the Sungei Besi area formed a Gurdwara. The Malayan railway police consisting mainly of Sikh personnel was established before 1913. Some of these Sikhs worked in the

Malayan railways workshops in Brickfields as well as in the brick kilns. In the early 1920s these Sikh Malayan Railway police personnel built a Gurdwara in Temple Road off Brickfields.

As in the other Federated Malay States wherever the Sikhs were stationed as policemen, together with Sikhs of other professions they established a Gurdwara. In the Klang town of Selangor, which was an important trading centre, many Sikhs were employed in the FMS police to maintain law and order. There were many more Sikhs who were watchmen, money lenders, dairy farmers and bullock cart operators. In 1900, they built the Gurdwara Sahib Klang. Early 1900s in Kuala Kubu Baru Selangor, Sikhs residing in the area who were policemen collaborated with other Sikhs in the civilian population and built a Gurdwara in Ampang Pitcha, Kuala Kubu. In 1890, 13 Sikh policemen were stationed in Jelebu, Negri Sembilan, and a section of their police barracks was converted into a Gurdwara. In 1881, the police force under the command of W. W Douglas had 75 Sikhs stationed at Sungei Ujong, together with the civilian population in 1900 the Sikhs built a Gurdwara in Seremban. In the 1900s Sikhs in the Bentong area, Pahang, who were police constables together with the Sikh civilian population built a Gurdwara. In 1910, Sikhs in Kuala Lipis who were mainly in the police force also established a Gurdwara.

In the Unfederated Malay States (UFMS), the British were advisers to the Sultan. Unlike the uniformity present in the Federated Malay States police forces, the Sikhs were employed in the UFMS police force on an ad hoc basis. The Sultans from the UFMS practiced more control over their states including the finance of their state departments. Under the advice of the British advisers the Sultans set up a police force in their own state but the organization and policy regarding the various forces remained unique to each state. Yet the Sikhs were able to find employment within these states (Kaur, 2009, 87). The Sikhs were employed in the UFMS as their reputation as security guards and for ceremonial purposes preceded them.

As a result there was no special policy with regard to the establishment of Gurdwaras for the Sikh policemen in the UFMS. In most cases, where there was a significant population of Sikhs, they came together collectively to build a Gurdwara. In the early 1900s, Sikh policemen in Batu Pahat, Johore, together with the Sikhs involved in farming and cattle rearing rented a shop-house to establish a Gurdwara. In 1916, Sikhs serving in the Johore Sultan's Guard requested a piece of land from the Johore Police Commissioner to build a Sikh Gurdwara. In 1920, Sikhs in the Muar police force rented a shop-house for their purposes for setting up a Gurdwara. In 1902, Sikhs in the Kedah police force established their Gurdwara, similarly in the 1920s Sikhs in Kelantan who were policemen, farmers and watchmen established their Gurdwara in Kota Bahru, Kelantan.

From Contingent to Community

Census reports conducted every ten years by the British authorities, beginning from 1881, although questionable in their accuracy due to their inability to

categorize the population according to their racial cultural identity, are able to provide a picture of the settlement patterns of Sikhs as they migrated out to Malaya and the Straits Settlements. Up till 1911, there was no category for Sikhs implying the possibility that the Sikhs must have been accounted for in the 1881, 1891 and 1901 census, as 'Bengalis and other natives were not particularised'. This was because most Sikhs who were coming to these territories were disembarking off ships that they had taken from Calcutta, Bay of Bengal and hence were categorised such.

After 1911, the Census began to include a category of Sikhs. It was found that most number of Sikhs resided in Singapore for the Straits Settlements and Perak for the Federated Malay States. In the 1931 census report, which included the Unfederated Malay States, the Sikh community was found to be larger in Johore. The Sikhs probably chose to settle down in Singapore, Perak and Johore because they had been encouraged to do so by the authorities. The Sikhs who were settled in these states were largely with their families. Fresh Sikh migrants also would have gravitated to these three states due to the greater social capital available and the higher availability of help in terms of recommendations for jobs and ready accommodation from fellow kinsmen. Hence Sikhs in these three states became the nucleus of an expanding immigrant Sikh community.

The immigrant Sikhs tend to congregate according to the region they were from in the Punjab before coming to Singapore and Malaya. The common division was between the Manjha, Malwa and the Doaba regions. When it was felt that the Sri Guru Singh Sabha organisation that had been established in Singapore in 1918 had become dominated by Manjha Sikhs, the Malwa Sikhs banded together to form the Khalsa Dharmak Sabha in 1924. The Doaba Sikhs followed suit by setting up the Pardesi Khalsa Dharmak Diwan in 1927. When the Mazhbhi Sikhs were denied equal access in terms of performing spiritual service and participation in the temple committee of the Central Sikh Temple in Singapore, they established the Khalsa Jiwan Sudhar Sabha in 1931. So even though the early police Gurdwaras that had been established were non-partisan and were mainly to serve the needs of the police contingents, the civilian Gurdwaras that were to form later were to reveal fissures and social patterns amongst the settled Sikh community.

A similar pattern was to emerge in the Malay States. The non-police Gurdwaras were to emerge as result of regional and occupational sub groupings and differences within the Sikh community. The first non-police Gurdwara in Kuala Lumpur was the Sentul Sikh Temple (Malhi, 1976, 200), which was built in 1912 by Sikhs working in the Central Railways workshop. The second non-police Gurdwara was the main Doab Sikh Temple which was built in 1920. Its origins reflect regional loyalties amongst the Sikhs. When the request of a Sikh of a Doaba region to perform ceremonial rites on his wife's death was rejected by the Sentul Temple, fellow Doaba Sikhs took offense against the Sentul committee members who were mainly Manjhas. The Doabas then proceeded to build the main Doaba Sikh Gurdwara. The third non-police Sikh temple was built in 1924 by Sikhs belonging to the Tatt Khalsa denomination which adheres to and propagates 'pure' beliefs of Sikhism. The Sikh business community,

Aroras, built their Gurdwara along Gombak Lane in 1930. The Sikh watchmen community established their temple at Chan Sow Lin Road in the early 1930s. As in Singapore, Sikh policemen initiated the building of Sikh places of worship but as the Sikh community began to expand, Sikhs began to construct temples along the lines of occupational stratification and regional differences.

Regions in Malaya and the Straits Settlements that had the greater number of Sikh policemen generally became the centre of Sikh activities and organisations. For example it was usually in the states of Perak, Penang, Selangor and Singapore that the Sikhs held annual festivals and the Sikh Gurus' birthdays with greater festivity. For example, in 1939 the Guru Kalgidhar School was founded at an annual meeting (*jormela*) at the Guru Kalghidhar Diwan Malaya held in Ipoh, Perak (Lopo, 1971, 67).

By the early 20th century, as the Singh Sabha reformation movement had gained momentum in the Punjab, it also began to have an impact on the Sikhs in Malaya. This was demonstrated in the establishments of the early Sikh religious institutions of Ipoh such as Sri Guru Singh Sabha Ipoh, Sri Guru Singh Sabha Pusing, Sri Guru Singh Sabha Larut, Sri Guru Singh Sabha Sentul, Khalsa Diwan Malaya and Guru Kalghidhar Diwan Malaya who own their origins to the Singh Sabha Reformation Movement in the Punjab (Malhi, 1976, 135). The Singh Sabha Movement was to have its impact in Singapore when the Singapore Singh Sabha was set up in 1918 to counteract the authority of the MHEB (Muhammadan and Hindu Endowment Board), which was made responsible for the Central Sikh Temple Affairs up till the issuing of the Queen Street Ordinance of 1st November 1940 (Sevea, 1998, 31).

Conclusion

The establishment and maintenance of Police Gurdwaras of the Straits Settlements and the Malay States are indicative of several factors. Firstly, that Sikh policemen were the pioneering migrants into Malaya. Secondly, the Gurdwaras were a nexus between the Sikh policemen and their employers, the British Colonial authorities. Thirdly, Police Gurdwaras were to lay the foundations in community building, Sikhi practices and social relations within the Sikh community for generations to come. These Police Gurdwaras provide evidence of the Sikh community's contribution to the national and social history of Malaya as well as to early diaspora formation of Sikhs in the Far East.

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