

A Research Visit: Seeking Records of East Indians in Canada in the 20th Century

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(Master Course, Asian History, Asian Studies)

Research Subject: Indian Revolutionary Movement in the Pacific Northwest

Period of Visit: 20th July 2011- 20th Sep. 2011 (63days)

1. Details of Research Visit: Where and Whom

1-1. Cities Visited

- Vancouver, Burnaby, Abbotsford, and Ottawa, Canada

1-2. Institutions Visited

- Vancouver Public Library (Central Library, Vancouver)
- The Vancouver City Archives (Vancouver)
- UBC Asian Library (Asian Centre, The University of British Columbia, Vancouver)
- UBC Rare Books & Special Collections (The University of British Columbia, Vancouver)
- SFU Archives (Simon Fraser University, Burnaby)
- SFU Rare Books & Special Collections (Simon Fraser University, Burnaby)
- UFV Centre for Indo-Canadian studies (University of the Fraser Valley, Abbotsford)
- Library and Archives Canada (Ottawa)

1-3. Local East Indian Communities Visited

- Kalsa Diwan Society Sikh Temple (Vancouver)
- The Vancouver Office of the Kalsa Diwan Society (Vancouver)
- Abbotsford Historical Gurudwara (Sikh Temple, Abbotsford)

1-4. Researchers Contacted

- Dr. Hugh Johnston (Simon Fraser University, Emeritus Professor)
- Dr. Satwinder Bains (University of the Fraser Valley, Director of Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies)

• Dr. Harjot Oberoi (The University of British Columbia, Department of Asian Studies, Professor.)

2. Object and Accomplishments

2-1. Object

The main object of this visit was to look through historical documents regarding East-Indian immigrants or political refugees who had gone from the Indian subcontinent to Canada in the early 20th century. The Vancouver Public Library and Library and Archives Canada have good collections on the topic. In addition, I had wished to visit local East-Indian communities or Sikh temples in Canada to look for historical sources.

2-2. Accomplishments and Prospects

In Vancouver, in addition to the two places mentioned above, I found that Simon Fraser University (SFU) Archives and the City of Vancouver Archives also had certain volumes of material related to my research. In the SFU Archives, I finished the collecting and listing of the “Indo-Canadian Collection” (F-145)¹, and in the City of Vancouver Archives, I read through the documents of “H. H. Stevens Files (Add. MSS. 69, Loc. 509-D-7, File 1-6, 7)”.

Also, at SFU, there is a working program related to my topic. It’s called the “Komagata Maru Project”², and I was able to make contact with some members of that project. Particularly, Dr. Hugh Johnston has given me a lot of help during my stay. I received important advice from him.

Investigation in the Library and Archives Canada (LAC) has shown that this institution has the most comprehensive collection on the history of East-Indians. I found out that inter-library loans of data on micro reel there is available from any library in the world. This means that I will be able to continue my research after leaving Canada.

I was able to visit three local Sikh communities or Sikh temples. They didn’t have their own historical sources, but I was able to have precious talks with priests that provided information unattainable in written material. They inspired me to conduct further research.

With all the benefits my trip to Canada entailed, I’m going to finish writing my master’s thesis on the connection between Indian revolutionary movement in the Pacific

¹ <http://www.sfu.ca/archives2/F-145/F-145.html> (Finding Aid of the Collection, cited 2012/08/11)

² <http://www.lib.sfu.ca/about/projects/komagata-maru> (The web page of that project, cited 2012/08/11)

Northwest and the East-Indians in Canada in the early 20th century.