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ARTICLE

EPISTEMIC WOUNDED ATTACHMENTS: RECOVERING DEFINITIONAL SUBJECTIVITY THROUGH COLONIAL LIBRARIES

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ABSTRACT

Postcolonial theorizing on empires and subjects focuses on governance and infrastructure as relevant geographies of relation. However, when governance-driven knowledge production migrates from colony to metropole, what postcolonial subjectivity formations are recovered from colonial archives, particularly if these archives are structured by epistemic difference? We theorize a wounded attachment to a colonial library, or the construction of subjectivity through colonial archival recovery, as a means of transforming a colonial library of governance into an academic discipline. Through the case study of Sikh studies, a discipline originating out of colonial governance of Sikhs, we argue that epistemic difference is transformed into epistemic distancing as a tool by which scholars pursue legibility to the Euro-American academy. We contextualize the ongoing investment in measures of academic legibility (for example, objectivity, distance, and validity) as how area and region are tied to the production of universal knowledge; these measures result in the elision of embodied knowledge as a valid framework for intellectual pursuit.

Keywords: academic legibility, embodied knowledge, epistemic distance, objectivity, Sikh studies, Sikhi

Within analyses of colonialism and empire, scholars emphasize reversing the analytical gaze to uncover the processes by which colonialism was rationalized, institutionalized, and challenged. The focus in these analyses is on how "events, processes, and structures in the peripheries" and metropole can jointly "shape the forms and even the very existence of colonialism."[2] Extending earlier theorizations on techniques of colonial governance, relational analyses identify the cultural maintenance of colonialism through the use of categories of race, gender,

1. An earlier draft of this article was presented at the November 2021 American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting and at "Thinking at the Border: Post- and Decolonial Theory and Epistemic Injustice," which was hosted by the University of Oxford's Department of Education in September 2021. We are grateful to our interlocutors at both events for their engagement, as well as Rita Kaur Dhamoon and Ricarda Hammer for their vital feedback on prior drafts.

2. George Steinmetz, "Major Contributions to Sociological Theory and Research on Empire, 1830s–Present," in *Sociology and Empire: The Imperial Entanglements of a Discipline*, ed. George Steinmetz (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 2.

and class to maintain cultural boundaries.[3] Turning this analysis inward to social theory and sociological practice, contemporary scholars who use colonial archives have questioned whether it is possible to engage the archives for subjectivity definition without extending colonial practice, given that academics were central to producing identity categories that were used to rationalize colonial domination.[4] Such an inquiry provides fundamental insights for theories of subjectivity formation under conditions of racial and colonial capitalism, wherein such theories of subjectivity formation cannot be unlinked from strategies of governance insofar as modernity is informed by the construction of difference.[5]

For instance, definitional projects were a key mechanism for colonial governance over the colonies from afar. For those located in the metropole, defining the ways societies and collectivities operated was critical for removing power from distant precolonial estates, and this process was carried out primarily by professionals from the metropole who could assist in defining the terms for colonial rule. For British colonization, colonial rulers incorporated men from the patrician class known as the "gentry," or local urban inhabitants of independent means and minor nobility, to manage the colonial offices of "self-government."[6] Additionally, the colonization project relied on the clergy and university-trained lawyers to make sense of societies outside the metropole through translational projects. While the gentry ruled locally, the clergy and lawyers provided the discursive rationalization for colonizing distant native communities who were deemed "heathens" within the metropole.[7]

This article explores disciplinary scholars' attachments to the colonial archive as an epistemic project that has been enabled by the transition from domination over colonial subjects to inclusion of these subjects as citizens in the imperial metropole.[8] We ground such exploration in an understanding of the geography of knowledge production as disciplining particular forms of knowledge as universal; in this understanding, the form through which knowledge is produced is

3. *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

4. Anjali Arondekar, *For the Record: On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

5. Ricarda Hammer, "Decolonizing the Civil Sphere: The Politics of Difference, Imperial Erasures, and Theorizing from History," *Sociological Theory* 38, no. 2 (2020), 101–21; José Itzigsohn and Karida L. Brown, *The Sociology of W. E. B. Du Bois: Racialized Modernity and the Global Color Line* (New York: New York University Press, 2020).

6. Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. and transl. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 93.

7. Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Max Arthur Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors*, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909); Ernest Trumpp, "Specimen of a Translation of the Âdi Granth," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, n.s., 5, no. 2 (1871), 197–218; Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," 92–95.

8. For a rigorous engagement with the limitations of such an epistemological pursuit, see Rajbir Singh Judge, "There Is No Colonial Relationship: Antagonism, Sikhism, and South Asian Studies," *History and Theory* 57, no. 2 (2018), 195–217. Here, we draw inspiration from Judge's theorization of antagonism to demonstrate the epistemic project that emerges through a continued (wounded) attachment to a colonial library for theorizing subjectivity formation.

as significant as the resulting product.[9] We use the case of Sikh studies, a Euro-American academic discipline that originated in colonial administrative projects and has been used to define categories of subjectivity. We ask, when professional academics engage the colonial record to define peoples and traditions through their scholarship today, what is recovered and how? For Sikh studies scholars, the colonial archive has been particularly critical for understanding the role of Sikhs during the British colonization of Ranjit Singh's Punjab kingdom and the subcontinent. Under the conditions of British colonization, the construction of a uniform definition of Sikhi and Sikhs represented the use of politicized identities for colonial rule.[10] At the turn of the twentieth century, Sikh reformers led numerous efforts to constitute a recognizably distinct "religion" for Sikhs for reasons that supported and challenged colonial rule.[11] In Sikh studies scholarship, understanding these colonial processes resulted in ongoing scholarly reckoning with colonial definitions in an effort to correct the record, clarify "appropriate" behavior, and identify the accurate mechanisms to actualize a Sikh subjectivity today—projects for which Sikh studies scholars have often turned to the colonial archive. Yet, in pursuit of these definitional projects, legitimate epistemological claims of definitional recovery have been shaped along three linked dimensions: (1) the materials within colonial governance archives, (2) scholars' and colonial officials' practicing epistemology to collect these materials, and (3) subsequent discursive debates on these materials' relevance to definitional subjectivity recovery—that is, the geographies of colonial archives and subsequent knowledge production of the narratives they maintain.[12]

We argue that academics' production of definitional recovery projects through the colonial archive creates an ongoing wounded attachment to a colonial library. While a *wounded attachment* is an epistemological link that scholars make between the colonial archive, categories, and subjectivity when arguing for recognition based on politicized identity, the *colonial library* is the abstraction of texts and systems of representation that have been used to invent categories of subjectivity as a measure of difference.[13] Relevant to geography as an onto-epistemic formation, wounded attachments to the colonial library served to transform Sikh studies from an epistemological project for colonial governance into one for academic colonial governance, wherein difference became a necessary marker of

9. Sarah Hunt, "Ontologies of Indigeneity: The Politics of Embodying a Concept," *Cultural Geographies* 21, no. 1 (2014), 27–32.

10. Kate Imy, *Faithful Fighters: Identity and Power in the British Indian Army* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019); Anne Murphy, "Defining the Religious and the Political: The Administration of Sikh Religious Sites in Colonial India and the Making of a Public Sphere," *Sikh Formations* 9, no. 1 (2013), 51–62.

11. Anshu Malhotra, *Gender, Caste, and Religious Identities: Restructuring Class in Colonial Punjab* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Arvind-Pal S. Mandair, "The Emergence of Modern 'Sikh Theology': Reassessing the Passage of Ideas from Trumpp to Bhāī Vīr Singh," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 68, no. 2 (2005), 253–75.

12. Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015); Achille Mbembe, "The Power of the Archive and Its Limits," transl. Judith Inggs, in *Refiguring the Archive*, ed. Carolyn Hamilton et al. (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2002), 19–27.

13. Wendy Brown, "Wounded Attachments," *Political Theory* 21, no. 3 (1993), 390–410; Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*.

objectivity to account for the relocation of the study of Sikhs from the distant colony to the metropole.[14] Applying Wendy Brown's analyses of the limitations of identity-based recognition to a novel context of academics' use of political categories for archival analysis, we extend her wounded attachment framework. We identify how Sikh studies scholars situated in Euro-American universities have developed three types of definitional recovery solutions to resolve colonial definitional tensions: repair, renegotiation, and repudiation. We contend that each of these is a type of wounded attachment through which scholars' definitional recovery projects have differentially engaged the colonial record on Sikhi and Sikhs. Whereas the repair and renegotiation projects use models of objective and distanced study to engage the colonial library, repudiation projects attempt to turn away from the colonial archive and library as a useful epistemological resource. In mapping the ongoing institutionalization of Sikh studies by way of these three projects of definitional recovery through the colonial library, we demonstrate how geographies of colonial epistemologies continue to emerge through a wounded attachment to forms of academic validity (for example, legibility, objectivity, and difference).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Archival Epistemology and a Colonial Library

Debates over using the colonial archive for academic research often focus on defining appropriate historical methods and theorizing the archive's "form."[15] In part, these debates emerged as scholars began reconceiving the archive as a type of knowledge institution that, in the context of Europeans' colonization of the Asian subcontinent, documents modes of colonial governance and the tools by which it was maintained from a distance.[16] Despite not being made for the study of colonialism, this archive doubles as the source materials by which academics, politicians, and the public make sense of postcolonial—and their own—subjectivities.[17] As a result, scholars theorize the "vernacular 'practicing epistemology'" that identifies what governing agents "imagined they could know and more importantly *what epistemic habits they developed to know it*."[18] Consequently, scholars have increasingly recognized the archive as an "ethnographic space" that has been constituted through historically based and social

14. Katherine McKittrick and Linda Peake, "What Difference Does Difference Make to Geography?" in *Questioning Geography: Fundamental Debates*, ed. Noel Castree, Alisdair Rogers, and Douglas Sherman (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 39–54.

15. Stuart Hall, "Constituting an Archive," *Third Text* 15, no. 54 (2001), 89–92; Mbembe, "The Power of the Archive and Its Limits."

16. Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*.

17. Arondekar, *For the Record*; Anneeth Kaur Hundle, "Guru Nanak in an Era of Global Thought: Sikhism, Sikh Studies, the University and the Political," *Chapati Mystery* (blog), 26 March 2021, https://www.chapatimystery.com/archives/sikh_studies.html; Murphy, "Defining the Religious and the Political."

18. Ann Laura Stoler, "Epistemic Politics: Ontologies of Colonial Common Sense," *The Philosophical Forum* 39, no. 3 (2008), 350. See also Ann Laura Stoler, "Imperial Debris: Reflections on Ruins and Ruination," *Cultural Anthropology* 23, no. 2 (2008), 191–219.

epistemologies.[19] Put differently, any theoretical abstraction of the archive would explore the "common sense that guided [officials' and scholars'] arts of governance and the violences of social policy" to ground the archive in the colonial world.[20]

As historians, sociologists, and scholars of region and area studies contextualize colonial archives to account for how networks and processes of domination constitute the archive's form, scholars of southern Asia have specifically questioned the practice of archival recovery through the southern Asian colonial archive. In this tradition, archival recovery of colonial subjectivities is not the primary goal because such an archive's potential is "in its ability to manifest and materialize differentiated histories of rule."[21] Archival recovery—reforming the official record by updating materials for accuracy or extending the archive to include more types of materials—is contingent on two interrelated "impulses."[22] One is the impulse to trace all colonized people's conditions under the category of "the slave" (*dasi*) and to collapse "all categories of impressed, indentured, and exploited laborers into the category of slaves"; the other is the impulse to understand the identification network that undergirds the archive.[23] Thus, to theorize any archive's form, scholars must not only consider the practicing epistemology that colonial officials and scholars used to constitute the archive but attend to the changing structure of epistemology and form in relation to the conditions of colonialism.

These southern Asian colonial archival debates are connected to debates about a colonial library that emerged in the African continent due to Europeans' colonization.[24] In this framework, the colonial archive is a set of formal institutions that were created for producing knowledge that could be used to govern the Asian subcontinent, and the *colonial library* is a broader conceptualization of the linked representations and texts that invent the object of study.[25] For instance, the colonial library that formed during colonization of the African continent "is an abstraction for the immense body of texts and system of representations that has over the centuries collectively invented, and continues to invent Africa as a paradigm of difference and alterity."[26] The colonial library remains privileged as the site for scholarly debates because scholars and researchers engage archival materials for discursive debates emerging from this archive.[27] In combining critiques of archival recovery with those of the colonial library, we introduce our concept

19. Ibid., 353.

20. Ibid., 350.

21. Anjali Arondekar, "What More Remains: Slavery, Sexuality, South Asia," *History of the Present* 6, no. 2 (2016), 147–48. See also Anjali Arondekar, "*Thinking Sex with* Geopolitics," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 44, no. 3/4 (2016), 332–35.

22. Ibid., 148.

23. Ibid.

24. *Decolonising the University*, ed. Gurminder K. Bhambra, Dalia Gebrial, and Kerem Nişancıoğlu (London: Pluto Press, 2018).

25. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*.

26. Zubairu Wai, "On the Predicament of Africanist Knowledge: Mudimbe, Gnosis and the Challenge of the Colonial Library," *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 18, no. 2/3 (2015), 270.

27. Gaurav Desai, *Subject to Colonialism: African Self-Fashioning and the Colonial Library* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001); Arondekar, "*Thinking Sex with* Geopolitics"; Ann Laura

of wounded attachments to the colonial library and elaborate on how scholars may create such attachments when they engage the colonial archive *for* archival recovery.

Theorizing Wounded Attachments

We situate a colonial library[28] in the context of British colonization of the Punjab geography and the multiple colonialisms that constructed India materially and discursively as a postcolonial state.[29] We connect this colonial context to the dual archival recovery impulses—to trace all colonized people's conditions under a single category and to understand the archive's identification network—through epistemological *wounded attachments* to the colonial library.[30] We apply Brown's concept of wounded attachment to archival geographies in order to mark a discursive link made to the library when arguing for recognition based on politicized identity. Though recognizing a politicized identity can be a strategic outcome for the purposes of mobilizing, Brown notes that such efforts must confront two major hurdles: (1) the articulation of said identity for recognition (by people, institutions, or the state) resubordinates the subject through disciplinary, essentialized identity categories and, thus, (2) identity-based recognition forecloses the subject's own possibilities for freedom by reinscribing the language of the wound as the only formulation through which freedom can occur.[31] The "original" wound therefore constitutes a failure to recognize identity accurately or appropriately and initiates a definitional recovery process to follow this trace.[32] The "failure" to recognize all bodies in the library crafts a discourse of power that is rooted in a bourgeois male ideal; what identities are excluded from are actually capitalist subjectivities of embodied material comfort and legal protection.[33] A continued fight to recognize politicized identities without a linked capitalist analysis means that possibilities of freedom, sovereignty, and desire can be further regulated through disciplined models of subjectivity formation and objects of study—such as academic disciplines and the colonial library.[34]

Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

28. We refrain from identifying the colonial library as solely of Sikhs or of Sikhi because of the library's investment in textual analysis and divestment from embodied knowledge. For more on the transformation of Sikhi through the colonial encounter, see Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair's theorizing on Sikhism in *Sikhism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 12–14.

29. Arondekar, *For the Record*; Priya Atwal, *Royals and Rebels: The Rise and Fall of the Sikh Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020); Gurminder K. Bhambra, "Postcolonial and Decolonial Dialogues," *Postcolonial Studies* 17, no. 2 (2014), 115–21; Navyug Gill, "Accumulation by Attachment: Colonial Benevolence and the Rule of Capital in Nineteenth-Century Panjab," *Past and Present* 256, no. 1 (2022), 203–38; Purnima Mankekar, *Unsettling India: Affect, Temporality, Transnationality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).

30. Arondekar, "*Thinking Sex with* Geopolitics"; Brown, "Wounded Attachments."

31. Brown, "Wounded Attachments," 390–92.

32. Anjali Arondekar, "Without a Trace: Sexuality and the Colonial Archive," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 14, no. 1/2 (2005), 10–27; Mandair, "The Emergence of Modern 'Sikh Theology.'"

33. Brown, "Wounded Attachments."

34. Rajbir Singh Judge and Jasdeep Singh Brar, "Critique of Archived Life: Toward a Hesitation of Sikh Immigrant Accumulation," *Positions* 29, no. 2 (2021), 319–46.

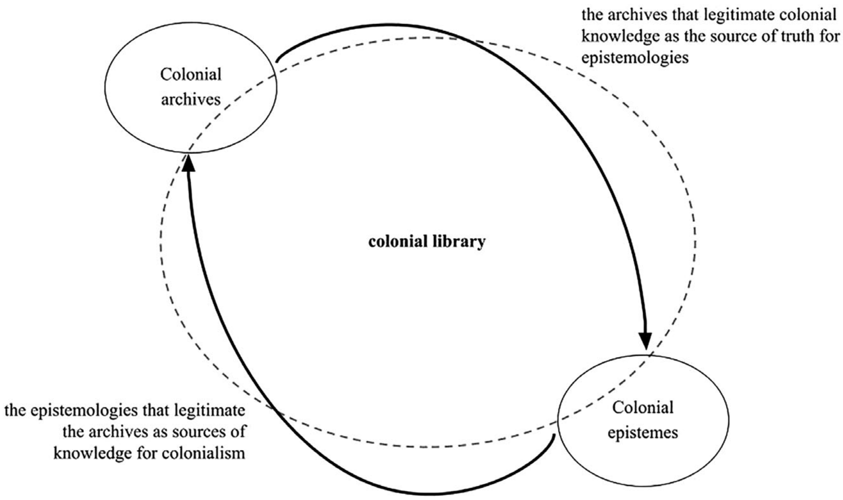

FIGURE 1. This image shows how the colonial library and colonial archive produce colonial epistemes. More specifically, it illustrates the epistemological relationship between the library, archive, and knowledge production.

Understanding wounded attachments as epistemological ties to the colonial library demonstrates how wounded attachments are tied to the geography of colonial domination. In order to feed economic and capitalist interests of the colonizing project, the colonial library serves as a key partner for reorganizing the geography that has been targeted for colonization.[35] Like colonial archives with specific orientations, the broader colonial library produces pathways for meaning making because it provides a practicing colonial episteme through which to interpret social life in a way that is consistent with the colonial rule. Through this episteme, "identity and alterity are always given to others, assumed by an I- or a We-subject, structured in multiple individual histories, and, at any rate, expressed or silenced according to personal desires."[36] Individuals enacting colonial rule use the colonizing episteme as a dichotomizing system of interpretation to create the colonial enterprise (schools, churches, press, audio-visual media, and archives), and the colonial enterprise then institutionalizes this colonial episteme in society as the legitimate form of knowledge production.[37] As a result, how colonial culture manifested in knowledge institutions was a "means of trivializing the whole traditional mode of life and its spiritual framework," even as these institutions accumulated "evidence" of indigenous life.[38]

In Figure 1, we summarize how to conceptualize the epistemological relationship between the library, archive, and knowledge production. The colonial library is constituted by a controlling episteme (practicing epistemology) to

35. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*; Desai, *Subject to Colonialism*.

36. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*, xi.

37. Balbinder Singh Bhogal, "The Facts of Colonial Modernity and the Story of Sikhism," *Sikh Formations* 11, no. 1–2 (2015), 243–65.

38. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*, 4. See also Hunt, "Ontologies of Indigeneity."

produce archives, which, in turn, actors use to determine what should be collected—determining relevance and significance. As a result, two phenomena happen: the library is perpetuated as a legitimate means *for* defining subjectivity and *defining* subjectivity is made into a dimension of difference that qualifies as an object of study.

Because the wounded attachment is an epistemological link to the library that defines an object of study through its alterity (that is, otherness), we can identify how a scholar creates such a wounded attachment when using the colonial archives by considering two explicit dimensions. First, considering that one impulse of archival recovery is correcting a misrecognition, one dimension of a wounded attachment is identifying how scholars articulate the purpose of legibility. Given the practicing episteme's role in legitimating the colonial library, a wounded attachment's second dimension is identifying appropriate knowledge products and the legitimate knowledge producers for the archive. Through these two dimensions, a wounded attachment can come in the form of different types of archival recovery projects, such as definitional recovery projects that aim to use the archive to (re)define subjectivity. A scholar's engagement with the colonial library through archival recovery then initiates a constant paradox. Because the library's abstract structure enables contemporary scholars to continuously reimagine the wounds of colonialism, scholars reinscribe wounded attachments through apparent self-created discourse, all while being haunted by the specter of colonial practicing epistemology based in capitalist desires.[39] By analyzing contemporary Sikh studies scholars' academic efforts of definitional recovery vis-à-vis the colonial library, we consider how the definition of Sikhi and Sikhs through the colonial record can be a type of wounded attachment to a colonial library for Sikh studies scholars.

DATA AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

We drew on two separate periods of scholarly production in Sikh studies to explore how the emergence and institutionalization of Sikh studies could be entangled with the colonial regulation and rule of Punjab. First, for the collection and analysis of colonial data, we explored the works of Ernest Trumpp and Max Arthur Macauliffe, two scholars who primarily defined the role an academic study of Sikhi would play in the colonization of Punjab. While Trumpp was solicited by the British colonial government and Macauliffe was solicited by elite Sikhs in Punjab, both produced foundational translated works on Sikh divine poetry: Trumpp's *The Ādi Granth, or The Holy Scriptures of the Sikhs* and Macauliffe's *The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors*.[40] This first collection encompasses the period in which the kingdom of Punjab was being

39. Arvind-Pal S. Mandair, *Religion and the Specter of the West: Sikhism, India, Postcoloniality, and the Politics of Translation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); Neferti X. M. Tadiar, *Things Fall Away: Philippine Historical Experience and the Makings of Globalization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).

40. Ernest Trumpp, *The Ādi Granth, or The Holy Scriptures of the Sikhs* (London: Allen, 1877); Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*.

transformed into the colonial province of Punjab—that is, the period between 1870 and 1910. We pay attention to these particular scholars because of their continued identification as "founding fathers" by Sikh studies scholars and, thus, their continued impact on the discipline.

With respect to analyses of this colonial data, we focused on Trumpp's and Macauliffe's written works that were published for English-speaking audiences. (Trumpp was German and Macauliffe was Irish and British.) We also analyzed selected published journal manuscripts in which other scholars reviewed and responded to Trumpp's and Macauliffe's claims. We did so because Trumpp and Macauliffe published their work in a transnational academy, which was developing at this time through a network of academics across the British settler colonial states.[41] Furthermore, this inclusion recognizes the relational context in which these translators were explaining the significance of their work to non-Sikhs. When analyzing their written materials, namely *The Ādi Granth* and *The Sikh Religion*, we considered the practicing epistemology of definitional recovery projects. We did so along three dimensions through which scholars could extend their engagement with the colonial library of governance for the purpose of legibility: how the authors were establishing their own authority to speak on these matters, on whom they relied for translation and legitimation, and which reasons they marshaled to defend their discursive decisions. With this focus on the academic discourses that Trumpp and Macauliffe produced regarding Sikhi and Sikhs in their own works, we used contemporary research on the British colonial archive to contextualize these discourses. We followed how British colonialists and their supporters used the archive at the turn of the twentieth century to consider the role of academic knowledge as an epistemic tool of colonial governance.

The second set of data is a collection of contemporary Sikh studies articles that were published in *Sikh Formations*, which has been the foremost publication site for Euro-American Sikh studies academic research since its establishment in 2005. For contemporary Sikh studies scholarship, we analyzed 128 articles that were published in *Sikh Formations*. Through a concerted search, we identified articles that explicitly described the field, covered a history of the field, and/or offered a contribution outside of normative formulations. This enabled us to analyze both what established Sikh studies scholars were saying with respect to defining Sikh studies and alternate avenues of scholarship that scholars identified as still legitimate enough. In an effort to map named shifts between 2005 and 2021, data analysis of these two subprocesses tracked definitions of the discipline identified by Sikh studies scholars. Further, by examining special issues that emerged out of conferences in order to track archived changes of the field, we analyzed how scholars whose work was at the forefront of the mid-twentieth-century phase of the discipline were understanding and defining the contemporary approaches in Sikh studies. Given the specific goals of this analysis, we discuss findings from close readings of a few *Sikh Formations* editorials that marked significant shifts or that constituted self-reflections from notable scholars in the field.

41. Tamson Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars: Universities, Networks and the British Academic World, 1850–1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015).

Analyzing these two periods of data together, we began to trace a lineage of Sikh studies scholarship rooted in historical debates found in the colonial government archive. We followed a set of discourses concerned with the original definitions or misdefinitions of what constituted Sikhi, Sikhs, and, eventually, Sikh studies. Through a "wounded attachments" framework, our next inquiry concerned whether there were Sikh formations that did *not* attempt to repair these original harms, which had been framed as emerging through the colonization of Punjab and memorialized in the colonial archive. This line of inquiry led to collecting and analyzing alternative sources and counternarratives that existed beyond the formal discipline of Sikh studies. In these sources and counternarratives, foundational conceptualizations of Sikhi and Sikhs continued to emerge, but the conceptualizations were framed as either definitions to be renegotiated through alternate frameworks (for example, by incorporating gendered analysis and feminism) or definitions to be repudiated altogether (for example, by rejecting the belief that Western structures of power, such as academic disciplines, are compatible with the philosophical underpinnings of Sikhi). Though we use *Sikh Formations* as one indicator of knowledge production within Sikh studies, it is neither the entirety of Sikh studies nor the colonial library; rather, it is *a* metric to explore the function and effects of colonial libraries on the studies of Sikhi and Sikhs. Indeed, *Sikh Formations* encompasses a subset of the colonial library by focusing on how scholars' definitional recovery projects made use of the knowledge of Sikhi and Sikhs in the governance archive. Postcolonial and decolonial studies highlight the need to understand how native elites worked with colonial administrators to safeguard their respective class status.[42] By juxtaposing how two periods of scholarship on Sikhs established credible "academic research" to study and speak about Sikhs, our analysis provides evidence that scholars rely on the existence of a colonial library as a discursive site to maintain epistemological linkages across periods and geographies.

FINDINGS

Originating Definitional Recovery in the Colony

Definitional recovery projects between the mid-1800s and mid-1900s operated to remake native Sikh practices and philosophies in service of British colonial governance. When surveying the colonial territory of British India, British-trained scholars recognized how political conflicts could emerge through religious practice. Rather than understand these practices further, colonial academics initially refused to make legible Indic spiritual philosophies in British-led and British-oriented definitional projects.[43] For example, British colonial governors eventually realized the importance of accurately understanding Indic faith traditions in

42. Desai, *Subject to Colonialism*; Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, transl. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963); Malhotra, *Gender, Caste, and Religious Identities*; Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*; Wai, "On the Predicament of Africanist Knowledge."

43. H. R., review of *The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors*, by Max Arthur Macauliffe, *The Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review and Oriental and Colonial Record*, 3rd ser., 28, no. 55 and 56 (1909), 315–29.

order to maintain colonial rule after the 1857 Sepoy Uprising, when British officials' apathy toward customs led them to rely on Sikh soldiers to end a Hindu and Muslim soldier-led rebellion.[44] To correct their misrecognition of faith traditions, British officials incorporated religious identity into rewards for military loyalty.[45] Though definitional projects provided insight into Sikh philosophies and practices, these colonial projects never abandoned their additional function to inform British officials on better tools for governance.[46]

Making Sikhi and Sikhs' distinctiveness legible to a British and European imperial audience became a critical colonial governance tool through the archives, even as Sikhs themselves worked to gain control over their own faith through reform efforts. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, British officials, who needed to understand which practices they could not ridicule or reject, experienced a knowledge gap; to fill this gap and to facilitate colonial governance, they needed academic institutions to produce knowledge on indigenous peoples. As one scholar noted at the time, "there is no Oriental school in England, as there is in other European countries, in which officials proceeding to India can be instructed in the great religions of that country and in the literatures which appertain to them."[47] For example, when Trumpp, a German philologist and professor of "Oriental Languages," began his effort to translate the Sikhs' Adi Granth, an early compilation of Sikh divine poetry, he focused expressly on the Adi Granth's language and its distinction from Hindi and Sanskrit.[48] In preparation for promoting this eventual 1877 translation, Trumpp published a summary of his ongoing work in *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*. His analysis of language initiated a paradoxical relationship at the intersection of legibility's purpose for governance and who could legitimately produce knowledge about Sikhi and Sikhs. While he was hopeful that Sikhs in Punjab could produce guidance on legitimate translations,[49] he did not think they were capable of doing so when he ultimately arrived in the colony.[50] Yet this suspicion was already evident prior to his travels to Punjab because, in a footnote in an 1871 article, he criticized Sikhs' ability to understand their own scripture by invoking other scholars who criticized Sikhs. Relying on Pandit Sardha Rama's "History of the Sikh Power," Trumpp argued that "even the learned Sikhs frequently misinterpret the words of the Âdi Granth, and are not always sure of the meaning of difficult words and passages."[51] He was doubtful that any Sikhs, aside from "learned Sikh priest[s]," could offer legitimate translations.[52] In a commonly retold story about Trumpp's efforts, as the moment that is cited as having "caused" the identitarian wound that

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

45. Imy, *Faithful Fighters*, 20–21.

46. Rajbir Singh Judge, "Reform in Fragments: Sovereignty, Colonialism, and the Sikh Tradition," *Modern Asian Studies* 56, no. 4 (2022), 1125–52.

47. H. R., review of *The Sikh Religion*, 321. One "Oriental College of Lahore" did open in 1876.

48. Trumpp, *The Ādi Granth*, iii, v.

49. Trumpp, "Specimen of a Translation of the Âdi Granth," 199.

50. Trumpp, *The Ādi Granth*, iii, v–vii.

51. Trumpp, "Specimen of a Translation of the Âdi Granth," 198n2.

52. Ibid., 199.

scholars today attempt to rectify, Trumpp, while meeting "Sikh priests at Amritsar," claimed that "he was a Sanskrit scholar, [and] that he understood their sacred writings better than they did themselves" as he smoked tobacco, which is prohibited in Sikh practices, in front of the Adi Granth.[53] Despite this paternalistic approach to legibly translating the Adi Granth and delimiting who could legitimately speak on Sikhi and Sikhs, Trumpp "was [still] obliged to depend on a half-educated member of the Sikh persuasion, described by orthodox Sikhs as a *lucha* or man of loose character."[54]

While the British produced these documentations and discourses for their own governance needs, that did not mean that these projects functioned *solely* for the purposes of governance. In the early twentieth century, these colonially produced discourses were actively engaged, modified, and resisted, as Trumpp himself noted. This is also apparent in several attempts at repairing definitions of Sikhi and Sikhs by scholars across British and Indian intellectual and political spaces, such as in Sikh-published materials and in reform movements that worked against and with British officials.[55] For instance, unlike Trumpp, Macauliffe was a senior British administrator who was petitioned by elite Sikhs "to make a correct translation of their sacred writings."[56] Macauliffe promoted his own translation, which received more vocal support from colony-based Sikhs, three decades after Trumpp published *The Ādi Granth*. Denouncing Trumpp's earlier effort as offensive, Macauliffe named his own translation as "making of reparation to the Sikhs."[57] He also uplifted certain Sikhs' support of his translation since they themselves (supposedly still) could not produce a translation that would be legible to the British government. For example, in a November 1909 letter asking the Government of Punjab to patronize Macauliffe's translation over Trumpp's translation, an Oxford University Press editor noted that the translation was supported by Sikhs in the Singh Sabha group of Amritsar.[58] Maintaining the support of local Sikhs was now fundamental for Macauliffe's claim to having made a legitimate, legible translation, especially given fears of these Sikh groups supporting anticolonialism.[59] His self-recognition of legitimacy is evident in his December 1909 letter to the Government of Punjab in which he rejected the Government's offer of "Rs. 5000" (a sizable amount at that time).[60] He wrote that he felt the amount

53. H. R., review of *The Sikh Religion*, 316. See also Max Arthur Macauliffe to Chief Secretary to the Government of Punjab, 17 December 1909, bundle 9866, file 127, p. 13, Home/General, Punjab State Archives, Chandigarh.

54. Ibid.

55. Mandair, "The Emergence of Modern 'Sikh Theology'"; Anne Murphy, "Placing Max Arthur Macauliffe in Context/s: Sikh Historiographical Traditions and Colonial Forms of Knowledge," *The Journal of the Irish Society for the Academic Study of Religions* 4, no. 1 (2017), 58–73; Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars*; Bob Van Der Linden, "Sikh Music and Empire: The Moral Representation of Self in Music," *Sikh Formations* 4, no. 1 (2008), 1–15.

56. Max Arthur Macauliffe to Chief Secretary to the Government of Punjab, 17 December 1909, bundle 9866, file 127, p. 13, Home/General, Punjab State Archives, Chandigarh.

57. Ibid.

58. P. T. O. to Civil Department, Government of Punjab, Lahore Division, 12 November 1909, bundle 9866, file 127, p. 1, Home/General, Punjab State Archives, Chandigarh.

59. Judge, "Reform in Fragments."

60. Max Arthur Macauliffe to Chief Secretary to the Government of Punjab, 17 December 1909, bundle 9866, file 127, p. 14, Home/General, Punjab State Archives, Chandigarh.

offered was "utterly inadequate to [his] labours and the importance of [his] work" and that his "acceptance [of it] would not be of much material advantage to [him], neither would it enhance [his] reputation in the eyes of the Sikhs or the general public."[61] While the Government was not convinced to patronize Macauliffe's translation at the time, in an April 1910 letter to the Secretary to the Government of India, the Punjab Civil Secretariat decided to purchase fifty copies for district offices and public libraries to help the knowledge "permeate through the Province."[62] This was done, ultimately, because the translation "gives a very complete view mainly from the aspect of the New Sikh School of the traditional Sikh religion and supplies for the first time what appears to be a reliable and readable translation of much of the Sikh scriptures."[63]

Even though Macauliffe's work provided a translation for the archives that resonated with some educated Sikhs' understanding of Sikhi, Macauliffe understood the dual purpose of his translations and worked to place them in the hands of colonial governors through his published work, which was circulated in the broader colonial library. When Macauliffe summarized his 1909 multivolume translation of the Adi Granth and published on Sikhi in *The Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review and Oriental and Colonial Record*, he expressed his desire for British and imperial officials to take Sikhi and Sikhs more seriously for the specific purpose of governance. Macauliffe reminded his British and European imperial audience: "It is too often forgotten that the orthodoxy of a Sikh means loyalty to his Sovereign. This statement will be understood by anyone who cares to make himself fully acquainted with the advantages to the Government of India of a rigid belief in Sikhism and faith in their Gurus."[64] In an academic review of Macauliffe's work in which the reviewer compared *The Sikh Religion* to Trumpp's 1877 translation, this political purpose was made explicit: "If he had given all the political advantages of the Sikh religion in his preface, many readers would perhaps have thought it unnecessary to read the whole of his work."[65] Legibility was a political tool because, with regard to Sikhi, "in its civil aspect the Sikh religion connotes deep, unquestioning loyalty, and in its military aspect the highest heroism and self-sacrifice."[66] Though this was made explicit in documentation *outside* the colonial archive, its traces were evident in Macauliffe's translation in the archive, and thereby in the colonial library of Sikhi and Sikhs.

While these colonial archive documents do offer insight into constructions of Sikh subjectivity, a scholar's practice of engaging the archive *for* identarian recovery may not be separable from the intentional efforts of the British to epistemically frame Sikhi and Sikhs as pliant colonial subjects. In other words, this was the evidence that was marshaled to define Sikhi and Sikhs as such. There is

61. Ibid.

62. Punjab Civil Secretariat to Secretary to the Government of India, 14 April 1910, bundle 9866, file 127, p. 29, Home/General, Punjab State Archives, Chandigarh.

63. Ibid., 28.

64. M. A. Macauliffe, "The Sikh Religion," *The Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review and Oriental and Colonial Record*, 3rd ser., 30, no. 59 and 60 (1910), 85.

65. H. R., review of *The Sikh Religion*, 323.

66. Ibid., 329.

little known about how the practicing epistemology that was used to constitute the governance archive treated disconfirming evidence—-that is, whether it was ever collected, never recognized as worthy for collection, or intentionally excluded from the archive.

Institutionalizing Disciplinary Definitional Recovery: From Governance in the Colony to Academic Epistemology in the Metropole

While academic studies of Sikhi and Sikhs continued as a part of studies for colonial governance throughout the early 1900s, the rapid decline of the British Raj in the 1940s required a transformation in the location and purpose of producing knowledge on colonized peoples. Since Trumpp and Macauliffe had established a set of relations between scholars of the Adi Granth, Sikhs, and colonial governance, scholars of Sikhi and Sikhs in the European academy worked to formally institutionalize Sikh studies by incorporating the study of Sikhi and Sikhs into British schools of "oriental studies." Alongside this relocation of academic study of Sikhs to the metropole, the institutionalization of Sikh studies as an academic discipline was further actualized by Sikhs in Punjab who were legitimated by the colonial knowledge hierarchy and were now relied on for state-building. This reliance on colonially legitimated Sikhs impacted larger community structures as recipients of colonial education, who also often came from dominating caste backgrounds, led the British-sponsored standardization of gurdwara committees and structures across Punjab.[67] The institutional incorporation of Sikh elite was not occurring within a vacuum; rather, locally imposed colonial governance was working to stabilize larger colonial governance structures against British anxiety in response to growing anti-colonial and Indian nationalist movements.

As a result of these threats to stability and security, British colonialists' purposes for knowledge production began to shift several decades before the relocation of colonial governance to the metropole. In particular, colonial epistemologies shifted from solely being concerned with colonial governance in the Asian subcontinent to addressing transnational dynamics.[68] One result was the construction of a clearly demarcated secular-religious divide in community institutions and behavior under British rule in Punjab and across their global empire, enabling colonial administration to regulate which iterations of identity were permissible versus threatening through their transnational rule.[69] The secular-religious distinction also functioned to police transnational resistance. For instance, anti-colonial movements such as the Gadar Party were intentionally classified as secular in order to distinguish their members from Sikhs who supported British rule. As a community relation that rejected secular-religious divisions, Gadaris (members of the Gadar Party) used diasporic gurdwara spaces to mobilize

67. Murphy, "Defining the Religious and the Political."

68. Mark Condos, *The Insecurity State: Punjab and the Making of Colonial Power in British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Renisa Mawani, *Across Oceans of Law: The* Komagata Maru *and Jurisdiction in the Time of Empire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018).

69. Murphy, "Defining the Religious and the Political."

anti-colonial movements globally.[70] Thus, to secure colonial governance during the globalization of imperial relations and the fall of empire, colonial governance of Sikhi and Sikhs transformed into a project of colonial epistemologies in the academy.

Whereas, at the start of the 1900s, academics' knowledge production on Sikhi and Sikhs was for colonial governance within British India, from the mid-twentieth century onward, such knowledge served to reincorporate a burgeoning diasporic community within a transnational context of connected imperialisms.[71] As the site of scholarship on colonized peoples transformed from the empire's colonies to the metropole university, scholars of Sikhi and Sikhs in the European academy fueled the institutionalization of the study of Sikhs and Sikhi in the academy. They did so through the epistemic construction of objectivity and difference; this produced a legitimate authority for academics to define Sikhs and Sikhi, mirroring the legitimacy claimed by colonists in Punjab. For the Gadar Party, this meant that the British Empire simultaneously encouraged transnational surveillance of anti-British colonial Sikh martiality and propagated Sikh martiality that upheld their empire through military service. Thus, the institutionalization of Sikh studies marked the relocation of the study of Sikhs into the academy while also neutralizing Sikh diasporic radicalization through existing global and imperial governing structures.

In surveying early post-empire scholarship from the 1960s and 1970s, the first *Sikh Formations* editorial team identified that operating in this transitional phase required defining a specific disciplinary orientation of knowledge products and producers through the construction of objectivity. For disciplinary products, the "proper domain of knowledge must be measured from the *outside* and therefore primarily in terms of the availability of a certain raw material, namely, archival resources or empirical data as a fuel for research activity."[72] This construction of objectivity through scholarship based on "raw materials" in the colonial archives reveals how scholars could transform governance studies based in the colonial library into the knowledge basis for Sikh studies. Further, these knowledge products were legitimated through their creation by proper knowledge producers—scholars in the 1960s and 1970s who could "transcend existential questions . . . by simply accepting the native informant's self-representation as a legitimate enunciation."[73] Thus, not only was the colonial library still demarcated as the primary source of legitimate knowledge, but the institutionalization of knowledge production also constructed a particular native informant as the primary community interlocutor to provide ongoing data. For example, as justification for producing contemporary scholarship on Sikhs and Sikhi based on one

70. Parmbir Singh Gill, "A Different Kind of Dissidence: The Ghadar Party, Sikh History and the Politics of Anticolonial Mobilization," *Sikh Formations* 10, no. 1 (2014), 23–41; Kanwalroop Kaur Singh, "Queering Colonial Power: Sikh Resistance in the Ghadr Movement," *Sikh Formations* 13, no. 4 (2017), 268–90; Seema Sohi, "Sites of 'Sedition', Sites of Liberation: Gurdwaras, the Ghadar Party, and Anticolonial Mobilization," *Sikh Formations* 10, no. 1 (2014), 5–22.

71. Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*.

72. Pal Ahluwalia, Arvind-Pal S. Mandair, and Gurharpal Singh, "The *Subject* of Sikh Studies," *Sikh Formations* 1, no. 1 (2005), 4.

73. Ibid., 5.

definitional framework (colonially educated Sikh representations of a standard Sikh identity), scholars have identified the false pretense of dialogue between colonial elite and Sikh elite as a legitimating force of "objective" research.[74]

For the institutionalization period, another false pretense of dialogue was occurring between Sikhs who, for the first time, were entering the discipline in greater numbers through training in the Euro-American academy and their non-Sikh faculty.[75] By virtue of depending on the colonial library to produce objective academic research on Sikhi and Sikhs, the process of constructing distance from Sikh communities was even more necessary. As existing academics of Sikhi and Sikhs increasingly incorporated Sikh academics into the academic governance project, epistemic distance became the measure of legitimacy for knowledge production. Without a clear method for building relationships with Sikh communities as valid interlocutors to produce legitimate scholarship, Sikhs' claims of knowledge production through their embodied experience were marked as invalid and inconsistent, except when conveyed through the credentialed academic, as objects of study became the producers of study. In doing so, existing academics structured knowledge production around institutionalizing Sikh studies through its transformation from a geographically distant project to one that now relied on epistemic distance from Sikh communities—a distance that Sikh academics were now in charge of managing.

Toward the end of this institutionalization phase, from the late 1970s through the 1990s, Sikh studies scholars witnessed mass anti-Sikh violence across India. Many Sikh studies scholars, Sikh and non-Sikh, noted feeling responsible for defending Sikhs' inherent humanity in human rights settings in an effort to counteract Indian state narratives of Sikh militant terrorism.[76] Simultaneously, renewed interest in studying Sikhi and Sikhs was driven by distinct concerns: the politics of international development, problems of integration in India, and "the desire in divinity schools (USA) and theology departments (UK) for an intellectual orientation that could respect cultural and religious differences."[77] These currents of globalization meant that Sikh studies scholars from India to the Euro-Americas were building a new relationship with community members through their subject position in the academy and institutionalizing this relational form. However, in the project of institutionalizing Sikh studies, this distant relationship was not considered an appendage of a colonial governance project. In Punjab and India broadly, Sikh studies departments faced complete silencing by the Indian government, whereas, in the West, Sikh studies conferences of the 1980s are remembered as "a nightmare illustration of what can happen when representatives of Sikhism

74. Ibid.; Arvind Mandair and Cosimo Zene, "Dialogue as the Inscription of 'The West,'" *Social Identities* 11, no. 3 (2005), 171–75.

75. Christopher Shackle, "Keynote Address," *Sikh Formations* 11, no. 1–2 (2015), 14–22.

76. Cynthia Keppley Mahmood, *Fighting for Faith and Nation: Dialogues with Sikh Militants* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996); Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Shackle, "Keynote Address."

77. Ahluwalia, Mandair, and Singh, "The *Subject* of Sikh Studies," 2.

and of Sikh Studies are determined not to listen to one another."[78] For example, "Sikhs clamored for verified updates from Punjab,"[79] while, in the words of Professor Ranbir Sandhu, "Western academics would go meet prominent scholars and, having not met the people directly affected by the oppression against Sikhs, come back with limited information."[80] Rather than engaging community calls to include embodiment as a legitimate basis for driving knowledge production, Sikh studies academics (Sikh and non-Sikh) in the West had their academic commitments to objectivity and apolitical knowledge claims. The institutionalization of Sikh studies as a formal discipline in which definitional repair was prioritized distanced Sikh studies scholars from Sikh communities since one could only speak on material harm that occurred separate from the university. In effect, this process propagated the new production of Sikh knowledge in relation to academic governance in the metropole rather than British governance in the distant colony.

Propagating Definitional Recovery: Global Sikh Formations versus Localized Sikh Embodiment

The third phase, propagation, is primarily one of Sikh formations, signifying an intended shift toward establishing Sikhi as a legitimate framework with which to form new analyses and theories of global culture and thought.[81] Sikh studies scholars recently noted that the contemporary transformation of the discipline depends on its ability to take up the question of the global world order; given that Sikhs have been intimately tied to producing it, Sikh thought has a crucial role to play in dismantling it.[82] In this propagation of Sikhi as a framework of global culture and thought, the first *Sikh Formations* editorial team proposed that "it may be possible to read 'Sikh religion' as a *theory of culture* and 'Sikh culture' as a *theory of religion*."[83] In this definitional recovery of Sikhi through Sikh studies, legibility is not identified as a way to claim academic legitimacy; "rather it is to instil the recognition that Sikh Studies has largely been approached from certain theoretical positions and forms of knowledge production that ultimately lead to the installation of the *subject* of Sikh Studies in a 'museum' culture."[84] Sikh studies scholars argue that situating Sikh studies as an ornamental figure to ethnic and cultural studies within Western academia was largely done through the epistemic construction of the "objective" non-Sikh scholar and the Sikh-identifying/identified scholar who had to actively demonstrate their "objectivity." Thus, Sikh academics were at risk of being portrayed as inherently too close to community,

78. Christopher Shackle, "Four Generations of Sikh Studies: A Personal View," *Sikh Formations* 1, no. 1 (2005), 33.

79. Mallika Kaur, *Faith, Gender, and Activism in the Punjab Conflict: The Wheat Fields Still Whisper* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 218.

80. Ranbir Sandhu, quoted in Kaur, *Faith, Gender, and Activism in the Punjab Conflict*, 218.

81. Ahluwalia, Mandair, and Singh, "The *Subject* of Sikh Studies"; Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*.

82. Hundle, "Guru Nanak in an Era of Global Thought."

83. Ahluwalia, Mandair, and Singh, "The *Subject* of Sikh Studies," 9. For further discussion on how this plays out in the study of religion, see Nirvikar Singh, "Who Owns Religion? Scholars, Sikhs and Squaring the Circle" (working paper, University of California, Santa Cruz, September 2022), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/362887690_Who_Owns_Religion_Scholars_Sikhs_and_Squaring_the_Circle.

84. Ibid.

perhaps a response to the increase of Sikh scholars in academia in the 1960s and 1970s. However, although Sikh studies scholars resist using markers of academic legitimacy and epistemic validity to legitimate themselves as spokespeople for Sikhi and Sikhs, they use these same markers of objectivity and distancing to shift the discipline out of its ornamental status in ethnic and religious studies. Instead, they offer Sikhi as a framework for theorizing global relations and equality.

Broadly, academic publishing practices encourage the reproduction of existing scholarship as legitimate, which is especially apparent in the fact that insular citational practices dictate one's academic audience.[85] More particularly for Sikh studies, the colonial library uniquely reproduces itself epistemologically through regular conferences that are designed to produce more publications for the discipline, publications that appear primarily in *Sikh Formations*, and selective engagement with colonial archival sources in contemporary Sikh studies scholarship. Most archival citations in contemporary scholarship fall into two primary categories: (1) colonial state archives (for example, British or Indian national and regional archives that contain colonial administrative documents) or (2) references to *other scholars'* work in which these archives are cited.[86] The decision to selectively use these archives and to turn away from community and toward the academy must be noted as a choice. On the one hand, scholars note the absence of an explicit Sikh archive, which was destroyed through multiple, intentional attacks on Sikh community libraries and institutions of community memory.[87] On the other hand, the uncritical use of the remaining archives and libraries, which have been recreated at the sites of erasure in an effort to memorialize said attempted erasure, risks producing a singular narrative of Sikh experiences of violence.[88]

Hence, in using colonial archives, scholars have not *experienced* limitations of using only certain modes of epistemology; rather, they have *produced* limitations through the choice of distant modes of knowledge production. Or, as Cynthia Mahmood and Stacy Brady state in their feminist ethnography with Sikh communities, "we find no fences [in building relationships with community interlocutors] and believe that the imagining of them creates not objectivity but sterility. . . . The distance and objectification implied by [large random sample research] is what makes people want to erect those fences."[89] Scholars'

85. Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

86. Harjeet Grewal, "Philosophical Transgression and Self Cultivation in the Purātan Janamsākhī: Bhāī Vīr Singh and Modern Sikh Reading Practices," *Sikh Formations* 16, no. 1–2 (2020), 66–84; Himadri Banerjee, "Sikhs and Sikhism in Bihar: Their Distinctiveness and Diversity," *Sikh Formations* 14, no. 2 (2018), 162–87; Kristina Myrvold, "Sketches of Sikhs in the 1880s: The Swedish Vanadis Expedition and Hjalmar Stolpe's Ethnographical Collection from Travels in Punjab," *Sikh Formations* 12, no. 1 (2016), 1–27.

87. Darshan S. Tatla, "The Loss of Sikh Heritage: The Missing Manuscripts of Sikh Reference Library since June 1984," *Sikh Formations* 16, no. 4 (2020), 385–409.

88. Radhika Chopra, "Seeing Off the Dead: Post-mortem Photographs in the Darbar Sahib," *Sikh Formations* 12, no. 2–3 (2016), 207–22.

89. Cynthia Mahmood and Stacy Brady, *The Guru's Gift: An Ethnography Exploring Gender Equality with North American Sikh Women* (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company, 2000), 107.

prioritization of the colonial archive—and, by extension, the library—and the denial of access to said archive permeates much of Sikh studies scholarship.[90] In a sense, scholars *prioritize* the text by centralizing the need for objectivity and legibility, or by not developing a methodology that engages community *and* text. Despite the larger presence of practicing Sikhs in the academy and in support of an expansive methodological approach, this choice to prioritize one epistemology is reminiscent of a "library-focused" formulation of Sikh studies.[91] A jointly informed methodology could explore Sikh ontologies—Sikh ways of being—through numerous epistemologies, or means of identifying that being (that is, onto-epistemes).

This practice of knowledge production as legitimate only through the scholar's distance from communities plays out today through Sikh studies scholars' inability to include an epistemology of embodiments, which is common within Sikh communities. Specifically, scholars continue to mark one onto-epistemic formulation as legitimate in academic research with respect to Sikh knowledge production. In this formulation, lived knowledge is ideological (rather than embodied or phenomenological); Sikh communities are analyzed as sites of conflict rather than as sites of collaboration and as sources of data (albeit rarely even this) rather than as a community of sovereigns, one wherein sovereignty itself is not homogenized but deliberated.[92] This site of conflict is still framed through the original wound of Trumpp's translation, in which Sikhi was portrayed as an illogical worldview system; yet, Trumpp's offense is also noted as a continued site of influence for the discipline: "Trumpp's very insensitivity produced such a powerful reaction, however, that his *Ādi Granth* should probably be regarded as the most influential, if hardly the most admirable of all Sikh Studies books."[93] Academics' practice of producing knowledge through selective distancing from community also mimics Trumpp's original relationship with Sikhi and Sikhs, wherein he used proximity to Sikhs to legitimize his own knowledge production while simultaneously delegitimizing Sikhs' ability to produce knowledge for themselves. This distanced relationship persists in how current relations between Sikh studies scholarship and communities are imagined: "Not only have these studies been particularly significant in shaping the changing central concerns of the field, but they have also been key markers in the sometimes fraught debates provoked by reactions within the Sikh community to the actual or reported findings of individual scholars."[94] As such, by locating scholars' relations to Sikh communities solely through the lens of possible critique (one onto-episteme), this propagation of Sikh studies' onto-episteme sidelines how Sikhs may produce embodied knowledge through their Sikh praxis.

90. Himadri Banerjee, "Sikh Dalits from North-East India: Experiences from Shillong and Guwahati," *Sikh Formations* 6, no. 1 (2010), 3–30.

91. Shackle, "Keynote Address," 14.

92. Judge, "Reform in Fragments."

93. Shackle, "Keynote Address," 16.

94. Ibid., 15.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

We draw on theories of subjectivity formation and racial and colonial capitalism to theorize the discursive relationship between colonial knowledge institutions, Euro-American academics operating primarily in the Euro-American academy, and postcolonial studies of Sikhs and Punjab. In contextualizing the creation of a Sikh colonial library within scholarly debates on subjectivity formation through the colonial archive, we analyze the specific case of Sikh studies scholars and their efforts at definitional recovery. Through our analysis, we argue that Sikh studies scholars must account for how scholars' continued centering of the colonial archive and definitional projects as foundational for academic research has transformed a colonial library of governance into the academic discipline of Sikh studies. Without doing so, academic knowledge production on Sikhi and Sikhs would continue to rely on largely the same geographies of relationality and rule as those that were constructed in colonial Punjab.

Theorizing postcolonial epistemology and subjectivity formation through a "wounded attachments" framework, our analysis of archival recovery projects draws on contemporary research concerning the British colonial archive in order to contextualize British perceptions of Sikhi and Sikhs in relation to a colonial library. When analyzing academic knowledge as a colonial governance tool through this framework, we identify two primary findings. First, we analyze definitional recovery along three dimensions through which scholars epistemologically remade the colonial library of governance into a contemporary discipline of Sikh studies: legibility to the Euro-American academy, appropriate knowledge products for legibility, and credentialed knowledge producers of these products. We find that these dimensions articulate a process of transforming studies of Sikhi into a legible field within academia while also determining a new body of representatives of Sikhi who would act as the intermediary for public debates on the boundaries and theorizations of what Sikhi should mean to the world. Second, by contextualizing how scholars have incorporated the politicized identity of Sikhi and Sikhs into the Euro-American academy since the 1960s, we find that these dimensions operate as "open wounds" for Sikh studies scholars to continuously engage the colonial library and produce Sikh studies as an academic discipline.

Through our wounded attachments framework, we can also identify three types of definitional recovery that operate within contemporary Sikh studies scholarship. In one tradition, scholars have produced a *colonial repair discourse* by engaging the specter of Trumpp's original translation and his harmful relations with Sikh communities. These scholarly efforts have rebuked Trumpp's work with the aim of providing a more "accurate" translation and definition of Sikhi for contemporary study. As responses made under conditions of colonialism, Sikhs' definitional reparative attempts worked within the site of colonial institutions to legitimate their own counter-knowledges because British officials looked for accuracy in their scholars' definitional projects, which were themselves based in the norms of European academic research.[95] Second, in lieu of repairing the colonial discourse, other scholars incorporated a study of Sikhi into the Euro-American curriculum but critiqued that this process occurred through a specific way of knowing: the Western episteme centered on legibility, objectivity, and difference. Through this episteme, Sikhi has been misdefined and misspecified as something of a religion, a culture, and the secular. As a result, Sikh studies scholars have produced a *renegotiation discourse* in which scholars have made specific claims on Sikh life in relation to existing epistemological categories (traditional/modern, secular/religious), strategically using them to highlight Sikhi's uniqueness in order to distinguish Sikhs from other collectivities. Third, and more recently, scholars have produced a *repudiation discourse* in which scholars have rejected both repair and renegotiation discourses because, scholars have argued, those discourses are inherently tied to promoting a *type* of Sikh life or a particular conception of Sikhi. Scholars have contended that legitimating *a* singular, unitary form of Sikhi with which to govern *all* Sikhs will necessarily require using the state's means of social control to uplift and center this ideal type while harming other Sikh formations. Arguing that the center of any Sikh studies discipline must include deep, polyvocal ties to Sikh communities rather than to continuous definitional projects, these scholars have moved against the discipline's inertia and provided alternative frameworks for Sikh studies scholars.

By understanding Sikh studies as emerging from a wounded attachment to the British Empire's colonial library, our study identifies two sites for future research in Sikh studies. First, though we critique engaging the colonial library as the primary means for subjectivity formation, we do not abandon archives or history. As more Sikh studies scholars critically engage contemporary questions concerning Sikh subjectivity, spiritual and political sovereignty, and praxis for the ongoing formation of modernity, scholars have found alternative ways to engage Sikh history outside the strict confines of the colonial library. For instance, scholars have attempted to understand and constitute a Sikh historiography or philosophy based on oral traditions from the 1400s to the 1700s.[96] In light of our argument and analysis, whereas these academic efforts have engaged oral traditions in order to attempt to *construct* a distinct record based in an embodied epistemology of those who identified and practiced as Sikhs, scholarly efforts centered around the colonial archive may instead remain bound to *reconstituting* the colonial archive more accurately or more holistically.[97] Second, our analyses identify a fruitful point of entry for Sikh studies scholars who do not wish to engage the colonial record as their primary site and for those who wish to "decolonize" the discipline. If these definitional recovery projects identify the moment *of* the "wound," scholars can

95. Mandair, "The Emergence of Modern 'Sikh Theology'"; Murphy, "Defining the Religious and the Political."

96. Jvala Singh, *Suraj Podcast*, accessed 13 August 2021, https://soundcloud.com/surajpodcast; Satnam Singh, "Worshipping the Sword: The Practice of *Śāstar Pūjā* in the Sikh Warrior Tradition," in *Objects of Worship in South Asian Religions: Forms, Practices, and Meanings*, ed. Knut A. Jacobsen, Mikael Aktor, and Kristina Myrvold (London: Routledge, 2015), 182–99.

97. Hammer, "Decolonizing the Civil Sphere."

return to the moment *before* the colonial wound, as Brown suggests,[98] to reconsider and resituate the primary questions of Sikh studies outside the definitional project.[99] Such an effort would not require rectifying any official inaccuracies or incompletions, but it would require considering the limitations of the discipline, and perhaps permanently.[100] Scholarship in this tradition could move outside the framework of wounded attachments to articulate a framework of Sikhi while raising questions about the use of colonial and state-based frameworks in a Sikh philosophy.

As Sikh studies is increasingly institutionalized as a formal academic discipline within the Euro-American academy, it is critical to interrogate the birth and genealogy of institutionalized academic desires for recognition or legitimacy through the colonial library. These constructions of social ordering and ideology are crucial to a pursuit of Sikh studies as they extend the colonial project to use definitional recovery for the sake of material gain. Through analyzing Sikh studies' recovery relationship with a colonial library, we conceptualize the contemporary, and possible future, formations of Sikh studies within the Euro-American academy through wounded attachments. As such, we can more clearly identify that epistemic distancing and differences of academic institutionalization are structuring forces for which to account rather than to take for granted.

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98. Brown, "Wounded Attachments," 408.

99. Hundle, "Guru Nanak in an Era of Global Thought"; Judge, "Reform in Fragments"; Katy Pal Sian and Rita Kaur Dhamoon, "Decolonizing Sikh Studies: A Feminist Manifesto," *Journal of World Philosophies* 5, no. 2 (2020), 43–60.

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