Orienting India : Interwar Internationalism in an Asian Inflection, 1917-1937

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4. Asianism in Exile

4.1 Land routes: revolutionary Asianism in Central Asia

As noted in the introduction, histories of interwar internationalism have focused strongly on internationalism in Europe and the United States. While these histories do often include anti-colonial activists from across the globe, it is often assumed that metropolitan capitals such as Paris, London, and Berlin, or cosmopolitan centres such as San Francisco and New York, were the only places where activists from different colonial territories and their sympathisers could conveniently meet. While each of these cities saw substantial internationalist traffic throughout the interwar years, this chapter argues that Asian centres were no less important. From Tashkent to Tokyo, the paths of many revolutionaries crossed in Asia, and many Asianist projects emerged where they intersected. This chapter is concerned with the activities of itinerant Asianists in Asia. It is divided in two parts, based on their travels and the places they sojourned: the land routes which connected South, Central, and East Asia, and the sea-lanes that connected ports such as Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras, with Singapore, Batavia, and Tokyo.

The routes across the Asian landmass invoke images of the silk road and of caravan trails travelled by monks, missionaries, merchants, and the odd explorer. The silk road also suggests a continuous route across the mountains and plains of Central Asia. In that sense, it is somewhat of a misnomer. The silk road was in fact a series of routes, with many entry and exit points along the way, and few travellers ever traversed it in full. Viewed from China, most routes eventually converged on Kashgar. From Kashgar, there was a series of routes either southward across the Hindu Kush into South Asia, or westwards north of the Pamirs to Samarkand, Bokhara, and Tashkent. South of the Pamirs, one might head on to Merv and from there either via Baghdad to Damascus or straight to the Black Sea and Anatolia. The Pamirs, which had to be traversed by many Indian revolutionaries on the way to these places, were not easy to cross. Marco Polo described the hardship of crossing of the Pamirs: 'There is no habitation or shelter, but travellers must take their provisions with them. No birds fly here because of the height and the cold. And I assure you that, because of the great cold, fire is not so bright here nor of the same colour as elsewhere, and food does not cook well'.[1] Half a millennium later, the journey was no less arduous. Rafiq Ahmad, one of several Indian activists to undertake the journey from the North West Frontier Provinces to Tashkent and back, recollected later:

[1] Quoted in F. Wood, *The Silk Road: Two Thousand Years in the Heart of Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 18.

> The cold in Pamir was unbearable. … Many horses died of strain before we reached Murgab. It was so steep that the animals could not just make it. We were given sugar in cubes, so that if in trouble over breathing we could put it in our mouths. … The clothes we had worn before were no longer serviceable. … Having walked continuously on snow-bound paths, our feet had swollen and our toe-nails had dropped off. … There was no human habitation near this border. Our provisions were exhausted. We had to spend the night in a cave without a bite of food.[2]

Indian traffic across the Pamirs has a long history. Tashkent, Samarkand, and Bokhara all had settled Indian trading communities.[3] Tashkent was a major centre on the pilgrimage route to Ottoman and Arab lands. But the nature of this traffic changed with the onset of the Great Game in the nineteenth century. Russia moved southwards, engulfing the Muslim khanates of Bokhara and Khokand, and later Khiva. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Russia had been separated from British India by about 2,000 miles. By the end of it, this distance had shrunk to a few hundred, with only the Pamirs between them. Russian and British officers could almost wave at each other there, posts being less than twenty miles apart in some places.[4] Well aware of Russian advances in the area, and cognizant of the fact that British agents were conspicuous, Indian *munshis* trained in surveying were sent out to map the area.[5] Other newcomers included archaeologists and manuscript hunters such as Paul Pelliot (see chapter 3), who crossed the Pamirs to get to Dunhuang.[6] After the October Revolution, the route became a revolutionary conduit between British India and Soviet Central Asia, frequented by anti-imperialists in general, and by Asianists and Islamists in particular.

As noted in chapter 1, Central Asia occupied an important place in many Indian geographies of Asia. To those who sought to frame Asia as a Hindu-Buddhist continent, the silk road invoked the wandering monks of medieval times who had taken Buddhism into China and the rest of East Asia. To those who imagined a Muslim Asia stretching from Indonesia to Egypt, the Muslim lands of Central Asia were indispensable parts of pilgrimage routes. And as civil war died down and the region was consolidated into the Soviet Union, the Asian Soviet Republics became symbols of Asian modernity—albeit a very different example of modernity from that posed by Japan. Many perceived Soviet Central Asia, with a variety of languages, religions, and cultures, as a model potentially more suited to India. It was geographically closer than Japan, and the region was widely held to have moved from an agricultural and nomadic state into an industrialized economy through an egalitarian system not infrequently hailed as a variation on *swadeshi*, for its emphasis on locally produced

[2] M. Ahmad, *The Communist Party of India and its Formation Abroad* (Calcutta: National Book Agency, 1962), 37–42.

[3] S. C. Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and Its Trade, 1550–1900* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

[4] Wood, *The Silk Road*, 149.

[5] They were called ‘munshis’ because they were dressed as itinerant religious men, their surveying equipment was masked to look like religious apparel, such as a strands of prayer beads altered for the purpose of measuring distance. Wood, *The Silk Road*, 150. Conversely, itinerant monks from China and Japan on the Indian subcontinent were always under British surveillance on the suspicion of being secret political agents.

[6] Pelliot was fortunate enough to see the caves of Dunhuang before 1921. During the years of civil war in Central Asia following the Bolshevik Revolution, deserters interned in the caves destroyed many of the painting and set fire to a number of artefacts. Wood, *The Silk Road*, 218.

goods.[7] As M. R. Masani, an Indian journalist who travelled extensively in the Soviet Union in the 1930s noted, 'Asiatic Russia held particular appeal to an Indian'.[8]

From the early 1920s and throughout the interwar years, Central Asia played a key role in a set of anti-imperialists engagements with Kabul, Tashkent, and Moscow as its most prominent centres. Maulana Barkatullah and Obeidullah Sindhi (see below) and Mahendra Pratap (see section 4.2) had formed a revolutionary group in Kabul in 1917. M. N. Roy and his associates, who figured in chapter 2, had helped create the nucleus in Tashkent from the fall of 1920. Moscow, prominent from 1920 thanks to both M. N. Roy and Virendranath Chattopadhyaya (discussed in chapter 2), increased in importance with the opening of the University of the Toilers of the East, which will be treated further below.

However crucial they were, it is important to note that these three centres were not exclusively driven by well-known revolutionaries-in-exile such as Barkatullah. Rather, the Central Asian sites treated here hold special significance for their appeal to (relatively) non-elite groups. Some aspiring revolutionaries formulated visions of an Asian future based on variations on the communist model. The Tashkent School and later the University of the Toilers of the East in Moscow were centres where such visions were formulated and taught. Others developed visions of an Asian future that had less to do with communism than with an explicitly anti-imperialist (Pan)Asianism. These found expression in the Pan-Asianist imaginings of Mahendra Pratap and in Asianist reformulations of the Khilafat issue and Pan-Islamism.

The Khilafat connection: pilgrims into revolutionaries

In the thought of Mohammed Barkatullah (1859–1927), Pan-Asianism, Pan-Islamism, and Asian communism were intimately connected.[9] Barkatullah was no stranger to 'Pan'-projects. While the concepts he proposed are an excellent example of the patchwork internationalist grammar that marked the early interwar years, they were consistently internationalist and anti-imperialist. Having 'exiled' himself on political grounds in 1906, he never returned to India. He was a co-founder of the Pan-Aryan Association in New York ('Aryan', here, meaning Indo-American collaboration), and had come into contact with incipient Japanese Pan-Asianism during his years as a teacher of Urdu in Tokyo. Active as a Ghadrite in the United States as well as in Berlin, we find him in Central Asia at the close of the First World War, as an Asianist whose projects had a strong Islamist inflection. This, too, had earlier roots; in Japan, he had published a journal called *Islamic Fraternity*, which, to the dismay of the British, called for anti-imperialist alliances in Asia. Indeed, when Indian involvement in Pan-Asianist projects started to expand in the 1920s, it was to this journal that intelligence services returned: '[Pan-Asianism] may be said to date back roughly some 10 or 11 years when Maulvi Mahomed Barkatullah, then Professor of Hindustani at the Tokyo School of Foreign Languages, … published a paper in Tokyo entitled "The Islamic Fraternity" which … generally advocated an alliance of the Asiatic nations against the domination of the white races'.[10] In 1915, Barkatullah met with Mahendra Pratap in Constantinople before proceeding

[7] Among others, 'Spirit of Swadeshi', *Congress Socialist*, 25 January 1936.
[8] 'The Romance of Baku', *Congress Socialist*, 22 January 1936.
[9] On Barkatullah's travels and activism, see Ramnath, *The Haj to Utopia*, esp. 43–9, 183–8, 218–32.
[10] APAC, IOR, L/P&J 12/157: Indians in Japan.

to Kabul where they intended to ask the Amir of Afghanistan, as well as several other leaders in the region, to declare war on the British. Although this request was denied, Pratap did gain the trust of Amir Amanullah and was sent to Soviet Russia as an extraordinary ambassador to establish friendly relations between Afghanistan and the new regime. He met with Lenin in 1919 and was also active in Soviet Turkestan and Bukhara.

Although well-versed in Islamic theology, Barkatullah was never a pronounced Pan-Islamist.[11] He was sympathetic to Marxist and Leninist theories, and to the Soviet project, but he was not a communist either. During his three-year stay in the Soviet Union, he set out to combine elements of both. In his thought, the unifying factor was Asia. To the *Petrograd Pravda*, he declared:

> I am not a communist nor a socialist, but my political programme at present is the expulsion of the English from Asia. … Thus I concur with the communists and in this respect we are genuine allies. [The annulment by Russia of secret treaties imposed by imperialist governments] united around Soviet Russia all the exploited peoples of Asia and all the parties, even parties far away from socialism. These acts predetermined and brought nearer the Asian revolution.[12]

In order to play his own part in this Asian revolution, Barkatullah wrote a Persian pamphlet entitled 'Bolshevism and the Islamic Nations'. Downplaying the antireligious tenets of the Soviet project and focusing instead on the similarities of the Quranic precepts of *zakat* and *bait-ul-mal* to communism, he focused on the imperialist threat to Asia. He considered a program of aggressive modernization on the Soviet model as a 'divine cry' to liberty, equality, and brotherhood.[13]

> British imperialism holds Asiatic nations in a state of eternal thraldom. It has moved troops into Turkestan with a view to felling the young tree of perfect human liberty just as it is beginning to take root and strength. Time has come for the Muhammedans of the world and Asiatic nations to understand the noble principles of Russian socialism and to embrace it seriously and enthusiastically. They should fathom and realize the cardinal virtues taught by this new system. … They should, without loss of time, send their children to Russian schools to learn modern sciences, noble arts, practical physics, chemistry, mechanics, etc. … Muslims of Russia! Muslims of the East! On this road towards a renewal of the world we await your sympathy and support.[14]

Barkatullah's pamphlet was not the only Indian manifesto written in Tashkent. A sizeable group of revolutionaries had gathered there, one of whom, Abdul Majid, edited an Urdu-

[11] G. Adhikari, *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India.* Vol. 1, *1917–1922* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House 1971), 115.
[12] *Petrograd Pravda*, no. 10, 1919, quoted in Adhikari, *Documents of the History of the CPI*, 118–20.
[13] Adhikari, *Documents*, 1:126.
[14] Barkatullah, 'Bolshevism and the Islamic Nations', quoted in Adhikari, *Documents*, 1:126–8.

Persian paper called *Zamindar*.[15] This periodical, too, framed its activism in terms of an all-Asia project. In their inaugural issue, they declared their intent to 'keep all Eastern revolutionary organizations under once centre'.[16] One of Majid's associates, Muhammad Shafiq, later to be sentenced to three years' imprisonment in the infamous Peshawar Conspiracy Case, wrote an 'Appeal to the Oppressed Peoples of the East'. This echoed a sentiment shared by many exiled Indian revolutionaries: if Asia took a united stand against the imperial powers, Indian independence would emerge naturally, as a by-product of that unity. Conveniently claiming to speak for all of India, Shafiq wrote:

> Respectful greetings from the organization of Indian residents in Tashkent. India with heart and soul hopes for the fulfilment of your desires. India is so sick of the oppressive repression that it is determined to plunge into the battle. Oh, sufferers of the East dreaming of freedom from iron chains, it is your duty to follow the example of India! … Brethren of Bukhara, is not your Amir a pawn of British greed? … Oh, Iranian brothers, is not your Shah busy touring Europe? … Oh, leading members of Soviet Russia, is your country really secure? … Never! It is only when you understand this that you will heed the call.[17]

Who were these 'Indian revolutionaries' in Tashkent? While some had been drawn to Soviet Asia soon after the October Revolution to collaborate with the new regime in either Moscow or Tashkent, the majority had ended up there for very different reasons. They had left after the 1920 Khilafat Congress, aiming to head to Angora (Ankara). These were the so-called *muhajirs* (literally, 'migrants'), who responded to the call for *hijrat* (emigration to escape repression) after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. As noted in chapter 1, the disillusion over unkept British promises with regard to the caliphate and the holy places of Islam had sparked the movement. The muhajirs were thus on their way to Anatolia rather than to Soviet Central Asia. Approximately two hundred muhajirs had set out, mostly from Peshawar, crossing into Afghanistan from the Northwest Frontier Provinces in present-day Pakistan. They had been promised asylum by the Amir who, as their numbers increased and several hundred penniless khilafatists camped near Kabul, retracted the offer. Those who did make it to Kabul met with an unlikely duo: Obeidullah Sindhi, an associate of Barkatullah and a staunch Pan-Islamist, and Abdur Rab, a Soviet agent who, like many of the muhajirs, hailed from Peshawar. Obeidullah Sindhi was connected to the radical section of the *ulema* at Deoband. Mahmud al-Hasan, the principal at Deoband, had declared the struggle for Pan-Islamic goals to be more effective from abroad, thus giving further impetus to the muhajir activists.[18] Obeidullah Sindhi gave this concrete expression by giving these 'Pan-Islamic goals' revolutionary and anti-imperialist content.[19] Rab appealed to similar sentiments, but convinced a group of muhajirs to continue on to Soviet-controlled Central Asia, for 'revolution had taken place and

[15] Abdul Majid was an associate of Rafiq Ahmad mentioned above.
[16] Adhikari, *Documents*, 1:137.
[17] Adhikari, *Documents*, 1:137–39.
[18] K. H. Ansari, 'Pan-Islam and the Making of the Early Indian Muslim Socialists', *Modern Asian Studies*, 20:3 (1986): 509–37: 514.
[19] Ibid., 515.

if they went there they could see and learn many things'.[20] They agreed to proceed there. At Bukhara, they were met by M. N. Roy, who invited them to join the incipient Indian revolutionary core in Tashkent. This caused a split in allegiances, and those muhajirs more interested in Pan-Islamism than in Soviet Asianism departed from the group. They got as far as Baku, but were distrusted by Turkish representation there and refused permission to continue.[21] However, even at the westernmost fringes of Soviet territory there was no escaping Soviet plans for the 'oppressed peoples' of Asia: at least two of the muhajirs, Akbar Shah and Masood Ali Shah, ended up at the Baku Congress of the Oppressed Peoples of the East, which opened on 1 September 1920.[22] They attended the following speech on the first day:

> Comrades! The grey-haired East, which gave us our first notion of morality and culture, will today shed tears, telling of her sorrow, of the grievous wounds inflicted upon her by capital of the bourgeois countries. … We must at last slam shut this book of the accursed past, so that it may never return. We must open a new page of history, when the oppressed peoples of the East will no longer be slaves, when they will not allow British offices to shamelessly plunder the Indians and the Persians, killing, insulting and mocking at everyone.[23]

The Congress of the Oppressed Peoples of the East convened twenty-two Asian nationalities to hammer out a common policy against imperialism in Asia with Soviet party leaders as well as representatives from other European communist parties.[24] Fourteen Indian delegates attended, roughly half of whom belonged to the Indian Revolutionary Association, soon to be merged with the newly established Communist Party of India (CPI).[25] M. N. Roy himself was absent, but M. P. T. Acharya (1887–1951) and Abani Mukherjee (1891–1937) represented the small group of 'card-carrying' Indians who had settled in Soviet Asia for ideological reasons prior to the muhajirs' arrival. Acharya had been a member of the Indian party that visited Lenin in 1918 and an associate of Abdur Rab.[26] But Mukherjee in particular was a revolutionary with a long pedigree in Pan-Asianist activism, whose travels took him to almost all Asianist centres as well as Asianist groups of the interwar period. Having met exiled Pan-Asianist Rashbehari Bose (discussed below) as early as 1914, his revolutionary activities led him to Japan, Singapore, and the Dutch East Indies. His Indonesian and Dutch contacts

[20] From the account of Rafiq Ahmad, quoted in Ahmad, *The Communist Party of India*, 15.

[21] Adhikari, *Documents*, 2:27.

[22] Adhikari, *Documents*, 1:52. On the Baku Congress, see J. Riddell, ed., *To See the Dawn: Baku, 1920—First Congress of the Peoples of the East* (New York: Pathfinder, 1993); S. White, 'Communism and the East: Baku, 1920', *Slavic Review* 33:3 (1974): 492–514.

[23] Congress proceedings: First Session—1 September 1920, in Riddell, *To See the Dawn*, 60–77.

[24] Riddell, *To See the Dawn*, 11. The Baku Congress, moreover, was convened by the Communist International after its second congress.

[25] S. Roy, *M. N. Roy: A Political Biography* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 1997), 58.

[26] Acharya had also been a revolutionary exile since 1907, passing through anarchism, socialism, communism, and back to anarchism. He spent the whole interwar period abroad with a permanent British warrant for his arrest. See M. P. T. Acharya, *Reminiscences of an Indian Revolutionary*, ed. B. D. Yadav (New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1991), vi.

acquainted him with communism, and through the offices of Dutch communist S. J. Rutgers he ended up in the Soviet Union and at the Second Congress of the Communist International. During a clandestine return to India, he was briefly engaged in trade union activities, collaborating with, among others, S. A. Dange.[27]

Among the 'non-party' Indians were Nazir Sidiq and Kadir,[28] both listed as members of the presiding committee of the congress. To Akbar Shah and Masood Ali Shah, who, in opposition to the aforementioned revolutionaries at Baku, had ended up at the congress almost by chance, the Baku Congress must still have been appealing. In the proceedings, India and Turkey took pride of place for two reasons: as horrifying examples of how proud, cultured, and rich Asian lands had been destroyed and humiliated by the capitalist-imperialist enterprise; and as Asian lands who had suffered particularly in the First World War. In the resulting 'Manifesto of the Peoples of the East', written during the congress and signed by the presiding committee members, great care was taken to mention all the represented Asian nationalities, but none as frequently as India and Turkey. The injustices committed there are presented as the *casus belli* for Asia to unite and fight the imperialists—under the leadership of Soviet Russia, conveniently presented here as an 'eastern people'.

> [This war] was fought for the partition of the world, and chiefly for the partition of Asia, of the East. It was fought to decide who was to rule the countries of Asia and whose slaves the peoples of the East would be. … Peoples of the East! You know what Britain has done in India, you know how it has turned the many-millioned masses of the Indian peasants and workers into dumb beasts of burden without any rights. … The British officers who rule over [the Indian soldiers], insolent sons of a British bourgeoisie grown fat on Indian corpses, do not regard them as human.
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> Peoples of the East! Do you know what Britain has done in Turkey? … When the Turkish people refused to accept a peace which would have destroyed them, the British occupied Constantinople, a holy place to Muslims. … They have closed all the points of entry into Asia Minor. In Asia Minor today there is not one piece of cloth, not one fragment of metal. The Turkish peasant must go about without a shirt and till the soil with a wooden plough.
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> The peoples of the East have long stagnated in the darkness of ignorance under the despotic yoke of their own tyrant rulers and of foreign capitalist conquerors. … We are representatives of the toiling masses of all the peoples of the East. … Peoples of the East! Often you heard a call from your government to holy war, and you marched under the green banner of the Prophet. But all those holy wars were fraudulent, serving only the interests of your self-seeking rulers. … Now we summon you for the first

[27] Aliases included Trailokovich Mukherdzhi (added Russian patronymic) and Dar Shaheer (alias used in Southeast Asia). Mukherjee stayed in the Soviet Union, primarily as an Indologist for the Soviet Council of Sciences, but was purged and executed in 1937. See further the somewhat hagiographic biography by G. Chattopadhyaya, *Abani Mukherji: A Dauntless Revolutionary and Pioneering Communist* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1976).

[28] No last name given.

> genuine holy war … a holy war for your own well-being, for your freedom, for your life. Save yourselves, peoples of the East![29]

As yet, the Baku conference has not been recognized as a moment of importance to the Indian anti-imperialist struggle, let alone as a site of anti-imperialist or Asianist significance to India.[30] This is partly due to the fact that Baku was not attended by any of the 'figureheads' of the revolutionary struggle whose travels brought them to the Soviet Union, such as Barkatullah, M. N. Roy, and Virendranath Chattopadhyaya. However, the strong Indian presence at the Baku Congress caused India to become a Profintern priority. Abdur Rab had sent a letter to the Baku Congress on behalf of the Indian Revolutionary Association in Tashkent, urging the delegates, and the Soviet Government in particular, to come to the aid of the oppressed peoples of the East. It is indicative of the Tashkent circle's particular brand of Asianism in an Islamic inflection, that in the letter they vow to work with all the Baku delegates to resolve the 'Eastern Question', but hope that 'help may be given without religious interference', which may be read as non-interference in the region's Islamic affairs.[31]

After the Baku Congress, plans arose to organize a large Indian Revolutionary Congress in Central Asia with Soviet help. M. N. Roy tried to get word of this initiative to Indian trade unions.[32] M. P. T. Acharya, in the meantime, moved to Kashgar to coordinate Indian activities through a Kashgar Union with local activists, although he admitted to difficulties in locating 'workmen's revolutionary unions' there.[33] Mukherjee took yet another approach, and worked to get Indian trade unionists to the Congress of International Trade and Industrial Unions in Moscow, and to help 'about three dozen Indian working men and peasants' to go to Moscow to be trained in trade unionism.[34] This translation from the revolutionary internationalism from the Indian exiles in Central Asia, into trade unionism in India, was not without its effect. This would become clear when its Asia Bureau was founded, and particularly in the years of the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat. Conversely, it put the Soviet policy towards Asia in the 1920s firmly on the map of the Indian anti-imperialist struggle. As can be glimpsed from the above letters, Acharya and Mukherjee both had large revolutionary networks within and outside of India, which included the leaders of revolutionary trade unions. Baku delegate Masood Ali Shah, moreover, was in close touch with M. N. Roy, and through him, revolutionary trade union leaders such as Muzaffar

[29] 'Manifesto of the Peoples of the East', in Riddell, *To See the Dawn*, 221–33.

[30] In stark opposition to the recognition of its significance to the Middle East and Persia. J. Pennar, 'The Arabs, Marxism and Moscow: A Historical Survey', *Middle East Journal* 22:4 (1968): 433–47; S. Blank, 'Soviet Politics and the Iranian Revolution of 1919–1921', *Cahier du monde russe et soviétique* 21:2 (1980): 173–94; S. Yilmaz, 'An Ottoman Warrior Abroad: Enver Pasha as an Expatriate, *Middle Eastern Studies* 35:4 (1999): 40–69.

[31] RCCSRMH 495–68–9: Mohammad Abdur Rabb Barq to the Comrades of the Third International, Second Congress, Baku, 10 August 1920. Published in Roy, Gupta, and Vasudevan, *Indo-Russian Relations*, 25–6.

[32] RCCSRMH 459–68–2, M. N. Roy to Ya. Z. Suritz, 4 October 1920, in ibid., 31–4: 33.

[33] RCCSRMH 544–1–11, M. P. B. T. Acharya to M. N. Roy, 17 November 1920, in ibid., 36–7.

[34] RCCSRMH 495–68–5, Abani Mukherjee to S. P. Gupta, 30 December 1920, in ibid., 44–50: 50.

Ahmed.[35]

The University of the Toilers of the East

Meanwhile in Tashkent, revolutionary training became more coordinated with the return of the Baku delegates. In October 1920, a political and military training school for Indian revolutionaries was established. The nucleus was formed by forty-odd muhajirs,[36] who were put up in the Indusky Doma (India House).[37] By April 1921, their numbers had risen to 110.[38] The short-lived school was referred to as *Indusky Kurs*, which suggests exclusive Indian involvement, but according to M. N. Roy it was an 'international brigade' of Indian, Persian, and Russian revolutionaries acting as an auxiliary to the Red Army.[39] The reality was probably less glamorous. The few existing accounts of the Tashkent School note general disappointment in the revolutionary zeal of its students—possibly because of their greatly varying educational backgrounds.[40] The promising ones were enrolled in officer training, including air force training; the non-elite students were enrolled in infantry training. According to Rafiq Ahmad, only one of them actually learned to fly an airplane.[41] This might be the unnamed ill-fated officer who died soon after demonstrating aerial acrobatics to recruits from Afghanistan and Persia when he was attached to the Red Army aviation unit in Leningrad.[42] However, attempts were made to disseminate propaganda throughout Asia generated at the Tashkent School; Shaukat Usmani and Rafiq Ahmad were sent to the tribal areas of Turkestan, away from watchful British eyes, to set up printing presses.[43] Such equipment was both expensive and hard to move—M. P. T. Acharya, too, was entrusted with the care of a typewriter that was moved first to the Kashgar Union and later to Tashkent.[44]

The Tashkent School left many Indians and Soviets alike unimpressed, and after eight months the school was disbanded. However, the attempt to train revolutionaries from Soviet and colonial Asia together in order to form a united Asian anti-imperialist front had not lost its attraction to either the Tashkent circle or to the Soviet leadership: the school was moved to Moscow and merged with the Communist University for the Toilers of the East (KUTV).[45]

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[35] S. Roy, *M. N. Roy: A Political Biography*, 61; S. Chattopadhyay, *An Early Communist: Muzaffar Ahmad in Calcutta, 1913–1929* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2011).

[36] Adhikari mentions forty students in volume 2, and fifty in volume 1. Given that only twenty-six of the muhajirs actually joined the Tashkent school, the former number is more likely. It is also closer to the account of Rafiq Ahmad, who notes that from an initial group of sixty, a sizeable group never proceeded to Tashkent. M. Ahmad, *The Communist Party of India*, 27.

[37] Adhikari, *Documents*, 2:27.

[38] Manjapra, *M. N. Roy*, 45.

[39] M. N. Roy, *Memoirs* (New Delhi: Allied, 1964), 437.

[40] Roy's own account not excepted; see Roy, *Memoirs*, 464. For the British view that 'from Roy downwards' Indian communists in Central Asia were largely incompetent, see Popplewell, *Intelligence and Imperial Defence*, 311.

[41] Ahmad, *The Communist Party of India*, 30.

[42] Roy, *Memoirs*, 471.

[43] Ahmad, *The Communist Party of India*, 30.

[44] RCCSRMH 544–1–11, Acharya to Roy, 27 October 1920. In Roy, Gupta, and Vasudevan, *Indo-Russian Relations*, 34–6: 35.

[45] Kommunističeskij Universitet Trudjaŝihsja Vostoka, also known as the Far East University. The university was expanded soon after to include branches in Tashkent and Irkutsk.

This was an addition to the International Lenin School, where European and American students were taught. The two universities were kept separated, with the University of the Toilers of the East geared exclusively towards Asian anti-imperialism. Most of the Tashkent students joined the KUTV. A. C. Freeman, who was allowed to inspect the university on behalf of the New York-based Friends of Soviet Russia Society, reported that the school was a colourful mix of illiterate Muslim peasants and Chinese, Japanese, and Indian political refugees with degrees from Oxford and Heidelberg.[46] Indeed, the 'Turkomans in high black wool hats, Sarts from Bukhara with brightly embroidered caps and almond-eyed Tartars from the Volga'[47] were joined by educated revolutionaries who would soon become important leaders in Asian anti-imperialist networks. Among them were Tan Malaka of the Indonesian Communist Party (KUTV, 1922), Ho Chi Minh (KUTV, 1923), and Liu Shaoqi (KUTV, 1921). Masood Ali Shah, Rafiq Ahmad, and Shaukat Usmani also attended.[48]

In this way, the university created an Asianist network of revolutionaries who not only remained in conversation with each other, but whose paths also crossed with revolutionaries at home. It made Moscow into a centre of Asianist enthusiasm in the first half of the 1920s, causing a variety of Pan-Asianists to include the city in their itineraries. The second anniversary of the KUTV was celebrated with speeches from all colonial territories in many languages, accompanied by a series of Asian dance performances.[49] At the third anniversary, Trotsky delivered a rousing speech. By this time, the school was under surveillance from British intelligence, who dismissed Trotsky's words as a self-congratulatory 'dwelling upon the world importance of the University.'[50] At the school itself, however, his words were received with enthusiasm:

> You must know how to couple the uprising of the Indus peasants, the strike of coolies in the ports of China, the political propaganda of Kuomintang bourgeois democracy, the struggle of the Koreans for independence, the bourgeois-democratic rebirth of Turkey and the economic and cultural and educational work in the Soviet republic of Transcaucasia. … At the moment of these decisive events the students of the Communist University of the East will say: 'We are here. … We know not only how to translate the ideas of Marxism and Leninism into the language of China, India, Turkey and Korea; but we have also learnt how to translate the sufferings, passions, demands and hopes of the toiling masses of the East into the language of Marxism'. 'Who has taught you that?' they will be asked. 'The Communist University for Toilers of the East taught us that.[51]

[46] A. C. Freeman, 'Russia's University of Oriental Communists', reproduced in Adhikari, *Documents*, 1:243–45: 244.

[47] Freeman, 'Russia's University of Oriental Communists', 243.

[48] MSA, Home Special file 543(2) Bolshevism—Note by the India Office London on the Indian Communist movement for the period 21 December 1922 to 10 May 1923.

[49] As noted by former *muhajir* Fazl Ilahi Qurban. 'Revolutionary Training Schools', *Vanguard of Indian Independence*, no. 1 (1923).

[50] NAI, Home Political 220 (1924): The Communist University for Workers of the East.

[51] L. Trotsky, *Perspectives and Tasks in the East—Speech on the third anniversary of the Communist University for Toilers of the East, April 21, 1924* (London: New Park, 1973), 14–5.

The fourth anniversary was celebrated no less festively, with Stalin himself speaking on the 'Political Tasks of the University of the Peoples of the East'.[52] However, his speech suggests that the university was already losing the official backing it had enjoyed under Lenin.[53] His speech opened with the statement that although all students at the university were 'Sons of the East', the differences between students from the Soviet East and from the colonial East were too large to teach the two groups in one educational body. His speech showed the first signs that a large Asian front, of which all constituent parts fought against imperialism and for their own self-determination (an atmosphere which had prevailed at Baku and Tashkent, and during the early years of the KUTV), was not on Moscow's list of priorities. In hindsight, the speech reads more like a closing ceremony. The answer came in the early 1930s, when the university leadership and student body were purged.

4.2 Asia overland: the travels of Mahendra Pratap

How were centres of expatriate Indian activism such as Tashkent and Moscow connected to other Asianist networks? Although the Tashkent and Moscow nuclei had their own imaginings of an Asian future, these visions were not necessarily shared by Asianists from other backgrounds and persuasions. However, as noted, the activities in these centres had put these cities on the Asianist map, and the Asianists who passed through incorporated them into a larger network of Asianist routes. Much like the silk road itself, few people traversed all of these routes in full. This section is concerned with Mahendra Pratap as an Asianist revolutionary who did so not once, but several times.[54]

Like his fellow revolutionaries in exile, Pratap was convinced that the struggle for India's freedom could not be fought from within the country. This resulted in three turbulent decades of travel with a view to seeking outside help to overthrow British rule in India. The majority of his life in exile was spent in various parts of Asia, where he interacted with people and institutions concerned with the future of the Asian continent, from Lenin to the Dalai Lama and from the University of the Toilers of the East in Tashkent to the Pan-Asiatic Society in Japan. While his plans seemed unrealistic at times, even to contemporaries, his decision to work towards a unified Asia—which would, in his view, inevitably lead to an independent India—was not at all uncommon. Through the very act of travelling, he became one of the threads that tied together a web of contacts that functioned as a civil society. Over the course of his nomadic life, he sought out other revolutionary exiles as well as Indian expatriate communities, especially in places that were significant to his larger plan of uniting 'Pan-Asia', notably Moscow, Kabul, Peking, and Tokyo. These cities acted as nodal points in his transit routes, where both exiled Indian activists and local intellectuals exchanged ideas and expressed their solidarity with colonized Asia. This is not to say they were necessarily spaces of unity and agreement. Rather, they offered opportunities for expatriates whose ideas

[52] Published as 'The Political Tasks of the University of the Toilers of the East', *Pravda* 115 (22 May 1925).

[53] Lenin had died in 1924. The university may have suffered from the power struggle between Stalin and Trotsky's. Karl Radek, who headed the university in its early years, was expelled from the party in 1927. He was readmitted in 1930, but sentenced to hard labour in a show trial soon after.

[54] Parts of the following pages were published in Stolte, '"Enough of the Great Napoleons!" Raja Mahendra Pratap's Pan-Asian Projects (1929–1939)', *Modern Asian Studies* 46:2 (2012): 403–23.

ranged from a vague sense of anti-colonialism to the radical establishment of a new Asian order.

To assert that Mahendra Pratap was not the only travelling revolutionary with an integrative function between disparate Asian anti-imperialist networks would be an understatement. The lives of South Asian Har Dayal and Muhammad Barkatullah, or of Tan Malaka and E. F. E. Douwes Dekker, with their (sometimes overlapping) narratives of travel, activism, surveillance, and imprisonment, are well documented.[55] Even so, there are several reasons for focusing on Pratap to map the revolutionary routes through the landmass of Asia. His travels were unusually extensive and his contacts particularly diverse. Moreover, what little literature does exist draws heavily on his autobiography and therefore on information filtered through Pratap's own perceptions.[56] Unfortunately, contrary to what we might expect, this autobiography offers little insight into his thoughts. It is an account of his travels, detailing the trials and tribulations of life on the road, from the price of donkeys in Tibet to armed skirmishes on the steppes of Central Asia.

Another impediment to a balanced account of his life is that several historians have attempted to integrate him more closely into the nationalist narrative, overemphasizing his non-communalism, his connections to the Indian National Congress, and his indebtedness to the thought of Gandhi[57]—who, however, was no internationalist and no fan of Pratap's ideas. Through his secretary, Gandhi once wrote to Pratap: 'Rather than move about from place to place doing nothing, you should take up any kind of settled job, no matter whether it is of plate-washing, or boot-blacking or hawking'.[58] And Nehru, who did share Pratap's internationalist enthusiasm, nevertheless described his first meeting with Pratap in the following way: 'He seemed to be a character out of medieval romance, a Don Quixote who had strayed into the 20th century'.[59] However, Pratap should be viewed as an Asianist and anti-imperialist rather than as a nationalist. According to him, India's independence would materialize if Asia united. Through strategic alliances at various key sites in Asia, he focused primarily on the latter goal.

Mahendra Pratap was born on 1 December 1866, the third son of Raja Ghanshiam

[55] E. C. Brown, *Har Dayal: Indian Revolutionary and Rationalist* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1975); M. Ramnath, *The Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire* (Santa Cruz: University of California Press, 2011); H. A. Poeze, *Tan Malaka: strijder voor Indonesië's vrijheid: levensloop van 1897 tot 1945* (The Hague: Smits, 1976); P. W. J. van der Veur, *The Lion and the Gadfly. Dutch Colonialism and the Spirit of E. F. E. Douwes Dekker* (Leiden: KITLV, 2006).

[56] V. Singh, ed., *The Life and Times of Raja Mahendra Pratap* (New Delhi: Originals, 2005); M. Pratap, *Reminiscences of a Revolutionary* (New Delhi: Raja Mahendra Pratap Birth Centenary Celebration National Committee, 1986); M. Hassan Khan et al., eds., *The Contribution of Raja Mahendra Pratap and Prof. Barkatullah Bhopali in Freedom Struggle and its Importance in Contemporary Society* (Kolkata: Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, 2008); D. O. Singh, *Mahāna krāntikārī, Āryāna Peśavā, Rājā Mahendra Pratāpa* (New Delhi: Candramukhī Prakāśana, 2008); D. N. Singh, *Rājā Mahendra Pratāpa: ek bahuayami vyaktitwa* (New Delhi: Raja Mahendra Pratap, 1986).

[57] S. Chakravarti, 'Important Legacies of Mahendra Pratap' in Singh, *The Life and Times*, 6–12; A. K. Patnaik, 'Raja Mahendra Pratap and the Provisional Government of India at Kabul' in Singh, *The Life and Times*, 13–33.

[58] NAI, Private Papers Collection (PPC) Mahendra Pratap, Correspondence file 32. Gandhi's secretary to Pratap, 11 September 1936.

[59] J. Nehru, *An Autobiography* (London: John Lane, 1938), 151.

Singh Bahadur in Al-Mursan. He attended Aligarh Muslim College and married into the ruling family of Jind. Pratap's emerging translocal solidarities first became evident when he went to Constantinople to 'serve Turkey' during the 1912 Balkan War. Some of his classmates from Aligarh had organized a medical mission led by Muktar Ahmad Ansari that he had wanted to join.[60] But by the time Pratap arrived, they had already gone to the front. Like the muhajirs eight years later, he never received Turkish permission to proceed: his host at the Turkish War Office was not only unimpressed by Pratap's devotion to the Turkish cause, he was also highly suspicious of his non-Muslim name.

Undeterred, Pratap fared better in his next attempt to meddle in a war. In 1914, he 'began to feel decisive sympathy for the Germans who were fighting this dirty British Empire' and wanted to see for himself 'what it was all about'.[61] By this time the local magistrate was already complaining of the pro-German attitude displayed in one of the articles in Pratap's periodical *Nirbal Sewak*.[62] Pratap bade his wife and children goodbye and left for Europe. His first stop of note was Geneva, where he met the famous revolutionary Krishnavarma,[63] Ghadar party founder Har Dayal, and later also Virendranath Chattopadhyay, who travelled with him to Berlin in 1915. In that city, he was received with receptions, banquets, and special tours to the front. He had an audience with the Kaiser and received the Red Eagle second class. They discussed his impending mission to Afghanistan to ask the Amir and other rulers in the region to declare war on the British. A list of participants was drawn up and Pratap left for Turkey with the party's German diplomat, Von Hentig.[64] Barkatullah, whose language skills in Persian and Arabic were vital to the mission, accompanied him, as did several Afghan Afridi soldiers who had been interned in Germany as prisoners of war and had volunteered their services. Before leaving for Afghanistan, they were received by the sultan in Istanbul, and the sultan's son-in-law and war minister, Enver Pasha.[65] Despite bouts of dysentery and high fever, Pratap thoroughly enjoyed the journey through Asia. His party reached Kabul on 2 October 1915 and they were received by King Habibullah, to whom they presented letters from the Kaiser and the sultan. Though the king appeared less than enthusiastic about declaring war on the British, Barkatullah and Pratap raised the issue of Indians interned in Afghan prisons for anti-British activities, and pressed for their release. This was a token of good faith that the king could easily provide; and

[60] M. A. Ansari was a medical doctor, educator, and politician and became President of the Indian National Congress in 1927. The medical mission consisted of five doctors and a supporting staff of nineteen. See S. T. Wasti, 'The 1912–13 Balkan War and the Siege of Edirne', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 40:4 (2004): 59–78. Ansari was also from Aligarh Muslim College, though he was not acquainted with Pratap at the time.

[61] Singh, *My Life Story*, 35.

[62] Nirbal Sewak (निर्बल सेवक) translates as 'humble servant' and was published in Hindi and Urdu.

[63] Among other things, Shyamji Krishnavarma (1857–1930) founded the India Home Rule Society, the India House, and the *Indian Sociologist* in London. I. Yajnik, *Syamaji Krishnavarma: Life and Times of an Indian Revolutionary* (Bombay: Lakshmi Publications, 1950); H. Fischer-Tiné, *Sanskrit, Sociology and Anti-Imperial Struggle: The Life of Shyamji Krishnavarma (1857–1930)* (Delhi: Routledge India, 2013).

[64] For details on the mission, see A. C. Bose, *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad* (Patna: Bharati Bhawan, 1971); T. L. Hughes, 'The German Mission to Afghanistan, 1915–1916', in *Germany and the Middle East, 1871–1945*, edited by W. Schwanitz, 25–63 (Princeton: Markus Weiner Publications, 2004); T. R. Sareen, *Indian Revolutionary Movement Abroad, 1905–1921* (New Delhi: Sterling, 1979).

[65] Enver Pasha, like many of the activists in this chapter, was to die as an exile in Soviet Asia.

Obeidullah Sindhi was among those released from prison.

Fig. 8. Pratap (white helmet) and Barkatullah (grey helmet) at the Euphrates river. Pratap's interlocutor is the Ottoman representative Kasim Bey
[Stiftung Bibliotheca Afghanica, Collection Botschafter Werner Otto von Hentig, 1915–7].

On 1 December 1915, Pratap, Barkatullah, and Obeidullah formally established the Provisional Government of India, with Pratap as its 'life president' (until government could be handed over to Congress) and the others as prime minister and home minister respectively. They dedicated themselves to the service of India: 'When the story of the freedom of our country will be written someday this chapter of our Provisional Government of India will receive due consideration. … Once, even a treaty was drawn up between us and Afghanistan'.[66] Although they received some encouragement from court factions eager for war, the Amir himself seems to have interacted with the 'provisional government' as little as possible.

[66] Singh, *My Life Story*, 51. There is no evidence that the treaty was actually concluded.

Fig. 9. Expedition members at Kabul after the establishment of the Provisional Government. Barkatullah (far left), Pratap (centre) [Stiftung Bibliotheca Afghanica, Botschafter Werner Otto von Hentig, 1915–7].

Pratap now pinned his hope on the Russian empire. Pratap sent a letter to the tsar, presented on a solid gold platter, urging Russia to 'establish her influence in Asia on a permanent basis'.[67] The tsar, however, was not inclined to help them. Not much later, the Soviets proved more receptive, even though they seem to have been a bit suspicious of Pratap's initial exchange of letters with the *ancien régime.* Nevertheless, there was more to Pratap's overtures to the Soviets than the sheer size and political influence of Asiatic Russia. As noted in chapter 1, communism and the Soviet Union would play a part in Pratap's political imaginary for his whole life.[68] Pratap travelled west overland once more and met Trotsky, who sympathized with his political views, and declared that he, too, wanted freedom for the oppressed Eastern nations.[69] However, news arrived that the Amir had been assassinated on a hunting trip and that his son and successor Amanullah had declared war on the British. Considering this a more receptive climate for his plan—which now revolved around 'collective action' in Asia to oust the British—Pratap returned to Afghanistan. On his way there, he met Lenin on 7 May

[67] T. R. Sareen, *Indian Revolutionary Movement Abroad, 1905–1921* (New Delhi: Sterling, 1979), 180. Despite the Anglo-Russian Entente, Pratap was possibly counting on lingering Great Game rivalry in seeking this alliance.

[68] See, for instance, West Bengal State Archives (WBSA), Police Files, 130/1923, file no. 264/23: 'The Connection of Revolutionists in Bengal with Bolsheviks'. In 1926, the Japanese barred Pratap from landing in Japan for the same reason. Pratap's last known profession of communist sympathies can be found in the 1958 pamphlet 'A Warning', ZMO Berlin, Horst Krüger Nachlass, Box 34, file 256–1.

[69] As later reported to the Indian Press: *Vartman*, 32 February 1924. The British saw this claim to Trotsky's support and Soviet designs in the East corroborated by Trotsky's speech to the Eastern Department of the Academy two months after the appearance of this article. See NAI, Home Political, File 220 (1924): 'Russian Designs in the East', 29 May 1924.

1919. Pratap's vision of the unity of Asian religions (see below) did not sit well with Lenin, who accused him of Tolstoyism. Lenin reportedly had better rapport with Barkatullah, who wrote *Bolshevism and the Islamic Nations* soon after.[70]

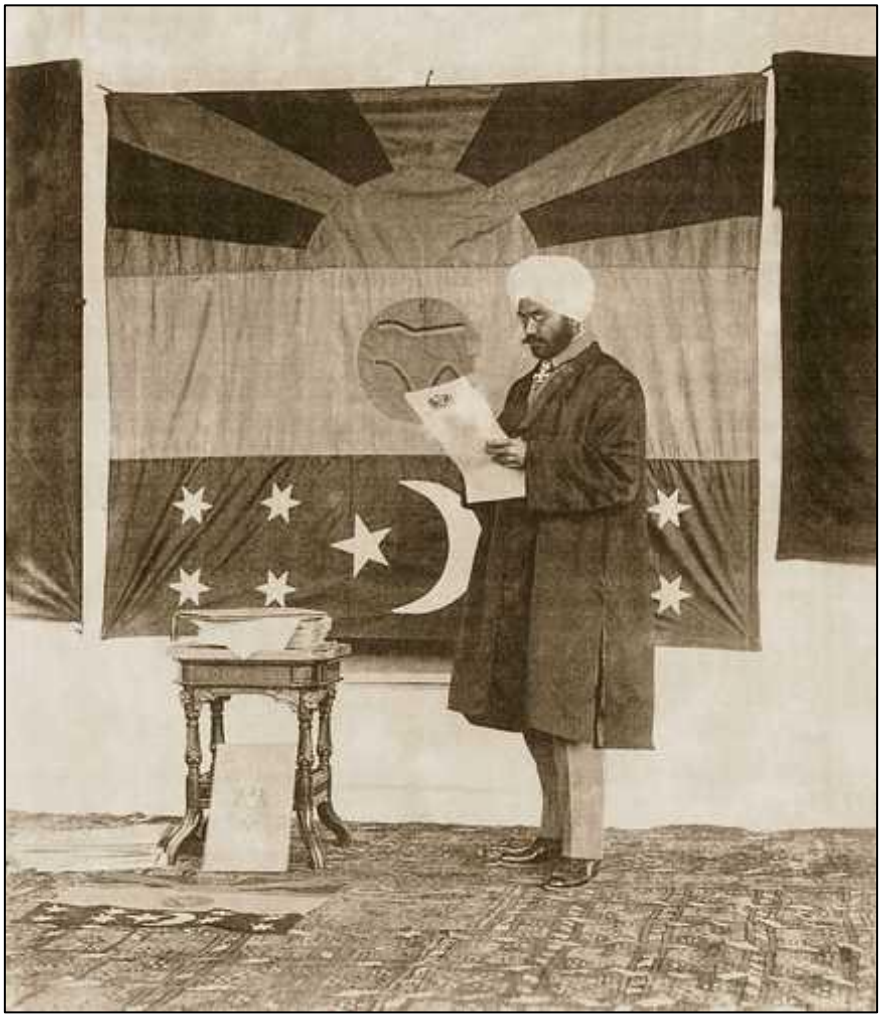

Fig. 10. Pratap 'in office' in Kabul, wearing the Red Eagle and holding the German letter to the Indian Princes. On the wall is Pratap's flag of the Provisional Government
[Stiftung Bibliotheca Afghanica, Collection Botschafter Werner Otto von Hentig, 1915–7].

On his return to Afghanistan, Pratap did indeed find the political climate at Kabul much changed, and in the spring of 1920 he was charged by the king to deliver letters to the rulers of Tibet, China, Japan, Siam, and Turkey. By this time, Pratap had acquired Afghan citizenship and he continued to present himself as an Afghan emissary throughout the 1920s.[71] However, Afghanistan would soon denounce him, and forced him to send back the letters after peace was made with the British in 1922. By this time, Pratap was in Tashkent, talking to what remained of the Indian revolutionary core in that city. From there, Pratap

[70] Written in Persian and translated into various Central Asian languages, this pamphlet circulated from Soviet Asia to Indonesia. See Adhikari, *Documents*, 1:121; L. Muraviec, *The Mind of Jihad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 219.

[71] As a result of his Afghan citizenship, he was no longer a British subject and could therefore not be arrested outside British soil. This greatly reduced the possibility of his arrest.

proceeded to Moscow to be treated for typhoid, but also to meet M. N. Roy, through whom new avenues for exchange with local intellectuals and Indian expatriates were opened at the University for the Toilers of the East.

Two significant events occurred later that year: Pratap visited Japan and met Rashbehari Bose, who was to become a lifelong friend and ally. Pratap was well received and spoke regularly to his Japanese hosts on the subject of the unity of Asia and of changing tides, because 'New opinions of King Amanullah, Comrade Lenin and Dr Sun Yat-sen were prevailing in the East'.[72] He stayed at a Buddhist temple in Kobe, a city with a sizeable Indian community, though few Indian émigrés would support him publicly as a result of his cooperation with Germany during the Great War, visiting him after dark instead. These clandestine meetings would provide entry into the Indian community on his next visit.

Nevertheless, finding the political climate in Japan only moderately supportive of his views for the moment, Pratap returned to Kabul, where the Afghan foreign office still paid his salary. He wanted to embark on another trip around the world to raise money and proselytize for his cause of a united Asia. Permission for this trip was granted, together with 400 gold pounds, and Pratap was dispatched with the parting message from the king: 'It is not now time for Pan-Islamism, we should all work for Asian unity'.[73] At this junction, Pratap decided that an appeal for Asian unity was best achieved by appealing to the widespread discourse of Asian spirituality. This time, he framed it in the context of the Buddhist networks that had once connected the Central Asian landmass, and embarked on a mission to Tibet. It speaks to the Asianist enthusiasm of the period that he managed to raise 10,000 dollars and seven volunteers for his mission.[74]

However, he never reached Lhasa. He wrote to the Dalai Lama from Chamdo, Tibet, in February 1926, but the Dalai Lama, although full of praise for Pratap's mission, would not allow him to proceed to Lhasa.[75] Now stuck in the Himalayas, the seven volunteers grew disaffected with Pratap and proceeded to China, forming new Ghadar *nuclei* in Hankow and Shanghai.[76] Ironically, and rather unfairly, Pratap would later boast of their success in inducing Sikhs to desert from the Indian Brigade in Shanghai.[77] With money running out, Pratap pressed on to China and while there received an invitation to attend the first Pan-Asiatic Conference at Nagasaki in the summer of 1926 (treated in section 4.4). By this time, few people could boast to have travelled overland through Asia as often as Pratap had.

Pratap did not manage to reach Nagasaki either: on the way to Japan his passport was stolen. Japanese authorities were already nervous about the anti-imperialist connotations of this conference, but this was a much more convenient pretext for keeping Pratap out than charges of political radicalism.[78] It took an intervention from his Japanese friends for him to

[72] Singh, *My Life Story*, 78.

[73] At least according to Pratap's own report of his discussion with the king. See Singh, *My Life Story*, 90.

[74] He actually raised $12,000, but distributed $1,000 to a penniless Barkatullah; $500 to Rashbehari Bose, and $500 to three others. NAI, Home Political 831/II (1926), memorandum, 15 December 1926.

[75] NAI, PPC, correspondence file 2: 'Dalai Lama to Mahendra Pratap', 1926.

[76] Bose, *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad*, 411.

[77] NAI, Home Political 28/I (1928), London to Shimla, 13 September 1927.

[78] In order not to offend Great Britain, the conference was moved from Tokyo to the smaller city of Nagasaki. Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism*, 156.

be allowed a few days' leave to visit Osaka and meet some of the conference participants and a few resident Indians. However, he did make it to the Second Pan-Asiatic Conference in Shanghai in 1927. However, he narrowly dodged a British search party with a warrant for his arrest, and was thereafter 'more carefully guarded than a treasure'.[79] The *Japan Advertiser* published a long interview with him on 21 October 1927, and the *Osaka Mainichi* in Japan and the *China Press* in China followed his movements with interest.

The publicity surrounding Pratap, which almost exceeded that of the conference itself, fed the ongoing, behind-the-scenes British debate on the amount of harm Pratap could do, and whether things would be made worse by his arrest. On the one hand, Pratap seemed to be taken seriously in the Far East. That he had support among the Indian diaspora too, was evident: an illustrative example is the arrest of three illiterate migrant workers in their thirties from Hoshiarpur, who declared that Pratap had 'inspired confidence' that he could raise an insurrection with the help of Nepal, Afghanistan, and Russia.[80] On the other hand, British intelligence found comfort in reports that, 'Mahendra Pratap is receiving little encouragement from official circles in Japan'[81] and that the Afghan minister at Moscow regarded Pratap as a 'tiresome and unbalanced individual'.[82] The best evidence of conflicting reports comes from China, where Pratap interacted with both Chinese and Indians from various local organizations and set up an 'Asiatic Culture League' in Hankow, even though it was reported that the local Indians were traders who had little patience for 'Mahendra Pratap's vague and sentimental internationalist schemes'.[83] On balance, the British stood by their former conclusion that Mahendra Pratap's 'power for mischief has been steadily dwindling' and that his communications contained 'clear evidence of a certain softening of the brain'.[84]

The last remark probably referred to Pratap's newest mission. Around this time his plan to form a 'province of Pan-Asia' (which he alternatively called the 'Province of Buddha') is first encountered: 'I just want to see our Aryan [that is, South and Southeast Asia] developed into a free, powerful State, as a part of an autonomous Asia, in our World Federation. My services will go … to arouse the peoples of Aryan to carve out their destiny!'[85] His plans to further this end by organizing a Third Pan-Asiatic Conference in either Tehran or Kabul fell through for lack of interest in either place, but he was undeterred. The 'World Federation Movement' was born in 1929 with the start of his periodical of that name. Apparently, though, the softening of the brain was spreading, as Rashbehari Bose and prominent Pan-Asianists Imazato Juntaro, Shumei Okawa, and Yonezo Fujiwara, declared themselves directors of the Pan-Asiatic League alongside Pratap. They published their new venture in the Calcutta-based *New Forward*.[86] Pratap would spend the best part of the next decade working towards creating 'the province of Pan-Asia''. The next section is concerned

[79] Singh, *My Life Story*, 139. See also NAI, Home Political file 13 (1927), Colonel Holland to DIB, 29 December 1927.
[80] NAI, Home Political 235/II (1926) on the Sikh conspiracy.
[81] APAC, IOR, L/P&J/12/16 on Mahendra Pratap.
[82] NAI, Home Political 831/II (1926), on the activities of Mahendra Pratap.
[83] APAC, IOR, L/P&S/10/899 on Mahendra Pratap, 1926–1932, Shanghai intelligence.
[84] NAI, Home Political, 831/II (1926) Hodge for DIB, 21 November 1925.
[85] Singh, *My Life Story*, 143.
[86] WBSA, Police Files, 126/1929 n. 234/29 Confidential: Pan-Asiatic League.

with his ideas and their reception: his plans for achieving Pan-Asia, and the formation of an Asian army under Pan-Asian leadership.

Pan Asia, Province of Buddha

The first issue of *World Federation* provides a glimpse into Pratap's plans for Asia. He writes about the 'Eastern Oppressed People's Society' of Nanking, and lets his readers know that Sadhu Singh, an Indian in China, is involved in this cause, and that Pratap's own 'heart is in their midst'.[87] This idea in itself had some currency: through Pratap, Nehru too expressed interest in this society, and said that with some more information he would try and affiliate the organization to the Indian National Congress.[88] Pratap also published Rashbehari Bose's recommendations for the Indian National Congress in this issue, thus providing a platform for linking the Indian community in Japan, who maintained a local branch of the Indian National Congress, to India. He adds that 'Congress should kindly adopt the principle of the World Federation as its creed and agree to support the movement of Pan-Asia as a part of world federation'. Though never adopted, this was not as far-fetched a recommendation as it may seem at first sight—a world federation was a popular ideal at the time, and an important feature of transnational-nationalist contacts.[89]

There were several reasons why Pratap felt that a world federation, in any shape or form, should start in Asia. One was his conviction that all world religions had been born on that continent, that they were all inherently peaceful, and contained elements of Buddhism in some form or other.[90] The message of the Buddha was put forward once more as a potential unifier for all of Asia.[91] The watchwords were 'renunciation and service', a versatile phrase that could serve as an argument to include Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists as well as socialists. He consciously pitted his inclusive definition of Asia against anti-Westernism, which he considered too negative. In the November 1930 issue of *World Federation* he explains: 'The conception of a vague Asian unity has been brought about more by non-Asiatic endeavour than by the Asiatics themselves. … Many people having Asiatic consciousness well-nigh hate Europe and Europeans. We endeavour, however, to correct the attitude of Asiatics and Europeans to one another. We explain that all the peoples of Europe are the children of the early Asiatic colonizers who colonized the north-west peninsula of the old world'. In other words, Asia was to be a cradle once more.

[87] All quotations from *World Federation* are taken from the National Archives of India (New Delhi), Mahendra Pratap Private Papers, which holds microfilms of most of the *World Federation* issues.

[88] NAI, PPC, letter no. 15. Jawaharlal Nehru to Mahendra Pratap, 30 June 1928.

[89] Federationalist ideas were often joined to Pan-Asianist ones. The utopian goal of a world federation emphasized cooperation rather than East-West competition, and could arguably make Pan-Asianist ideas more palatable to Western audiences. Nehru, too, advocated a world federation in this manner. J. Nehru, *Toward Freedom: the Autobiography of Jawaharlal Nehru* (New York: John Day, 1941), 371–84.

[90] He considered 'renunciation and service' to be Buddhist values, but also 'the watch word of all ancient cultures of the East'. *World Federation*, January 1931.

[91] Here, too, Mahendra Pratap was not alone. Gandhi would later say that, 'India was Buddhist in reality. I would say the same thing to China and Japan. But for Asia to be not for Asia but the whole world it has to reclaim the message of Buddha and to deliver it to the world'. *Harijan*, 24 December 1938.

Asian army

By far the most difficult and most controversial of Pratap's Pan-Asian projects was the formation of an Asian army. Considering Pratap's espousal of Buddhist spiritual ideals, it is the hardest to reconcile with his other views. Furthermore, the idea of his Asian army had taken off at the Pan-Asiatic Conference at Dairen—then in the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo—in March 1934, which convinced all non-Japanese in Asia that it was not Pratap's brainchild at all, and that the Japanese just needed 'an Afghan' to propose this bellicose resolution. The choice of Asian army directors exacerbated the issue: they were all Japanese. The *China Press*, for one was puzzled: 'If this outline is regarded not as a work of the imagination of a broken-down adventurer and propagandist, but as one that has been carefully thought out by imperialistic dreamers, it may be read with great interest'.[92] The newspaper found it 'symptomatic of the megalomania that seems to afflict so many Japanese in all ranks of society today', but that does not suffice as an explanation—for how can a 'highly practical people like the Japanese really interest themselves in a movement so fantastic, so fatuous and futile as that of an Asiatic Army?'[93] British intelligence was even less generous: 'The manifesto, it will be observed, is signed amongst others by Pratap and its wording … reveals a very strong resemblance to the latter's usual dithyrambic style'.[94]

But Pratap did not see his Asian army as a purely Japanese project at all. His plan was to find a Pan-Asian directorate for his Pan-Asian Army, which celebrated the Asian landmass. It was to consist of 'one Manchu, one Mongol, one Tibetan and three Chinese'.[95] He speaks of a 'volunteer corps throughout Japan, Korea, Manchukuo, China, Tibet and Mongolia to unite these family members of one great cultural house'.[96] But then Pratap lost the crucial support of the Indian expatriates in China. In their eyes, this latest plan disqualified all his other ideas. As the *China Press* wrote in April 1934: 'The Indians in China are particularly bitter towards the so-called Raja Mahendra Pratap. … Pratap is accused specifically of deceiving his countrymen for the last 15 years by his occasional anti-British outbursts and patriotic phrases which concealed his real object of working for his Japanese masters'.[97] The Asian Army idea was spinning out of Pratap's control. He had willingly taken Japanese support, but was soon told by the Japanese general Kuniaki Koiso that 'the Japanese army would realize all the freedom necessary'.[98] Still, Pratap reports having enlisted over 300 volunteers for the Asiatic army, though even he seems to have doubted that number: 'Some of these names do not count for anything. They simply put down their names at our mere request. But on the other hand, many more are ardent supporters'.[99] Three 'recruiting centres' were opened at Tokyo, Dairen, and Tsingtao.[100]

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[92] 'Indian Puppet Continues Search for Supporters of Fantastic Golden Corps of Pan-Asianism', *China Press,* 18 March 1934.

[93] Ibid.

[94] APAC, IOR, L/P&S/103 on Mahendra Pratap. Dairen to Peking, 17 February 1934.

[95] Volunteer Call, reproduced in the *Japan Advertiser,* 21 October 1933.

[96] Ibid.

[97] 'Indian Puppet', *China Press,* 18 March 1934.

[98] Singh, *My Life Story*, 250.

[99] Ibid., 265.

[100] 'Recruiting centres' should not be interpreted as offices with personnel; the addresses are without exceptions the home addresses of Japanese volunteers.

After 1935, Pratap distanced himself from the idea of an actual Asian army. In his diary for that period, he implies that the word 'army' had been a bone of contention all along, but that it should not be taken literally: 'we work to humanize all walks of life. We hope to create new sense [sic] for the old barbarous terms'.[101] For Pratap, the Asian army ended here. He disengaged himself from the movement, claiming that his vision of the army as a purely 'moral force' had been abused. But his name remained attached to the idea, and by the Second World War, the *Peking Chronicle* for one had tied these earlier initiatives to the future core of the Indian National Army: 'In Indo-China there are about 6,000 Indians, 30,000 in Thailand and 60,000 in the Federated Malay States. Raja Mahendra Pratap is looking to these national groups in particular to form the native army which will finally overthrow British rule in India'.[102] However, the establishment of the Indian National Army was never part of Pratap's vision—his army was to be international, and composed of international leadership, a crucial point that was agreeable to neither the Japanese, nor to the later Indian National Army leadership. It is clear that over the course of the 1930s, Pratap's name had become linked to Japan more than to Afghanistan. As a consequence, his opportunities to forge strategic alliances throughout Asia had diminished. In order to understand how this happened, three interlinked questions need to be asked: how did he really see Japan's role in his project of unifying Asia? How did his travels contribute to a climate of collaboration? And in what way was Pratap useful to the Japanese?

First, Pratap was always quick to say that he was not one of those who believed Japan to be the only leader in Asia. Leadership was a question to be decided by 'all the lands of Asia', but, added Pratap, he preferred 'comradeship' as it was more fitting to the times: 'Let us all be co-workers for our common welfare … we can then all admire the great achievements of the Japanese people as we unhesitatingly pour out praises for the lovely scenes of these flower beds of the sea'.[103] His master plan for the 'Golden district' (the Far-Eastern district of the Pan-Asia he envisioned), was a board of 'enlightened human beings' from both Japan and China who would draw up a plan of mutual cooperation among the peoples of the Far East.[104] Moreover, he ultimately had faith in the good intentions of Japan, and the fact that 'Tokyo is rich in internationalism'.[105] This feeds into the second question. The internationalist circles in Japan, both inside and outside of the Indian community, kept Pratap in Japan for most of the 1930s and also encouraged his faith in Japan as the site from which Asian unity was to emerge. These internationalist circles will be examined in section 4.4. Furthermore, *World Federation* as a publication had an integrative function all of its own, with subscriptions high enough in the early 1930s to warrant both Urdu-Gurmukhi and Chinese-Japanese editions. It was the former, vernacular, edition in particular that led the British to finally ban the publication, which they had initially not seen as a threat.[106]

How was the entry of Indian revolutionary elements into Japanese Pan-Asianism received by the Japanese themselves? If the British intelligence records of the early 1930s are

[101] Singh, *My Life Story*, 268.
[102] 'Peoples of Asia Agree with Axis—Will Struggle for New Order', *Peking Chronicle*, 31 December 1941.
[103] *World Federation*, January–February 1936.
[104] *World Federation*, February 1933.
[105] *World Federation*, August 1937.
[106] NAI, Home Political 29/IV (1931), Issue of Notification under the Sea Customs Act.

to be believed, it would be easy to conclude that Japan regarded Pratap and his colleagues as a collection of overzealous incompetents who had no Japanese political backing.[107] But it has to be taken into account that, in the interest of good relations between Japan and Britain in the interwar period, the chances were slim that Japan would publicly support Indian seditionists on the Government of India's 'most wanted' list. Moreover, the critical attitude of Indian political leaders towards Japan's policy in China was a disappointment to the militarist school in Tokyo.[108] But actions speak louder than words, and from 1933 onwards Pratap was regularly paid to travel to Manchukuo and speak at Chinese schools about the blessings of Japan's leadership in Asia. His visits and his (inevitable) reports that the Pan-Asianist spirit in those parts was growing were widely publicized in Japan.[109] Pratap himself did not feel he was being used by the Japanese. Optimistic right to the brink of war, he felt the Japanese were helping him instead: 'I must confess that this hopeful spirit is especially created by the great victories of the Imperial Army and the Imperial Navy. … With the help of these victorious forces I can build our free Aryan in no time'.[110]

When war broke out, the province of Buddha no longer offered the possibilities it once had. Pratap's corresponding loss of faith in Japan is a notable break in his thinking. He now had to prevent his version of Asian unity from clashing with Japan's imperialist conception of a Pan-Asian union under Japanese leadership. But however ambiguous Mahendra Pratap had been about his plans for Asia in terms of the crucial points of armed struggle and future of Asian leadership, by the time war broke out it had become clear that his vision clashed with that of Japan's Greater East-Asia. As a result, he was forced to lead a quiet life in Japan during the war years and did not involve himself with the emerging plans for the Indian National Army—even though the idea was largely his. He spent most of his time alone, reminiscing in a *World Federation* with dwindling subscription numbers, revisiting the interwar years in which the great Asian landmass had still been a blank canvas with unlimited potential for sketching the unified continent of his dreams.

4.3 Shipping lanes: lascar internationalism

As the sections above have demonstrated, land routes connected Asianist centres as far apart as Moscow, Baku, Tashkent, Kashgar, and others. Travelling by these roads, rather than in the relatively enclosed and controlled environment of a ship, could help prevent detection. Pratap managed to evade arrest for most of his career as an exiled Asianist. However, it was also treacherous: many muhajirs did not survive the crossing of the Pamirs, and several who did survive had to brave the turmoil of civil war in Central Asia. The shipping lanes that connected the cosmopolitan port cities of Asia presented alternative ways of reaching revolutionary centres. Through them, both rooted and mobile communities stayed in touch

[107] NAI, Home Political 59/38 (1938), 15 December 1938. The British Ambassador at Tokyo received assurances that led him to conclude that 'Mahendra Pratap is more of a nuisance than a political embarrassment'.

[108] T. R. Sareen, *Indian Revolutionaries, Japan and British Imperialism* (New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1993), 44. Pratap's close relationship with Chinese revolutionaries and Indians in China were a cause for concern as well.

[109] *Japan Advertiser*, 21 October 1933; and 18 April 1934; *The Fukiu Times*, 5 March 1934.

[110] *World Federation*, press release of 12 December 1941. 'Aryan' meant the larger South Asian region.

with Asianist colleagues. These shipping lanes formed an important conduit in two ways: by moving texts, and by moving people. The omnipresence of Indian seamen on commercial vessels made it easier to move both.

As noted above, most of Mahendra Pratap publications were proscribed, and his communications were on interception lists from British surveillance. But given the itinerant nature of his activism, the circulation of his messages across Asia was vital to his project. The same holds true for rousing pamphlets such as Barkatullah's *Bolshevism and the Islamic Nations*, which was meant for all corners of Asia from Soviet Azerbaijan to Indonesia. Given the fact that Pan-Islamism and Communism were perceived by the British as two of the gravest threats to the British Empire, such pamphlets could not travel through ordinary channels. However, anyone caught carrying proscribed texts was liable to prosecution. How, then, did political texts written by exiled and expatriate Asianists travel between sites in Asia? Ingenious ways of smuggling texts through 'legal' channels did exist—one of the more notorious examples is Veer Savarkar's *The Indian War of Independence 1857*, which was printed in the Netherlands, sent to France for distribution and finally sent to India with book jackets of European classics such as Dickens' *Pickwick Papers* and Cervantes' *Don Quixote*.[111] Most contraband, however, was moved by lascars.[112]

In studies of both labour and maritime history, lascars have been called 'forgotten seamen' and an 'invisible underclass'.[113] Though no longer represented in historiography as a group that was either denied agency or incapable of it, studies of the political activities of lascars are still few and far between.[114] The archive is partly responsible, as lascars' experiences rarely come to the historian unfiltered. Unlike prolific revolutionaries such as Pratap, few first-hand accounts of lascar political activism exist, and little is known of their activities outside of unionism, which had direct bearing on their industry.[115] In the volatile 1920s, the Government of India was likewise in the dark about lascar involvement in underground revolutionary networks. Lascars travelled under the radar, invisible (often

[111] V. Savarkar, *The Indian War of Independence—1857* (1909; repr. Bombay: Popular, 1960), original publisher's note.

[112] The term lascar is derived from Persian and originally referred to conscript labourers in army camps. It may also take the connotation of soldier. Not far removed from the derogatory term 'coolies', the term ceased to be used in the 1970s. It was used officially throughout the interwar period. C. Markovits, J. Pouchepadass, S. Subrahmanyam, eds., *Society and Circulation: Mobile Peoples and Itinerant Cultures in South Asia, 1750–1950* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003), 95. The term is used here for descriptive reasons; the seamen in this chapter used the term to refer to themselves.

[113] C. Dixon, 'Lascars: The Forgotten Seamen', in *The Working Men Who Got Wet: Proceedings of the Fourth Conference of the Atlantic Canada Shipping Project, July 24–July 26, 1980*, edited by R. Ommer and G. Panting, 265–81 (St. John's, Nfld.: Maritime History Group, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1980), 265.

[114] There are more studies about lascars in the age of revolution, particularly in the Atlantic, than in the twentieth century. See, among others, P. Linebaugh and M. Rediker, *The Many-headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000); and most recently M. van Rossum, 'A "Moorish World" within the Company: The VOC, Maritime Logistics and Subaltern Networks of Asian Sailors', *Itinerario* 36:3 (2012): 39–60.

[115] With the notable exception of Dada Amir Haidar, *Chains to Lose: Life and Struggles of a Revolutionary* (Karachi: Pakistan Study Centre, 2007). The testimony of other lascars, including voice recordings, has recently been analysed by F. Roy, H. Liebau, and R. Ahuja, '*When the war began, we heard of several kings'—South Asian Prisoners in World War I Germany* (New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2011).

literally, for Indian lascars tended to work below deck), unidentified, their luggage rarely searched. As a group, they were attractive for those seeking to circulate texts, objects, or people between Asia, Europe and the US, or indeed, within Asia itself. To the British, they presented a dual threat: what they might carry, but also who they might be—for who was to say the man behind a lascar certificate was not a revolutionary who had taken his place?

The correct procedure for hiring a lascar was an ideal that had little bearing on reality. Officially, each prospective crew was inspected by the chief officer of the ship and the chief engineer, assisted by the deck and engine room serangs.[116] The names of the lascars were then registered in the ship's articles, a copy of which remained with the shipping master. Each lascar was to produce his continuous discharge certificate, on which the name of the ship was entered with the date of enlistment. This entry was signed by the shipping master and captain and stamped with the shipping master's stamp. In this way—theoretically—one might trace every lascar on his trips around the world. However, on September 1922, the Mercantile Marine Office at Manchester wrote to the Government of India:

> Sir, I attach certificates of discharges for the following lascar seamen: Omed Kazi no. 086046, and Abdool Hawk no. 062274. These men were engaged at Calcutta on May 7th last for a voyage in SS *Bloemfontein*. When the deck crew were being sent yesterday to the Asiatic Home, London, to await transfer to another vessel, the Serang reported to me that these men had failed to join at Calcutta and that the following seamen had taken their places: Abdool Cader Mudoo age 24 born Furridpore Calcutta; Abdool Rahomon Abdool Mojia age 16 born Calcutta. The matter had not been brought to the Master's attention and consequently the names of these two men did not appear on the agreement, neither were they in possession of certificates of discharge.[117]

Letters like these were a common occurrence in the world of mercantile shipping, and the attached handwritten note from the passport office stated that 'Once a revolutionary has left India disguised as a seaman, there is little satisfaction in punishing the Serang responsible'.[118] The fact was that any given crew had about a hundred lascars from ports all over India. Even after the crew had been enlisted, not all lascars might actually turn up for duty on the day the ship was set to sail—it then fell to the serang to supplement the crew with whomever he could find in port. The foremost responsibility of the serang was that the men chosen were fit for the work, not where they came from or what activities they engaged in while in the port. Moreover, who was to say a discharge book was actually a lascar's own? Some lascar certificates read like they were created for the very purpose of being interchangeable, with identifiers no more specific than 'man of colour' or 'head bald'.[119]

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[116] Serang was the term used in this period for a boatswain (supervisor); the serang's mate was called 'tindal'.

[117] MSA, Home Special 543(4)A of 1922 Bolshevism—Measures to prevent the surreptitious departure to continental countries of Indian revolutionaries disguised as seamen: Board of Trade, Mercantile Marine Office, Trafford Road, Salford, Manchester, 28 September 1923 to GOI.

[118] MSA, Home Special 543(4)A of 1922: Passport Office notes.

[119] Markers taken from: MSA, Home Special 543(4)A of 1922: Note on paragraph 3 of letter dated 4 October 1923 from the India Office to the Secretary of the Government of India Home Dept.

Networks and organization

When it came to revolutionary Asianism, the Tashkent circle was of great concern to the British. In terms of the circulation of literature, the Tashkent circle was reported to have developed a courier service. Nalini Gupta, an associate of M. N. Roy who was later charged in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case of 1924, was entrusted with a mission to the port of Calcutta to accomplish this in 1922. He claimed to be successful in organizing lascars to transport communist literature through the 'Sailors' Organization'.[120] Later that year, Roy attempted to post another of his associates in Bombay to do the same.[121] Apparently, he, too, was successful in his attempt, as by 1923, Bombay was reported to be the main site for the import of literature into India from European and Asian ports.[122] Karachi was an important secondary port, and it soon became clear that the literature smuggled into India was not limited to Roy's own propaganda, or Soviet propaganda from the circles around the University for the Toilers of the East, for that matter. In 1922, the *Awakening of Asia* was found on a lascar of the SS *Mandala* when it made port in Karachi.[123] This book was written by Henry Mayers Hyndman, published in New York in 1919 after a long fight with American censors, and immediately proscribed by the British when it was published.

Successful interceptions of literature from Chattopadhyaya's League against Imperialism headquarters in Berlin indicate that a similar network of lascars was used. Mention is made of a 'tall, large-sized, clean-shaven American Negro, aged bout 40 who speaks English well,' who went by the name of Samuel and plied the shipping line between Hamburg, India, and Singapore carrying literature from the League.[124] However, while the specially instituted 'rummaging staff' of the port authorities was occasionally successful, regular complaints of lack of manpower and the inability to effectively search full crews were frequent, and it must be assumed that much literature slipped through the nets.[125] Another measure implemented to first chart and then break the links in the chains of lascar organizations in port cities, was to prevent the flow of funds from the Indian Seamen's Union and the Lascar Welfare League.[126] The British government's assumption was that lascars would only traffic in proscribed literature when paid, and their profit motive was contrasted with the politically-motivated use of the lascar networks by outsiders. The possibility that

[120] The Indian Seamen's Association, which was active in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras. On these and other unions, see G. Balachandran, 'Conflicts in the International Maritime Labour Market: British and Indian Seamen, Employers, and the State, 1890–1939', *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 39:1 (2002): 71–100; and H. Goodall, 'Port Politics: Indian Seamen, Australian Unions and Indonesian Independence, 1945–47', in *Labour History* 94:2 (2008).

[121] Home Special Dept. 543(3) 1923 Note on the Third International; Activities directed towards India; Measures to prevent bolshevist agents, arms, literature and money from entering India: Memorandum.

[122] Home Special Dept. 543(3) 1923 Bolshevism: Home Department Special Notes, 1922–1923.

[123] MSA, Home Special Dept. 543(3) 1923 Bolshevism: Arms and ammunition and literature seized and detained in 1922 on reports made by the Appraising Department, Karachi Custom House.

[124] WBSA, 7/32 file 21/32 Visits of foreigners and suspicious subjects to India: Intelligence Bureau, Home Dept., New Delhi, 23 November 1932.

[125] MSA, Home Special Dept. 543(3) 1923 Bolshevism Steps taken, both at British and Native State Ports, to stop Socialist agents, arms, literature and money entering Bombay and Sind.

[126] MSA, Home Special File 543(18) E Pt. I, 1929–1933: List of organizations and societies.

lascars might be anti-colonial activists themselves was largely ignored. This gave politically active lascars an opportunity to hide behind colonial stereotypes that viewed them as illiterate and unconnected.[127]

But even if lascars themselves were not widely feared to be revolutionaries, the problem of actual revolutionaries posing as lascars had to be tackled. Shipping masters were instructed to hand over on arrival any seamen who appeared to be 'not of the ordinary lascar class'.[128] However, it was also noted that a thorough check of a full lascar crew was impossible in port for constraints of time, and a check on board after the ship had sailed might take even longer than the actual voyage and would thus be useless in terms of advance warning to the receiving ports in India. Moreover, even if such a check were possible, one still had to act on the assumption that people were sailing under their own name.

Sometimes, however, identity fraud was simply too obvious. The Bombay records flag two Indian lascars, Basanto Kumar Galgooli and Krishna Nidi Bey, who had enlisted in Glasgow and sailed from Liverpool to Bombay. Unable to perform any duties on board, the shipping master threatened to prosecute them. They pleaded for leniency, revealing that they were actually art students. They had gotten 'stranded' in Britain, and through the offices of the Asiatic Association in London, money had changed hands and they had secured passage on the ship. The trail ran cold there—in port, they disappeared before they could be apprehended.[129] Their story, though not inconceivable (the Glasgow School of Art was a renowned institution), was never confirmed. True or false, it demonstrates the usefulness of lascar networks and their potential as an alternative mode of travelling. This remained of concern to the British authorities throughout the 1920s. In 1926, two self-proclaimed revolutionaries were apprehended trying to sign on as lascars in London; two others succeeded in doing so and could not be arrested when they disembarked.[130]

As was the case with the self-described art students above, it was through lascar boarding houses as well as lascar labour unions that connections were made and solidarities expressed. It had also been the Asiatic Home in London, which had arranged for the switch that allowed the abovementioned 'Abdool Mudoo' and 'Abdool Mojia' to travel. The Union of Eastern Sailors, furthermore, coordinated propaganda activities through D. Medzhis, who was also the head of the Madras branch of the Communist Party of India.[131] These activities suggest that lascars should be regarded less as transmitters of political activism than as political activists themselves. If this possibility is taken into account, a different picture emerges in which the lascars' own transregional solidarities played an important role.

The abovementioned courier 'Samuel' is a case in point. He was not a lascar who supplemented his meagre income by ferrying literature across the ocean; he appears in the file as a regular visitor to the League's headquarters in Berlin and, as such, a revolutionary in his

[127] For an elaboration of this point, see Raza and Zachariah, 'To Take Arms across a Sea of Trouble', 19–38.
[128] MSA, Home Special 543(4)A of 1922: To the Passport Officer to Government, Bombay, 7 February 1924.
[129] MSA, Home Special 543(4)A of 1922 Commissioner of Police Bombay to Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 31 October 1923.
[130] MSA, Home Special 543(4)A of 1922 Commissioner of Police Bombay to Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 9 December 1926.
[131] WBSA, Police Files 106/1925; file 87/25 Dissemination of Bolshevik Propaganda through Eastern Sailors (1925).

own right.[132] In addition, seamen's unions were among the first to affiliate to larger bodies, such as the International Federation of Transport workers (ITF), an important platform to unite Asian sailors against discrimination by European-dominated unions.[133] This was perceived as a worrying development—intelligence officer J. Lawson, for example, wrote to the India Office in 1925 that Indian and Arab seamen conferred together on political matters.[134] Two examples of transregional solidarities in which lascars were at the forefront of developments stand out: the domination of sailors' unions in the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat, and a decade later, the wartime boycott by Indian lascars of Dutch ships in Australian waters (discussed below).

Strong translocal solidarities had emerged in the context of the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat (PPTUS) treated in chapter 2. Whereas the inaugural congress at Hankou had primarily made overtures towards the All-India Trade Union Secretariat and to Red International of Labour Union affiliates, seamen's unions had also taken a prominent part in the proceedings. Early on, a pamphlet had circulated amongst crews that 'there were no foreigners among seamen' and that the Asian seamen had a responsibility 'to help workers from the Asian seaboard to free themselves from … the exploitation of their masters'.[135] The pamphlet concluded with the rallying cry was that 'we must serve as conductors of the revolutionary movement traveling from one shore to the other. We must help our more backward comrades in Asia attain the front ranks'.[136] By 1928, it was through the PPTUS that concerted action by 'coloured seamen' was coordinated.[137]

The boycott during the Indonesian revolution presents a similar picture: on 23 September 1945, a lascar union call went out to halt Dutch shipping in Sydney. Indian seamen met with Indonesian activists to pledge their support.[138] At the meeting, it was said that 'the unity of our people, the people of two important countries, must ensure our ultimate emancipation'.[139] The boycott was jumpstarted when Australian, Indonesian, and Indian unionists worked together to forcibly free a crew of lascars who were made to load Dutch ammunition bound for Indonesia onto a ship in the North Sydney docks. In October alone, two hundred Indian seamen walked off ship and a thousand more had adopted a non-cooperative strategy, staying on but refusing to work with materials bound for the Netherlands Indies.

Both examples belie the lascars' reputation as a 'docile' or 'unintelligent' class.[140] As

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[132] WBSA, 7/32 file 21/32 Visits of foreigners and suspicious subjects to India: Intelligence Bureau, Home Dept., New Delhi, 23 November 1932.

[133] Van Rossum, *Hand aan Hand*, 117–35.

[134] Balachandran, 'Conflicts in the International Maritime Labour Market', 86.

[135] *La Presse Revolutionaire*, quoted in Fowler, 'From East to West and West to East', 99.

[136] Fowler, 'From East to West and West to East', 100.

[137] *International Press Correspondence*, 18 January 1929, 63.

[138] Goodall, 'Port Politics', 28. See also: J. Martinez, 'Coolies to Comrades: Internationalism between Australian and Asian Seamen', in *Labour and Community: Historical Essays*, edited by R. Markey, 295–312 (Wollongong: University of Wollongong Press, 2001).

[139] Quoted in Goodall, 'Port Politics', 30.

[140] See, for example, J. P. Jones, 'Lascars in the Port of London', *PLA Monthly* (February 1931); G. E. Mitton, *Peeps at Great Steamship Lines—The Peninsular and Oriental* (London: A. and C. Black, 1913), 58; MSA,

crucial transmitters between activists in ports around the world, they could link Asianist sites when official routes were closed or legal means of transportation not feasible. Port authorities were on the lookout for the move of funds between the PPTUS and the various lascar welfare leagues and unions.[141] But by and large, the British intelligence services failed to acknowledge that transregional solidarities were also to be found among lascars themselves. Colonial stereotyping of lascars as a class made it hard to acknowledge their agency as actors rather than transmitters in internationalist and Asianist projects. This made cosmopolitan port cities across Asia into key sites where Asianist projects developed and from which these expanded to include secondary and non-elite groups.

Finally, it must be remarked that the record left by those who travelled as regular passengers could be equally puzzling. The case of a T. K. Roy, interviewed upon disembarkation at Dhanuskodi port in 1929, is illustrative. The report suggests that this self-described 'student' had been in touch with Asianist groups at least once, but was not forthcoming with concrete information. It is impossible to tell from the interview whether he was uninterested in the revolutionaries he had encountered, or whether he merely pretended to be uninterested to appease his interviewers or to escape prosecution.

> From the trend of his talk it would appear that Roy is rather disaffected with the British administration of India. He further said he happened to see Raja Mahendra Pratap in company with one Chatterjee at the Indian (Hindustan) Association in Berlin about a month ago. … Roy learnt that these two individuals were exiles having been forbidden by the Government of India from entering India. This Chatterjee is reported to be connected with the Pacifist movement which draws together the Subject Countries and Minor States in an alliance against the great powers. Roy says the movement indirectly fights against Imperialism. These two exiles met the Indian students at the association in connection with a tea party. … Roy was not much impressed by the personality of Mahendra Pratap, but learnt that this exile has been fomenting trouble against the British in China and Afghanistan. T. K. Roy's luggage was searched by the Customs but nothing incriminating was found.[142]

Such reports demonstrate that ships, too, offered a mode of travel that was difficult to control, and which offered ample opportunity for revolutionaries to travel between Asianist sites. In 1912, Rashbehari Bose, one of India's most wanted revolutionaries, had sailed to Japan on a regular ticket by pretending to be a nephew of Rabindranath Tagore tasked with preparing the logistics of Tagore's impending tour of Asia.[143] Bose would later report 'there were only two first-class Indian passengers on the steamer including myself, and on the police officer having enquired of the purser as to who and what I was, the latter told him that I was a distant relation of the Poet Tagore and going to Japan for study. This mightily pleased the European

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Home Special 543(4)A of 1922 Bolshevism Secretary Government of Bombay to Secretary Government of India Home Department, 8 August 1923.

[141] MSA, Home Special File 543(18) E Pt. I, 1929–1933: List of organizations.

[142] WBSA, Police Files, 44/1928, file 53/28: Indians returning from abroad at Dhanushkodi, 4 October 1929.

[143] WBSA, Police Files, '185/1925; file 108/25: 'Reminiscences of Rash Behari', from the Chandernagore-based paper 'Pravartak'.

police officer'.[144] Anand Mohan Sahay, an Indian revolutionary in Japan who likewise figures in the following pages, used lascars to carry letters to his contacts in Asia to prevent interception.[145]

4.4 Indian Asianists in Japan

The focus will now move to East Asian sites which were connected by sea, in particular Kobe and Tokyo. Local as well as itinerant Indian merchants, students and activists engaged in Pan-Asianist projects in collaboration with, and sometimes in opposition to, Japanese authority and civil society. The Pan-Asianism of Indian actors in Japan was exceptional in so far that it predated the First World War, making the October Revolution and the 'Wilsonian moment' less of a demarcation point than was the case with Asianist projects elsewhere. Harald Fischer-Tiné has argued that for specific sites including Tokyo, the watershed character of the First World War (argued by Akira Iriye, Prasenjit Duara, and others), stands in need of qualification.[146] Instead, the seminal moment was 1905. Japan's victory over Russia in this year provided an impetus to the nascent Pan-Asianist movement, and sparked a widespread belief in an Asian renaissance, with Japan representing a specific Asian modernity. Subsequent Indian international, anti-imperialist networks grew from 1905 to 1914, the decade of accelerated globalization.[147]

It has become almost commonplace to note the impact of the Russo-Japanese War. Nevertheless, the 1980s showed a historiographical debate, with a number of historians remarking that its importance to Indian activists had been overstated—it was really the Government of India celebrating the victory of its ally in the Far East.[148] The Anglo-Japanese alliance had been signed two years prior to the Russo-Japanese war. However, there is ample evidence to attest to the interest generated in India by Japan's victory, leading Tagore's friend C. F. Andrews to remark that 'even the remote villagers talked over the victories of Japan as they sat in their circles and passed round the *huqqa* at night'.[149] With the increase of Indian interests in Japan, travel to and settlement in Japan increased, with Japanese institutions of higher learning becoming an attractive alternative to those in the United States and Great Britain. Indian students in Japan formed the Oriental Young Men's association as early as 1900, to 'help oriental students in their career' and improve their contacts in Japan.[150] In 1903, there were thirteen Indian students registered in Japan. Within five years of the Russo-

[144] Ibid.

[145] NMML, Manuscript Division, Oral Transcripts, Anand Mohan Sahay, 7.

[146] H. Fischer-Tiné, 'Indian Nationalism and the 'World Forces', 328. On 1918 as a 'moment', see A. Iriye, 'Beyond Imperialism: The New Internationalism', *Daedalus* 134:2 (2005): 108–16; P. Duara, 'The Discourse of Civilization and Pan-Asianism', *Journal of World History* 12:1 (2001): 99–130.

[147] On globalization preceding the First World War, C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 451.

[148] For this view, see P. A. Narasimha Murty, *India and Japan: Dimension of their Relations* (New Delhi, 1986), 28. For a dissenting view see, among others, T. R. Sareen, *Indian Revolutionaries, Japan and British Imperialism* (New Delhi: Anmol, 1993), 5.

[149] C. F. Andrews, *The Renaissance in India* (London, 1923), 4.

[150] Sareen, *Indian Revolutionaries, Japan and British Imperialism*, 8.

Japanese war, their number had grown to over a hundred.[151] There was a pre-existing mercantile community of Indians, concentrated in two regions close to major shipping ports: Yokohama and Tokyo on the one hand, and Kobe and Osaka on the other. But neither core was particularly active politically until the post-war internationalist moment ignited a series of Pan-Asianist projects with two agitators at the centre: Anand Mohan Sahay in Kobe and Rashbehari Bose in Tokyo.

It is argued here, that given these pre-existing ties, the Indian Asianist projects that evolved in Japan were actually marked by four decisive 'moments' in the opening decades of the twentieth century, of which 1905 was the first. There was increased Indian traffic to Japan on the wings of the post-war internationalist moment of 1918, and 1924 marked a receptive phase among the Japanese public during the closing years of the Taishō democracy (1912–26), accelerated by the establishment of the Pan-Asiatic Society. Finally, the shift in Japanese foreign policy during the Shōwa period and its withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1933 had a strong impact on the nature of Pan-Asianist projects among Japan's Indian residents.

Kobe: Anand Mohan Sahay and the Indian National Congress branch in Japan

A full biography of Anand Mohan Sahay is yet to be written. What information on him exists is known primarily through his dictated memoirs, which were not recorded until 1981 and may have been embellished. These can be supplemented, and sometimes corrected, by the writings of other contemporary Indian activists as well as information recorded by journalists and by British Intelligence. By his own account, Sahay left India in 1923 in disappointment with the INC. He had decided to continue his studies abroad and return to the nationalist struggle later. Denied a passport for the United States, he sailed to Japan. He landed in Kobe without funds but with a recommendation letter by W. W. Pearson, a Santiniketan professor who had accompanied Tagore on his tour of Japan in 1917. Finding the local Indian mercantile community in Kobe largely uninterested in or unaware of the anti-imperialist struggle, Sahay decided to stay in Kobe and raise political awareness there. He started working in Indian firms to arouse their employees to take an interest in anti-imperialist politics and rented a room at the local YMCA, through which he could do the same with Japanese students.[152] As an important shipping port, Kobe was a convenient place for this kind of work: less than two years later, Sahay had become acquainted with Sun Yat-sen, who had just delivered his famous Greater Asianism speech in Japan and passed through Kobe on his way back to China.[153] Sahay and Sun were introduced by Rashbehari Bose, who would also introduce Sahay to Mahendra Pratap.

However, Sahay may have shaped this narrative of exile and revolutionary work abroad in hindsight. British intelligence records cast him in the role of informer in this period, which suggests that he might not have arrived in Japan quite the Asianist revolutionary he

[151] Prasad, *Indian Nationalism and Asia*, 45.
[152] NMML, Oral Transcripts, Sahay, 3.
[153] For the speech and a short analysis, see Saaler and Spilzman, *Pan-Asianism*, 2:75–85.

later became.[154] The same contradiction is evident from his interactions with Bose, to whom he refers as both a 'close friend' and as someone completely out of touch with the Indian political situation and who spent his time comfortably at banquets with 'feudal politicians'.[155]

If Sahay was an informer during his first years in Japan, this changed in 1926, and the Indian Political Intelligence Office was slow on the uptake.[156] Subsequent to the Pan-Asiatic Conference at Nagasaki in July–August 1926, he organized a Pan-Asiatic Youth Conference with Bose and a group of Japanese politicians. The main outcome of the Youth Conference—in stark opposition to the main Nagasaki conference—was 'to organise the youth of enslaved Asian countries for revolt'.[157] Since Sahay held a passport that was valid throughout East Asia, he took it upon himself to start acquiring support for this revolt. He took pains to remain inconspicuous, erecting an import/export firm under the rather flimsy name of 'International Trades'. Collecting textile samples, he wrote to a variety of businesses throughout Asia to announce his arrival. In this way, he visited China (Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Canton), Malaya, Singapore, Sumatra, and Colombo.[158] He even managed to return to India briefly from Colombo, arriving in Calcutta in early 1927.

During his stay in Calcutta, he stayed aloof from INC politics, but did get married to Sati Devi, a niece of C. R. Das. Das's plans for establishing a Pan-Asian Federation have been treated in chapter 1. Interestingly, the only person in Calcutta he told about his Pan-Asianist project was Subhas Chandra Bose, who had been released from jail on the eve of the newlyweds' departure for Japan. Sahay returned to Japan via Singapore. When he disembarked at Singapore to give a speech to the Indian community there, British intelligence finally realized that Sahay had become a radical Asianist. Ironically, this was because another informer had been present at Sahay's speech. After a prolonged interrogation at the Police Commissioner's office, Sahay escaped to Japan on a French ship, his freedom intact but his cover blown, which was probably one of the reasons intelligence referred to him as 'suspect'.[159]

Back in Kobe, Sahay's status as an anti-imperialist and Asianist was no longer ambiguous: he started a Japanese branch of the INC, the opening meeting of which was attended by, among others, the well-known Burmese anti-imperialist Paw Tun Aung. Paw Tun Aung would also represent the INC at Sun Yat-sen's funeral in 1929. Seen through the lens of the Japan branch of the INC, the developing break between Japanese support for Asian cooperation and the developing militarist school of Shōwa Japan becomes clear. In establishing the INC, with its connotations of nonviolent struggle, Sahay received no official support. Undeterred, Sahay provided the INC with an official organ, *Voice of India*, which quickly became popular among Japanese university students, and was viewed by the

[154] APAC, IOR, L/P&J/12/36: Indian National Congress in Japan. Secret note from the Tokyo embassy, 8 January 1928. This is an unusual document and may have been an oversight, as the British IPI documents were usually very careful to protect the informers' identities.
[155] NMML, Oral Transcripts, Sahay, 3.
[156] They did not suspect him of having 'turned' until 1928.
[157] NMML, Oral Transcripts, Sahay, 4.
[158] NMML, Oral Transcripts, Sahay, 5.
[159] APAC, IOR, L/P&J/12/36: Indian National Congress in Japan. Secret note from the Tokyo embassy, 8 January 1928.

Government of India as a Pan-Asianist periodical that heralded Japan as the liberator of Asia and advocated concerted Asian action.[160]

In order to please the Japanese authorities, Sahay carefully downplayed the INC's commitment to nonviolence. He intensified his contacts with Rashbehari Bose, attended banquets with Japanese military officers, and circulated photos of himself in military uniform.[161] His rapprochement to Japanese authorities paid off: a number of new Indo-Japanese associations emerged, for which Sahay took partial credit.[162] The trade rivalry between Britain and Japan provided a further impetus for Indo-Japanese cooperation. It also hurt the Indian merchants in Japan, who, after years of residency, decided to put their faith in Japan rather than Britain. Indians in Shanghai and Hong Kong also indicated their interest, and support for the liberation of Asia by Japan grew into a larger network of Indians in East Asia. However, as this network became implicated in Japan's expansionist policies, its connection to India weakened. As noted, Indian public opinion turned against Japan, and Nehru notified Sahay in 1935 that his branch could no longer use the INC name.[163]

Finally, during the late 1930s, Sahay was paid by the Japanese government to tour Asia, including Japanese-occupied territories, to create a support base for Japan's Greater India vision under the banner of an 'Indian appeal' to Asia. On the eve of the Second World War, he stated:

> If China and Japan had spent the same amount in consolidating their united strength of the real enemy and exploiters of we all the oppressed peoples of the East, our peoples of all lands would be much happier. … Time has come when all the Asiatics must give up our internal conflicts and quarrels and work hand in hand for the emancipation of us all from foreign domination and exploitation. I have no doubt you will accept the leadership of your great benefactor Mr Wang Ching Wei and will work for peace, progress, and prosperity of China and the rest of Asia. … Time is opportune for the unity of Asiatic peoples. Let us forget the past. Let us create a New Asia of which we all may be rightly proud.[164]

Interestingly, Sahay's visions of Asia's renaissance, which he published in English and Japanese, owed less to Japan's vision of Greater East Asia than to the internationalist enthusiasm of the interwar period. Positioning himself somewhere between Tagore's spiritual Asianism and Pratap's vision of world peace through Asian unification, he writes:

> Peoples in the East need not wait for a guidance or initiative from the outside world. The Orient has to act irrespective of what others think of doing. It is as much

[160] APAC, IOR, L/P&J/12/366: INC in Japan 1928–1935. Dispatch, 26 October 1932; NMML, Oral Transcripts, Sahay, 6.
[161] APAC, IOR, L/P&J/12/366: INC in Japan 1928–1935. List of Revolutionaries in Japan, 1933.
[162] NMML, Oral Transcripts, Sahay, 7.
[163] NMML, Oral Transcripts, Sahay, 7.
[164] APAC, IOR, L/P&J/12/502; AM Sahay 1936–1940. Secret transcript of Sahay's speech in China. Wang Jingwei (1883-1944) was a close associate of Sun Yat-sen and present at the latter's Greater Asianism speech in Japan in 1924.

> necessary for the regeneration of Asia as for the peace and progress of the world at large. We must realize that the East has a mission to fulfil in this world full of miseries and madness. Although the materialist civilization of the West has given the world many useful and beneficial things it has failed miserably to make the world happy and peaceful. That capacity to make the world once again a happy and peaceful abode for humanity the Orient will give, to give birth to [sic] a new Culture suitable for the present world, based on the high ideals of the East.[165]

Tokyo: Rashbehari Bose and Pan-Asian agitation

Unlike Sahay, Rashbehari Bose (1886–1945) had no political roots in the Non-cooperation movement in India. Quite the opposite, he had become involved in violent revolutionary circles first in Bengal in the early 1900s, and was later implicated in the failed assassination attempt on Viceroy Lord Hardinge in 1912.[166] The outbreak of the First World War offered him the possibility of setting up a network throughout Asia for his revolutionary activities, the main purpose of which would be smuggling arms into India to trigger a rebellion against the British. The plan failed, partly due to the arrest of E. F. E. Douwes Dekker (an Indo-Dutch relative of the writer Eduard Douwes Dekker, or Multatuli), who had come into contact with Krishnavarma and other Indian revolutionaries during his exile in Europe. Dispatched to Java to arrange arms shipments from there, he travelled via the Ghadr group in California, but was apprehended in China and return to India, where he divulged the plans in court.[167]

With a strong case being built against him in India, Bose was forced to flee and travelled to Japan under the guise of P. N. Tagore, posing as Tagore's nephew with the cover of sailing well ahead of the poet himself to prearrange the latter's talks and accommodation in Japan.[168] He landed in Kobe and proceeded to Tokyo, where he organized a fiercely anti-British meeting with Pan-Asianist writer and Indologist Shumei Okawa. Lala Lajpat Rai and Heramba Lal Gupta of the Ghadr Party in the United States also attended. The meeting was cause for the British to press for the deportation of all Indian revolutionaries from Japan under the terms of the Indo-Japanese alliance.[169] The Japanese authorities complied, but Japanese civil society did not: the next morning, Toyama Mitsuru, a Pan-Asianist and right-wing politician from an old Samurai family active in the reactionary Black Dragon Society, provided shelter to Bose and Gupta.[170] Lajpat Rai, by this time, had already left for the United States,[171] and Gupta soon followed. Bose, however, after a prolonged period of hiding got

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[165] A. M. Sahay, *India* (Tokyo: Modern Nippon Sha, 1939), 102.

[166] Among others, J. G. Oshawa, *The Two Great Indians in Japan: Shri Rash Behari Bose and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose* (Calcutta: Kusa Publications, 1954), 1–4.

[167] 'Daus Dekkar' in Indian sources. Van der Veur, *The Lion and the Gadfly*, 314–53; Bose, *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad*, 135–44.

[168] WBSA, 185/1925; file 108/25 Printing articles relating to the reminiscences of revolutionists which have appeared in the press. Article from *Bangabani* (Calcutta).

[169] Bose, *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad*, 149.

[170] The Black Dragon Society, among other things, ran an espionage school and pressured the Japanese government for a strong Pan-Asianist foreign policy. They supported foreign Asianist activists such as Sun Yat-sen and Rashbehari Bose financially. The society's already shadowy image has since deteriorated through an appearance as the villains in the James Bond film *You Only Live Twice.*

[171] Oshawa, *The Two Great Indians in Japan*, 6.

married to Tosiko Soma, the daughter of Kokkoh Soma, author of *Awakening of Asia.* Bose had met the Somas through Toyama, and he became a naturalized Japanese in 1923.[172] Much indebted to Toyama, Bose's Pan-Asian activities expanded. He became involved with the *Zen Ajia Kyokai* (Pan-Asiatic Society, sometimes referred to as the All-Asia Society), which organized the 1926 Pan-Asiatic Conference in Nagasaki.

There is much confusion in the historiography of this conference and about its importance. Sven Saaler gives three conferences organized under the auspices of the Pan-Asiatic Society in the 1920s: Nagasaki (1926), Shanghai (1927) and Kabul (1928). The Kabul conference, however, never took place, as has been mentioned in section 4.2.[173] The importance of these conferences to India has likewise been overstated. For instance, it is mentioned that the Nagasaki conference sent letters of 'commendation' to individuals who had demonstrated their dedication to the cause of Asia, including Nehru and Gandhi.[174] However, the individuals in question had been contacted beforehand but declined to attend. Gandhi replied:

> Whilst doing whatever I can to promote brotherly feelings amongst all the different nations, I am chary of belonging to any association which I do not know intimately. An Asiatic Federation will be a federation of one physically strong race and other physically weak races. Much though there is to admire in the Japanese progress, you will pardon me for saying that I am not enamoured of it. I am engaged in demonstrating that it is possible to overcome the excesses of physical strength by matching against it, if such a conjunction of ideas is permissible, spiritual strength. You will, therefore, excuse me for not joining your movement.[175]

However, the Nagasaki conference was important in other ways. Firstly, it helped cement Indian expatriate revolutionaries' connections to their Asian counterparts among the approximately 100 attendees. The Indians represented the third largest group: of the thirty-five official delegates, seven were Indian—or eight, if one includes Mahendra Pratap as an 'Afghan' delegate.[176] Apart from Anand Mohan Sahay and Rashbehari Bose, the two most important Indian participants were Kesho Ram Sabarwal and Vidya Dari Bhakshi.[177] Both were connected to Bose and the Black Dragon Society, and both contributed to *The Asian Review*, a journal connected with the Society.[178] Sabarwal had experience in circulating Asianist propaganda; as a Ghadrite he had set up a press for revolutionary literature.[179] He

[172] Ibid., 21.

[173] S. Saaler, 'The Pan-Asiatic Society and the "Conference of Asian Peoples" in Nagasaki, 1926', in *Pan-Asianism: A Documentary History*, edited by Saaler and Szpilman, 2:97–105; 97.

[174] Saaler, 'The Pan-Asiatic Society', 99.

[175] 'Letter to the Pan-Asiatic Society, Peking', *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 31 (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Publications Division, 1969), 223–4.

[176] Who, however, did not manage to attend the conference, as has been mentioned in section 4.2.

[177] With thanks to Torsten Weber, who alerted me to a 'Bikushi' in Japanese sources with regard to the Nagasaki conference.

[178] APAC, IOR, L/P&J/12/157 Indians in Japan: memorandum regarding Japanese co-operation with Indian revolutionary agitators: G. Eliot of British Embassy Tokyo to Foreign Office, 1 February 1923.

[179] NAI, Home Department, DIB, The Ghadr Directory, Government of India 1934.

later created his own Asianist momentum as an editor for the *Japan Times*, publishing articles on Asianism as well as articles on India.[180]

The conference also marked an important phase in Pan-Asianism in East Asia: it was held in open defiance of the government's official policy, which was to refrain from Pan-Asian projects for fear of antagonizing its allies. This is significant, for it reflects a growing support base among Japanese civil society for a future Pan-Asian alliance. Several well-known Pan-Asian societies sent delegates to the conference. Although at Nagasaki 'Asian solidarity' was the watchword, this helped lay the groundwork for the shift from Japanese *solidarity* with Asia to Japanese *leadership* of Asia. In this sense, the conference must be regarded as a stepping stone towards the militarist Pan-Asianism of the 1930s.[181]

But outwardly, the conference was fully committed to bringing about an Asian renaissance, marked by Asian solidarity and cooperation. The ambitious plans that emerged from the conference reflect the unbridled optimism of interwar international associational life. Among the conference's resolutions were the formation of an Asian League, an Asian university, and the desirability of an Asian language.[182] All three would resurface at the Asian Relations Conference in 1947 described below in chapter 5. Rashbehari Bose's own speech was a testament to these sentiments:

> For thousands of years, the Easterners were a very superior people in civilization, spiritually and materially. … The Union we are now going to establish is to shape a new form of our Eastern civilization. Its basis is on the pure faith and love for Asia. Let us unite and do our best to establish this union at all cost and let us make a big contribution to the happiness of all humanity.[183]

The history of Rashbehari Bose's Pan-Asianist activities in Japan after 1933 remains to be written. The existing literature jumps from the 1920s to his involvement in the Indian National Army in the Second World War.[184] However, Bose remained active in Asianist circles throughout the 1930s. As Çemil Aydin has demonstrated, the liberal and conservative camps in Japan were not as divided on the issue of Pan-Asianism as is often thought—only their motives were different.[185] The fact that Pan-Asianism had become mainstream in the Japanese public sphere by 1933 meant that Bose could count on increased support from the Indian community resident in Tokyo.

In 1933, Bose started an Asia Lodge for Indian students in Japan, which the British suspected was heavily subsidized by Japanese authorities. Students could live there practically rent-free, and several students chose to do so. One of them was Dhyaneshwar Deshpande,

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[180] APAC, IOR, L/P&J/12/480 Indians in Japan: memorandum on the attitude of Indians and Japanese in Kobe Consular District, 1934.

[181] Even at the time of the conference, scepticism as to Japan's intentions did exist, especially among Korean and Chinese delegates. For a breakdown of the negative critiques, see Saaler and Szpilman, *Pan-Asianism: A Documentary History*, 1:101–2.

[182] Saaler and Szpilman, *Pan-Asianism: A Documentary History*, 1:199.

[183] Oshawa, *The Two Great Indians in Japan*, 27–8.

[184] With the exception of E. Hotta, 'Rash Behari Bose and his Japanese Supporters', *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 8:1 (2006): 116–32: 120–1.

[185] Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism*, 161–5.

who had moved to Japan to study jiu-jitsu. After staying at the Asia Lodge, he found a job as an editor at *The Japan Advertiser* and decided to stay.[186] Perhaps the Lodge's most remarkable resident was A. M. Appan, an ardent internationalist who had intended to bicycle around the world before retiring his bicycle and settling in Tokyo.[187]

In the meantime, Bose lectured throughout Japan, much as Anand Mohan Sahay and Mahendra Pratap had. However, they were not the only ones. Lesser known figures such as A. M. Nair, another Indian student in Tokyo, were paid by the Japanese authorities to do the same. Yet another, K. B. Sinha, established an Indian Information Bureau spreading propaganda on the importance of Indian independence for a free Asia.[188] As Bose formulated this in one of his lectures:

> The sufferings and sacrifices of the people of India have a deep and poignant significance for the peoples of Asia. We wish Asia to be healthy and whole, and to have no diseased spots on her fair body where white parasites may gather. Asia should be healthy and free; every European and American colony in Asia is a leprous spot. She must awake, gather help and strength and so be fit to press forward in the building up of her own beautiful civilization. That is the meaning of the Indian revolution for India, and that is the meaning of the Indian revolution for Asia as well![189]

Bose wrote prolifically, starting a periodical by the name of *New Asia*, 'for the complete independence of India, Asia and Humanity', which, at a subscription rate of one yen per year, was intended to appeal specifically to students.[190] This was reason for the Government of India to interdict any 'matter published, written or composed' by Rashbehari Bose in July 1933.[191] In 1934, he became one of the directors of the Pan-Asiatic League. It is interesting, given the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and the establishment of Manchukuo in early 1932, that the constitution of this League is still phrased in the idiom of Asian solidarity and cooperation. Although no documentation survives on who wrote it, it is likely that Bose was responsible for its references to India. The constitution cautioned that 'Japan must not make the mistake of the Europeans and exploit Asia, with the results seen in India today'. Instead, Japan should 'put morality and culture first. Without this, a League of Asiatic Peoples is impossible'.[192]

However much Rashbehari Bose may have attempted to influence the new expansionist turn in Japanese foreign policy, his position became untenable as the Second World War drew near and the Indian Independence League and Indian National Army (INA)

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[186] NAI, Home Political 1935 file 1/6 Indian Community in Tokyo: Enclosure to Tokyo dispatch, 19 March 1935.

[187] APAC, IOR, P&J/12/480 Indians in Japan, 1934. Memorandum on the attitude of Indians and Japanese in Kobe Consular District, 1934.

[188] APAC, IOR, P&J/12/366: INC in Japan 1928–1935. Dispatch British Embassy, Tokyo, 18 January 1933.

[189] APAC, IOR, P&J/12/163 Rashbehari Bose. Summary of lecture given by Bose on 6 June 1932.

[190] APAC, IOR, P&J/12/163 Rashbehari Bose. British Embassy Tokyo, 31 May 1933.

[191] NAI, Central Board of Revenue, Customs Duties Branch, 1938 file no 536/cus. I/38. Proscribed publications—Publication entitled 'New Asia' by Rashbehari Bose.

[192] APAC, IOR, L/P&J/12/158 Far Eastern Department: Japan, the Pan-Asiatic Movement: Great Asiatic Society and the policy of Pan-Asianism, 22 February 1934.

became a reality. The history of the short-lived INA, the subsequent INA trials in New Delhi, and their influence on India's attainment of independence have been thoroughly described elsewhere and need not be reiterated here.[193] It itself, the INA was devoted to India's liberation from the British, and is not viewed as a Pan-Asian project here. However, what deserves more recognition than has so far been the case is the extent to which the INA was indebted to the Asian networks forged by Indian expatriate revolutionaries in the interwar period. There is more to this than the continuity of INA leadership in the form of Anand Mohan Sahay and Rashbehari Bose. When the active recruiting for the INA began in Singapore, Thailand, Malaya, and Burma, the Indians at these sites were already connected. Early on, they had read the same literature when Baba Osman Khan distributed Ghadar pamphlets throughout China, Japan, Java, Sumatra, Burma, and Malaya.[194] Bangkok, the site of the Indian Independence League Conference, had been the nucleus of a revolutionary network through the Bharat Culture Lodge started by Satyananda Puri, a student of Rabindranath Tagore.[195] Such networks were maintained and enlarged by events such as the Nagasaki Conference, and the travels and activities of Sahay and others in Southeast Asia.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has been concerned with the activities of itinerant Asianists who were active in, and travelled between, key sites in Asia. Two revolutionary routes, which represent different Asianist agendas and concerns, have been examined. In Central Asia, the First World War and the Bolshevik Revolution had provided opportunities for anti-imperialism in an Asian inflection. Revolutionaries such as Barkatullah, M. P. T. Acharya, Abani Mukherjee and Abdur Rab, were instrumental in formulating a revolutionary idiom that drew on both communism and Pan-Islamism, which could count on a considerable audience. Their numbers were augmented by the arrival of the muhajirs, many of whom remained in Central Asia when their attempts to reach Turkey were thwarted. The Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku and the *Indusky Kurs* in Tashkent were key sites where this particular formulation of Asianist solidarity was developed further. Both routes eventually led to Moscow, where the University of the Toilers of the East provided both revolutionary training and a meeting ground for Asian anti-imperialist activists.

A very different Asianist trajectory was presented by commercial shipping routes, which provided opportunities for both texts and people to travel between the cosmopolitan port cities of Asia. There, the Asianist message could also count on a receptive audience. The Indian communities in the port areas of Kobe and Tokyo were catalysts in Pan-Asianist projects which spread outwards to the ports of Singapore and Bangkok. These projects were

[193] Most recently: S. Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India's Struggle against Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); S. Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); W. F. Kuracina, 'Sentiments and Patriotism: The Indian National Army, General Elections and the Congress' Appropriation of the INA Legacy', *Modern Asian Studies* 44: 4 (2010): 817–56.

[194] K. Singh Giani, *Indian Independence Movement in East Asia: The Most Authentic Account of the INA and the Azad Hind Government compiled from the original office records* (Lahore: Singh Brothers, 1947), 16.

[195] K. Singh Giani, *Indian Independence Movement in East Asia*, 16.

focused on the opportunities created by Pan-Asianism as it developed in Japan, although their relationship with Japanese Pan-Asianism was fraught. These two circuits were connected by revolutionaries who travelled between these Asianist sites by land and by sea. It is important to note in this regard, that lascars not only acted as transmitters of information, but also engaged in anti-imperialist activism themselves. The itinerant lives of Asianists such as Mahendra Pratap, finally, demonstrate the versatility of Asianism as a rallying point for anti-imperialist groups of different ideological and religious persuasions.

Pratap, Anand Mohan Sahay, Rashbehari Bose, and their Indian colleagues continued to cooperate with Japan even after Indian public opinion had turned against Japan as an example of Asian modernity, and against Japanese formulations of Pan-Asianism in particular. Nevertheless, after independence, many exiled revolutionaries were welcomed back as anti-imperialists who had contributed to the struggle for independence in their own way. Although far removed, both physically and mentally, from the Gandhian moment in India, as the case of Pratap demonstrates their Asianist activism found a place in public memory.

Pratap stayed in Japan throughout the war, and was briefly at the notorious Sugamo prison during the American occupation of Japan as a consequence. He was later allowed to return to India, where he was received with all the enthusiasm due a true patriot.[196] This was part of a larger context in which exiled revolutionaries were welcomed back—regardless of their politics—in recognition of their personal sacrifices and as 'forgotten men' of the struggle for independence.[197] This was most evident at the All-India Old Revolutionaries' Conference, held in New Delhi on 13 and 14 December 1958, in which three hundred revolutionaries took part. Bhupendranath Dutta, the younger brother of Swami Vivekananda and president of the Old Revolutionaries' Conference, proposed in his opening speech that the revolutionaries had extended the struggle to foreign countries and that therein lay their contribution.[198] India's President Rajendra Prasad was a little less generous, but still sent a message to the Old Revolutionaries' Conference that though the nation was wedded to nonviolence, 'the contribution of the revolutionaries to the movement for independence was no less valuable'.[199] Prime Minister Nehru, finally, entertained all the delegates at tea. But there were dissenting voices. Some of the delegates were still quite vocal in their dislike of Gandhian thought, even to the press; and Pratap, who took an active part in the proceedings, made a public speech in front of the Jama Masjid criticizing the Nehruvian government and reiterating once more his plans for world federation. If the world had changed, Pratap had not. Dismissing 'pious sermons of nationalism' and democracy, as well as Nehru's Afro-Asian regionalism, he called upon the government and the people to finally realize a federated

[196] Petitions to allow Pratap to return to India had been made as early as 1938 by his supporters, notably members of the All-India Jat Mahasabha. NAI, Home Political, 59/38 (1938), Representations for the Grant of Permission to Mahendra Pratap to Return to India.

[197] Editorial, *Sunday Statesman*, 14 December 1958, 3.

[198] ZMO, Horst Krüger Nachlass, Box 34 file 256–1. Booklet, *All-India Old Revolutionaries Conference Address, by Dr Bhupendranath Dutta* (1958).

[199] *The Sunday Standard*, 14 December 1958, 1.

'Aryan' as a province of Asia in a federated world.[200]

Pratap served as a member of parliament from 1957 to 1962. Having survived years of travel, prison cells, armed skirmishes, fevers, and even typhoid, he finally died at home in India at the ripe age of ninety-three. He had developed a spiritually charged conception of Asian unity in which a federated Asia would in time become part of a federated world. His thought may be regarded as an intricate patchwork of internationalist ideas circulating in the interwar period, some of which were so contradictory that within the space of fifteen years he was both nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize and interned on charges of war crimes.[201] However quixotic his plans may have been, the alliances he forged to execute them were very real. He tailored his propaganda to fit Islamists in Kabul and communists in Moscow. He certainly lived his idea of a Pan-Asia through his travels, demonstrating the connectedness of the continent by showing that no part of Asia was so remote that it could not be reached by train, camel, motorcar, or donkey. His exploration of the relationship between the local, the regional, and the global, was one of the myriad ways in which the legitimacy of the world order was challenged in the interwar period.

[200] ZMO, Horst Krüger Nachlass, Box 34 file 256–1. Booklet, *Challenge by Raja Mahendra Pratap M. P. Aryan Peshwa* (1958). See also points 14–16 of the pamphlet *Federal Party* of the same year. The vernacular *Hindi Hindustan* was the only newspaper to still respond somewhat positively to Pratap's federationalist programme in their 28 June 1958 issue.

[201] Pratap was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize by N. A. Nilsson, a Swedish board member of the International Peace Bureau, in 1932. The nomination mentions his mission to the Dalai Lama.