

## MASTER'S THESIS

### **Policing strangers by strangers: changing colonial policing strategies and the recruitment of Indians in the Hong Kong police forces, 1841-1941**

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**Policing Strangers by Strangers:  
Changing Colonial Policing Strategies and  
the Recruitment of Indians in the Hong Kong Police Force,  
1841-1941**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the British colonial policing strategy by studying a hundred years of history of the Indians in the Hong Kong Police Force from 1841 to 1941. The British strategy of policing the colonies was always described as “policing strangers by strangers.” Instead of recruiting local natives, some colonial governments specifically favored using reliable aliens or strangers as policemen. The Indians, especially the Sikhs, were favored by the British for colonial policing. Policing by the Indians was a common practice from Chinese treaty ports to South Africa and within the Empire in Hong Kong. In the case of Hong Kong, the Indians served as one of the pillars and always accounted for a substantial part in the colonial police force until the mid-twentieth century. While considering the practice of “policing strangers by strangers” in Hong Kong, this research focuses on three key issues. It first lays out how the British perception towards the Indians and the Chinese, and how and why the Indians were specifically chosen for colonial policing. Secondly, it argues that there was policing strategy across territorial boundary connecting India with other colonies by considering the Indians and India itself as factors affecting the development of the Hong Kong Police Force. Thirdly, it pays attention to the role of the Chinese as an auxiliary force in policing the colony and how the local circumstances of Hong Kong resulted in unique colonial policing strategy different from other colonies within the Empire. As historical circumstances changed over time, there were changing British perceptions from time to time towards the Indians. Such changes included from trusting them to doubting their reliability, which in turns affected the colonial policing strategy in Hong Kong. This thesis aims to provide an in-depth research on the history of the Indians in policing Hong Kong from historical and political aspects and to explore the interactions between colonies and the Empire, in order to address the salient features of British colonial policing and contribute to fill up such a missing puzzle in the overall picture of the historical development of the Hong Kong Police Force.

# Table of Contents

Declaration.....	i
Abstract .....	ii
Acknowledgments .....	iii
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Figures.....	ix
List of Tables .....	x
<b>Chapter 1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
I.    Literature Review .....	2
i.    General Studies on the Indian Community in Hong Kong .....	3
ii.   Remarkable Studies on Colonial Policing in the British Empire .....	6
iii.  Studies on Policing in Early Hong Kong .....	10
II.   Objectives of the Study .....	14
III.  Scope of the Study .....	16
IV.  Sources and Materials .....	17
V.   Structure of the Contents .....	19
<b>Chapter 2 Background .....</b>	<b>22</b>
I.    Exploring the Colonial Policing of the British Empire.....	22
II.   The British Policing Strategy: Policing Strangers by Strangers .....	26
III.  Revisions on Research into Policing in the British Empire.....	27
IV.  The Early Conditions of Hong Kong.....	29
V.   The Early Attempts to Control the Native Population in the Colony.....	34

<b>Chapter 3 Policing Hong Kong: the Establishment of</b>	
<b>    the Hong Kong Police Force.....</b>	<b>39</b>
I. Early Attempts in Policing the Colony .....	39
II. The Policing Plan of Charles May in 1845.....	42
III. Deficiency of the Police Force.....	49
IV. Proposal of Reorganization of the Police Force in 1854 .....	51
V. The Police Commission of 1856.....	57
VI. Robinson’s Reform: Recruitment of Bombay Sepoy .....	59
VII. The Nature and Characteristics of the Police Force .....	66
VIII. Summary .....	67

<b>Chapter 4 The Era of Punjabis’ Predomination in</b>	
<b>    the Hong Kong Police Force.....</b>	<b>71</b>
I. MacDonnell: Reformer of the Hong Kong Police Force .....	71
II. Enlistment of Trained Sikh Police for Service in Hong Kong .....	73
III. Enlistment of Punjabi Muslims for Service in Hong Kong .....	77
IV. The Indian Mutiny and a Belief in Martial Race .....	79
V. The View from India:	
Indians for Police Service in Hong Kong .....	82
VI. The Performance and Lives of the Newly-recruited Indians .....	87
VII. Promotion of Indians in the Colonial Policing Service .....	94
VIII. Public Perception towards the Indians.....	98
IX. Public Reactions towards Indian Police.....	103
X. Summary .....	105

<b>Chapter 5 Policing by Strangers or Local Natives? –</b>	
<b>    The Exceptional Case .....</b>	<b>107</b>
I. Native Chinese Peace Officers, 1841-1861 .....	107
II. The District Watch Force, 1866-1949 .....	111
III. The Police Commission of 1872.....	117
IV. Pro-Chinese Policing Strategy: Governors Sir Arthur Kennedy	

and Sir John Pope Hennessy .....	124
V. The 1884 Strike and Riot .....	129
VI. Hindering Factors of the Localization of the Hong Kong Police Force.....	131
VII. Summary .....	132
<b>Chapter 6 Policing the New Territories .....</b>	<b>135</b>
I. The Occupation of the Leased Territories .....	135
II. Lockhart’s Report on the Arrangements for Policing the New Territories.....	136
III. Armed Resistance to the British Occupation.....	138
IV. Policing Arrangements after the Resistance .....	142
V. The Case of Ping Shan.....	149
VI. Summary.....	153
<b>Chapter 7 Between the Two World Wars.....</b>	<b>155</b>
I. Discontentment toward Indians for the Colonial Policing Service in Hong Kong	
i. Fighting for a Pay Increase.....	155
ii. Involvement of Indians in Offences .....	159
II. Controversies surrounding the Reliability of Indians in Hong Kong and the British Empire	
i. Enlistment of Indians in Foreign Countries.....	162
ii. The Rise of Indian Nationalism .....	171
iii. The Possibility of Indian Seditious in Hong Kong .....	173
III. Disturbances in Hong Kong and the Enlistment of Chinese from Weiheiwei .....	179
IV. Towards the Second World War.....	186
V. In-Between Positions: the Colonists and the Colonized.....	189
VI. Summary .....	192

<b>Chapter 8 Conclusion .....</b>	<b>194</b>
Selected Bibliography .....	200
Curriculum Vitae .....	208