

# **First World War and Locality in Colonial Punjab: A Nuanced Understanding of the War Effort**

*Tahir Mahmood\**

## **Abstract**

This article in the light of revealing new sources provides a nuanced understanding of the contribution of the British Punjab to the First World War through a case study approach. By focussing on the war effort made by colonial Shahpur district it presents a grassroots perspective of the recruitment processes. It also provides answers to the bigger questions related to the recruitment process, civil-military integrations, handling of the recruits and functioning of the territorial recruitment system. The case study material drawn from the Deputy Commissioner Record Office Sargodha argues that the reality at the locality level was more complex than the provincial picture painted in the existing literature. Civil-military integration worked well where the initiative rested with the military authorities; however, it was chequered when the initiative came from the civilian authorities. So the coordination and cooperation between the civilian and military authorities was not as smooth and harmonious as painted in the provincial picture. Similarly, it also questions the exiting understanding that with the introduction of 'territorial recruitment system' the recruitment problems were solved. It argues that despite its introduction, the handling of recruits and the effective distribution of military manpower remained a tricky business.

---

## **Introduction**

Punjab emerged as the 'sword arm' of British India towards the end of nineteenth century. It replaced the recruitment areas of Bombay, Bengal and Madras, and became home of the colonial Indian Army. Before the commencement of the First World War it provided the Indian Army with 50 per cent of its troops and this went up to about 60 per cent during the war. It made monetary and material contribution to the war effort to the tune of Rs. 92,118,664. It was this reason that it became 'virtual home front' during the First World War. Its experience of the war effort was unprecedented and unique as compared to any other part of India. The

---

\* Dr Tahir Mahmood, Assistant Professor, Government College University, Lahore.

whole province was mobilised and its civil administrative machinery showed tremendous cooperation with the military authorities. Collaborating elite of the province was involved in the recruitment drive at unprecedented level. The position of the rural landed elite was further entrenched through recruitment rewards. As the war wore on the death toll increased which meant frequent demands were placed on the province to replenish the depleting regiments. The existing literature on Punjab's military history is mainly provincial and it views the war history through the prism of provincial level sources. So far the locality based study was avoided due to the lack of access to local level sources. Things at the locality level were more complex than the picture painted at the provincial level. This study aims to address this gap in the existing literature through a case study of the war effort in the key Shahpur district of colonial Punjab. Shahpur district forms an important case study as it was one of the most important recruitment districts for the Indian Army. During the first five months of the war the district raised 4,920 men and took the leading position among all the district of the province. In terms of overall performance it was placed at number fourteen among all the districts in 1918.<sup>1</sup>

This article presents original analyses of the recruitment process at the grassroots level during the First World War. This study analyses the changes brought to the recruitment system in order to cope with the heightened war-time demand for the recruits. The general standardised view is that there was unprecedented level of cooperation between the civil and military administration and all of the civil administration became a monolithic machine geared towards the procurement of recruits. However, this locality based study reveals a more complex story of the recruitment process. Despite the introduction of a new 'territorial system' of recruitment there were still many problems regarding the handling of recruits and the efficient distribution of military manpower. In this regard the article focuses on the district officials' attempts to solve these problems and their desire to seek necessary cooperation and approval from the military authorities. The lack of coordination between the civil and military authorities regarding the proposed scheme of establishing a non-regimental depot at Sargodha and its eventual abandonment after a prolonged consultation and debate will shed fresh light on the theme of civil military integration. Furthermore the article will also highlight those areas where cooperation demanded by the military authorities was more readily extended by the civil

---

<sup>1</sup> M.S. Leigh, *The Punjab and the War* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1997), p.59.

administration. In this way this study will reinforce the existing interpretation of civil-military cooperation in areas where it was necessary to meet the recruitment quotas set by the Provincial Recruitment Board, as well as to establish welfare schemes for the soldiers' families. First we turn to the military labour market in the district and the changes brought into the recruitment system. This we will see by comparing the military labour market before the war and its expansion under the territorial system of recruitment introduced during the war.

### **Military labour market before the war**

Tan Tai Yong has demonstrated that with the emergence of martial race theory, introduction of military reforms in the aftermath of 1857 and Punjab's proximity with the main theatre of conflict in Afghanistan helped the province become home of the colonial Indian army. The rural elite developed military connections after their various services in the uprising of 1857. Their role as 'military contractors' for the Raj received an added impetus when Punjab became a major recruitment ground for the colonial Indian army.<sup>2</sup> The military connection of the Shahpur district goes back to the uprising of 1857 when its martial tribes loyally supported the British to restore their political control. Recent research has demonstrated that the collaborating elite viewed recruitment as a resource to augment their position in the society. By procuring recruits they competed for the British largess which they could use to beat of their rivals. Tiwanas, a Rajput clan centered at Mitah Tiwana, took a lead in the recruitment process in the district. Military services of the Tiwanas helped them to establish their social, political and economic ascendancy in the district.<sup>3</sup> Other designated martial tribes included Awans, Janjuas and Baloches in the district.

Yong argues that the military labour market was an extremely limited one.<sup>4</sup> It was mainly restricted to the designated military districts and martial tribes within the province. This was certainly true with respect to the Shahpur district. Recruitment policies based on the martial race theory and on the collaboration of the rural elite had a differential impact on the people of the district. It neglected some groups while showered political, social and economic patronage on others. This was mainly due to the old system of recruitment as the recruitment was

---

<sup>2</sup> Tan Tai Yong, *The Garrison State* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> See Ian Talbot, *Khizr Tiwana The Punjab Unionist Party and the Partition of India* (Richmond Surrey: Curzon, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> Tan Tai Yong, *op.cit.*

carried out only in certain tracts and within certain classes. Recruitment was restricted to a small number of localities and tribes.

For example the Tiwanas and Noons had special affinity with horse riding and they showed marked preference for the cavalry regiments. They had huge estates in the Shahpur and Khushab *tehsils*<sup>5</sup> (administrative sub-divisions of a district). Both the tribes inhabited the surrounding areas along the railway line between Khushab and Gunjial towns.<sup>6</sup> From the Salt Range and its base the Awans and Janjuas preferred service with the cavalry and infantry regiments. The local Camel Corps had pulled the bulk of its strength from the Qureshis of the Eastern Salt-Range and the Baloches of Khushab. However, Baloches of Sahiwal and from its neighbourhood as well as the Baloches of Jamali in the Tahl preferred service with the cavalry regiments. There were 2,500 men in the army before the war and all had come from these tracts.<sup>7</sup> This skewed pattern of recruitment continued until 1916 and the military authorities did not feel the need to change it for the first twenty-nine months of the war. This system had two components: 'direct enlistments' and 'class recruiting'.

Under 'direct enlistment' the regimental connection of the family and neighborhood played a pivotal role. The young persons, whose family members and friends were serving in various regiments, would present themselves at the respective regimental depots. In total, 17 regiments had drawn recruits from the Shahpur district. Sixteen regiments had been recruiting before the war. One regiment that connected itself during the war was 6th Cavalry. For this regiment Malik Dost Muhammad Khan Tiwana promised to procure one hundred recruits. Moreover, the leading men who could bring recruits for their respective regiments were given high ranks and honorary commissions. These people in turn used their influence in their neighbourhoods to get more recruits for their regiments. For example, Retired Risaldar (a non-commissioned cavalry rank) Major Sher Baz Khan, who was made *zaildar* (in charge of a *zail*) in Katha Masral, had served the 34th Poona Horse, for 28 years. His brother, Risaldar Major Hussain Khan, followed suit and joined the regiment. Both were given the title of Sher Bahadur. Risaldar Major Sher Baz Khan supplied no less than fifty-five recruits

---

<sup>5</sup> Colonial Shahpur district had four *tehsils* namely Sargodha, Shahpur, Khusab and Bhulwal. These *tehsils* were named after the principal towns Sargodha, Shahpur, Khushab and Bhulwal respectively.

<sup>6</sup> M.S. Leigh, *War Services of the Shahpur District* (Lahore: Civil and Military Gazette Press, n.d.), p.12.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

during the war to his former regiment mostly from Awans and his own Janjua tribe.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, honorary Captain Sardar Muhammad Amin Khan, who was an influential man in Salimabad sent a great number of recruits from his locality to the 23rd Cavalry - his old regiment.<sup>9</sup> It is interesting to note that even though the new system of recruitment was introduced in 1917, direct enlistment continued throughout the war and that was why returns for the number of recruits given by the Central Recruiting Board were always in excess of those given by the Divisional Recruiting Officers.<sup>10</sup>

Under the 'class recruiting' system at various cantonments recruiting depots were established. These depots were put under the charge of recruiting officers and their main function was to enlist people from a particular class i.e Sikhs, Punjabi Muslims, Jats etc. In this way a Sikh of Rawalpindi would not be recruited by the depot located there, rather he would have to go to the depot at Amritsar. Moreover, under this system recruiting parties sent out by the regiments would pick up recruits in the designated areas. Some regiments moved their headquarters to the districts where the majority of their recruits had come from. In the Shahpur district there was only the 53rd Silladari Camel Corps which had its headquarters at Sargodha. This was beneficial because the soldiers had more time to spend near their homes and consequently there were fewer desertions. Moreover, they acted as informal recruiting officers by setting their own example in their villages. For the military authorities the maxim was 'that the best recruiter in the wavering districts was the newly-joined recruit'.<sup>11</sup> However, in case of the regiments with headquarters in the far off districts, desertion was very common. Later we will see that the civil and military authorities contemplated establishing depots in the home districts of the recruits to tackle the problem of desertion. In Shahpur district the figures supplied by the Superintendent of Police are quite revealing. From the period, 1st August 1914 up to 31st March 1918 there were 1,172 cases of desertion, out of which 654 were arrested and 518 were still at large as late as the

---

<sup>8</sup> Risaldar Major Hussain Khan, Depot Poona Horse to Commissioner Rawalpindi, 1 May 1919, in File U/XIV/194, Deputy Commissioner Record Office Sargodha [Henceforth DCRO, Sargodha].

<sup>9</sup> M.S. Leigh, *War Services of the Shahpur District, op.cit.*, p.55. This regiment had the only Hindu Commissioned officer of the district, Jamadar Mohkam Chand of Chak No. 42. S.B.

<sup>10</sup> M.S. Leigh, *The Punjab and the War, op.cit.*, p.41.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.42.

last mentioned date above.<sup>12</sup> The estimated total number of men recruited between this period was 12,229, which means deserters comprised 15.7 per cent of the total recruitment.<sup>13</sup> These figures represent the overall picture and separate data for the regiments is unfortunately not available.

Thus the old system had many drawbacks and there was a lot of wastage of resources. Handling of the raw recruits in order to turn them into an effective war material was a question of utmost importance but under the old system it was neglected to a large extent. The recruitment depots were located at great distances and some time it was not possible for the people to incur expenses in order to reach there. There was bitter competition among the different regimental recruiting parties, so much so that sometimes propaganda against the rival regiment was employed to discredit it from potential recruits. This lack of coordination among the recruiting parties was also reflected on the civil side. The Civil administration was not consulted and sometimes had no knowledge of the activities of the recruiting parties.<sup>14</sup> In the Shahpur district, therefore, recruitment was haphazard and the infantry regiments like the cavalry regiments were mostly relying on their soldiers to bring recruits for their respective regiments. As long as the infantry regiments did not open their regimental clearing depots in the district the recruitment base remained restricted and only the Awans of the district took up infantry service in large numbers.<sup>15</sup>

### **Expansion of the military labour market**

From 1917 onwards under the new system of recruitment, as Yong has pointed out, the civil administration, right from the bottom to the top, became a 'monolithic machine' geared up for the recruitment process, and to deal with defects in the existing recruitment procedures. Under the new 'territorial system' the recruitment zones were made to synchronise with the administrative boundaries of the districts and the divisions. The recruitment procedure was streamlined through a single chain of command by appointing mostly civilian recruitment officers at the district and military officers at the divisional level. A Central Recruiting

---

<sup>12</sup> I. Slattery Esquire, Superintendent of Police Shahpur District, Sargodha, to the Deputy Commissioner, Shahpur District, 29 June 1918 in File No. U XIV 193, DCRO, Sargodha.

<sup>13</sup> See the 'Statement showing the number of deserters from the Indian Army and the number arrested or otherwise accounted for from 1 August 1914 to 30 June 1918', in File No. U XIV 193, DCRO, Sargodha.

<sup>14</sup> For more details see Tan Tai Yong, *op.cit.*

<sup>15</sup> M.S. Leigh, *War Services of the Shahpur District, op.cit.*, p.56.

Board was established at Delhi to ascertain the military manpower requirement and to allocate the quota to the provinces. Soon afterwards, in June 1917, a Provincial Recruiting Board was constituted to administer the recruitment campaign in the province. The Lieutenant Governor, Michael O' Dwyer himself chaired the board, which comprised the financial commissioner, commissioners of the administrative divisions and notable members of the collaborating elite from various districts. From Shahpur, Major Malik Umar Hayat Tiwana represented the district. The fundamental feature of the new system was that the entire civil administrative machinery of the province was mobilised in the recruitment operations and the rural military elite assumed the role of 'military contractors' at an unprecedented level.<sup>16</sup>

The old system of recruitment continued until 1916. Until that time little pressure was applied to mobilise the people for enlistment. Therefore, the recruitment process remained very slow. The total number of combatants on 1 January 1915 was 2,834. This had risen to 3,320 by 1 January 1916. In the following October the province was asked to produce 3,500 mule and camel drivers who were required for service in Mesopotamia. From the district, Malik Khuda Bakhsh Tiwana was deputed by the Provincial Recruitment Board to raise the recruits. In this regard he enlisted 760 men from the Shahpur district.<sup>17</sup> Pressures intensified as the death toll rose. In July 1917 the Shahpur district was asked to provide 5,727 men. The final demand on the district was made nine months later. It was asked to enlist 11,520 men during the 12 months ending 31 May 1919.<sup>18</sup>

Under the new recruitment system the whole district was mobilised. Shaikh Shahnawaz Khan, who had played a very important role in recruitment in the Rawalpindi district, was appointed as District Assistant Recruiting Officer and for the first time a systematic effort was made to recruit from all classes and from all parts of the district.<sup>19</sup> Later, Major W.C.W. Miller was appointed as Assistant Recruiting Officer. He had been an Executive Engineer in the P.W.D Irrigation Branch and had good knowledge of the people and of local languages. Shaikh Shahnawaz Khan, however, continued as his assistant until the middle of 1918. Major Sir Umar Hayat Tiwana along with *risaldar* Dost Muhammad Khan Bahadur rendered services as Honorary Recruiting Officers.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Tan Tai Yong, *op.cit.*, pp.114-17.

<sup>17</sup> M.S. Leigh, *War Services of the Shahpur district, op.cit.*, p.13.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>20</sup> See footnote (no. not given) in *Ibid.*

Moreover all the official and semi-officials, urban and rural notables, landed gentry and rural chiefs were mobilised. Various organisations were created and the recruitment graph went up very sharply and 'in the nine months following 1 July 1917 the number of men produced was 6,469 as against the 5,727, which Government had fixed as the contribution for 12 months'.<sup>21</sup> However, in late 1918 recruitment related disturbances took place, which considerably slackened the recruitment process.

According to the Recruitment Board the total number of people in the army originating from the district was 14,040 (combatants 12,840, non-combatants 1,290) at the end of November 1918. This meant that one in 25 of the total male population of 1911 was recruited. Among the 28 districts of the Punjab, Shahpur district in respect of number of combatants, total number in service and the percentage of male population serving stood thirteenth, fourteenth and eighteenth respectively.<sup>22</sup> It is impossible to give the exact number of total recruits because the Recruiting Boards' figures do not include those who were killed, discharged, retired and deserted. Secondly, a large number of recruits produced by the canal colonists were not natives of the district and on reaching their units registered themselves under their home districts.<sup>23</sup> However, it is estimated that nearly 13,000 men joined the army after the outbreak of the war. Table No.1 shows that after the introduction of territorial recruitment system in 1917 there was a marked increase in the enlistment of soldiers. The recruitment was carried out in all *tehsils* and from all classes of the people. Those classes which were hitherto considered non-martial could find their way to join the army under the new system.

**Table No. 1 Recruitment in the Shahpur District during the War**

Year	Numbers recruited
1914	334
1915	386
1916	909
1917	4,040
1918	7,039

Source: M.S. Leigh, *War Services of the Shahpur District*, p.13.

---

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14.



It would be erroneous to consider that these excellent recruitment results were achieved just because of the 'territorial recruitment' system. Element of coercion could not be ruled out completely. In the Shahpur District some village refused to enlist. Their entire inhabitants were forced out of the village. Womenfolk were separated until the men showed their willingness for the recruitment.<sup>24</sup> Feroz Khan Noon argues that coercion was not sanctioned by the higher military authorities. The lower-level recruiting staff used illegal means on their own behalf to forcibly enlist the people.<sup>25</sup> Ashiq Hussain Batalvi, however, does not absolve of the senior British officers. He argues that coercion was the result of pressures applied by the higher authorities to meet the quotas.<sup>26</sup> Batalvi seems right in terms of the pressures applied by the higher authorities to get the recruitment quotas realised by the lower staff but there is no evidence regarding the endorsement of coercion by them. For example, about recruitment related disturbance in the Lahore District a British military official stated:

I agree with you in thinking that it looks very much as if an attempt had been made to round up the youth in this case. In fact the whole recruitment party appears to have acted like a press-gang. As you know, I am much opposed to these methods...I do not wish to get Lieutenant William into trouble, but he seems to me to have acted injudiciously, and I should like the military authorities to take steps to prevent these 'press gang' methods in future.<sup>27</sup>

In the Shahpur District disturbances took place at Mardwal, Lak and Behk Lurka. In one incident *tehsildar* (officer in charge of a sub-division of a district) Sayad Nadir Hussain, while on recruitment duty, was murdered on 27 July 1918.<sup>28</sup> In all these disturbances, local collaborating elite helped the authorities in maintaining political control and arresting the culprits. Umar Hayat Tiwana, Mubariz Kahn Tiwana and Khuda

---

<sup>24</sup> Ashiq Hussain Batalvi, *Iqbal Ke Akhri Do Sal*, (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2000), p.62.

<sup>25</sup> Feroz Khan Noon, *From Memory* (Islamabad: The National Book Foundation, 1993), p.77.

<sup>26</sup> Ashiq Hussain Batalvi, *op.cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>27</sup> See confidential letter from Camp Gurdaspur to H.P. Tollinton, Deputy Commissioner, Lahore, 10 February 1918, in PGPH(M), Part B, September 1918, Nos. 419-22.

<sup>28</sup> Feroz Khan Noon about the murder of *tehsildar* writes that it was because of his 'unseemly part in forcing recruitment'. Noon, *From Memory*, p.77. Also see Leigh, *War Services of the Shahpur District*, p.11.

Bakhsh Tiwana provided their horsemen to the superintendent of police. Umar Hayat personally arrested culprits and sometimes negotiated singlehandedly in extremely dangerous circumstances.<sup>29</sup>

The recruitment disturbances tarnished the benevolent image of the state. On the other hand, the military establishment tried its best to use its benign image to step up the recruitment. The military authorities took a number of steps as early as in 1914 to keep the home districts of the soldiers free from any feelings of unrest. In this regard the first priority was the families of the soldiers who, were they to be satisfied, could set a good example to the rest of the people in their vicinity. Major General F. J. Aylmer, the Adjutant General, instructed the General Officers Commanding Divisions and Independent Brigades to issue instructions to all officers concerned with the investigation and payment of family pensions, that such cases should be 'considered as matters of extreme importance and even more especially the cases of the relatives and next-of-kin of soldiers killed in action or died of wounds'.<sup>30</sup> These claims were to be investigated by the civil authorities who were told that the Commander-in-Chief considered it as a matter of 'gravest importance' and the cases should be treated as 'very urgent and dealt with as expeditiously as possible'.<sup>31</sup> In this regard the services of the retired Indian Officers were also taken and they were informed through Commanding Officers to help the heirs of soldiers in their own localities by explaining to them the requirements for the early expedition of their cases. In addition, the families of the soldiers could approach the commanding officers of the military depots situated in their districts regarding the difficulties and delays to their pension cases. The commanding officers liaised with the Deputy Commissioners to expedite the matter. In some cases there were inordinate delays and the controller of military accounts was involved, who in turn directly issued orders to the concerned Deputy Commissioners to explain the delays. For example, Officer Commanding, Depot, XX Deccan Horse, Neemuch, reported one such case about Daffadar Sujan Singh who was killed in Flanders. The military authorities were very sensitive about this issue

---

<sup>29</sup> Umar Hayat Tiwana to M. S. Leigh, n.d., in File U/XIV/194, DCRO, Sargodha.

<sup>30</sup> Major-General F.J. Aylmer, Adjutant-General in India, to the General Officers Commanding Divisions and Independent Brigades, 25 November 1914, in File UXIV 235, DCRO, Sargodha.

<sup>31</sup> The Adjutant General in India to The General Officers Commanding Divisions, Divisional Area and Independent Brigades, 8 December 1914, in File UXIV 235, DCRO, Sargodha.

and the accountant general wrote to the Deputy Commissioner, Ludhiana, that 'the Government of India have decided that the investigation of claims to family pensions on behalf of the heirs of men killed in action or have died during the present war, should be carried out as rapidly as possible, as any delay in such matters would be contrary to the true interest of Government, and that step should be taken by those concerned to obviate this'.<sup>32</sup>

The complaints about the delay in the investigation of the cases were not numerous and were mainly from the Lahore, Poona and Lucknow divisions.<sup>33</sup> The military authorities in the Punjab, however, were very sensitive to this matter and Brigadier General W.C. Barrat impressed upon the provincial government that all the civil officers should be given 'strict injunctions' as regards to the completion of the pension cases on behalf of the families of the soldiers killed in the war or those who died of wounds, 'with utmost speed'.<sup>34</sup> The military authorities believed that hardships of the families would have a detrimental effect on recruitment.<sup>35</sup> There were no such delays in the case of Shahpur District and the district authorities through *tehsildars* and colony officers were getting full compliance of the orders.

The establishment of Patriotic and Heroes Fund was another important benevolent measure taken by authorities. In this regard local committees were created in the districts to provide funds to the officers investigating the pension claims of the heirs of the soldiers killed during the war. The officer had to provide Rs.50 to the person appearing before him as a token of immediate relief and the pension claim was processed immediately afterwards.<sup>36</sup> These measures were given the 'widest possible publicity'.<sup>37</sup> The military authorities also considered it 'desirable in the interest of recruiting' that while soldiers went on leave or on visit to their home districts they should have some money in their

---

<sup>32</sup> The Controller of Military Accounts to the Deputy Commissioner, Ludhiana, 18 February 1915, in File U/XIV/235, DCRO, Sargodha.

<sup>33</sup> H. Wheeler, Sec. to the GoI., Home Department to the Chief Secretary to GoP., 14 August 1915, in File U/XIV/235, DCRO, Sargodha.

<sup>34</sup> Brigadier General W.C. Barrat, Commanding Lahore Divisional Area, to The Chief Secretary to GoP., 24 February 1915, in File U/XIV/235, DCRO, Sargodha.

<sup>35</sup> Additional Secretary to GoP, to All Commissioners of Division in the Punjab, 25 May 1915, in File U/XIV/ 235, DCRO, Sargodha.

<sup>36</sup> Extract from India Army Order No. 182, Patriotic and Indian Heroes Fund, 19 April 1915, in File U/XIV/ 235, DCRO, Sargodha.

<sup>37</sup> A.B. Kettlewell, Additional Secretary to GoP to All Deputy Commissioners in the Punjab, 24 September 1915, in File U/XIV/ 235, DCRO, Sargodha.

possession.<sup>38</sup> The non-combatant soldiers were taking excessive advances when they were serving overseas or while convalescing in India and because of this they did not have enough funds available when they visited their homes. The military authorities tackled the issue by putting a ceiling on the amount of advances. Moreover, for the missing soldiers, who were sending money to their families, orders were issued in July 1915 that their families should continue to be paid for seven months. These orders were applied retrospectively to the cases of soldiers who were already reported missing during the war.<sup>39</sup> Officers serving with the Indian expeditionary forces were also temporarily exempted from income tax.<sup>40</sup>

Despite the disturbances and the occasional slackening of the recruitment process, overall good results were achieved. The following table shows the numbers recruits enlisted during the war at *tehsil* level. The *patwari's* lists, which did not tally with the Recruitment Board's figures, gave the following results.

**Table No.2 Recruitment at Tehsil level**

<i>Tehsil</i>	Men in the army in November 18	Percentage according to village lists of	
		Male population	Men of military age
Sargodha	2,941	4	14
Shahpur	2,757	4	13
Bhulwal	2,342	3	9
Khushab	6,704	7	20
Total	14,774	5	14

Source: M.S. Leigh, *War Services of the Shahpur District*, p.16.

Table No. 2 reveals that Khushab *tehsil* led the whole district in supplying recruits. Arid agriculture and poor cultivation in the *tehsil* always necessitated the people to join the army in order to supplement

<sup>38</sup> Adjutant General in India to Commandants of all Labour and Porter Corps Depots, in File U/XIV/ 235, DCRO, Sargodha.

<sup>39</sup> Indian Army Orders by His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief in India, Army Headquarters, Shimla, 29 July 1915. Persons subject to the Indian Army Act who are reported missing. Instructions as to pay and payment of family allotments and pensions, in File U/XIV/ 235, DCRO, Sargodha. Welfare of the soldiers was also looked after through *panchayats* and through District War League committees. See Tin Tai Yong, *op.cit.*, pp.120–22.

<sup>40</sup> *Civil and Military Gazette* (Lahore), 28 March 1918.

their meagre incomes. This was not unique to Khushab. In the neighbouring Jhelum District people joined the army due to similar circumstances.<sup>41</sup> Khushab's prominence in the war effort can also be ascertained by the fact that out of 563 casualties for the district 529 belonged to this *tehsil*.<sup>42</sup> Within the Khushab *Tehsil* most of the casualties were suffered by the Hill and Mohar Circles. This was mainly due to the fact that these circles had sent the majority of the men in the army when war broke out. These men suffered the brunt of the war in Flanders and East Africa and faced the 'hardships of early days in Mesopotamia'.<sup>43</sup>

### **Handling of the recruits and the effective distribution of manpower**

Under the new recruitment system although good results were achieved there were many problems and difficulties faced by the district administration. There were problems in the handling of and effective distribution of manpower. Moreover there were no permanent regimental recruitment depots in the district except with the Camel Corps. All recruitment was carried out through mobile clearing depots. As a consequence, the local connection, which was helpful in recruitment, was lost as soon as the depot was removed. Besides this, inter-regimental competition for recruits, desertion and lack of uniform fitness standards for recruits, along with inadequate training facilities, added to the problems. In this section we will discuss the district administration's efforts to solve these problems which will also highlight the inadequacies of civil-military cooperation. It is important to note that these problems, however, did not pertain only to the Shahpur District but existed throughout the whole Rawalpindi Division. That was why the soldier bureaucrat Lieutenant Colonel Frank Popham Young, Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, who was also a pioneer in respect of emphasising the importance of civil-military cooperation during the war, raised the matter at the Divisional level.

In early 1918, he convened a meeting of all the Deputy Commissioners along with the Divisional Recruiting Officer, Major Tancred. In the meeting Captain Shirley of the 54th Sikhs regiment was

---

<sup>41</sup> About the recruits coming from Jhelum District Feroz Khan Noon writes 'They had nothing better to do. The Jhelum District receives *lakhs* of rupees by way of Army pensions. Recruits came mostly from areas which had no irrigation canals, depended on a few inches of rain a year and were very poor. See footnote in Feroz Khan Noon, *op.cit.*, p.79.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p.32.

asked to make a presentation on recruitment related issues. He highlighted the defects with the existing system which according to him led 'to great waste of the soldier material used in obtaining recruits for the different units, and to defective distribution of manpower'.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, there was waste of time and money because trained officers and soldiers were employed in the recruiting drives. There was also haphazard distribution of manpower because of the inter-regimental scramble for recruits. On these issues Popham Young commented:

Many of the defects pointed out by Major Shirley which relate to the manufacture of the soldier out the raw material, been mainly influenced by the feeling that our recruits are not handled with that careful discrimination, which is necessary if the soldier's life is to be rapidly popularised amongst those to whom military service is an unfamiliar, and a somewhat fearful, thing.<sup>45</sup>

Haphazard distribution of manpower was a natural outcome of the fact that the system of direct enlistment was functioning parallel to the 'territorial recruitment' system. In the previous section we have noted that in the recruitment pattern regimental connections played a very important role in enlisting new recruits who would sometimes show strong prejudice in favour of parental regiments and units. These regimental connections were in fact encouraged by the district administration. Butler, the Deputy Commissioner of Attock, particularly developed a system in which territorial connections of a few regiments were established with the Attock district. He also wanted the same regiments to move their headquarters to the district. He was of the view that the regiments should be encouraged to establish their depots in the districts with which they had strong local connections. Butler, therefore, was averse to any scheme necessitating the recruits to be kept at a training depot or training service units located outside the district. He argued that any such scheme would not be a good substitute for the 'direct absorption of recruits into regiment stationed at the headquarters of the district'.<sup>46</sup> It was considered prudent to keep the soldiers close to their homes for training purposes as this will discipline them without disheartening them and the system would encourage their friends and relatives to look favourably towards the recruitment. In this regard Popham Young made recommendations for the 2/54th Sikhs, the 2/89th

---

<sup>44</sup> Popham Young to the Additional Secretary to the GoP, 5 March 1918, in File U/XIV/211, DCRO, Sargodha.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

Punjabis, the 74th Punjabis, the 2/67th Punjabis to be stationed at Attock. He also recommended that the training depots at Gujrat, Sargodha or Shahpur, and Mianwali should be established which would preferentially enlist for certain regiments and generally for all regiments chosen by the recruits. He further recommended that staff of the depots should be non-regimental and permanent so that they should become aware of the local customs and practices and should develop acquaintance with the local tribes.

Popham Young was in favour of establishing non-regimental training depots rather than clearing depots because the latter would move on after recruiting 200 to 300 people and the important link with the local communities would be lost. According to his plan recruiting would continue to be regimental and would be carried out by the recruiting parties. However, all these recruits would be kept together in the same non-regimental depot in the district for training purpose before being sent to their respective regiments. Moreover, the British officers would be absolved from recruiting duties. Those recruits who would not have any regimental preference would be drafted to the units which were deficient of men.<sup>47</sup> Next we turn to the Popham Young's scheme of establishing a non-regimental depot at Sargodha.

### **Scheme of establishing a non-regimental depot**

The scheme of establishing a non-regimental depot will provide a more nuanced view of the theme of civil-military integration as compared to the broad brush approach of the provincial level military studies. The scheme could never materialise yet we will discuss the history of deliberations and recommendations of various civil and military officials at length because it serves a good illustration of the ambiguities, contradictions and dilemmas surrounding the process of civil-military integration. It will demonstrate that situation at the lower level was more complex than portrayed in the existing literature. It also reveals how the civil administration, with the cooperation and coordination of the army recruitment officials, came to play a crucial role not only in recruitment, but also in training and distribution of the manpower. Unfortunately the scheme could not materialise in the end due to extraneous factors, which explains the inherent limitations of the new role that civil administration had acquired. Popham Young sought approval for a non-regimental depot in the Shahpur District from the Adjutant General. He sanctioned

---

<sup>47</sup> Popham Young, Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, to the Deputy Commissioner Shahpur District, 27 April 1918, in File U/XIV/211, DCRO, Sargodha

the scheme subject to the provision of accommodation and the availability of staff. Popham Young valued the scheme highly because of its manifold advantages. In this regard he said:

If a training depot can be established in which recruits for all regiments except those which have their permanent depots in some neighbouring Cantonments, can be retained for a period, it is thought that we shall largely eliminate desertions as well as that scheming and malingering which often leads to the return of recruits from regimental headquarters.<sup>48</sup>

Regimental rejections were common although the recruits were declared fit by the civil surgeons. It was because of variations in medical standards prevailing in recruitment that caused confusion and disheartenment among the civil officers engaged in procuring recruits. In order to avoid this anomaly Popham Young recommended that a Military Medical Officer should be attached to the depot whose decision should be considered final regarding the fitness of recruits.

Regarding accommodation, B. T. Gibson,<sup>49</sup> the Deputy Commissioner Shahpur, suggested that training staff of the depot could be accommodated in police lines either at Shahpur or Sargodha. In fact there was more barrack accommodation at Shahpur than at Sargodha and Shahpur was better situated because it was the most promising recruiting area. On the other hand, Sargodha was considered to be a much healthier place and this consideration was enough to turn the scale in its favour. The neighbouring cantonments were at Sialkot, Jhelum and Rawalpindi where some regiments had headquarters but had strong regimental connection with the Shahpur district. Popham Young's scheme envisaged that these regiments should take their recruits directly to their headquarters.<sup>50</sup> Divisional recruiting officer, Major Tancred, worked out the training procedures whereby the recruits would stay for 30 days in the depot and then spend 10 days on leave. They would be despatched to corps 40 days after their enlistment. Cavalry and artillery recruits would not join this depot but Mule corps recruits would do so. It was expected

---

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Major B. T. Gibson was a soldier bureaucrat. Mrs Gibson was also very active during the war. She did a lot of work in raising money for Lady O' Dwyer's Fund and Silver Wedding Fund in the Shahpur District. She was present in a *Jalsa* held at Naushehra on 17 July 1918, where many people contributed to the funds. See Meghraj (of Naushehra) to the Deputy Commissioner, Shahpur District, 13 February 1919, in File U/XIV/194, DCRO, Sargodha.

<sup>50</sup> Popham Young to the Deputy Commissioner, Shahpur District, 27 April 1918, in File U/XIV/211, DCRO, Sargodha.



that the majority of the recruits would come from the Sargodha and Bhulwal *tehsils* where regimental connection was very limited. Recruits would make the choice of regiment at the time of recruitment otherwise 'the officer commanding depot would arrange afterwards to send them off in batches to any suitable corps in want of men'.<sup>51</sup>

Popham Young's scheme had similarities with an earlier proposal by Sir Charles Dobell, Officer Commanding 2nd Rawalpindi Division, for the establishment of a general clearing depot at Sargodha. It was thus extremely disappointing for the civil administration when the scheme of a non-regimental depot was rejected by Adjutant General owing to the shortage of staff. The Adjutant General wanted to improve the functioning of the existing depots by placing a senior Indian officer in charge of all the existing regimental depots in the Shahpur District. As noted earlier there were just two existing depots in the district and the Deputy Commissioner, Gibson and the Assistant Recruiting Officer suggested that there would 'hardly be a sufficient employment for a senior officer'.<sup>52</sup> Later on Gibson explained to Popham Young that Sir Charles Dobell's scheme was not different from the scheme of non-regimental depot proposed by him. Sir Charles Dobell, as part of his scheme, had already asked the district administration to build thatched huts for the accommodation of 500 hundred recruits.<sup>53</sup> Major Miller, Assistant Recruiting Officer Shahpur District, also had received information from the Adjutant General that he was prepared to establish a training depot for the recruits either at Shahpur or Sargodha.<sup>54</sup> This approval was with reference to the scheme of Sir Charles Dobell.

However, problems began to develop when attempts were made to find staff for the depot. Due to shortage of British officers it was thought convenient to follow the example of the Gujranwala District where a senior Indian officer was placed in charge of the recruiting depots.<sup>55</sup> There were five recruiting depots functioning under the senior Indian officer,

---

<sup>51</sup> Divisional Recruiting Officer to the Adjutant General in India, 16 June 1918, in File U/XIV/211, DCRO, Sargodha.

<sup>52</sup> Lt. Col. Sir, Frank Popham Young, Commissioner Rawalpindi Division to Additional Secretary to GoP, 23 October 1918, in File U/XIV/211, DCRO, Sargodha.

<sup>53</sup> Sir Charles Dobell, Commanding Officer 2nd (Rawalpindi) Division, to Popham Young, Commissioner, Rawalpindi Division, 27 September 1918, in File U/XIV/211, DCRO, Sargodha.

<sup>54</sup> Popham Young to the Deputy Commissioner Shahpur District, 27 April 1918, in File U/XIV/211, DCRO, Sargodha.

<sup>55</sup> The Adjutant General in India to the Additional Secretary Government of Punjab, 24 August 1918, in File U/XIV/211, DCRO, Sargodha.

who was considered more useful given the fact that the British officers sent by the units had little experience of the local depots. Major Batton, divisional recruiting officer, was of the opinion that these arrangements should be adopted in the Shahpur District, because there were many new army units which required help. These units, according to him, would be allowed to open recruiting depots in the district and in this way there would be a justification of having a senior Indian officer in charge of the depots. He wrote to the Commissioner Rawalpindi Division stating that:

When the general depot at Sargodha is sanctioned, it could be made use of by several units, of which more than one at a time could be given a quota of recruits in return for a direct commission as *Jamadar*. The Assistant Recruiting officer Sargodha informs me that there would be no difficulty in getting together a staff of pensioned I.Os, N.C.Os, and men to assist the senior officer in charge in the manner of administration, drill and discipline.<sup>56</sup>

Towards the end of 1918, as we have noted earlier, serious recruitment disturbances took place in the Bar villages in the Shahpur *Tehsil* and in some hill villages in the Khushab *Tehsil*. These disturbances slackened the recruitment process in the whole district and, therefore, it was not the right time to establish the non-regimental depot. Hence, B.T. Gibson, the Deputy Commissioner, recommended that the question of establishing such a depot should be postponed until there was some improvement in the recruitment situation.

The Divisional Recruiting Officer, Major Batten, suggested to Popham Young that the entire depot of the 2/127th Balochis should be moved to Shahpur because of the cold weather.<sup>57</sup> In his opinion this would give a fresh impetus to recruitment in Shahpur, as recruits joining the depot would be given the opportunity to stay several months near their homes. Moreover, since desertion was common in this regiment, the recovery of deserters would also become easier.<sup>58</sup> As making arrangements for the accommodation of the entire depot was difficult, Popham Young came up with his own plan. In fact six new cavalry units were being raised at Quetta. Given the fact that there was a marked

---

<sup>56</sup> Divisional Recruiting Officer Rawalpindi to the Commissioner, Rawalpindi Division, 23 September 1918, in File U/XIV/211, DCRO, Sargodha.

<sup>57</sup> Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, to the Divisional Recruiting Officer, Rawalpindi, 9 October 1918, in File U/XIV/211, DCRO, Sargodha.

<sup>58</sup> Popham Young Commissioner Rawalpindi Division to the Additional Secretary to the GoP, 23 October 1918, in File U/XIV/211, DCRO, Sargodha.

preference for the mounted arms in the Shahpur District, he, therefore, proposed to establish a cavalry depot to provide recruits to the units. Regarding accommodation, he would require the District Board agency to make some additions to the existing facilities should the Adjutant General favour his idea.<sup>59</sup> In this regard the Deputy Commissioner proposed, 'If a cavalry depot for new cavalry regiments can be started at Shahpur, then there should be an infantry depot at Sargodha. Otherwise a full infantry depot at Shahpur is all that is required. In my opinion there is at present no room for two infantry depots in the district at the same time'.<sup>60</sup> In the end none of the above mentioned schemes could materialise.

To the dismay of the civil administration all their efforts failed to improve the recruiting system for better handling of the recruits. Throughout the duration of the First World War recruitment remained regimental and it would have been far better to encourage regiments having strong connection with the district to establish permanent depots following the successful example of the Attock District. The new territorial system of recruitment, which was the hallmark of civil-military integration, was after all intended to widen the recruitment base. The objective of recruiting from all classes and from all parts of the district could have been better served had the regimental depots been encouraged to establish permanent headquarters and function with the cooperation and coordination of civil military authorities in the district.

## Conclusions

This grassroots study has provided fresh perspectives on the military recruitment process in the key Shahpur District of colonial Punjab. The failure of the district authorities to improve the procedures for the handling of recruits points towards a lacuna in the civil-military cooperation. The new 'territorial system' of recruiting was extremely successful where the civil administration had played its military role relying on its own civilian administrative structure. However, it faltered in its innovative schemes where military initiative and sanction were deemed to be necessary. That is why after 1916 when the civil administration assumed a greater role in the recruitment process it proved equal to the task of meeting the recruitment quota fixed for the province and that too at the time when potential recruits were considered to be on the verge of depletion. This was mainly because it

---

<sup>59</sup> PophamYoung to the Additional Secretary to the GoP, 23 October 1918, in File U/XIV/211, DCRO, Sargodha.

<sup>60</sup> Deputy Commissioner, Shahpur District to Lt. Colonel Sir Frank Popham Young Commissioner, Rawalpindi Division, 22 October 1918, in File U/XIV/211, DCRO, Sargodha.

had the utmost discretion in mobilising its machinery in the civilian domain without seeking the consent of the military authorities. All the civil and semi-civil officials in the administrative setup were involved in stimulating the recruitment process. Besides *zaildars* and honorary magistrates, the rural notables were integrated to the whole war effort. These people were brokers of state patronage and they used their influence to stimulate recruitment in their respective areas. The process was further facilitated by the regimental connection of the areas which functioned as a pull factor.

The general assumption made in the existing literature seems to be that with the introduction of new 'territorial system' of recruitment the problems with the 'old recruitment system' were overcome. In contrast to this view we have seen that many of the problems continued to persist during the whole period of the war. Due to the vacillations of the civil and military decision makers and their lack of coordination reveals the fragile nature of civil-military integration. The civilian authorities failed to establish a non-regimental depot at Sargodha.

Many of the recruitment related problems were, in fact, not addressed as late as the Second World War. In April 1941 all the Deputy Commissioners of the province were instructed to ensure that the village officials knew about any recruitment programme in advance and the district medical authorities were instructed to be in touch with the medical officers on duty with the recruiting parties 'so that those recruits that were rejected for some minor curable ailments might receive curative treatment.'<sup>61</sup> The Deputy Commissioner Sargodha accordingly instructed the District Soldiers Board and the Civil Surgeon Sargodha to ensure the compliance. An elaborate mechanism for the treatment of the recruits for curable ailments was put in place. The recruiting medical officer directed the recruits to report to the local dispensary or to the hospital and he would add a note in this regard on the provided proforma. He had to submit a list of such people to the Civil Surgeon. The Civil Surgeon would also receive a list of people whether treated or not from the medical officers and would provide information to the recruiting officer in monthly statements. The Civil Surgeon Sargodha was informed by the Deputy Commissioner to instruct all the medical officers serving in the district to carry out the orders.<sup>62</sup> In this way potential recruits were saved from being rejected just because of minor ailments.

---

<sup>61</sup> F.C. Bourne, Esq., C.I.E., I.C.S. Home Secretary to Government, Punjab to All Deputy Commissioners in the Punjab, 9 April 1941, in File U/XVI/288, DCRO, Sargodha.

<sup>62</sup> Assistant Recruiting Officer, Jhelum to the Deputy Commissioners Mianwali and Shahpur, 8 May 1941, in File U/XVI/288, DCRO, Sargodha.