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## **Discovering stories from Punjab on the streets of Saint-Tropez, Cote D'Azur, France**

**Ranveer (Rav) Singh**

*Founder, A Little History of the Sikhs*

### **Abstract**

This paper presents stories associated with artefacts and episodes from the Kingdom of Lahore in Punjab, told through the author's research visit and fieldwork on the streets of Saint-Tropez located on the Cote D'Azur in the South of France. Episodes in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century that shaped the establishment of the Kingdom of Lahore, ruled by Maharajah Ranjit Singh, are outlined, and the author introduces Europeans employed in the armies of Punjab. The author describes how the actions of the Maharajah in the 1830s opened up highly profitable trading routes for some of his European generals between Lahore and Europe, dealing in arts, armour and textiles. The establishment of these Indo-French trading routes included the export of luxurious shawls from Kashmir and Amritsar (ruled at the time by Ranjit Singh) to Europe. One prominent individual, Jean-Francois Allard, who rose to become a general in Punjab, is chronicled, and the paper focuses on Allard and his wife, Bannou Pan Dei, and their life in Saint-Tropez. The paper ends by highlighting the recent work by officials in Saint-Tropez to articulate these stories and shared histories to develop interest, relations and promote tourism between the locations of India, especially Punjab and Himachal Pradesh, and France.

**Keywords:** Indo-French History, General Allard, Maharajah Ranjit Singh, Bannou Pan Dei, Kashmir, Kashmiri shawls, Saint-Tropez

### **Introduction**

This paper presents field and desk research undertaken by the author following a visit to the French Riviera from late May to early June 2022. The author is the founder of '*A little History of the Sikhs*', a community initiative that works to translate research in Sikh history from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day into walking tours in London, day trips in the South of England and weekend study visits across the United Kingdom and Western Europe. Background to '*A little History of the Sikhs*' is provided in Singh (2020).

The research presented here builds on the author's work in London, where he maintains a database of over 120 locations, which can reveal insights into Sikh history and heritage. These are connected to present a range of different themed walking tours. The author's approach was used to develop the content presented in this paper, using geographical history to detail stories from Sikh and Punjab history through artefacts in museums, statues, and physical sites such as residences, churches, and open spaces. The paper provides visibility to tangible aspects of Sikh history in these locations in Saint-Tropez to acknowledge the

historical links between the Kingdom of Lahore and the Republic of France in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The paper begins with an overview of Saint-Tropez on the Cote D'Azur, located on the Riviera along the south coast of France, followed by a summary of the Kingdom of Lahore under the rule of Maharajah Ranjit Singh is detailed. Next, the author profiles notable figures that connect the two countries, including the Maharajah, General Jean-Francois Allard, and his wife, Bannou Pan Dei. These three historical figures are now memorialized through statues unveiled in 2017 in Saint-Tropez. The physical statues substantiate the description: *"The goal Ranjit Singh had in mind as he shaped the Sikh Empire's foreign policy was nothing short of projecting the name and fame of his kingdom onto a global royal stage."* (Atwal, 2020). The author then explores two items in particular – the turban helmet and the Kashmir shawl - and connects them through their origins in France and Punjab. The turban helmet was worn by the Fauj-i-Khas (special brigade) of Ranjit Singh in Punjab and modeled on the iconic helmet and cuirass of Napoleon's Carabinier officers, and the Kashmiri shawl, which was expertly woven in the Kashmir Valley and was brought from Punjab to France to supply the royal families and nobility of Europe. The order of presentation is based on a combination of location and chronology and ends with a summary conclusion.

### **Saint-Tropez, Cote D'Azur**

Saint-Tropez is situated in the southeast of France, in the Var Department of the Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur region. The region, which includes the cities of Marseille, Nice, Toulon, and Aix-en-Provence, has a Mediterranean climate with hot summers and mild winters.



*Figure 1 – Saint-Tropez, France*

Historical records show Saint-Tropez was first and foremost a fishing village, given its location on the shores of the Mediterranean. Much of its later history was also associated with the sea, including long-distance navigation and the establishment of dockyards, where ships were built to trade in wine and olive oil, which were grown in the region since the time of the Romans. (Tourist Guide of Provence: Saint Tropez, 2023)

During the 15<sup>th</sup> century, wealthy families from Genoa, Italy, settled

there, and Saint-Tropez was where the finest ships were built. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the citadel was constructed with fortifications that remain in place today.

The development through centuries of the town, from a fishing village, to an exporter of goods to Genoa, to becoming a bohemian hub for writers, painters and filmmakers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is detailed on sources such as the Tourist Guide of Provence: Saint Tropez <sup>1</sup>.

### **The Kingdom of Lahore & Maharajah Ranjit Singh**

The Kingdom of Lahore (also known as The Sikh Empire) in the Punjab region was a major power in the Indian subcontinent, formed under the leadership of Maharajah Ranjit Singh. He established an empire through the forging of Misls<sup>2</sup>, previously ruled by autonomous Sikh leaders. Ranjit Singh remains known to this day as the 'Lion of the Punjab' - one of the most admired rulers in the history of India. His empire existed from 1799, when Ranjit Singh captured Lahore, to 1849, when the British East India Company annexed it. The kingdom, at its height, included the Khyber Pass in the West, areas of Tibet in the East, and extended from Mithankot (located on the west bank of the River Indus in the Rajanpur district of modern-day Pakistan) in the South up to Kashmir in the North, encompassing all the five great rivers of Punjab. His court in the historic fortified city of Lahore (now in modern-day Pakistan) was where the arts and sciences prospered in a period of prosperity in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The population across the Sikh Empire varies from 3.5 million inhabitants in 1831 (Singh A, 2010) to 5.35 million in 1838 (Hans, H, 1993) to being estimated at 12 million (Singh P, 2016). Although the population figures vary, all sources state that by religious demography the majority of the population were Muslims at up to 80%, followed by Hindus and Sikhs.

This paper illustrates the ambitions of Maharajah Ranjit Singh beyond the lands of Punjab. In her book, *Royals and Rebels*, Atwal states, "*The true scope of the Maharajah's ambition went far beyond the desire to supersede his Sikh counterparts, or even becoming one of the leading political figures of northern India. The goal Ranjit Singh had in mind as he shaped the Sikh Empire's foreign policy was nothing short of projecting the name and fame of his Kingdom onto a global royal stage*". (p.90, Atwal, 2020)

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<sup>1</sup> Tourist Guide of Provence: Saint Tropez <https://www.avignon-et-provence.com/en/tourism-provence/saint-tropez>

<sup>2</sup> An armed group of Sikh horsemen during the middle and later decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Under their *misaldar* (a *sardar* in command of a Misl) acquired regional authority over areas of varying size. (Fenech & McLeod, 2014)



*Figure 2: A Portrait of Maharajah Ranjit Singh taken from a miniature by Jivan Ram of Delhi,*

This ambition was supported through a novel feature of the Kingdom of Lahore under Ranjit Singh (Figure 2) which saw the appointment of several European military officers. These mercenary soldiers arrived in Punjab seeking employment following the wars in Europe, and some of them rose to high ranks within the armies of the Lahore Kingdom.

One such European military officer was Jean-François Allard. In 1822, Allard, a veteran of the French Emperor Napoleon's imperial guard, and his friend Jean-Baptiste Ventura reached Lahore, Ranjit Singh's capital city.

### Jean-François Allard



*Figure 3: The French General Jean-Francois Allard (1785-1839), Officer In Maharajah Ranjit Singh's Army, French School, Circa 1830.*

Maharajah Ranjit Singh soon asked Allard (Figure 3) and Ventura to undertake the modernization of his army, which led them to command the Fauj-i-khas (special brigade). In 1827 the Fauj-i-khas comprised 15,000 men in four infantry regiments, three cavalry regiments, and one unit of modern artillery, under French command. The Generals gave orders in French, but learnt Punjabi to talk to their soldiers, and "Allard had received from the Maharaja authorization to adopt the tricolor flag, for his troops, and the making of uniforms on the model of the French Imperial outfits, for the Sikhs, the turban having replaced the police caps" (Allard H P, 2013)

During this period, the turbaned helmets seen in the collections of armouries and museums emerged. General Allard modelled his Fauj-i-khas on his previous experience with the armies of Napoleon during the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815)<sup>3</sup>. Napoleon had inherited two regiments of carabiniers – mounted soldiers

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<sup>3</sup> Napoleon became First Counsel and head of the French Republic in 1799, following the execution of King Louis XVI and nationalization of Church lands in 1795. Napoleon's reforms were enabled by restoring law and order in France and a series of military victories against anti-revolutionaries led by Britain, Austria and Russia. Victories came against Austria and Russia in 1805, over Prussia in 1806 and over Russia in 1807, advancing French domination into Central Europe. Satellite Kingdoms were created in the Grand Duchy of Berg, the Kingdom of Westphalia, the Grand Duchy



armed with carbines (musket rifles). Carbines were lighter than full-length muskets, making them easier to handle on horseback. The carabinieri were commonplace during the Napoleonic Wars in Europe.



*Figure 4: Carabinieri during the Russian Campaign, by Édouard Detaille*

In a decree dated 24 December 1809, Napoleon decided to equip the carabinieri like cuirassiers - cavalry equipped with helmets and breastplates, following campaigns where the previous bearskin busbies proved to be impractical. The bearskins frequently fell off during combat and exposed carabinieri to serious head injuries. Napoleon was persuaded that his carabinieri needed helmets and cuirasses. The decree of 1809 was to maintain "a difference between carabinieri and cuirassiers," whilst at the same time offering identical protection for both cavalry regiments. The "Greek-style" helmet and crimson plume are believed to have been the Emperor Napoleon's personal preferences. Doctors of the time praised these helmets and cuirasses for their significant contribution to defence

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of Warsaw, the Kingdom of Naples implementing French-style reforms. However, the conflict with Britain remained unresolved. Across the Kingdoms, Imperial rule began to provoke the same resistance faced by the revolutionary governments in France in the 1790s. Following the disastrous invasion of France in 1812, the '100 Days' war in 1815 with Britain and the allies ended in a crushing defeat in 1814 at Waterloo. (Parker G 1994)

against musket rounds and sword blows. The helmet gave an impression of increased height and also were liked by the carabiniers. The highly recognisable uniform (used in the campaigns from 1812 to 1815) was to remain almost unchanged until the end of the 19th century (Houdecek F, 2018).



**Figure 5:** *Napoléon's French Carabinier Officer's Helmet and Cuirass (1811 and 1815)*



**Figure 6:** *Sikh turban helmet (Taup) with koftgari gold work. Lahore workshop, Punjab, Sikh Empire, c.1801-1844.*

The 'Sikh turban helmet', as illustrated in Figure 6, was worn by the Dragoons of General Allard's elite brigade in Punjab, the Fauj-i-khas. These troops were highly active in operations ordered by the Maharajah, towards the southwest (Sindh and Baluchistan), the East (Anglo-Sikh border), and towards the North-West when Peshawar was annexed in 1834. The French generals also led the conquests of the Himalayan states in the North.

### **The annexation of the Kingdom of Chamba and Bannou Pan Dei**



One of the earliest princely states in modern-day India is the Kingdom of Chamba, which was founded in the Himalayan foothills in the late sixth century. Raja Menga Ram and Banni Panje Dei, to whom Bannou Pan Dei was born on January 25, 1814, governed the Kingdom in the early 19th century.



*Figure 7: Bannou Pan Dei*

A border between the Kingdom of Lahore and British India was formed along the River Sutlej as a result of the Treaty of Lahore, which was signed on 20 May 1809, between the Honourable East India Company and Ranjit Singh. The Treaty prevented Ranjit Singh's ambitions to extend the Empire to the Majha and Malwa regions in the South of Punjab but allowed him to pursue conquests in the North, North West and South West. (The Anglo-Sikh Treaties: 1806-1846, Sikh Museum Initiative)

The French generals of Ranjit Singh were central to the campaign of subjugating princely states across the foothills of the Himalayas, and the Kangra Fort was captured by the Lahore Army. The Kangra Fort is the largest fort in the Himalayas and probably the oldest dated fort in India<sup>4</sup>. The fort was a strategic

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<sup>4</sup> District Kangra: Government of Himachal Pradesh: <https://hpkangra.nic.in/tourist-place/khandagir-udayagiri/> (accessed 21 January 2023)

site from which neighbouring kingdoms such as Chamba and Mandi could be conquered.

An account by Henri-Prévost Allard details the exchange recorded by courtiers of the Kingdom of Lahore when the French generals were in negotiations with the King of Chamba:

*General Sahib stood and stretching out his hand above the princess's head, said forcefully: On my honor and my religion, Raja Menge, I swear to you that no one except me will be authorized to approach the princess even less to touch her. But I cannot return to Lahore without her. You would be seriously failing her Majesty and you would oblige her to avenge the affront. Then desolation would fall upon your country, and she would still be brought to the King, no longer as a princess, but as a slave"*

*"let the princess decide!" replied the father, [Raja (King) Menge]*

*"I do not want to be enslaved to the harem of the one-eye king, nor to suffer the torture of sati" responded Bannou*

In his book, Allard H P (2013) details the dialogue through which Bannou Pan Dei agreed to be the wife of General Allard:

*She gazed into the General's gaze "Do you eat beef, general sahib?"*

*"How awful princess! Do you take me for an Englishman?"*

*The little princess said gravely: "I was sure you weren't eating the source of life. Your face is too good. Well if you swear your protection I agree to sacrifice myself and follow you to save my father's country. But let it be understood that you will always be there to protect me".*

*translated from Le Generallisme, Allard HP (2013) by the author*

General Allard married Bannou Pan Dei in 1826. Five of their seven children survived infancy, with the family residing in a stunning residence in the Anarkali Gardens, located in the north-east of Lahore. Lahore is the historic capital of the Punjab region, and today is the second largest city in modern-day Pakistan. General Allard and his wife also adopted an orphan, Achille, an act which endeared Allard to his Muslim soldiers under his command.



*Figure 8: The Allard family, General Allard, Bannou Pani Dei, their five children and attendants, at their residence in the Anarkali Gardens, Lahore, Paris 1836*

After further conquests of regional centers of art in Punjab, General Allard protected local artists and supported the handicraft trade between France and Kashmir. He was recorded as being passionate about India's history and archeology.

Bannou Pan Dei, their children, and two of Bannou's female maids travelled with Allard when he took a leave of absence in June 1834 and returned to France. The General explained to Maharajah Ranjit Singh that the trip was necessary so that the children could receive a Christian education. Allard, though, cited another justification in a French newspaper interview. Because his wife was much younger than him and came from a conservative Hindu household, he worried that if he died in Punjab, she might be forced to do sati<sup>5</sup>. The Sati Prohibition Act, passed by Lord William Bentinck, later outlawed the historical Hindu practise of sati, in which a widow sacrifices herself by sitting atop her husband's cremation pyre.

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<sup>5</sup> Sati (Suttee) – The burning of a widow on her deceased husband's funeral pyre. The practice was denounced by the Sikh Gurus. (Fenech & McLeod, 2014). The practice was not a Sikh custom, but was followed in Ranjit Singh's court.

Bannou Pan Dei relocated to Saint Tropez in July 1835, where she remarried Allard in a civil wedding conducted in French. She was a Hindu, thus they could not get married in a church. The children were given legal status through the marriage ceremony, and Allard made arrangements for their education between December 1835 and April 1836.



**Figure 9:** *The residence of General Allard and Bannou Pan Dei, constructed by General Allard in 1835, and now a Boutique Hotel*

During their two years together in Saint-Tropez, General Allard built their family residence, now the boutique hotel – The Pan Dei Palais (Figure 9).



He left France to go back to the Punjab after settling his family into their new home and school; he would never see his family again. General Allard's young family and 35-year-old wife were left behind when he passed away in Peshawar at the age of 54 from a heart condition. Bannou reportedly walked to the sea every evening to wait for her husband's return because she was unable to accept the news of his death.

Bannou became a Christian and was baptised as a Roman Catholic in the Saint Tropez church in 1841. The French King and Queen agreed to serve as her godfather and godmother. General Jean-Baptiste Ventura, who was in Marseilles for one of his journeys to Europe, attended the ceremony, which was held in magnificent manner (Singh, 1992).

The painting shown in Figure 8 was commissioned to be reproduced by Bannou, at a larger scale, but showed all seven of their children, including the two deceased children buried in Lahore, before their departure to Saint Tropez. She died at Saint Tropez on 13 January 1884 and is buried in the Allard family tomb in the 'Cimetiere Marin' of Saint Tropez.



*Figure 10: The statue of Bannou Pan Dei unveiled in Saint-Tropez and the family tomb of General Allard in the Cimetiere Marin, where she is buried*

The historical links between Lahore, Peshawar, and Chamba in Punjab, and told through the residences, museums, and locations in Saint-Tropez as presented in this paper, are also illustrated through the curation of three statues in Saint-Tropez - those of Maharajah Ranjit Singh, General Allard and Bannou Pan Dei (Figures 10 and 11).



The authors research to plan his visit to St. Tropez led to identifying some of the protagonists behind the project to install the three statues. Outreach and direct communications revealed that the work of Jean-Marie Lafont in 2001 to prepare an exhibition and catalogue to celebrate the bicentenary of the coronation of Maharajah Ranjit Singh as the ruler of Punjab, inspired Henri-Prévost Allard to further research his family history as a descendant of General Francois Allard and Bannou Pan Dei. Henri-Prévost Allard published his book on his ancestor, General Allard in 2013, whilst also working on projects in his home town in his role as the Deputy Mayor of Saint-Tropez. His mayoral portfolio includes inward investment and tourism. Another protagonist was Ranjit Singh Goraya, who works to promote the project in Saint-Tropez in his role as president of Sikhs in France<sup>6</sup>.



**Figure 11:** The statues of Bannou Pan Dei and General Allard unveiled in Saint-Tropez on 17 September 2016

<sup>6</sup> Ranjit Singh Goraya was also the first turbaned Sikh to be elected as a Deputy Mayor (for Bobigny, a suburb of Paris). The election victory was reported as being all the more poignant, as Ranjit Singh was one of three Sikh students expelled for wearing his turban to school in 2004, when France implemented a law banning the wearing of 'conspicuous' religious symbols in schools. The UN Human Rights Committee ruled in 2012 that the law in France on 'conspicuous' religious symbols violated the rights of Sikh students to manifest their religion, protected by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The officials in Saint-Tropez and the Sikh community in France have worked to bring alive the shared history from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, which includes the installation of the statues, the refurbishment of the residence of Bannou Pan Dei into a luxury boutique hotel and details of the life of General Allard as a son on Saint Tropez in the museum within Saint-Tropez's historic fort. Henri Prévost-Allard's wish is for the historic relationship between Punjab and France to foster relationship and grow tourism between the people of Punjab and Himachal Pradesh to the South of France. Ranjit Singh has supported this, to promote and raise awareness of the Sikh identity in France.



**Figure 12:** The statue of Maharajah Ranjit Singh, unveiled in Saint-Tropez on 17 September 2016

### Cashmere and Kashmiri shawls

During the author's research visit to Saint-Tropez, streets lined with high-end boutiques and luxury shops associated with the world's most famous designers were experienced. The streets of Saint Tropez also revealed a story of a particular item from the Punjab region in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which too became an iconic luxury item - the Kashmir shawl.

Cashmere is a soft, silky fabric that today is synonymous with status and wealth. The word for the fabric itself is closely associated with the Kashmir shawl, deriving from an anglicisation of Kashmir. It originates from the fleece of cashmere goats which are found across the region that stretches from Turkey through to Inner Mongolia, and includes Kashmir. The cashmere fibers are

longer, smoother and straighter than sheep's wool and are removed with a comb from under the goat's chin. The fibers are then spun into a filament, which is then woven or knitted. It is reported to take a single goat one year to produce enough cashmere fibers to make just a single scarf. Pashm is a wool that is derived from the changthangi cashmere goat, and pashmina refers to the material or the variant of the Kashmir shawl that is made of Pashm. Both cashmere and pashmina are sourced from the same goat and the difference lies in the blends of the spun wools – typically cashmere fiber ranges from 12 to 21 microns and pashmina refers to a finer cashmere and silk blend with fibers ranging from 12 to 16 microns (Bonn & Yates, 2002)

Dyers had supposedly created over three hundred tints extracted from the bountiful plants in the Kashmir Valley (Ames, 2010). The colors of the dyes ranged from vivid golden saffrons, shades of peach, salmon pinks and fuchsias, intense reds, tints of emerald green, indigo blues, and rich crimson. The dyes were combined with the cashmere, described as a *"miraculous, if not alchemical, fusion of the two"* in a process that *"was unique to the Valley of Kashmir and rendered these loom products one of the true unsurpassed textile wonder of the world"* (p.20 Ames, 2010)

The Kashmiri shawl was therefore the synthesis of the exotic dyes and rare wools, used to create articulated designs and highly complex patterns that reflected cultures of the ruling periods in the Valley: Mughal (16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century), Afghan (18<sup>th</sup> century), Sikh (early 19<sup>th</sup> century) and Dogra (mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century). The shawls were traditionally woven entirely by hand, where each color of small wound bobbin of colored yarn was manipulated backwards and forwards through the warp threads to create the designs. Characteristic ridges on the back of the shawl were created when two yarns were interlocked. The process of weaving a large shawl was specialized and laborious work, taking anything from eighteen months to three years to complete.

The Mughal era reached its pinnacle in the 1500s, when trade between Iran and Mughal India flourished. This was made possible by expanding business communities and commercial operations among populations dispersed over several border restrictions by emperors, sultans, and shahs. The governing classes recognised the worth of commerce and its significance in boosting national prosperity. The Kashmir shawl was unmatched in its attraction throughout Europe. Napoleon brought this handwoven, imperial fabric from the East to France. It became a cultural fixation and conjured up visions of great opulence and exotic delicacy throughout his time. In his history of the Kashmir shawl, Ames describes the first point of contact between fashion and the Empire, *"When Napoleon returned from Egypt, the generals and officers who*

*had served under him brought back mementos of the Orient. Among these were Kashmir shawls, which they wore around their waists as belts." (pg.223, Ames, 2010)*

At the time, the Sikh domination of North India suited the British Empire as it fended off Russia from the North-West and China from the North-East. Kashmir was now at the center of foreign interests, and between 1801 and 1846, a new era for Kashmir's reputation for internationally renowned crafts was established.

In this context, Ranjit Singh's conquest of Kashmir in 1819 was an important event in the history of the region. Before the annexation of Kashmir by the Sikhs, Kashmir had been under Iranian and Afghan rule (since 1739) Ranjit Singh's worked to bring back prosperity to Kashmir. The Muslim population of Kashmir, were initially fearful of Sikh rule, anticipating discriminatory practices in terms of taxes and freedom to practise their religion (without the threat of conversion practices). However, Ranjit Singh offered amenable policies, working to improve day-to-day life for the valley's residents and ruled through a firm hand. An example of this is detailed in terms of the breakdown of revenues in relation to the production and sale of Kashmir Shawls. Although it is widely reported that Kashmiri weavers were exploited under the rule of Punjab, and that the trade was exploited for profit by brokers, Lafont shares the detailed assessment of the Kashmir province in 1832 by C M Wade. A document in the report details a breakdown of the charges related to a pair of red shawls valued at Rs.500. The breakdown shows weavers wages at 53%, government levies at 25% and broker fees fixed at 5% (p.89- 91, LaFont, 2002). As workers began to receive a fair part of their wages starting, shawl production resumed, wealth soared, and Kashmir began to include shawls in its tax payments to the administration in Lahore.

The Maharajah did not appoint any of his French generals to the governorship of Kashmir but did allow his high-ranking officials to conduct commercial activities. All his generals were interested in manufacturing the shawls, which led to the industry's revival: *"As soon as Sikh power in Lahore was consolidated into political unity, there was a blossoming of arts and architecture. There was a frenetic building activity in the two capital cities of Lahore and Amritsar for almost forty years"* (p.75, Ames, 2010)

By 1835, Jean-Francois Allard and Jean-Baptiste Ventura, the Maharajah's two French generals, were receiving part of their remuneration for their army employment in Kashmiri shawls. Lafont states that the narrative that *"Kashmir, under the Sikhs, was at the lowest ebb of its prosperity between an akme under the Mughals and a renaissance under the Dogras"* (Lafont, p 88) was a fallacy,



as brokers who were accused on exploiting the weavers with extravagant taxes, were actually being paid 5% in fees. (Lafont, p 90).

To meet demand, shawls were also being manufactured in Amritsar, which had become the center of the Kashmir shawl trade (following the 1833 famine in Kashmir), (p.95, Lafont, 2002). Writing in 1872, Baden Powell noted that shawls from Amritsar were closest to the 'excellence' (quality) of Kashmir-made shawls<sup>7</sup>.



*Figure 13: Empress Josephine in the Park at Malmaison,  
Pierre Paul Prud'Hon*

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<sup>7</sup> Wrapped in centuries of tradition & culture: the shawls of Kashmir in European Portraits. The Heritage Lab Culture Art Museums <https://www.theheritagelab.in/kashmir-shawls-european-portraits/>





*Figure 14: Patka (sash)  
Kashmir c. 1820-1840*

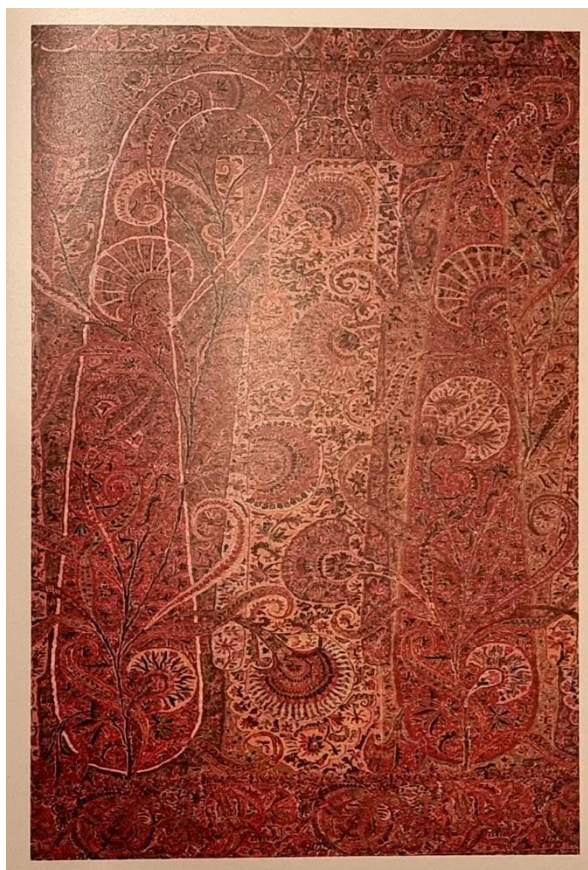
*Figure 15: Shawl of Bannou Pan  
Dei, wife of General Allard,  
Kashmir c. 1826-1841*



*Figure 16: Shawl of Bannou Pan Dei, wife of General Allard. Detail: Parrots  
in a field of flowers*

Today, Kashmir and Amritsar-made shawls can be found in museums and private collections worldwide. A recent publication by Dr. Parvinderjit Singh Khanuja includes a chapter dedicated to the 'Embroidered and Woven masterpieces: Textile Traditions of Greater Punjab' (Khanuja, 2022). The chapter includes examples from the Khanuja Family Collection of textiles from Punjab and greater Punjab (Kashmir, Ladakh, Kangra and the northwest regions adjoining Afghanistan), and Ames '*has classified Kashmir shawls into four distinct periods: Mughals, Afghans, Sikh and Dogra, highlighting the stylistics changes that took place during these reigns*' (p.308, Khanuja, 2022). Styles from the Sikh period of rule broke away from the conservative patterns under Mughal and Afghan rule, with an '*exuberance of playful geometry or arches, and circles, suffuses these graphics swirls with a kinetic energy that cannot help but evoke feelings of mysticism and awe*' (p.308, Khanuja, 2022). Figures 13 to 20 provide illustrations of paintings of European royalty with their luxury shawls, together with examples from the period of Maharajah Ranjit Singh's kingdom.





*Figure 17 and 18: Pashmina (and detail)  
Sikh period, 1835*





*Figure 19: Pashmina, Sikh period, 1830*



*Figure 20: Pashmina, Sikh period, 1835-40*



## **Conclusion**

This paper presents research on the links between 19<sup>th</sup> century Punjab (modern day states of Punjab in Pakistan, Pakistan, China and India-controlled Kashmir India and the north Indian states of Punjab and Himachal Pradesh) and France, where the author's initial work focused on General Allard, who was born in the seaside town of Saint-Tropez, and Bannou Pan Dei, a princess from Chamba, who married the General and lived there for nearly 50 years with their five children. The initial objective was to go to their homes and witness the monuments of Maharajah Ranjit Singh, General Allard, and Bannou Pan Dei, which were unveiled at Saint-Tropez on September 17, 2016.

However, the research visit and time spent strolling through the charming alleys of the village on the Mediterranean coast also revealed histories from the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that the author has brought out in this paper.

The rise of General Jean-Francois Allard, a former officer of Napoleon during the Napoleonic Wars, is documented. He travelled to the east and arrived in Lahore in 1822. He was promoted to command the Fauj-i-khas, the highly effective French battalions that served as the foundation for Maharajah Ranjit Singh's rebuilt and reformed Lahore Army. The Sikh helmet turbans that are currently on display in military museums and collections around the world are ascribed to Allard, modelled after the iconic helmet and cuirass of Napoleon's Carabinier officers, and were worn by the Fauj-i-Khas.

The streets of Saint Tropez, which today are lined with designer boutiques and high-end clothing stores by the most well-known fashion designers in the world, also hold stories of similar elite fashion and luxury textiles with international trade routes between Punjab and France in the 1830s. One specific item, the Kashmiri shawl, has been discussed in this paper. The European generals developed Indo-French commerce lines, which included the export of opulent shawls from Kashmir and Amritsar, and they opened up immensely lucrative trade routes between Lahore and Europe dealing in items including textiles.

In recent years, officials in Saint-Tropez have worked to promote and articulate the shared history to foster greater understanding and relationships between the French and Sikhs residing in France, and promote the Saint-Tropez area to residents of Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and wider India as a visitor destination.

Reflecting back upon the author's work in this field of researching, mapping and developing tours to introduce and raise awareness of Sikh, Anglo-Sikh and Punjab history found in London, across the UK and in Western Europe, it is hoped that St. Tropez will be another destination for the Sikh and Indian diaspora communities similar to Thetford in Norfolk, England (which is closely associated with the life of Maharajah Duleep Singh and his family). The author

hopes that this paper allows visitors to connect the stories of artefacts and events in Punjab with the residences and locations found in Saint-Tropez.

Given that the recent memorials and events were a result of a project by local government organizations in St. Tropez and Punjab to highlight historical ties between the two regions and support local economic development, this will contribute to India's larger economic objective to liberalize and expand its economy as it aspires to be a world power. The efforts in St. Tropez may serve as an example for other European cities and nations to create a comparable format in order to support their local economies by drawing tourists who are interested in Sikh and Indian history. For instance, the author's work in Edinburgh (Scotland), Valletta (Malta) and Amsterdam (the Netherlands) provides similar contemporary historical narratives and sites that could be connected together and supported by boutique and themed hotels and restaurants to attract an Indian and Indian diaspora audience.

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### Image Credits

**Figure 1, 9, 10, 11, 12** – Photographs by author Rav Singh

**Figure 2 and 3:** A Portrait of Maharajah Ranjit Singh taken from a miniature by Jivan Ram of Delhi, and The French General Jean-Francois Allard (1785 - 1839), Officer In Maharajah Ranjit Singh's Army, French School, circa 1830, Magasin Pittoresque, 31 December 1836, Paris. 'A little History of the Sikhs' Collection

**Figure 4:** Français: Carabiniers à Cheval en Russie (Carabiniers during the Russian Campaign), 1893 by Édouard Detaille (1848–1912) Source:

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Carabiniers\\_%C3%A0\\_cheval.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Carabiniers_%C3%A0_cheval.jpg)

(accessed 6 September 2022)

**Figure 5:** The Fondation Napoléon's French Carabinier\* Officer's Helmet and Cuirass (1811 and 1815) coll. Fondation Napoléon, INV 77. A and B © Fondation Napoléon / Vincent Mercier <https://www.napoleon.org/en/history-of-the-two-empires/objects/the-fondation-napoleons-french-carabinier-officers-helmet-and-cuirass-1811-and-1815/> (accessed 6 September 2022)

**Figure 6:** Sikh turban helmet (Taup) with koftgari gold work. Lahore workshop, Punjab, Sikh Empire, c.1801-1844 Asian Art Museum, Gift of the Kapany Collection.

**Figure 7:** Bannou Pan Dei, Oil on canvas, Artist Unknown, No place, no date [Lahore 1837-1839?] Private Collection, stolen in 1977, sourced from Lafont, J M (2002) Maharajah Ranjit Singh, Lord of the Five Rivers, pg. 89

**Figure 8:** The Allard family, General Allard, Bannou Pani Dei, their five children and attendants, at their residence in the Anarkali Gardens, Lahore, Paris (1836, Public Domain)

**Figure 13:** The Empress Josephine in the Park at Malmaison, Pierre Paul Prud'Hon, (1809), Source: <https://www.napoleon.org/en/history-of-the-two-empires/paintings/the-empress-josephine-in-the-park-at-malmaison/> (Accessed 29 September 2022)

**Figure, 14, 15, 16:** (13) Patka (sash) Kashmir c.1820-40 National Museum, New Delhi Acc. No. 62.2351 (14) Shawl of Bannou Pan Dei, wife of General Allard, Kashmir c. 1826-1841 (15) Shawl of Bannou Pan Dei, wife of General Allard. Detail: Parrots in a field of flowers 1826-1841 La-font, Jean-Marie (2002) Maharajah Ranjit Singh, Lord of the Five Rivers, pg. 89, 90

**Figure, 17, 18, 19, 20:** (17 and 18) Pashmina (and detail), Sikh Period, c1835, Pashmina, Image No 46, p335 (19) Pashmina, Sikh Period, c 1835-40, Pashmina, p341, (20) Pashmina, Sikh Period, c 1830, Pashmina, p342, Khanuja Dr. P S (2022) *Splendors of Punjab Heritage, Art from the Khanuja Family Collection*, Roli Books