SWORDS TREMBLING IN THEIR SCABBARDS*: A STUDY OF INDIAN OFFICERS IN THE INDIAN CAVALRY, 1858 - 1918

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*Our swords are trembling in their scabbards, but have not yet shown their glitter.'
Daffadar Abdul Jabha Khan, serving in France with the 18th Lancers in a letter to another soldier in the same regiment in India, April 1915.
To the officers, non-commissioned officers and men of the Indian Army who served the Raj with honour and fidelity
‘Swords trembling in their scabbards’:  
A study of Indian officers in the Indian Cavalry  
1868-1918  

Michael John Creese  

Abstract  

The Indian army under British rule was unique in that it had two sets of officers, one British and one Indian. The Indian officers played a vital role within their regiments but could never proceed to the higher levels of command. Even the most senior and experienced Indian officer was subordinate to the most newly-arrived British subaltern and Indian officers were never allowed to command British troops. This study, believed to be the first of its kind, explores the education, selection and training of Indian officers together with their changing role in the period 1858 to 1918 with a brief coda covering changes up to Indian Independence in 1947.  

The study focuses on the careers of the Indian officers of four cavalry regiments and their achievements during this period. Letters sent to and from them while they were serving in France during the Great War are used to personalise the story and, in particular, use is made of previously unpublished material from the diary of Amar Singh. He had a very varied military career which illustrates the difficulties facing Indian officers at this time.  

The study concludes that although the Indian officers were undoubtedly very courageous and effective troop and squadron commanders, they were held back by their lack of a basic general education. Racial stereotyping by many of their British commanders of the period led to their refusal to believe that Indians could be, at least potentially, as capable as themselves. This prejudice was part of the wider social gulf between the two races.  

In spite of these difficulties, the Indian officers made a very significant contribution to the overall effectiveness of the Indian Army of this period.
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FOREWORD

There were two armies in India in the second half of the nineteenth century. The first of these, the British Army, was made up of a number of regular units, infantry and cavalry, together with their supporting arms. These units were officered entirely by British officers, trained at the Military Academies at either Woolwich or Sandhurst, exactly as any other unit of the British Army. British units would normally spend a number of years in India before being posted back to England. The second army was the Indian Army, reconstructed after the Mutiny but still, until the turn of the century, organised into the three Presidency Armies. Following the Mutiny of the Bengal Army in 1857 the Indian Army had no field artillery, being restricted to a few mountain batteries. British and Indian units saw almost continuous service throughout the nineteenth century, chiefly, but not exclusively, on the North-West Frontier. In addition to these two armies were the forces of the Princely states, which varied considerably in size and quality, as well as a number of auxiliary and militia units of even more doubtful quality. A Corps from the Indian Army was the first reinforcement from the Empire to reach the hard-pressed British Expeditionary Force in Belgium in 1914. This Army, which was eventually to be divided between India and Pakistan in 1947, was unique among the armies of the world in that it had two groups of officers - British and Indian.

The original concept was that the Indian officers, coming from similar backgrounds, and naturally understanding the social and religious mores and customs of their men, would form a link between the British officers and the sepoys. So who were the Indian officers who pose, rather stiffly, for the photographs taken from the eighteen sixties onwards? What was their background, their education and training?
How did they, and the British officers, interpret their role? There are plenty of regimental and campaign histories covering this period but often they have little to say about the exploits and service of the Indian officers. This study is an attempt to explore their contribution, concentrating upon the period from the Mutiny to the Great War. The Indian Army of the second half of the nineteenth century was a large organisation with 39 cavalry regiments and 130 infantry regiments by 1903. In order to make the project manageable within a reasonable time scale, I have chosen to concentrate upon the cavalry and, indeed, upon only four regiments within that arm of the service. In making that choice, I am conscious of having to overlook the service of many fine men and there may be those who say that the infantry have been neglected, as usual, at the expense of their more glamorous mounted colleagues!

I did not wish to pursue the well-trodden path of another regimental history or campaign history. Instead, drawing upon my experience of research in the educational field, I have chosen instead to write case-studies of regiments representing two of the three Presidencies, together with one from the Punjab Frontier Force. A fourth regiment, the Jodhpur Lancers, was a State regiment administered under the Imperial Service Scheme and officered almost entirely by Indians. From these case-studies I have attempted to draw out the more general issues. The regiments were selected on the basis of the availability of material as well as wishing to represent a fair cross-section of the Indian cavalry. The Bengal contingent, represented by the 9th (Hodson's) Horse, provided the largest group of regiments in the Indian regular cavalry, nineteen of them coming from that Presidency. There is an excellent regimental history of Hodson's Horse by Major Cardew published in 1928 which includes pen-portraits of some of the more distinguished Indian officers. There is also
a booklet detailing the service of the members of one Indian family in the regiment during the nineteenth century, written by Mehta Gyan Chand. The cavalry of the Bombay Presidency is represented by the Poona Horse; the regiment is fortunate in having a fine regimental history, illustrated with photographs, published in 1882, followed by a two-volume study in 1933 and an excellent modern history bringing events up to date and published in 1993. In addition, there are the memoirs of Captain Roly Grimshaw recounting his service with the regiment in 1914-15. The cavalry regiments from Madras date back to 1757 and were the only non-silladar (in which the rider did not bring his own horse) regiments during the second half of the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, none of the four Madras cavalry regiments has produced a detailed regimental history and it has not been possible, therefore to include one of them in this study. The Punjab Frontier Force is represented by the 2nd Punjab Cavalry for whom an original hand-written order book of 1898 survives, together with a regimental history published in 1888 with named photographs of the Indian officers in 1859 and again in the year of publication. The Punjab regiments remained on the Frontier during the First World War and no regimental history exists for this period. The regiment is therefore replaced in this study for the period of the Great War by the Jodhpur Lancers. This also provides an opportunity to contrast the experiences of the Indian officers in a State regiment with those of officers in the regular cavalry.

Material on the Jodhpur Lancers is based largely upon my own research since there has been to date no regimental history covering the early years of their existence or their contribution to the Allied cause during the First World War.

In addition to these regimental case-studies, the thesis also includes an account of the military career of one individual, Amar Singh, based upon the diary (much of
which has not been published when the thesis was written) which he kept from when he was aged ten until his death in 1942. Born in Jaipur, Amar Singh was sent as a boy to Jodhpur where he became protégé of the then Regent, Sir Pratap Singh. He served with the Jodhpur Lancers in China in 1900 before becoming one of the first class of students in the Imperial Cadet Corps. Upon graduation he was appointed as a staff officer to the GOC Mhow District, General Sir Moore O'Creagh. In 1914 Amar Singh went to France as a staff officer and later served for a short time in Mesopotamia. He was commissioned into the 16th Cavalry in 1917 but left after a couple a years following a disagreement with his Commanding Officer. He finished his career as Commandant of the Jaipur State Forces. From a very different background than the rissaldars and subedars of the regular cavalry regiments, Amar Singh's career illustrates the difficulties facing even an educated Indian when attempting to become a commissioned officer in the Indian Army during this period.

Many of the comments and much of the language used by British officers at the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century are completely unacceptable in a more aware and politically correct age. It is, nevertheless, necessary to quote directly, and correctly, from those officers in order to illustrate the point and it is hoped that no modern reader will be offended by remarks made over a century ago.
Acknowledgments

Any study of this nature depends very heavily upon the assistance and goodwill of many people. First and foremost, I am grateful to my supervisors in the School of Historical Studies at the University of Leicester. Dr Clive Dewey started me on the road and, indeed, suggested this topic as a suitable one for study. When he left the University, Dr Peter Musgrave manfully took over his role and saw the thesis through to completion. Without their constant advice and support it would have been impossible to produce this work. Drs Huw Bowen (Leicester University) and David Omissi (Hull University) gave valuable advice on the preparation of the final version of the work.

I am most grateful to the staff of the India and Oriental Library within the British Library, the staff of the Library of the National Army Museum, of the University of Cambridge Library and of the India National Archive for their unfailing patience and assistance in producing the material which I needed. I am particularly grateful to Dr Peter Boyden of the National Army Museum who drew my attention to the regimental history of the 2nd Panjab (sic) Cavalry and the photographs within it. I am deeply indebted to the late Mohan Singhji of Konota, nephew of Amar Singh, for so freely providing access to the latter’s diaries and for permission to quote from them. My wife and I spent a most delightful week at Narain Niwas, Amar Singh’s home in Jaipur (now a hotel), and were also invited to see the diaries in situ in Amar Singh’s library at Kanota. Sadly, Mohan Singhji died in February 2005 before this thesis was completed. Dhananjaya Singh hosted our visit to Jodhpur and helped enormously in my search for material on the Jodhpur Lancers. Colonel Karen Singh, late Poona Horse, generously gave me a copy of the latest version of his regiment’s
history and entertained my wife and I to a very pleasant evening in the Divisional
Officers' Mess, Jodhpur, once the Officers' Mess of the Jodhpur Lancers. Lt Col
Emerson, Secretary of the Indian Army Officers' Association, very kindly put me in
touch with a number of ex-Indian army officers and they in their turn were most
helpful in being prepared to share their experiences of working with Indian officers
during and immediately after the Second World War. Paul Vickers, IT Director for the
Army Library Service, assisted by providing me with references to the curriculum at
Sandhurst in 1900 from the Prince Consort's Library, Aldershot.

Last but no means least, I am happy to pay tribute to my wife, Lesley for her
constant encouragement and enthusiasm especially in the final stages of the production
of this work. We have explored the battlefields and war cemeteries of Northern
France together and it was at her suggestion that I contacted HH the Maharaja of
Jodhpur for information about the Jodhpur Lancers. That enquiry led to our visit to
Jodhpur and to the making of many friendships in India.

A Note on nomenclature

Nineteenth century documents use the term 'Native officers' when referring to Indian
officers. After the First World War, Indian officers began to emerge from either
Sandhurst or it's Indian equivalent at Dehra Dun with King's Commissions. In order
to avoid confusion between these officers (KCIos) and those Indian officers who had
followed the traditional route up through the ranks, from 1935 the latter were termed
Viceroy's Commissioned Officers (VCOs). I have used the term 'Indian officer'
throughout, adding the initials 'VCO' and 'KCO' where necessary. I have referred to
the calamitous events of 1857 by the title by which they were known at the time,
simply 'The Mutiny'. British spellings of Indian words vary from time to time.
Ranks in the Indian Army

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cavalry</th>
<th>Infantry</th>
<th>Rank insignia</th>
<th>British equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rissaldar-Major</td>
<td>Subedar-Major</td>
<td>Crown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rissaldar</td>
<td>Subedar</td>
<td>Two stars</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jemadar</td>
<td>Jemadar</td>
<td>One star</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daffadar</td>
<td>Havildar</td>
<td>Three stripes</td>
<td>Sergeant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lance-Daffadar</td>
<td>Naik</td>
<td>Two stripes</td>
<td>Corporal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting Lance-Daffadar</td>
<td>Lance-Naik</td>
<td>One Stripe</td>
<td>Lance-Corporal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sowar</td>
<td>Sepoy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Trooper/Private</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In more modern times, the word ‘sepoy’ is often replaced by ‘jawan’. One Indian officer usually served as assistant quartermaster and another as assistant adjutant; the latter was known as the Woordy-Major. In the cavalry there was, for a period, the rank of ressaider, intermediate between the risaldar and the jemadar. The ranks of Rissaldar-Major and Subedar-Major having been first introduced in 1818 were re-instituted in 1866.

Indian Decorations

The highest ranking award specific to the Indian Empire was the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India, established in 1861 and restricted to the very highest ranks. The Order of British India (OBI) was instituted in 1837 and consisted of two classes. The First Class, restricted to risaldars (subedars in the infantry) and above carried with it the title 'Sardar Bahadur' - literally 'The Brave One' or 'Chief'. The Second Class, open to jemadars, carried the title 'Bahadur'. Both awards brought with them a small increase in pay. The Indian Order of Merit (IOM), also instituted in 1837 and
consisting of three classes, was open to any Indian officer or soldier, regardless of rank and was awarded for an act of conspicuous gallantry in the face of the enemy. This is the oldest award for gallantry in the British Empire, pre-dating the Victoria Cross. A first act of bravery gave admission to the Third Class, a second act by the same man to the Second and, extremely rarely, a third act gained the First Class award. All three classes included an increase in pay. In 1911, Indian officers and other ranks became eligible for the award of the Victoria Cross (VC) and accordingly the First Class was abolished. In 1917, Indian officers became eligible for the Military Cross (MC). The Indian Distinguished Service Medal (IDSM) was introduced in 1907 as an award to recognise distinguished service by officers, non-commissioned officers and men of the Indian land forces. The Indian Meritorious Service Medal (IMSM) was established in 1888 and was granted, with a small annuity, to soldiers with eighteen or more years of meritorious service. Very few were awarded before 1914. In addition to all of the above awards, Indian soldiers were entitled to the appropriate campaign medals.
INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to explore the changing role and responsibilities of Indian officers in the Indian Army between 1858, immediately after the Mutiny, until 1918, the end of the Great War. The selection, education and training which these men received once they had entered the Army will be considered, as well as the their relationship with their British officers. The racial prejudice of many, but not all, senior British officers will be seen as an important factor in their unwillingness to admit that Indian officers were as capable of command as they were. The lack of even a basic general education was also a handicap for many Indian officers as weapons and tactics became increasingly sophisticated over the period under consideration. Chapter 7 continues the theme up to the time of the granting of India's Independence in 1947. To be a soldier in nineteenth century India was to be a member of an honourable profession and the soldier caste enjoyed high status; their standing within the population was very different from that of Wellington's 'scum of the earth'. Lord Kitchener of Khartoum (1850-1916), Commander-in-Chief in India from 1902 to 1909, wrote:

Soldiers of the Indian Army are of comparatively high social standing; many of them are of good birth. Some, poor as they may be, will take no other service except that of a soldier. They possess many sterling and admirable qualities and have proved themselves excellent fighting men and fit to stand shoulder to shoulder with the best. It follows that they are proud, and being sensitive, their susceptibilities are easily offended.¹

The sowar making his way back on horseback to his rural village on leave would be a respected member of the community. The East India Company, and later the British Government, took pains to ensure that this status was maintained and enhanced. Honours and awards, pensions and grant of land, privileges before the courts, all helped to give dignity to serving and retired soldiers of the Indian Army. But these men were not mercenaries, serving the highest bidder for pay and pension only. The notion of izzat, of honour, was a crucial part of the soldier's way of life. The men recognised their obligation to fight, and if necessary to die, which service in the Army brought with it. In May 1915, Major Hira Singh, serving with the State Forces in Kashmir, wrote to two men, perhaps relations, serving with Indian Corps in France:

O dear friends, you know that for three or four generations we have been eating the salt of the British government. So that if we fulfil the obligation of this salt what shame is there in that? If you betray any cowardice, weakness or disloyalty you will be for ever dishonoured and disgraced. The man who fears on the battlefield, who displays any pusillanimity, is sure to be killed. Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.\(^2\)

The use of the Latin quotation contrasts interestingly with Wilfred Owen's use of the same phrase in his well known poem about the effects of a gas attack!\(^3\)

The British policy of recruitment only from the so-called martial classes - Rajputs and Brahmans from Hindustan and the Punjab, Jats, Sikhs and Gujars, Pathans and Afghans, and Gurkhas - must also have added to the soldier's status and added to

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\(^2\) Reports of the Chief Censor: Letters to and from Indian soldiers in the Great War. Records of the Military Department in the India and Oriental Collections in the British Library, L/MIL/5/826 Henceforth L/MIL/.

\(^3\) Owen W., 1917 *Dulce et Decorum est.*
their exclusivity. The cultural and physiological differences which existed between castes and regions in India were exaggerated and systematised by the recruitment policy adopted by the British. Steven Cohen, writing on the martial races within the Indian Army, states that:

The martial race theory, as well as the close connection of the (British) officer to his troops, enabled the British to strengthen the dependent relationship by going beyond it, giving the Indian Army a character that was unique among colonial armies.⁴

There was, however, a downside to this policy, as T. A. Heathcote⁵ points out. It was the martial races which were the most backward in terms of western education and intellectual achievement. The vastly increased demand for manpower during the First and Second World Wars meant that many recruits were taken from classes previously considered non-martial and it was found that they were perfectly well able to perform at least as effectively as their previously favoured brethren. As Cohen puts it:

For any who cared to examine the performance record ... it was clear that with adequate leadership and training virtually any group could be employed somewhere in the military.⁶

(Further discussion of the martial race theory will be found in Appendix C.)

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⁶ Cohen S.P. *The Indian Army*, p. 73.
was translated from the original Hindi and originally published in Lahore in 1873. Doubt has been cast on the authenticity of the memoirs but there is a strong body of opinion in their favour. Unfortunately, from the point of view of the present study, Sita Ram has very little to say about his role as an Indian officer.

A pamphlet entitled *The Life of Risaldar-Major Sirdar Bahadur Ishwari Prasad Tiwari, CIE, 38th (King George's Own) Central India Horse* was written by his grandson, Pandit Mahesh Prasad Tiwari and published by The Moon Press in Agra in 1929. Ishwari Prasad Tiwari was born on 10 July 1822 in Oudh, the son of a Jemadar in the infantry of the United Malwa Contingent. He entered the army on 1 October 1837, aged 15. He was promoted to Jemadar in 1849 and to Subedar five years later. He transferred to the 2nd Central India Horse as Ressaidar on the 2nd November 1860 and to the 1st Central India Horse as Risaldar on the 1st July 1861. His career appears somewhat atypical in that he spent the majority of his service more as a policeman rather than a soldier. He was relentless in the pursuit of dacoits - an occupation for which he seems to have had a natural bent and in which he was particularly successful.

*A Muhijal Family of 9th Hodson's Horse* by Mehta Gyan Chand records the services of three generations of the family in the regiment but gives little detail of their activities. *A Native Officer's Diary* by Abdur Razzak record his experiences when he visited London for the opening of the Imperial Institute in 1893. Unfortunately he tells us nothing about his regimental experience or his role as an officer. Copies of both of these booklets may be found in the Library of the National Army Museum, London. Amar Singh's diary, covering as it does his whole military career, is, therefore, even more significant as a source even though his background is very different from that of
the average Indian officer. He provides a unique record of the difficulties facing a young Indian as he seeks to bridge the gap between his own background and experience and service with the British.

A few regimental Record Books survive from the nineteenth century. These were hand-written in English - perhaps by the adjutant. They vary in content. The least useful are little more than a record of successive inspections by various generals, noting their comments. Others, such as that of the 2nd Panjab (sic) Cavalry, give details of regimental orders, special events, outstanding actions by officers and men etc. The writer of the first regimental history of this unit appears to have drawn heavily upon this manuscript. The Army List of 1877 is the first to include details of the Indian officers serving with the regiments. This and the succeeding issues are most useful in providing details of the officers' service with dates of their promotion and courses attended. Regimental histories vary in the account which they provide of the service and exploits of Indian officers. Some, such as that of the 2nd Panjab Cavalry referred to above, are most helpful, while others, especially the later ones, are little more than bare outlines designed to offer the recruit and newly-joined officer a brief survey of the history of the regiment. Regimental histories, not unnaturally, record regimental success and tend to gloss over any shortcomings. Though they vary enormously in quality, the best of them are, however, an invaluable source of information. Full details of some examples are given in the Bibliography. Campaign histories inevitably concentrate upon the highlights rather than the monotonous daily round of service. Whilst it is not uncommon for generals to publish their memoirs, those written by regimental officers are much less common. An exception is Indian
Cavalry Officer 1914-18 by Captain Roly Grimshaw of the Poona Horse.\(^9\) He tends to take a rather dim view of the performance of any regiment other than his own. A collection of letters by Captain, later Lt-Colonel, Eustace Maxwell, who served briefly with the Jodhpur Lancers, survives.\(^10\) Not intended for publication, they give an invaluable insight into the realities of trench warfare.

It is not until the period of the First World War that we find a significant amount of documentation written by Indian soldiers themselves, or to be more precise, the translations of thousands of letters written to and from home by Indian soldiers serving in France. The letters home from Indian soldiers were censored on a regimental basis in exactly the same way as those of British soldiers. In addition, however, the mail from Indian soldiers was subjected to a second level of censorship. This was imposed originally because of concerns, not altogether unfounded, about seditious material reaching the Indians. The Chief Censor, Captain Howell, originally a member of the Political Department of the Indian Civil Service, produced a monthly report for the High Command. This report was supported by translations of a sample of about sixty or seventy letters each month illustrating the points made in the report about the troops’ morale etc. The reports and translations survive\(^11\) and offer a fascinating insight into the feelings and experiences of the officers and men at the front. During the period 1914-15 the majority of letters are from infantrymen, many of them in hospital in England. This is presumably because there were more Indian infantrymen than cavalrymen in France and possibly because the authorities were more interested in the morale of the infantry who were bearing the brunt of the fighting. There are three

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\(^11\) L/MIL/S/825 - 827.
caveats to be born in mind regarding these letters. Firstly many of them will have been actually written not by the signee but by the regimental scribe at his dictation.

Secondly the soldiers were naturally fully aware that their letters were being censored; sometimes they used simple codes, eg 'black pepper' meant Indian troops, and in some instances attempted to obtain secret inks. Finally, although a few letters were written in English, generally one must remember that one is reading a translation into English of the original Punjabi, Gurkhali etc. Nevertheless, in spite of these caveats, the letters remain a most vital source of information.

The files of the India Office provide a background to the period and in particular, offer a view of the development of official policy towards Indian officers during the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries. The reports of the various Committees which addressed the issue make fascinating reading. From the view-point of the contemporary reader, the recorded comments of many, though not all, of the British officers and officials make depressing reading. They are all too often highly jingoistic and totally dismissive of the leadership potential of Indians. That said, these comments do, in general, represent the official view of the British rulers, not all of whom were unsympathetic to the Indians and their aspirations. The Journal of the Indian United Services Institute contains a number of very interesting articles written by British officers relating to the education and training of Indian officers.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, all of the Indian cavalry, with the exception of the three Madras regiments, was organised on the sillardar system. In
his history of the Indian cavalry, Major General Singh Sandhu wrote: 'The sillardar system was responsible for much of the glamour and élan of the Indian cavalry.'

This system for the recruitment of cavalry has its origins in the Moghul Empire and the East India Company followed the practice because of its attractive financial features. Large land-owners, with men and horses at their command, would bring in as many of these as they could muster - they became sillardars. It was not a feudal obligation but perhaps more akin to the Highland Chieftain bringing his clansmen with him to the battle. For instance, Gopal Singh rode into Agra in 1858 with some seventy followers who became the 5th Troop of Mayne's Horse which in turn became the 2nd Troop of the Central India Horse. The men enlisted by the sillardars were known as barghirs, and since their maintenance in the regiment was at the expense of their patrons, the latter received a regulated share of the pay of their nominees.

Over the years this system was modified in that uniforms and equipment, and often the horses, were obtained centrally by the regiment and the men were expected to enlist with a certain amount of money, known as the assami, towards the purchase of their mount and deductions from their pay over time went towards the cost of their equipment. The sowar paid an insurance into regimental funds in case his mount became ineffective and he was then supplied with another. On leaving the service, the man received back the money that he had paid in and handed over his horse. The efficiency of the sillardar regiments gradually increased and according to Major-General Singh Sandhu:

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13 Jackson, Major D. *India's Army* Published in London in 1940 by an unknown publisher, based upon articles which had previously appeared in The Statesman in India in 1938/9. Vol I, p. 45.
"The system produced an excellent set of Indian officers and non-commissioned officers with outstanding ability, integrity and devotion to duty."\textsuperscript{14}

Immediately following the Mutiny, the cavalry was organised on the so-called irregular system which, in its early days, meant that the command of companies and squadrons was in the hands of the Indian officers and that only the command, second-in-command and regimental staff were British officers. From January 1861 the majority of the Indian cavalry regiments were reorganised on a modified irregular basis, each with only six British officers. The word 'irregular' is somewhat misleading in this context; the regiments so-called were as efficient as any other. Maj. Gen. Shahid Hamid explains that:

The expression 'irregular' was coined by the British officers entrusted with the job of raising the cavalry regiments, and was meant to give a touch of medieval chivalry and valour. In reality the word was misused and misunderstood, doing damage to the cause of the cavalry.\textsuperscript{15}

Charles Chevenix-Trench\textsuperscript{16} suggests that the term 'irregular' was defined by three characteristics; an attitude of mind which manifested itself in a disdain for precision on the parade ground, secondly, glamorous full-dress uniforms and practical uniforms for service and thirdly, the silladar system. The silladar system worked tolerably well when the regiments were employed primarily on internal security duties in India or on the Frontier. However, the mounting of even the best regiments was never as good as that of the Madras regiments in which the horses belonged to the

\textsuperscript{14} Singh Sanhu, \textit{The Indian Cavalry}, p. 408.
The arms and equipment differed between regiments and, in most cases, did not compare with the government issue because of the financial implications. Commanding officers could choose equipment depending on their own personal likes and dislikes, and their successor might have entirely different views. There could therefore be a lack of uniformity within the unit as the change-over proceeded. Because of the cost, indifferent equipment and horses might be retained when they ought to have been discarded. The campaigns of the First World War produced much more wear and tear on the horses and equipment and a need for greater uniformity.

The financial interests of the sillardar and his regiment meant that they wished to do as little as possible in order not to wear out their investment but from the government point of view, the sillardar system was a cheap way of raising and maintaining cavalry. When the sillardar system was ended in 1921, it was found that the costs of maintaining the 36 cavalry regiments on the old system would only be sufficient to fund half their number under the new arrangements. However, the advantages of the sillardar system to the State had not been merely financial. Major General Watson writing in the regimental history of the Central India Horse states that:

The sillardar system implied that an individual who was sufficiently loyal and sufficiently confident in the powers of the State to win its battles and pay its way, was prepared to place not only himself but also a great part, or even the whole, of his resources at the disposal of the State for military duty.

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17 Maunsell, Col E. B., *The Scinde Horse 1839-1922* (Published by a Regimental Committee, 1926).
This Introduction has indicated from whence Indian officers were recruited and has
given some idea of their social background and standing within the community. The
sillardar system, which was used by virtually all of the Indian cavalry regiments until
after the Great War has also been explained. This system helped to perpetuate the
pattern of son following father and grandfather into the same unit. The sources of
information on which the following Chapters are based have also been discussed.
CHAPTER ONE: INDIAN OFFICERS AND THE ORGANISATION OF THE INDIAN ARMY: AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of the chapter is to provide a brief overview of the development of organisation of the Indian Army, from its beginnings under the East India Company until Independence in 1947, in order to serve as a backdrop to the changing role of Indian officers within that army. The Indian Army began in a small, almost casual, way with the formation of forces to protect the East India Company's trading posts. The Army grew to play its part in the successful struggle against the French which left the British as masters of India. Wars against various Indian rulers saw further expansion until the sub-continent was convulsed by the events of 1857. Thereafter, the re-constituted Indian army generally fought its battles in Afghanistan and on the North-West Frontier until the Great War of 1914 made hitherto unforeseen demands upon it.

Immediately upon the outbreak of the First World War an Indian Corps was sent to the Western Front. Indian troops were also to be employed in Egypt and Mesopotamia. The Indians in France rendered invaluable service in spite of their almost total unpreparedness for the conditions in which they found themselves. They suffered heavy casualties, especially among their British officers, and this, together with the difficulties of providing reinforcements, led to the withdrawal of the Indian infantry in 1915. The cavalry, however, remained in France waiting hopefully for a breakthrough which never came. At last, in 1918, they were to find conditions better suited to their abilities in Palestine. The War, together with increasing demands for independence in India, led to a growing realisation that Indian officers would have to
play a much greater role than hitherto. Indian officers were now to be granted King's Commissions and a College, run along the lines of the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst, was set up at Dehra Dun in 1933 to train young Indian officers. A programme of Indianisation was introduced through which certain units would eventually be officered exclusively by Indians though the process was painfully slow. Those Indian officers who did not hold the King's Commission would now be entitled Viceroy's Commissioned Officers (VCOs).

The outbreak of the Second World War found the Indianisation programme far from complete. The number of VCOs had been progressively decreased in the Indianised battalions, but upon the outbreak of war, their numbers were brought up to the same complement as in the non-Indianised units. During the War, very many more Indian officers were to receive the King's Commission and to fight as equals alongside their British counterparts. When partition came in 1947, the old Indian Army was divided, not without much heartbreak, between the two new nations of India and Pakistan. The position of VCO was to be retained within the Indian army with the title changed to Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO) so that the traditions of the old subedars and risaldars live on today.

The early years

The East India Company, established in 1600, set up 'factories' or trading posts on the coast of India. The origin of the Indian Army, and of its Indian officers, can be traced back to the 'Chowdikars', a force raised to protect these factories. The Company officials called their subordinates 'subedars' from 'subah' meaning a province and 'dar' meaning a holder or keeper. The first battalion organised in Bengal by Robert Clive
Amiya Barat gives a view of a typical recruit:

A representative Bengal sepoy recruit of c1800 was a Hindu of high caste, a resident of the Bihar and Oudh regions with Hindustani as his mother tongue. He was person of good physique and hailed from the peasantry and a station which possessed a social heritage. He was often of the landed gentry and enlisted to gain status. He remained a civilian at heart though a soldier by profession.²

The first order prescribing the strength of an infantry company in the Indian Army is dated November 1755 and lays down that there shall be one subedar, four jemadars, 16 NCOs and 90 men. In his excellent history of the Indian Army, Philip Mason points out that:

"It would be misleading to call a subedar a captain and a jemadar a lieutenant, but at that time men of those ranks did command a number of men we now regard as the command of a captain or a lieutenant."³

Companies were formed into battalions in 1758, each of which consisted of nine companies, each with 120 men. The overall effect of the change was to reduce the number of Indian officers in a company while, at the same time, increasing the ratio of British officers to Indian officers who remained subordinate even to the British sergeant-majors. Further re-organisation in 1796 brought an end to the old system of command by native officers. A battalion of native infantry with eight companies now had 22 or 23 British officers together with ten subedars and ten jemadars so that the numbers of British and Indian officers were almost equal. This very significant

increase in the number of British officers in a battalion had the effect of down-grading the role of the Indian officers. The subedar had previously been, in effect, a company commander and the jemadar a platoon commander but with many more British officers in the unit, the Indians lost their status. As pensions increased not only with rank but with length of service, there was every incentive for men to serve as long as possible, sometimes even for fifty years. General George MacMunn (1869-1952) illustrates the point thus:

On the cross over the long trench graves on the battlefield of Chillianwalla are inscribed the names of two Brahmin subedars and against their names is recorded their ages, 65 and 70.4

Indian officers were always promoted from the ranks and were usually elderly men who had spent their lives an a single regiment. Their grasp of English was uncertain, if they spoke it all, and many came from the lower ranks of Indian society. They were unlikely ever to aspire to equality with the British officers, as Byron Farwell states:

It was not men of this stamp who were expected to hold a King's Commission: they were unlikely to desire entrance to the British officer's mess as subalterns.5

In contrast to the Indian princes, the East India Company took great care to pay its sepoys regularly and gave them a small pension when they retired. The families of soldiers killed in action were entitled to a pension and provision was made for disabled men. Indian soldiers were given due respect by government departments and

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the civil authorities. Their prestige in society was further raised by the fact that they were given priority in the courts and, as General Rajendra Nath, points out:

The English looked after the interests and welfare of the sepoys as well as the Indian officers holding the ranks of Jemadars and Subedars so well that even today after 42 years of independence we have not been able to match that.\(^6\)

The financial security and social respect contributed significantly to the fidelity and discipline of the Indian troops. Amiya Barat writing about the Bengal infantry points out that:

The sepoys undoubtedly benefited from all these privileges (allowances, leave, pension, honours and decorations) but when considered in the proper perspective, they were really more interested in their immediate earnings and in their future promotion prospects. Their special interest in the latter may be explained by the fact that all the native officers in the Company's army rose from the ranks.\(^7\)

**Indian officers and the Mutiny of 1857**

The causes of the Mutiny of 1857 are varied, complex and outside the scope of this study. The impact of the changes in the role and perceived authority of the Indian officers in the years immediately preceding was, however, undoubtedly a contributory factor. During the first half of the nineteenth century, more and more English men and women went out to India. Attitudes towards the Indians began to change. No longer

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\(^6\) Rajendra Nath, Maj-Gen, *Military Leadership in India: The Vedic period to the Indo-Pak wars* (New Delhi, Lancer Books, 1990), p. 239.

\(^7\) Amiya Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, p. 151.
was it socially acceptable for an English officer to have an Indian mistress and the child of a mixed marriage, such as James Skinner (founder of Skinner's Horse), would have little hope of advancement among English society. Amiya Barat again:

The European officers of the Native infantry were not immune to this changing social environment and their behaviour towards the sepoys reflected the attitude of the period. Indifference and abuse became the order of the day and social contact with the sepoys and native officers was looked down upon. This feeling was further aggravated by the fact that inexperienced immature cadets were sent out from England to take command over sepoys and native officers, the latter far older than themselves.8

The reforms of 1796 had denuded the Indian officers of the remnants of authority that had rested with them. From being the leaders of men, they were reduced to playing the role of contact-men between the sepoys and the commanding officers of their regiments. They had virtually no effective authority and even as go-betweens were at the command of the most junior European subaltern. This feeling of frustration was aggravated when the Indian officers compared themselves with their civilian colleagues: Major-General Shahid Hamid suggests that:

In the early days the small number of British officers allotted to units, sometimes no more than three, gave rise to closer relations with the men and a greater degree of responsibility and, consequently, efficiency and initiative amongst the native officers.

8 Ibid, p. 152.
The steady increase in the number of British officers in units eroded all these desirable qualities ... and was contributory factor in the debacle of 1857.9

Only with difficulty could the Indian officers make their status as officers felt either by the sepoys or by the European officers. They had emerged after long service as sepoys but still shared their life and were surrounded by men recruited from their own locality with ties of caste and even kinship. Elderly men with no prospects of further promotion or reward and deprived of incentives and status, the native officers came greatly to resent the harsh and contemptuous behaviour of the European officers towards them. Indeed the deterioration of this relationship, which much increased during the period under review, overshadowed all other grievances and more than anything else caused the native officers to lose all interest in their profession. Kaye, the first historian of the Indian Mutiny, suggests that:

The native officers were aggrieved over the gradual curtailment of their authority. This trend had been visible in the Bengal army from 1786 onwards when a European subaltern was appointed to every company and the native officers collapsed into something little better than a name.10

In his recent history of the Mutiny, Saul David11 argues persuasively that the underlying cause of the uprising of 1857 was a financial one because as British rule extended further and further, the opportunities for loot decreased. The ringleaders were ambitious men, including some officers who were close to pension, and were

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9 Shahid Hamid Maj-Gen, So They Rode and Fought, p. 36.
united in their exasperation with the limitations of Company service. They wanted a government which would give them greater opportunities for advancement and better pay. Whatever the reason, when mutiny came, the Indian officers generally preferred to swim with the tide rather than against it. Sometimes they were implicated in the mutiny (the 47th in 1824) but more often they simply stood aside (the 64th in 1844, the 66th in 1850). Communications between the English officers and the sepoys broke down when the Indian officers identified themselves too closely with the men or conversely when the sepoys saw the latter as hostile to their interests. Had the European officers been more closely in touch with the men, the weakness of the Indian officer link would not have been such a problem. The English officers did not learn the language of their men; they were often inexperienced, absent from their regiments or both. Charles Allen points out that:

Over the last decade, something had been lost from the relationship that bound officers and men together: more British officers were being allotted to each regiment, with a corresponding loss of responsibility for Native Officers.\(^\text{12}\)

In the mutiny of 1857, many Indian officers were to lead their men against the British whilst others were to stay loyal and 'true to their salt.'

The post-Mutiny reorganisation of the Indian Army

According to Farwell, the Mutiny swept away what little social intercourse was left between Briton and Indian. Friendliness and hospitality became unnaturally strained or non-existent. The knowledge of ways of life, ways of thinking which come from familiar daily intercourse disappeared. Even in the army, distrust, however slight, distanced officers and men in all but the Gurkha regiments.\(^\text{13}\)

The events of the Great Mutiny were to cast a long shadow over the relationship between the British and the Indian officers and troops; never again was there the same degree of trust. In particular, there was concern about giving the Indian officers too much responsibility and experience. As Major-General Rajendra Nath points out:

In the army, leadership plays a significant role. It was the British intention to make full use of the sepoys as cannon-fodder but ensure that they are given no opportunity to learn the art of command or leadership.\(^\text{14}\)

However, whether or not they were trusted by the British officers, the Indian officers would always have considerable influence upon the sepoys which might be used for good or bad. As a Memorandum submitted to the Secretary of State for India indicates, Indian officers who are treated as:

mere fighting tools, entrusted with no real honour or responsibility

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\(^\text{13}\) Farwell B., *Armies of the Raj from the Mutiny to Independence*, p. 64.

and denied the opportunities for promotion found in other aspects of the British administration in India were unlikely to demonstrate their fidelity in time of temptation or trial.  

Two interlinked questions concerning the re-organisation of the Indian Army aroused considerable debate in the mid 1870s. What was the appropriate ratio of British to Indian officers in a regiment, and what were to be the duties and responsibilities of the Indian Officers? Following the Mutiny, the army of the East India Company was taken over by the Crown. Prior to the Mutiny there had sometimes been as many as 26 British officers in a unit which meant that, as a Departmental Minute points out, their duties were often:

light and insignificant while the Native officers were stamped as mere ciphers. The system under which they have been employed and treated ... has been such as to ensure as far as possible their degradation and inefficiency. They have been treated as private sepoys, with better coats and better pay, but they have studiously been denied all real official authority and influence. They have been treated ... as an entirely inferior class... It is simply impossible that the intelligence, independence and self respect which should characterise the officer should be developed among men under such a system.  

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15 Memorandum submitted to the Secretary of State for India 1876, L/MIL/7/7240, p. 8.
16 Departmental Minute No 438 of 1876, submitted to the Secretary of State 20 May 1876, pp. 5-7
There was a belief among some British officers at least that it was important to train the Indian officers properly and to give them a position of real authority. Sir Harry Norman's view was that:

I do not conceive it possible to have a satisfactory Native army without thoroughly good Native officers. We should have thoroughly efficient and, if possible, thoroughly loyal and contented Native officers; and I think we do our best to secure them under a system under which we give our Native officers responsible and honourable positions, with a suitable and adequate training. 17

On the other hand, following the Mutiny, the loyalty of the Indian troops, and especially of their officers who might, perhaps, lead the men in any future uprising, was a major concern. One of the changes introduced was that henceforth promotion would be on the basis of merit and capability rather than simply on length of service; there would be no more sixty- and seventy-year old native officers. In the Bombay army, promotion had always been by merit and selection and this system was now applied in the other two Presidencies with a consequent improvement, not only in the promotion prospects of the most able soldiers, but also in the efficiency of the regiments.

17 Norman, Sir H., 1875 Notes on the organisation of the Indian Army, Chapter 1, para 15, L/MIL/7/7240
General Sahid Hamid states that 'The return to the small establishment of British officers ... restored the authority and responsibility of the native officers.'

and David Omissi shares the same view:

The Indian officers warmed to their new responsibilities. They proved competent to command companies and troops and acquitted themselves well on detached duties. They developed and improved as a result of being given greater authority. Some regimental commanders came to prefer veteran Indian officers to inexperienced British subalterns because the former exercised more effective sway over the men.

Mason points out that it is remarkable that, in the immediate post-Mutiny period, that regiments based upon the irregular system, with considerable trust and responsibility given to, the Indian officers, should have received such a good hearing. However, as the century wore on, the number of British officers was gradually increased again with a consequent diminution in the role of the VCOs. Most Indian army infantry regiments went into action in 1914 with 14 British and 16 Indian officers.

The First World War

In 1914 the Indian army consisted of thirty-nine cavalry regiments and 138 infantry battalions, twenty of these being Gurkha units. The Indian artillery was limited to twelve mountain batteries.

21 Ibid, p. 405.
The Indian Army Corps which landed in France in 1914 was not trained or equipped to fight one of, if not the, most effective armies in Western Europe. The sepoys received more modern rifles when they landed in Marseille and had little opportunity to practise their use before they were thrust piece-meal into the First Battle of Ypres. They had no Corps artillery and were under-strength compared with a British Corps. The Corps fought in conditions totally unlike anything they had experienced before and they were, initially at least, less well equipped to cope with the cold and the mud than European troops. The Indian officers had had little experience of independent command and were not educated or trained to the level of their British counterparts. Because of this, the Indian troops relied very heavily upon their British officers. This meant that they were very adversely affected by casualties among the British officers. Regiments were diluted by the lack of adequate reserves. Captain Bonham-Carter writing of the need to train Indian officers suggests that:

The heavy casualties which may occur in a few minutes fighting shows that Indian officers commanding platoons must be trained to take the place of their British officers in command of companies. The failure of Indian officers on various occasions in the present war has been largely due to them not having been trained in peace for the duties and responsibilities appertaining to higher rank.22

In 1915, the Lieutenant-Governor of Burma's view was that:

The Indian officers lack the initiative to carry on because they have never been in a position to command, and consequently have never been taught initiative.23

After the War

Although Lord Curzon (1859-1925), Viceroy from 1902 to 1909, had publicly announced in 1903 that Indians would be eligible for the King's commission, little was done due to the opposition of the military establishment. In 1919 the Esher Committee was established in order to report on the organisation and administration of the Indian army but recommended few changes and made no recommendation for any increase in the number of King's commissions awarded to Indian officers.24 However, resolutions moved in the Indian Legislative Assembly following publication of the Committee's report included one suggestion that one quarter of the number of officers commissioned annually into the Indian army should be Indian and that an Indian equivalent of Sandhurst should be established in order to train young Indian officers.

Indian troops had passed through a baptism of fire in Europe and had seen their British officers swept away. They had seen and heard that in the French and Russian armies men of African and Asiatic origin were given full commissioned rank and had seen Turkish officers bravely leading their men in the most modern warfare. As Lt-General Menezes remarks: 'They must ask themselves why to Indians alone this

23 Lt-Governor of Burma. Appendix to a Note from the Viceroy on the granting of commissions to Indians, October 1915. L/MIL/7/19006.
24 Menezes, Lt-Gen S.L., Fidelity and Honour, p. 315.
privilege was denied.'25 Indian politicians, looking towards independence, were agitating for an Indian army officered by Indians. As General Rajendra Nath points out: 'Without an efficient Indian Army, officered by our own nationals, self-government for India must be a very unreal and shadowy thing.'26 Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, politician in the Legislative Assembly speaking in 1928 said: 'The question whether a Military College shall or shall not be established in India is a question of life or death to the people of this country.'27

The first Indians to obtain the King's Commission were doctors who, in 1912, were permitted to hold regular commissions in the Indian Medical Service of the Indian Army: nearly 700 were commissioned during the War.28 However, although more than one million Indians served abroad in the Great War and some 60,000 died, none of the 9,000 officers granted temporary King's commissions in the Indian army during the war were Indian (though four Indian officers had been commissioned in to the Royal Flying Corps).29 After the war Indian soldiers were given pensions and grants of land, and 200 selected VCOs were awarded honorary commissions with pay and pension benefits. Due to their age, these officers would not be expected to be on the active list for long, if at all. In addition, the Viceroy proposed that, in recognition of the contribution of the Indian Army to the war effort Indians would in future be able to obtain the King's Commission and ten places would henceforward be reserved for

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26 Rajendra Nath, Maj-Gen 1990 *Military leadership in India*, p. 252.
27 Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya in the Legislative Assembly 1928 quoted in Rajendra Nath, Maj-Gen 1990 *Military leadership in India*, p. 252.
suitable candidates at RMA Sandhurst. At this rate, though, it would take one hundred years to produce a substantial proportion of Indian officers in the Indian Army.

The Secretary of State for India wrote in a secret memorandum to the Cabinet in July 1917:

> The granting of King's commissions to Indians had been under consideration for many years, both in India and at home but no progress has been made with it owing the unwillingness of the War Office to concede the principle of giving Indians command over Europeans.\(^3^0\)

The same memorandum proposed that places at Sandhurst were to 'be allotted to Indian youths who by birth, character and education are fitted to aspire to high military rank.' In addition, commissions would be awarded to exceptional Indian officers for services in the field and to distinguished Indian officers whose age and defective education meant that they were unfit for the higher commissioned ranks. Finally, the Viceroy hoped that commissions would also be granted to some soldiers who had come up through the ranks. On leaving Sandhurst, successful cadets would spend a year with British unit before being posted to an Indian regiment. The granting of commissions in this way was intended to reward representatives of the martial classes who had fought so well beside the British during the war. It was argued that men of the martial races could only be handled by officers of the same race and that the martial races were entitled to the lion's share of the commissions as they had made the greatest sacrifices during the War. However, it was not easy for young Indians to enter Sandhurst. The entrance examination had to be taken in England and many of the

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\(^{30}\) Secret Memo from the Secretary of State for India to the Cabinet, 20 July 1917, L/MIL/7/19006.
cadets lacked the education and robustness to cope with a demanding course designed for the products of the English public schools.

The War Office remained very reluctant to grant full commissions to Indians. This was largely due to racial prejudice; the Commander-in-Chief, India wrote:

There is no lack of physical courage among Indians, but I think there is a distinct lack of that moral courage which is involved in unhesitating acceptance of heavy personal responsibility.  

However, the major obstacle to the granting of full commissions to Indians remained the War Office's refusal to countenance the idea that they might then be in a situation where they would be in command of European troops. This opposition is shown very clearly in a letter from the War Office to the India Office written in July 1917:

The Army Council after careful consideration have come to the conclusion that to grant commissions to natives of Indian would entail a great risk from the military point of view, in that it involves placing Indian officers in a position where they would be entitled to command European troops.

However, as the Viceroy suggested, 'It is not, I believe, as the C-in-C's note indicates, the British soldier who will be unwilling to accept the Indian officer's orders ... but the British officer.' Nor were the C-in-C's sentiments shared by all British officers. The Governor-General of the North West Frontier Province wrote that:

My twenty five years of service across India have been spent in intimate contact with warlike races amongst whom I have known men who by character and hereditary instinct had every qualification to become with

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31 Appendix by C in C India to a Note by the Viceroy on the granting of commissions to Indians, October 1915, L/MIL/7/19006.
32 Letter from the War Office to the India Office, 5 July 1917, L/MIL/7/19006.
33 Note by the Viceroy, October 1915, L/MIL/7/19006.
proper training thoroughly efficient officers, the equal at least of the average officers of any army.\textsuperscript{34}

\textbf{Indianisation}

The first tentative step towards Indianisation had come with the formation in 1901 by Lord Curzon of the Imperial Cadet Corps. The aim of the Corps was to entice the sons of the ruling families of India to serve in the army either the regular army of the States Forces. Admission was limited to the sons of princes and nobles and these were generally drawn from students who had attended one of the four Chief's Colleges at Ajmere, Lahore, Rajkot and Indore. The course lasted for two years and those who seriously wished to pursue a military career would then undergo a more sustained military course in a garrison class. In the event, most of those who entered the Corps did not elect to serve in the armed forces. Of the first entry of thirteen cadets, only four, including Amar Singh, chose to pursue a military career.

A Committee was set up in 1922 under Lt-Gen. Shea to consider the issue of Indianisation. Their report proposed that complete Indianisation (excluding Gurkha units) should be completed in three phases of fourteen years each. If the first phase was successful, the second phase would be completed in nine years and the third phase in seven. From the beginning of the second phase, British officers would cease to be commissioned into the Indian army and eventually the VCOs would disappear. At this rate, the Indian army would be completely Indianised by 1955! Eventually Whitehall agreed to six battalions and two cavalry regiments being Indianised as a start and the opening of a pre-Sandhurst institution (The Prince of Wales Royal Indian Military

\textsuperscript{34} Appendix by the Governor General North West Frontier, L/MIL/7/19006.
College) on the old campus of the Imperial Cadet Corps. The Indian Sandhurst Committee of 1926, chaired by Lt-Gen. Skeen, recommended an increase in the annual number of vacancies at Sandhurst to 20, increasing annually by four until the Indian Sandhurst was established in 1933. Actually, it was opened at Dehra Dun in 1932 with sixty places for the regular army and forty for the States Forces.

**The difficulties facing Indian officers**

Indianisation was not, however, without its problems. The Progress of Indianization Committee which met in 1923 expressed the view that those Indians who held the King's Commission should resemble British officers, that is, men who had been to public schools, as closely as possible. Indian officers, and potential officers, were to be judged not only on their professional qualities but on their social behaviour as well. The vast majority of potential Indian officers had not been to a British public school and the establishment of the Prince of Wales Royal Indian Military College was an attempt to address this difficulty. The Report of the India Sandhurst Committee stated that:

> In the United Kingdom the great majority of army officers are drawn from families with a tradition of military service and military distinction extending through many generations. In India, and so far as Indians are concerned, the position is entirely different. As is well known, there are classes of the population with whom the profession of arms is hereditary and prima facie they should readily produce good material of the kind required, but their experience of military service is confined to service in the ranks, or
service as VCOs whose authority and responsibility are strictly limited.\textsuperscript{35}

Although there was considerable prejudice among some British officers against Indians being granted the King's Commission, this prejudice was not as widespread amongst the rank and file. However, their lack of a good general education was often a considerable handicap for the potential Indian officers. In order to further improve the situation, it was proposed that military schools would be established to provide training for NCOs and that, in future, no Indian NCO would be promoted to Jemadar unless he had attended one of these schools. The caste and relative social standing of Indians holding the King's and Viceroy's commissions might also cause difficulty. According to Lt-Gen Menezes,

> It might happen that a KCO had not much wealth or landed property in comparison to a VCO serving in the same unit in which case the former will be looked upon with some lack of respect not only by the latter but also by the rank and file who come from the same part of the country.\textsuperscript{36}

The process of Indianisation is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7.

\textbf{The Second World War and after}

Lt-Gen Menezes suggests that

> The Indian army was comparatively less ready in fact for a jungle war with Japan than it had been in 1914 for a trench war with Germany.\textsuperscript{37}

On 1 October 1939, the Indian Army comprised 159,858 soldiers plus a further 34,515 enrolled non-combatants organised into ninety-six infantry battalions.

\textsuperscript{35} Report of the India Sandhurst Committee, L/MIL/17/5/1783.
\textsuperscript{36} Report of the India Sandhurst Committee; evidence of Risaldar Sardar Khan, Indian adjutant and QM RIMC, Dehra Dun, L/MIL/17/5/1785.
\textsuperscript{37} Menezes, Lt-Gen, \textit{Fidelity and Honour}, p. 347.
and eighteen cavalry regiments. There were also four Indian State Forces cavalry regiments and seven infantry battalions ready for service. The number of VCOs had been progressively decreased in the Indianised battalions, but upon the outbreak of war, their numbers were brought up to the same complement as in the non-Indianised units. In a typical infantry battalion there were 15 KCOs, British and Indian. In 1942-43 the companies were commanded by British officers and platoons were commanded by VCOs, with Subedars acting as Company second-in-command. There was a strong and deep link between the British officers and the VCOs encompassing mutual respect, loyalty and affection and the Indian officers were a necessary and very effective strata of command. The VCO was selected at battalion level because he already possessed military skills, had a grounding of literacy and was able to read and write Urdu. He knew his men and their families down to the last detail. However, they received no special training on promotion though they might later attend specialist courses, for instance on the 3" mortar or machine gun.

By the end of the war there were some 32,750 British officers and 14,000 Indian officers in the Indian army and the latter had performed well. Perry states that

When queried about the special merits and demerits of Indian officers,

British commanders agreed almost unanimously on the superior ability of the Indian officer to handle his troops.

Immediately after the Japanese surrender, General Auckinleck (1884-1981), the last Commander-in-Chief of the Indian army, convened a committee as to the future status of VCOs, presided over by Maj.-Gen. Briggs (1895-1995). In the Indian Army today,

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38 Ibid, p.343.
39 Lt Col Montagu, 2nd Bn, 2nd Punjab Regiment, telephone interview.
Class regiments and Class Companies are not commanded by men of their own race and so the VCOs live on as Junior Commissioned Officers (JCOs).

Conclusion

The nature of warfare changed out of all recognition between 1857 and 1947. However, Wellington would not have felt very much out of place on a battlefield immediately prior to the Boer War and indeed Marlborough might have been familiar with much around him. Small wonder, then that during the nineteenth century that the British Army became hidebound and conservative and that the Indian army, under the control of its British officers, followed suit. It took the cataclysm of the First World War to produce significant change and what change there was often undertaken with great reluctance. In 1904, Lord Kitchener, referring to the need for reform with regard to British officers in the Indian Army, had written of their

Dislike of change and a deep-seated racial repugnance to any step which brings nearer the day when Englishmen in the Army have to take orders from an Indian.41

Between 1858 and 1947 the role of the Indian officer waxed and waned. Always a key figure in providing an essential link between the British officer and the sowars, the degree of responsibility and freedom given to an Indian officer varied. At times the Indian officers might almost be considered as de facto commissioned officers on a par with their British counterparts while at other times they were perceived as little more than glorified non-commissioned officers. It was the Second World War which provided the impetus to train and commission large numbers of Indian officers.
and provided them with opportunities to reach the higher levels of command.

Without this opportunity, the Indian and Pakistan Armies would have been in some considerable difficulty as the British officers left for the last time in 1947.

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CHAPTER TWO: INDIAN CAVALRY OFFICERS 1858-1914

Introduction

Having given a general outline of the development of the Indian Army from 1857 to 1947 in the previous chapter, we now proceed to look in more detail at the role of the Indian officers in that army. In this chapter we shall consider the careers of the Indian officers from three typical Indian Army cavalry regiments in the period 1858 to 1914 with information drawn, in the main, from their regimental histories. As discussed earlier, the three regiments have been chosen in order to give a representative from each of the Bengal and Bombay Presidencies together with one from the Punjab Frontier Force. The choice of individual regiments within those categories has been determined largely by the availability of sufficiently detailed information. In addition, because the Punjab regiment did not go to France or Palestine and, more importantly, to provide an example of a different system, the Jodhpur Lancers represent the State Forces. The next Chapter will take the story forward up to the end of the Great War.

THE BENGAL PRESIDENCY: 9th (HODSON'S) HORSE

A brief history of the regiment

The regiment, and its sister regiment - the 10th Hodson's Horse, are typical of the irregular regiments of cavalry which were raised so hastily in 1857 in Bengal to replace those regular cavalry regiments which had mutinied. It was raised by Henry Hodson (1821-1858) in separate risallahs (troops) and embodied under his name on Delhi Ridge. So many men, Sikhs, Muslims and Afghans, came in, perhaps not entirely fired
with enthusiasm for the British cause but looking rather for loot\(^1\), that three regiments were raised. It was the first of these which was to become the 9th Hodson's Horse. After Delhi had been re-taken, the regiment moved to Lucknow where Hodson was killed. The 9th were the only Indian cavalry regiment to take part in the Sudan campaign of 1885 for which they were equipped with the lance. They also took part, serving in small detachments, in the Chitral Force 1895-7. The regiment went to France in 1914 and remained there until February 1918 when they sailed for Egypt to take part in the Palestine campaign. For further details the reader should consult the excellent history of the Regiment by Major F.G. Cardew (see Bibliography).

The raising of the regiment
The first rissalah of 84 men, which was to become the 1st Troop of the Ninth, was raised at Lahore by a Mr Montgomery and Man Singh. The latter was the risaldar, with Mirza Jiwan Beg as naib-risaldar and Nur Din as jemadar. Man Singh was later to become the first risaldar-major of the 9th (see below) and was to be awarded the IOM 1st Class for his services. The next two rissalahs to be raised both went to the 2nd regiment which was to become the 10th, Hodson's Horse. The fourth rissalah of 92 men which became the 5th Troop of the Ninth was raised at Amritsar by Sardar Shamser Singh. The risaldar was Jai Singh, the naib risaldar, Harditt Singh and the jemadar, Amar Singh. Harditt Singh was eventually to succeed Man Singh as risaldar-major of the 9th. The third troop of the Ninth was raised at Delhi by Sardar Ali Raza Khan with Muhammad Raza Khan as risaldar, Sher Muhammad Khan as naib-risaldar and Agha Abdul as jemadar. Muhammad Raza Khan was to receive the

Indian Order of Merit, 1st class and a pension of Rs 200 in perpetuity. The rissalah which was to become the 2nd troop of the Ninth was the twelfth to be raised. It was raised by Man Singh at Lahore and Amritsar with his nephew Harsa Singh as risaldar and Hukum Singh as naib-risaldar.

A family within the Regiment

*Muhiyal Family of 9th Hodson's Horse* by Mehta Gyan Chand records the services of three generations of the family in the regiment. The four sons of Mehta Dirvan Chand all served in Hodson's Horse. The eldest, Mehta Rattan Chand, spoke Persian, Urdu and Pushtu, served as personal orderly to Hodson and was promoted to naib risaldar. He transferred to the Guides Cavalry and was killed on Rao Hill, Delhi in 1857. His son, Mehta Shib Das, received the family pension for twelve years before being old enough to enlist in the 2nd Punjab Cavalry. He later transferred to the 4th Punjab Cavalry, rose to the rank of Kot Daffadar and retired after 32 years service on a superior rate of pension. His son, Rattan Chand's grandson, was to serve as a ward orderly with Hodson's Horse. Rattan Chand's cousin, Mehta Kishan Singh, served in the 4th Cavalry, being promoted to jemadar in 1863. He was awarded the IOM 2nd Class for his valour in a fight with 35 men lasting five hours at an outpost near Bannu. A nephew of Mehta Shib Das also served in Hodson's Horse ending his service as Mess writer. He resigned because of what he saw as his indifferent treatment at the hands of Dogras in the regiment.

Mehta Chand's second son, Mehta Gulab Rai, was an expert swordsman who served for 34 years with Hodson's Horse before being discharged on a superior rate of pension. Three of *his* four sons were to serve with the regiment, two of them in the
regimental school and the third as Mess daffadar. Mehta Amir Chand, the third son of Mehta Dirvan Chand, was severely wounded serving with the regiment as a daffadar. His son, Mehta Gobal Chand joined the regiment in 1884 and was promoted to daffadar in 1894. He took part in the Chitral and Tirah campaigns and ended his service as Chief Clerk. He was awarded three squares of land when he retired on pension. Finally, Mehta Chand's fourth son served in the regiment for 28 years. A speaker of Persian and Urdu, he became regimental accountant and was awarded a jagir (grant of land) on his retirement.

Two distinguished officers of the Regiment

Man Singh, Sardar Bahadur (? - 1892)

He was the son of Sardar Sava Singh of Ruriala in the Gujranwala district and had served with distinction as a cavalry officer in the Sikh army. He took part in a campaign against the Afghans at Peshawar and was present at the principal battles of the First Sikh War. He then joined the Punjab mounted police in 1852 but at the time of the Mutiny returned to military service. He raised and commanded, with great distinction, the first risala of the regiment. He was present at the siege of Delhi including the capture of the King and Princes of Delhi, the action at Shamshabad, the capture of Lucknow and the action at Nawabganj. There he displayed conspicuous gallantry and was severely wounded charging and capturing three enemy guns. For his exploits he was mentioned in despatches and awarded a campaign medal (two clasps), the Order of Merit 1st class and two jaghirs. He was appointed the first Risaldar-Major of the regiment in March 1866 and later awarded the Order of British India, 1st

class. On his retirement from the regiment in 1877 he was appointed manager of the
Darbar Sahib at Amritsar (a post which had been held for 13 years by his elder brother)
and he held this position until his death. He was also an honorary magistrate in
Amritsar, a C I E, and Viceregal Darbari.

Manowar Khan, Sardar Bahadur. Dates unknown.
He served throughout the First Afghan War, 1838-42, including the taking of Ghazni
and the recapture of Kandahar and Kabul, being awarded a campaign medal with
clasps and a star. He took part in operations in Sindh in 1844-5 and the Sutlej
campaign of 1846 with the 12th Irregular Cavalry. He was awarded a medal and
clasps for the battles of Firozshah, Aliwal and Mudki. He received a further medal and
clasps for his part in the Second Sikh War of 1848-9. At the outbreak of the Mutiny
he was serving as a risaldar in the 12th Irregular Cavalry. He was with a detachment
of the regiment at Gorakhpur when he remained loyal when the greater part of the
regiment mutinied. He received a certificate from the District Judge to the effect that
the safety of the Treasury and of the lives of the Europeans at the station were due to
his efforts. He was awarded the Order of British India 1st Class and the Order of
Merit, 1st Class. He was at the first and second reliefs of Lucknow and took part in
the subsequent operations in Oudh for which he received a medal with three clasps.
He was appointed risaldar-major of the 9th Bengal Cavalry in 1877 and retired in
1880.
THE BOMBAY PRESIDENCY: THE POONA HORSE

A brief history of the regiment

The regiment was raised as the Poona Irregular horse in 1817 to serve in the Mahratta Wars. The name of the unit was changed several times in rapid succession in the 1860's until by 1903 it had become the 34th Prince Albert Victor's Own Poona Horse.

At Coryguam, on New Year's Day 1819, a small British Force including 300 men of the Poona Auxiliary Horse fought off a Mahratta army of some 30,000 men. The regiment served in Afghanistan in 1839 and took part in the Scinde campaign of 1842/3. In 1856 the regiment was sent to Persia and at the battle of Koosh-ab (or Khushab) in 1857 they put to flight a Persian regiment, capturing their standard and spiking their guns. The captured standard, in the form of a silver hand with the inscription in Persian 'The hand of God above all things,' was henceforward borne above the regimental standard. A small silver replica of this device is still worn by officers of the regiment while in mufti. The regiment returned to India in time to take part in the pacification of Central India after the Mutiny and then were back in Afghanistan for 1878-1880 serving at Kandahar before relieved by General Robert's march from Kabul. The regiment was in France from 1914 to 1918, Lieutenant De Pass winning a posthumous Victoria Cross. In 1918 the regiment joined the 14th Cavalry Brigade in Palestine.

The raising of the Regiment

When raised, the regiment was to consist of 10 Risalars, each with 1 Risaldar, 5 Jemadars, 10 Dafadars and 500 siladars. The regimental history published in 1882 states that:
Men of respectability and family were allowed to recruit for promotion on the following terms: Risaldars to raise 500 horses, Jemadars 100 and Dafadars 40. Men of low caste were not to be admitted. No regular dress is to be enforced; but if the men after they have been entertained, will consent to wear cloth angribas or turbans and cummerbunds of a uniform colour, they ought to be encouraged to do so...³

The approach to discipline within the regiment is clearly set out:

European officers will settle all complaints that may be made to them direct or otherwise. The men will, however, be recommended to state their grievances, in the first instance, to any of the dafadars of the Risalar, who will afterwards accompany them to the commanding officer, and it must be the particular study of every officer to gain the confidence of the Native officers and privates by every means in his power. Disputes to be settled through the sentences of the Punchayats (formal meetings of the men of the regiment), elected as much as possible with the option of the parties involved in the dispute. Punchayats, in their decisions, can generally be guided by the judgment of the European officer. They will save him from the odium which might otherwise arise in checking a variety of irregularities. The European officer might have, consequently, to bear in mind that in this service respectability and popularity are the ways to govern; and to attain these, the officer must combine sense, temper, confidence and liberality.⁴

⁴ Ibid, p. 2.
In 1831 a detachment of the Nizam of Hyderabad's Cavalry (ancestors of the Deccan Horse) was deemed to have failed in their object. A panchayat consisting of the Indian officers was assembled, held a thorough enquiry and decided that, with the exception of nine sowars, all the others, officers and men, had failed to do their duty. The Resident confirmed the finding and the whole concerned were paid up and dismissed on the spot. The Army Act at this time did not apply to the Nizam's troops. After the Mutiny, Bartle Freer (1815-1884) (quoted in Mason) persuaded the Generals that court-martials should consist entirely of Native officers;

They were even more prompt and as severe as the European court while the troops were made much more clearly aware of what was happening and convinced of justice.

The importance or rewarding good performance was also noted:

All sorts of exercises should be encouraged - good shots, good riders, swordsmen, etc should be praised and receive presents. Nautches must be given to the Native officers; the Kanats (curtains) to be open that the whole Risalar may consider themselves entertained; on each the occasion the (British) officer can retire by 12 or 1 o'clock without giving offence, and he ought not to permit any indecency in his presence.

Gold and silver bangles will be presented to all who may particularly distinguish themselves in action, and other suitable rewards granted to those

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5 Jackson, Major D., *India's Army* (London, Publisher unknown, 1940, based upon articles which had previously appeared in The statesman in India in 1938/39) Volume I, p. 82.
whose zeal for the service on other occasions may be deemed worthy of such
consideration. The Native officers to be treated with the utmost respect and
attention, and all men with kindness and consideration; no private man to be
struck on any account whatever.7

Two distinguished Indian Officers of the Poona Horse from the nineteenth
century

The Commanding Officer, Captain G K Erskine, wrote pen-portraits of the Indian
officers (probably all from one Risalar) in 1840 and commented on one of them as
follows:

Risaldar Dowlut Roa Ghorpana, Sirdar Bahadur (22 years and 8 months
service). An officer of distinction and possessed of the most creditable
testimonials: served throughout the Mahratta wars and operations in Sind
and Afghanistan with the Army of the Indus.

In a Brigade Order of 30 November 1830, Captain Spiller had written of this officer:

Added to his being a soldier of the most distinguished bravery, his talents and
conduct are such as to render him, on all occasions, an officer of the greatest
use. His conduct to his men has always been marked by kindness and liberality:
hence he is deservedly loved by them, and, from his rank and influence, he is no
less respected by all classes of men not belonging to the army, and which he
has, on many occasions, turned to account for the public service, and I look on
him as one of the best soldiers I have ever seen.

7 Hogg and Erskine, Historical Records of the Poona Horse, p. 3.
A regimental order was published by Colonel Westropp dated 1 September 1873: 8

In holding up the successful career of Jemadar Gufran Khan, as an example to the regiment, of conspicuous service on the part of a soldier with due appreciation and reward for the same by the State, the Commanding Officer takes the opportunity of bringing prominently to notice the advantage of serving the Sirkar with fidelity and devotion. No motives of caste or relationship should ever be allowed to interfere with a good soldier in the discharge of duties due to the Government he may be serving, and all ranks may rest assured that conspicuous loyalty to the State, no matter what may be the rank of the individual performing it, cannot fail to attract the notice of superior authority.

Enlisting as a youth in 1863, Jemadar Gufran Khan gave early signs of his feelings towards his officers on the occasion of the murderous assault made on the Commanding Officer and Adjutant on 1 March 1864, for which he was promoted to the rank of Naik. Since that time he has invariably conducted his duties to the satisfaction of his superiors, and in November last he gave crowning proof of his loyalty by giving notice of the presence, in Bombay, of a notorious mutineer of high rank who had taken a conspicuous part in the rebellion of 1857 for which service he has now received his present reward.9

Rissaidar Gufran Khan was killed in action at Deh Khoja near Kandahar 14 August 1880.

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8 Typescript Notes on the History of the Poona Horse. National Army Museum, London 6910-11-2a
9 Ibid.
The Poona Horse at the turn of the century

At the turn of the century, the Poona Horse might be considered to be a 'crack' regiment. They were led by a very experienced (and much decorated) group of Indian officers all of whom had served in the Afghan War of 1880-81, three of them in Persia and two in the Indian Mutiny. General the Hon A Hardinge (1828-1892), commanding the Bombay Army, inspected the regiment in 1885. At the end of the parade he ordered all the officers to the front and stated that he considered the Poona Horse the best drilled native regiment he had ever seen; that its high state of efficiency was not only a matter of congratulation from the regimental point of view but was a source of strength to the State. During this period men from the regiment carried off many of the prizes at the inter-regimental shooting competitions. One Sowar gained second prize for painting at the Soldier's Exhibition at Poona in 1882 and the regiment won 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes for military sketching, being the only Indian regiment competing in the class. Out of the total of seventeen Indian officers in 1914, twelve held a musketry certificate, with nine qualified on the machine-gun. This presumably reflects the emphasis placed on shooting within the regiment.

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THE FRONTIER FORCE: THE 2nd PUNJAB CAVALRY

A brief history of the Regiment

The regiment was raised in April 1849 at Lahore by Lieutenant Samuel Browne, based upon cadres from the 9th and 17th regiments of Bengal Cavalry. In addition, two complete troops came up from Hindustan, one under Tota Ram and the other under Nasrullah Khan; these were given command of their respective troops. The practice of giving direct commissions to men who brought in a sufficient number of recruits appears to have continued at least until 1865 when Mamara Kan, the son of the late Rissaldar-Major Lahras Khan, was appointed as a Jemadar on bringing in 14 men with 250 rupees each. Tota Ram eventually became Risaldar-Major, a rank which his son Gaj Singh also achieved, and two of his grandsons also served in the regiment. Tota Ram was invalided out in 1874 after twenty four and a half years service. Colonel Sam Browne (1824-1901) wrote of him

An intelligent and smart officer, who always keeps his troop in excellent order, is much looked up by his men over whom he has great influence. A man well worthy of the highest rank in the regiment.

During the Mutiny, the regiment was present at the siege of Delhi, though it made little contact with the enemy, being chiefly employed on outpost duties and patrols. It was then part of a pursuing column under Colonel Greathed and took part in the following engagements: Bolandshahr, Jhajar, Aligurh, Alarabad, Agra, Kanonj, Nawabgurij, the Relief of Lucknow, the Battle of Cawnpor and Futeghur. It was during the Mutiny

campaign that Browne gained the Victoria Cross and it was in this action that he lost his arm which led him to invent the eponymous belt. The regiment was part of the Kandahar Field force during the second Afghan War of 1878-80, distinguishing itself at Ahmad Khel in April 1880. In the 1903 re-numbering, it became the 22nd Cavalry (Frontier Force) with Sam Browne being included in the regimental title the following year. The regiment went to Mesopotamia in 1916, returning to India only in 1920.

The Indian Officers of the 2nd Punjab Cavalry in 1856

The History of the 2nd Panjäb (sic) Cavalry 1849-1886, published in 1888, is very detailed but it is also probably unique among early regimental histories of the Indian Army in that it contains two sets of photographs of the Indian officers, one dated 1859 and the other undated but probably 1886. One of the earlier photographs, showing eight officers and NCOs of the regiment, all holders of the Indian Order of Merit for their services during the Mutiny, was later used as the basis for a painting by the artist Gordon Hayward. The painter has removed an obtrusive doorway from the background and also shown the men wearing their Mutiny medals which were awarded after the photograph had been taken. The eight men shown in the photograph are as follows:-

Duffadar Bishan Singh (Indian Order of Merit, 3rd Class)

Captain Probyn wrote of him: 'He has one fault - he is too brave, foolhardy and delights in danger which is to him a pleasure.' General Sir John Watson VC ((1829-1919) reported a conversation with Bishan Singh relating to his great friend

Dye Singh who was serving in the 1st Punjab Cavalry and who had been wounded in the back. Bishan Singh said that none of his relatives had ever been wounded in the back and he prayed to God that none of them ever would be. He never spoke to his friend again. In 1867, when he was Risaldar-Major, he was promoted to the OBI 1st Class. When he died in 1874, his son Jemadar Jowahir Singh was promoted to the rank of ressaidar and later became Risaldar-major. Another of Bishan Singh's sons, Sobha Singh, rose to the rank of risaldar.

**Jemadar Jiwan Singh (Indian Order of Merit, 3rd Class)**

The Bengal Army list for January 1877 is the first issue of this publication to include the names of the Indian officers serving with individual regiments. This list includes the names of three of the individuals shown in the 1859 photograph. Jemadar Jiwan Singh (shown as Jewun Singh in the Army List) joined the regiment on 1 October 1851. He is shown as a Ressaidar though no date is shown for this promotion; it may be the same as the date on which he was made Woordie-Major. He was promoted to the rank of Jemadar on 26 February 1858 and became Woordie-Major on 30 April 1874. His Order of Merit was awarded on 17 December 1857. He was invalided out in March 1879.

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15 Permanent Order Book, Sam Browne's Cavalry, Handwritten, Entry for 31.8.68.
Jemadar Jamyat Singh (Indian Order of Merit, 1st Class)

Jemadar Jamyat (spelt Jemyut in the Army List) Singh joined the regiment on 1 September 1853 and served with it for 25 years. At Lucknow he had distinguished himself by, with the help of Duffadar Panjab Singh, recovering the body of Major Sandford under fire. Captain Probyn (1833-1924) described him as ‘Brave as a lion, a great horseman and spearsman, he killed about a company of men in this campaign.’

He was promoted to Jemadar on 27 April 1859 and advanced to the 1st Class of the Order of Merit on 25 November 1862, following the campaign in Afghanistan. In 1878 he transferred to the 5th Punjab Cavalry as a Ressaidar as an excess of officers of his rank and class meant that further advancement in the 2nd was unlikely. He thus secured his troop after 25 years service. He had four sons; Amin Singh who became a risaldar in the 5th Punjab Cavalry, Bhagwan Singh, risaldar-major in the 7th Bombay Lancers, Natha Singh a jemadar in the 5th Bombay Cavalry and daffadar Partak Singh, who was killed at Ahmad Khal on 19 April 1880. When Jamyat Singh left the 2nd Punjab his commanding officer wrote:

The Officer Commanding .... takes this opportunity of expressing the pleasure he feels on the advancement of this Native officer and at the same time his great regret in losing him from the regiment with which he has so long been connected. The name of this Native officer will long be remembered by all ranks and classes in the regiment whose reputation he has by his unexceptional gallantry and conduct helped much towards establishing.17

16 Ibid, Entry for 22.4.78.
17 Ibid, Entry for 22.4.78.
Ressaldar Hakdad Khan (Indian Order of Merit, 3rd Class)

On the 29th August 1858, this officer was in command of a party of cavalry who attacked and killed all but four of a party of mutineers. Later, at Sissiah in January 1859, he rallied a company of the 42nd Highlanders (The Black Watch) whose officer and sergeant had been killed. He was sufficiently cool while under enemy fire to stop and take the names of two Highlanders who had stood their ground so that he could pass on their names to higher authority. Presumably as a result of this action, the regiment was escorted by the band of The Black Watch when they marched out of Bareilly on 1 September 1859 bound for Kohat. Later he commanded the 6th troop but he was discharged in 1863 with a gratuity of nine month's full pay as too old for further service.

Jemadar Sher Singh (Order of British India, 2nd Class and Indian Order of Merit, 3rd Class - his later decoration not being shown in the 1859 photograph)

Jemadar Sher Singh joined the regiment on 3 June 1849, was promoted to Jemadar on 22 January 1859 and to Ressaidar on 16 November 1874. He was awarded the Order of Merit, 2nd Class on 17 December 1857. He was awarded the order of British India (2nd Class) with the title Bahadur for the Afghanistan campaign and advanced to the 1st Class in 1886. Sher Singh is the only one of the eight officers shown in the 1859 photograph who was still serving with the regiment in 1886 when the second

18 Anon History of the 2nd Panjab (sic) Cavalry, p. 15.
series of photographs was taken. A venerable figure with a white beard, he is shown wearing his two orders together with campaign medals for the Mutiny, India General Service and Afghanistan. When he died in 1888, the Commanding Officer wrote as follows:

It is with the feelings of the deepest sorrow that Colonel Lance on the eve of his departure assures the regiment of his sympathy for the loss it has sustained in the death of its most distinguished member, Rissaldar Sher Singh Sirdar Bahadur CIE. The late rissaldar's devotion and gallantry, signally displayed on numerous occasions during the mutiny campaign won for him the 2nd Class of the Order of Merit as well as the admiration and respect of all soldiers English and native with whom he was associated. Since then the Rissaldar served in the Bozdar expedition, Dowar Valley expedition of 1872, Jowah expedition 1877 for which he received a medal and clasp and the Afghan War 1878-80 for which he received a medal and clasp for Ahmed Khel. He was decorated with the 1st Class of the Order of British India in recognition of his services and was selected for the high honour of forming one of the small body of Native officers who represented the Native Army at the celebration of the Jubilee of Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen and Empress of India that was held in England last year.

The regret that will be felt throughout the regiment that the Rissaldar has not lived to enjoy in retirement the ease which his long service merited and the honours and rewards he had so nobly won will, Colonel Lance feels sure, be
shared to the full by his old officers and friends Lt Gen Sir Sam Browne and Sir Dighton Probyn (1833-1924) of whose kindness and hospitality to him when in England the Rissaldar always spoke with expressions of deepest gratitude. The late Rissaldar’s unswerving loyalty to the State and to the officers under whom he served, his general demeanour, his single hearted honesty and his untiring energy which the weight of 75 years had failed to impair, afford a bright example to his fellow soldiers which Colonel Lance trusts will be long remembered and imitated in the Regiment.20

Duffadar Panjab Singh (Indian Order of Merit, 3rd Class)

At Cawnpore, with Lieutenant Probyn, he brought in a part of eleven mutineers. When they attempted to escape, he killed three of them. Lt Probyn wrote of him

"In this unequal conflict he proved himself a gallant soldier and his superior horsemanship enabled him to inflict single-handedly such a loss on the party opposed to him."21

At Lucknow he had distinguished himself by recovering - with the help of Duffadar Jamriat Singh - the body of Major Sandford under fire.22 In 1858 he was admitted to the 2nd class of the Order of British India ‘in consideration of his gallant and faithful service’23 and he eventually rose to the rank of risaldar.

20 Permanent Order Book, Sam Browne’s Cavalry, Entry for 27.4.88.
21 Anon, History of the 2nd Panjab Cavalry, p. 9.
22 Ibid. p. 11.
Ressaldar Bishan Singh Sirdar Bahadur (Order of British India and Indian Order of Merit, 2nd Class. The second decoration is not shown in the photograph.)

He too was admitted to the 2nd class of the Order of British India in 1858 'in consideration of his gallant and faithful service'. In March 1866, he became Rissaldar-Major and in November of 1867 he was promoted to the 1st Class of the Indian Order of Merit and awarded the honorary title 'Sirdar Bahadur'. He died at home in August 1868.

The name of this native officer will long be remembered in the Regiment amongst all the castes between whom he knew no difference.... His services under the British government extend over a period of nineteen years during which time he gave great satisfaction to every Commanding Officer he had served under by his unexceptional conduct in quarters and his gallant bearing in action.

In recognition of his service, his widow was granted for her lifetime the share in village of Kariala and his eldest legitimate heir the share, value 330 rupees, in the village of Samupura (both in Gujerat) which Bishan Singh had enjoyed. His son, Jemadar Jawali Singh was promoted to ressaidar and replaced his father in command of the 3rd troop. He in his turn became risaldar-major and served in that rank for five and half years, being awarded the OBI. His brother, Sobha Singh, was a risaldar in the regiment and his son served in the regiment before being commissioned into the 1st Bombay Lancers.

23 Anon, History of the 2nd Panjab, p. 8.
24 Permanent Order Book, Sam Browne's Cavalry, Entry for 31.8.68.
25 Anon History of the 2nd Panjab Cavalry, p. 21.
Duffadar Sarmukh Singh (Indian Order of Merit, 3rd Class).

He was selected as the representative of his regiment to receive the Empress' Medal distributed on the 1st January 1871 to mark the installation of Queen Victoria as Empress of India. He was over 60 when he retired and regimental orders stated that he bore the privations and hard work of the campaign with a spirit deserving of imitation. His energy and cheerfulness were continued until the last day of his duties.  

Four other nineteenth century Indian officers of the 2nd Punjab Cavalry

1. Rissaldar-Major Gholam Hyder

He joined the regiment on 15 March 1853 as a Jemadar, was promoted to Ressaidar on 21 January 1857 and to Rissaldar on 1 January 1859 when Panjab Singh transferred out of the regiment. He was advanced from the 3rd to the 2nd class of Rissaldar in 1867 and became Rissaldar-Major on 30 April 1874 when he was advanced a further grade. He was invalided out in 1879.

His high character for integrity and courteous and dignified manner earned him the respect of all with whom he served. When Woordie-Major of the Regiment he was especially marked for his strict impartiality to all classes in the Regiment and, by thorough knowledge of, and attention to, his difficult and important duties, he gave valuable assistance to the officers with whom he was associating in maintaining the order and discipline of the Regiment.

26 Ibid, p. 41.
27 Bengal Army List 1877
He was suffering from a dangerous and painful malady when he undertook the 
march to Kandahar, displaying thereby a spirit of devotion that merits the 
highest praise.28

When Major-General Roberts (1832-1914), commanding the Punjab Frontier Force, 
inspected the regiment in 1878 he wrote in his report that:

He was particularly struck by the intelligent manner in which Rissaldar Major 
Gholam Hyder and Rissaldar Badawah Singh disposed of their squadrons 
for outpost duties.29

Gholam Hyder's son was appointed Risaldar-Major in 1889 and died in 1900.

Rissaldar-Major Lahrasaf Khan

He joined the regiment on 1 September 1853 as a Jemadar, was promoted to Rissaldar 
on 7 August 1863, advanced a grade in August 1867 and promoted to Rissaldar on 16 
November 1874.30 He succeeded Hakdad Khan in command of the 6th Troop. In 
1879 he distinguished himself during a charge near Shah Jui against a party of Afghans 
led by Sahih Jan. He succeeded Badawah Singh as Rissaldar-Major in May 1881, at 
which time his eldest son, Jemadar Hakim Singh, was given a direct commission as a 
jemadar and took over command of his father's troop. He died on 23 December 1883. 
At that time, his second son, Arjasaf Khan was promoted to Duffadar in recognition of 
his father's service.

The following tribute was paid to him by his commanding officer.

During the 29 years he served with the regiment his high character for justice

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28 History of the 2nd Panjab Cavalry, pp. 40-41.
29 Ibid, p. 54.
30 Bengal Army list 1877.
and impartiality towards those under him, for conciliatory and courteous bearing to his equals, and for unswerving devotion to his duty won him the respect of all ranks. Throughout the Afghan War, the Rissaldar-Major served with marked distinction, his gallant conduct at the battle of Ahmed Khel having attracted the special notice of Lt Gen Sir Donald Stewart and the Commanding Officer feels assures that had he survived he would have attained the highest honours that were open to him. During three years as rissaldar-major he rendered the highest service to the Regiment by assisting in the maintenance of soldierly feeling, and by setting a bright example to his brother native officers in keeping up that spirit of unity and friendship which is so essential to the well-being of the Regiment. On this melancholy occasion the Commanding officer calls on Native Officers severally and collectively to maintain that unanimity amongst themselves which has for so long been a privilege and an honour to the regiment. The Commanding officer feels assured that the British officers share with him the deep grief that he experienced in the loss of a Native officer whom he has so long admired as a soldier and valued as a friend.31

Rissaldar-Major Badewah Singh

He joined the regiment as a naib-risaldar in 1857 and served throughout the Mutiny campaigns. He was promoted to Ressaidar in March 1859 and to Rissaldar in 1868 being advanced a grade in August 1874.32

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31 Permanent Order Book, Sam Browne's Cavalry, Entry for 24.12.83.
32 Bengal Army List 1877.
He always worthily maintained his authority and position as a native officer. Well-acquainted with his duties, he has always assisted materially in disciplining and training the men under his command and had thereby contributed to keeping up the efficiency and reputation of the Regiment. It must always be a most gratifying recollection to the Rissaldar-Major that he was enabled before leaving to serve with credit throughout the late Afghan campaigns and he is now assured that he carries with him the good wishes of all ranks of the regiment.33

Note: The rank of naib-rissaldar was abolished in 1861.

Risaidar Bhuru Singh
Retired in October 1885, having joined the regiment in September 1853 and been promoted to Jemadar in 1868.

At the siege of Delhi in 1857, Risaidar Bhuru Singh first brought himself to notice by his conduct in action. He was present at all the actions in which the regiment was engaged during the mutiny campaign and at Bareilly in 1859 he was severely wounded and awarded the 3rd Class Indian Order of Merit. The risaidar also served in several of the expeditions in which the regiment has taken part and throughout the Afghan campaign including the battle of Ahmed Khel. By his strict integrity, which is one of the highest qualifications that an officer can possess, and by his conscientious attention to his duties during his

33 Permanent Order Book, Sam Browne's Cavalry, Entry for 22.6.81.
17 years as a native officer, he earned the respect and confidence of those under whom he served.34

The Regiment at the turn of the century.

The Commanding Officer, Colonel Lance, wrote when leaving the regiment after 30 years service with it:

The excellent feeling that has always existed between the British officers and the native ranks and between the Native Officers of all classes amongst themselves is well known and Col Lance for the last time calls upon the Native officers especially to sedulously endeavour to maintain that spirit in the future, remembering in this respect the well-being of the regiment depends entirely upon their temper and judgement.35

In May 1893 Risaldar-Major Narayan Singh resigned.

The regiment has lost a native officer who has been associated with it since 1857. The commanding officer takes this opportunity of placing on record the valuable services performed by Risaldar-Major Narayan Singh during his 36 year’s connection with the regiment and expressing to him the regret with which British officers, native officers and all ranks will address to an officer who by his impartiality, integrity and soldier-like qualities has earned for himself a well-deserved reputation in the regiment.36

34 Ibid, Entry for 8.10.85.
36 Ibid, Entry for 20.5.91.
In 1894 his successor Risaldar-Major Hakim Ali Bahadur resigned.

The Commanding Officer desires to place on record the high appreciation entertained by him of his long and valuable service. During the years that the Risaldar-Major has been in the regiment, he has shown himself untiring in the performance of his duties and has by his example contributed to keeping up the efficiency and discipline of the regiment. His honesty and impartiality has earned the respect and admiration of all ranks.37

In 1887 General Luck, a well-known cavalry officer of the time, held a camp of exercise of the Sind cavalry Brigade at Sihi, one of the first of its kind. The camp of exercise was much talked of and did an enormous amount of good.38 In 1890 the regiment took part in cavalry camp at Muriake and Brig-General Luck DSO, Inspector General of Cavalry and commanding the camp, commented that:

Great credit is due to all, especially the four regiments of the Punjab Frontier Force who rarely have opportunities of working even at regimental drills.39

In April 1911 the Indian Officers Club was made an Institute with a reading room and tennis and badminton courts. Portraits of the King Emperor, the Empress and Colonel Sam Browne VC were presented by the British officers. The club was much appreciated by the Indian Officers as it brought all classes together. In 1914 the regiment included Sikhs, Hindustani Hindus, Punjabi Muslims, Pathans and Hindustani Muslims. The regiment won the Indian cavalry tent-pegging trophy in 1912 and were second in 1913. In 1914, out of the total of seventeen Indian officers, ten held a

37 Ibid, Entry for 31.7.94.
38 Ibid Maunsell, The Scinde Horse, p. 36.
39 Regimental Order Book, Sam Browne’s Cavalry, Entry for 4.9.90.
musketry certificate, with eleven qualified on the machine-gun. Twelve of them held an equitation certificate. The regiment moved from the frontier to Mesopotamia late in 1916 but seems to have seen little action. The regimental order book ends at this time so we can leave them with the remarks made by Lt General Sir Malcolm Groves KCIE CB commanding the Quetta Division in 1914

The 22nd Cavalry is in a very efficient state. Drill very good; paces even and movements quiet. Musketry very satisfactory and showing marked improvement and the same remark applies to signalling and equitation. The regiment is well commanded and officered, particularly well mounted, well turned out and smart. In all respects fit for service.

40 Singh Sandhu The Indian Cavalry, p. 349.
STATE FORCES: THE JODHPUR LANCERS

Before India's Independence in 1947, one quarter of the population of India lived in the Princely States under their hereditary rulers. These rulers maintained, with the agreement of the British, forces which varied considerably in size and effectiveness. The threat of Russian invasion through Afghanistan in 1885 prompted a number of the rulers to make elements of their forces, to be known as Imperial Service Troops, available to the Government of India in times of war. In return, the Government would contribute towards the cost of equipping these units which would be expected to be up to the same standard of training as the infantry and cavalry regiments of the Indian Army and fully able to fight alongside them. Training was supervised by officers seconded from the Indian Army, schools of instruction were set up and officers from the Imperial Service units were seconded from time to time to units of the Indian Army in order to broaden their experience. The major difference between these regiments and their counterparts in the regular Indian Army would be that all of the officers would be Indians with only two or three British officers acting as advisers. Sir Pratap Singh (1845-1922), three times Regent of Jodhpur, embraced the Imperial Service scheme whole-heartedly and the Sardar Risala, later known as the Jodhpur Lancers, was formed in 1889. The regiment took part in the Tirah campaign of 1897 and went to China in 1900 at the time of the Boxer uprising. When war broke out in 1914, Sir Pratap Singh had immediately telegraphed King George V and placed all the resources of the State, including the Jodhpur Lancers, at the disposal of the King. Aged 69, he told Sir Harry Watson, the Inspector-General of Imperial Service troops, that he wanted to lead his regiment in a charge and to die at the head of his men. Sir
Harry, with what turned out to be remarkable foresight, said that there would be no opportunity for cavalry charges in France, to which Sir Pratab replied that he would make an opportunity! The Jodhpur Lancers were the only State Force cavalry to serve in France.

**Conclusion**

In the nineteenth century the regiments seemed to become family businesses - one might almost say dynasties. Apart from the well documented example of the Muhiyal family in Hodson's Horse there are plenty of other cases where sons, grandsons and nephews follow fathers, grandfathers and uncles into the regiment. Not infrequently the son of a Rissaldar-Major becomes Rissaldar-Major in his turn. In the 2nd Punjab regiment, Jemadar Jewali Singh, the son of Ressaldar Bishan Singh Sirdar Bahadur replaced his father as commander of the 3rd Troop and Jemadar Hakim Singh, the eldest son of Rissaldar-Major Lahrasaf Khan, succeeded his father as a troop commander. Mamara Kan, the son of the late Rissaldar-Major Lahras Khan, was appointed as a Jemadar when he joined the regiment. Although the earlier policy of granting direct commissions to men who brought in a sufficient number of followers was ending, this is a relatively late example of direct commissioning.

The comments made by their British colleagues clearly demonstrate that the Indian officers made a very significant contribution to the success of the regiment. Their courage and loyalty has been amply demonstrated through, for instance, the action of Hakdad Khan at Sissiah in January 1859, when he rallied a company of the 42nd Highlanders (The Black Watch). This would almost certainly have earned him a DSO
in the British army and, at a time when the decoration was more freely awarded than in later years, possibly even a VC. In the comments quoted above, the quality most often noted by British officers when writing of Indian officers was their bravery, with integrity, impartiality, loyalty and professionalism also being frequently mentioned. Nor were the officers of the three regiments considered above exceptional. Between 1847 and 1876 Indian officers of the Scinde Horse were engaged by the enemy while in command of detachments in thirteen separate actions. General Jacobs wrote of the 2nd Punjab Regiment in 1857 that

Its native officers are, as subalterns, equal to the best Europeans.\(^4\)

While it may be true to say that the Indian officers of cavalry regiments, and especially the so-called irregular regiments, had greater opportunities for independent action than their infantry counterparts, there is no reason to suppose that the latter were any less fit to act as leaders.

The average length of service of the Indian officers and therefore their age upon retirement seems to have declined during the second half of the nineteenth century. Though it took Janyat Singh of the 2nd Punjab twenty five years to secure command of a troop, Gholan Hyder retired after twenty six years, Jiwan Singh after twenty eight and Lahrasaf Khan after thirty. If we assume that they joined the regiment around age twenty, possibly younger, this would have them retiring at approximately fifty years old. Sarmukh Singh seems to have been the exception being over sixty when he retired.

\(^{42}\) Anon *History of the 2nd Panjab Cavalry*, p. 9.
These officers, not unjustifiably, were well rewarded upon their retirement. In addition to the medals and awards which they had gained during their service (some of which carried with them a small pension) they all earned a basic pension which might well be supplemented. Ressaldar Hakdad Khan who was discharged in 1863 as too old for further service was given a gratuity of nine month's full pay. Rewards were also extended to the widows and sons of ex-officers. The second son of Rissaldar-Major Lahrasaf Khan, Arjasaf Khan, was promoted to Duffadar in recognition of his father's service. In recognition of the service of Ressaldar Bishan Singh Sirdar Bahadur, his widow was granted for her lifetime the share in village of Kariala and his eldest legitimate heir the share, value 330 rupees, in the village of Samupura which Bishan Singh had enjoyed.53

The Indian officers who went to war in 1914 were extremely experienced soldiers who knew all there was to know about low-level regimental soldiering. In 1914 the average length of service of jemadars, the most junior of the Indian officers, in our sample was thirteen and a half years (see Appendix A). This may be compared with the average young British subaltern who might find himself in the trenches only a few weeks after leaving school. One disadvantage of this length of service might be the unfitness of the older men to cope with the conditions in France. For instance Risaldar-Major Ram Singh of Hodson's Horse of went home after less than twelve months in France, having collapsed in the trenches and died a year later.
Most of the Indian officers had qualifications in musketry the machine gun and equitation and the many, especially among the younger men, had more than one qualification (see appendix A). We shall consider the training and education of Indian officers in greater detail in Chapter 5. They were excellent troop and squadron leaders, who could probably have led their regiments in a charge, but they lacked any experience, or training for, higher command. Accustomed over the years to look to their British officers for leadership, many of them found themselves unable to take over when those officers became casualties. Used to fighting tribesmen on the Frontier, none of the Indian officers, and it must said, few of the British officers, were ready for the conditions in which they found themselves fighting in Northern France against one of the most professional armies in the world.
CHAPTER THREE: INDIAN CAVALRY IN THE GREAT WAR 1914-18

Introduction
War is the ultimate test of any army, its officers and men. It is therefore important in this study to review the performance of the Indian cavalry and its officers during the Great War where it was tested in conditions far removed from those of the North-West Frontier. It would not be possible within the confines of this work to produce a detailed study of the history of every regiment during this period but we can, nevertheless, draw upon the experiences of our case-study regiments, two of which served in France and Palestine, to draw out some general conclusions. To these two regiments we can add the Jodhpur Lancers, one of the regiments created under the Imperial Service scheme which also served in France and Palestine. It was the only State Force cavalry regiment in France and was officered entirely by Indians with three British officers as 'advisers' and so provides a useful contrast with the two regular regiments.

An outline of the service of the Indian cavalry in France
The first Indian troops to arrive in France were thrown piece-meal into the first Battle of Ypres. When the front line stabilised and the Indian corps was allotted its own section of the front, the two divisional cavalry regiments fought dismounted while the Cavalry Brigade was kept in reserve. During the German attack around Festubert in November, the Cavalry Brigade was again thrown into the fighting as infantry. As
further Indian cavalry had arrived in France, the Indian Cavalry Corps was formed in December 1914.

In March 1915, the two Indian infantry divisions attacked at Neuve Chapelle and the cavalry was held ready to exploit the breakthrough which never came. At the end of the year the Indian infantry left France and the cavalry were re-organised into two Divisions. Some regiments returned to India while others were sent to Mesopotamia, leaving only ten Indian cavalry regiments in France. During the winter of 1915-16 the cavalry worked out a standard organisation for holding trenches in the dismounted role and also undertook some mounted training. At the opening of the Somme offensive the 1st Indian Cavalry Division was in reserve behind Gommecourt but, once again, there were few opportunities for mounted action. On July 14 1916, two regiments of the Secunderabad Brigade of the 2nd Cavalry Division - the Deccan Horse and the British 7th Dragoons - did take part in the attack on Delville Wood but their attack stalled as did other attempts later in September. In the spring of 1917 the German army withdrew to the pre-prepared Hindenburg line in order to shorten their front and the Indian cavalry took part in a number of skirmishes as part of the British advance.

The Indian cavalry divisions were earmarked as part of the troops to take part in the battle of Cambrai which saw the first large-scale use of tanks in November 1917. However, the only mounted involvement in the initial assault was by a Canadian squadron of the 5th (Indian) Cavalry Division. At the end of the month the Germans counter-attacked vigorously and initially made rapid progress. Indian cavalry took part in a number of mounted actions which helped to stem the German advance as, for instance, when Hodson's Horse supported the Guards at Gauche Wood in December.
Cambrai was to be the last major battle for the Indians in France and in February 1918 they left for Palestine to replace the British Yeomanry regiments recalled to France.

The Indian cavalry in Palestine

The (Indian cavalry) regiments from France had nothing whatever to learn from the mounted troops they came alongside in Palestine and could show the way to most.¹

The Indian regiments were brigaded with British yeomanry regiments and together with Australian cavalry formed the Desert Mounted Corps. By May 1918 two Brigades, re-armed with lances, were in the unpleasant summer conditions of the Jordan Valley where they were involved in a number of successful patrol actions. There was some re-organisation of the cavalry before the final offensive which was planned for September. The aim of the attack was to rout the Turkish forces in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon. The cavalry were to advance along the Palestine coast, break through the Turkish defences and then turn north-eastwards over the Carmel range and down into the plain of Megiddo. An elaborate deception plan effectively confused the Turks as to the direction of the main thrust. The cavalry moved forward on the night of 18 September. Surprise was total and Hodson's Horse was through the main enemy defences by 6 am next morning. By the evening of 20 September the 4th Cavalry Division was astride the main communication line between the Turkish 7th and 6th Armies and Damascus. Phase One of the operation had been completed in 36 hours and the Division had advanced 110km.² Acre was captured on 23 September.

¹ Maunsell, *The Scinde Horse*, p. 188.
² Singh Sandhu *The Indian Cavalry*, p. 358.
and Haifa on the same day by the sowars of the 15th (Imperial Service) Cavalry Brigade which included the Jodhpur Lancers. Of the latter success, the official history comments that 'No more remarkable cavalry action of its scale was fought in the whole course of the campaign.'

On the 26th of September the Desert Mounted Corps began its advance upon Damascus, which was captured on October 1st. In just over a month, the Corps, which included 13 Indian regiments out of a total of 24, had destroyed three Turkish armies and taken 46,000 prisoners.

The Poona Horse 1914-1918

In 1914 the Poona Horse was part of the 9th (Secunderabad) Cavalry Brigade, together with the 20th Deccan Horse, the 7th Dragoon Guards (British) and N Battery Royal Horse Artillery. According to the regimental history:

Training for war, especially as regards musketry, had reached a very high standard. The Indian ranks of the Regiment were thoroughly loyal, well disciplined and imbued with esprit de corps, trained to the highest pitch and ready to follow their officers anywhere.

Mobilisation for war in Europe presented particular problems for a Silladar Regiment such as the Poona Horse. Each regiment had to provide, at its own cost, horses, transport, tents, saddlery, clothing and equipment. Equipment which might have been suitable for a campaign in India had to be replaced under regimental arrangements and at regimental cost as the regimental history explains:

Warm clothing of the proper quality and quantity, was not only unobtainable on the open market but made a call upon regimental funds which they were quite unable to meet. All that could be done was to supply each sowar with a flannel shirt and a warm jersey.5

Accordingly, when the regiment sailed from India in the third week of September 1914, the men were wearing their tropical uniforms supplemented with those two items. However the regimental history records that by November 1914, gifts of mufflers, gloves etc from friends and well-wishers ‘enabled the men to withstand the cold without suffering ill-health; in fact the daily average of sick was less during these winter months than the normal in India.6

On their arrival at Marseille, the men were re-armed with the latest pattern rifle and at Orleans they were also issued with bayonets. The historian of the Deccan Horse wrote:

Up till now, no one had contemplated the possibility of cavalry being utilized in any other way other than as cavalry, and it came as a shock and a surprise when an issue of infantry bayonets was made to the Brigade. As neither officers nor men had ever received any instruction in the use of the bayonet, and as there was not any convenient way of carrying it when mounted, this new weapon was looked upon as somewhat of an encumbrance. What was especially unfortunate was that the particular pattern of bayonet did not fit the new rifle which had been issued to the Brigade on landing at Marseilles and this had lamentable consequences.7

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5 Ibid, p. 77.
6 Ibid, p. 78.
The bayonet actually fell off the rifle because of the vibration caused by rapid fire!

The regiment detrained at Lillers on November 1st, and almost immediately found themselves fighting as infantry, with unfamiliar weapons, in the First Battle of Ypres. On November 2nd three squadrons were ordered to dig trenches at Rouge Croix. They soon came under enemy fire, but were ordered to down tools and advance to the aid of the 2nd Gurkhas. Their commanding officer, Colonel Swanston, was killed, shot through the head while trying to locate the enemy positions. It quickly became apparent that any further movement forward in daylight was out of the question though a further attempt to advance was made after dark. Apart from the death of their Colonel, Risaldar Hamir Singh and Jemadar Bulwant Singh were wounded in this futile affair.

Later in the month, following an attack by the Germans the Cavalry Brigade was brought into the line to reinforce the Ferozapore Brigade around Festubert. The regimental history again:

The trenches were in a thoroughly bad state, half full of water, and many men had to stand in them up to their thighs throughout the night; the cold was intense.  

and Captain Grimshaw:

Never a complaint that they were half frozen to death... or that they were being called upon to fight as they had never in their wildest transport of imagination pictured, armed with a weapon they had never handled before they put foot in France.  

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8 Wylly *The Poona Horse*, p. 90.
9 Grimshaw *Indian Cavalry Officer*, p. 44.
As a result of the conditions, several men collapsed from exposure, including Jemadar Faiz Mohamed Khan. During this period, 90 men from Jacob's Horse were evacuated suffering from trench-foot. Apart from those who were only laid up for a few days, some of these casualties returned after four or five months, some not at all. Whilst digging trenches at the end of November, Risaldar Muaz-ud-din Khan had two bullets through his turban and his putties blown off his legs by a bomb. 15 men out of his troop of 18 were killed or wounded.

On 19 December, the Secunderabad Cavalry Brigade was formed into a composite infantry regiment, 800 strong, with men of the 7th Dragoon Guards, 20th Deccan Horse and Jodhpur Lancers. On 20 December this force was ordered to counter-attack near Festubert. The result was another disaster; only a very few of the attackers succeeded in reaching the enemy line - Major Molloy found himself there with only two other men. Captain Grimshaw comments that:

The line of deployment had not been in any way marked out, no preliminary reconnaissance of the line of advance had been made, and the exact position, and its extent, held by the enemy was unknown. No compass bearings to march on were available and in effect the only orders were that the troops were to be disposed in two lines.

Major Loring and Risaldar Muaz-ud-din Khan were killed, and Ressaidar Sultan Mohammed Khan and Jemadar Faiz Muhammed Khan were wounded. In total 49 officers and men were killed or wounded. In the same battle, the Deccan Horse had 5 out of 6 British officers and 5 out of 7 Indian officers killed or wounded.

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10 Maunsell *The Scinde Horse*, p. 56.
11 Ibid. p. 46.
12 Grimshaw, *Indian Cavalry Officer*, p. 53.
By the end of the year the Poona Horse had lost 50% of its men as casualties in action together with a high proportion suffering from sickness and exposure. One gains some idea of the difficulties the Indian troops faced in keeping warm from the following letter from a sowar of Hodson's Horse to a friend back at the regimental depot in India.

On my body at the present there are a warm vest, a warm shirt, a warm uniform coat, warm underpants, a pair of heavy breeches, two pairs of warm socks and boots. Even so, when I come out of my tent, I feel that I would like to have another warm shirt on.14

However, life was not without its compensations. Lance Daffadar Ahmad Khan, 34th Poona Horse, wrote to a Daffadar in India in November 1916:

The Indian officers are better off than they have ever been. Each one gets a bed and a French mattress and such blankets as they have never seen even in their dreams!15

In 1916 there were high hopes that the attack on the Somme would bring the long-hoped decisive blow. Just before the opening of the battle, Kot Dafadar Mirtha Khan of the Poona Horse wrote to a friend in India as follows:

The preparations for the fight are now complete. We are all afraid, but when one sees the preparations one cannot help being delighted. Our hearts are cheered now by the thought that our King is going to be victorious, for the arrangements of all kinds are perfect. Just as when one is playing kawaddi (a game resembling the English schoolboy touch)

14 Reports of the Chief Censor, I/MIL/5/825.
15 Ibid.
and are delighted when one of the other side is put out. Now we are all
like boys playing touch.\textsuperscript{16}

On July 14th the Secunderabad Cavalry Brigade was sent forward to advance
and co-operate with the British infantry who were to attack High Wood and Delville
Wood. The Deccan Horse were engaged (and had two Indian officers wounded) but
the Poona Horse was in reserve during the attack. The Regiment sent out two
patrols, one under 2/Lt Phillips and the other under Jemadar Abdul Gafur (promoted
21.12.14 after sixteen years service). Of the latter's conduct, Colonel Elphinstone,
commanding the regiment wrote later:

Sent off to find and report on the road to Longueval, he, a man of
very little education, went straight to the right spot and got an excellent
report of the route back to HQ within an hour of his starting out. Having
done the first part of his job, he then proceeded to find out the situation at
Longueval and found the village partly held by the enemy and partly by
our own troops and a fierce fight in progress. Many a man would have been
content to send in this information but not Abdul Gafur. Leaving his patrol
under cover, he worked his way into the village and eventually found a British
officer who pointed out to him the position of the opposing forces, and, having
sent back this information, the Jemadar kept in touch with the infantry until all
chance of a breakthrough was gone, when he was recalled. It is hard to
imagine a finer instance of liaison between infantry in the front line and cavalry
hoping to get through.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Wyllly The Poona Horse, p. 115.
Risaldar Sultan Khan of the 18th Lancers, serving on the HQ staff of the 2nd Indian Cavalry Division, wrote to a colleague at the regimental depot in mid-September 1916:

The cavalry are in action with their horses. The fighting is very severe and we have taken many prisoners and the enemy is retiring. We have taken their first and second lines and are attacking the third line. Behind these lines the country is open and there will be plenty of work for the cavalry.\(^\text{18}\)

Alas - the cavalry was never to break out into the open country; they moved forward again in expectation of a breakthrough on a number of occasions in September but each time their hopes were dashed. The cavalrymen passed the winter of 1916/17 in billets engaged in dismounted training. In the spring of 1917 the Germans withdrew to a strong defensive position from the Vimy ridge to the Chemin-des-Dames in order to shorten their line. The Indian cavalry was employed following up the Germans as they fell back. They then held the St Quentin-Peronne sector where the Germans came to respect the ability of the Indian cavalry not only to hold the line against German raids but effectively dominate no-man's-land and successfully raid German lines.\(^\text{19}\) At the Battle of Cambrai in November 1917, the first large scale tank battle, five divisions of cavalry, including the two Indian Divisions, were to exploit the expected breakthrough. Although the Secunderabad Brigade advanced some distance, the infantry had not gained their final objective and an attack by cavalry on unshaken German infantry was ruled out. In the event, only one squadron of Canadian cavalry

\(^{18}\) Reports of the Chief Censor, L/MIL/5/826.
\(^{19}\) Singh Sandhu, *The Indian Cavalry*, p. 312.
got through the defences. The brigade was to remain in reserve for the remainder of
the battle, including the German counter-attack, without being engaged and in January
1918 the regiment moved to Palestine.

The Poona Horse in Palestine

The regiment arrived at Alexandria in April and spent the next three months in re­
organisation and training. Lances were issued and the regiment was brigaded with the
Deccan Horse and the Sherwood Rangers to form the 14th Cavalry Brigade in the 5th
Cavalry Division. By July the regiment was in the Jordan Valley and on the 14th they
moved forward to support the 15th (Imperial Service) Brigade which was in action at
El Henu. Attacking a strongly defended position, Lieutenant Dickson, Ressaidar Zalim
Singh and seven sowars were killed. During the night of 27/28 July, thirty men under
the command of Jemadar Pem Singh carried out a raid on an enemy post. During this
action the Jemadar and seven men were killed.

During August and September all of the cavalry was engaged in training and
re-fitting for the big attack and on 19 September they moved forward. The regiment
advanced sixty miles in twenty-four hours and were in support of the 15th (Imperial
Service) Brigade during their assault on Haifa. They left the town on 26 September
and on the 30th they charged a large body of Turks who immediately broke and fled,
more than six hundred prisoners being taken. The regiment had by now covered two
hundred and sixty miles since leaving their start line. Moving forward towards the
Homs-Damascus Road, A squadron came across a party of Hedjaz Arabs whom they
mistook for enemy troops. The Arabs fled, leaving a staff car containing a European
whom Risaldar-Major Hamir Singh tried to arrest as spy before he was identified as
none other than Colonel T E Lawrence! The regimental history suggests that this event accounts for Lawrence's strong disapproval of the Indian Army which he expresses in *Revolt in the Desert*.

The regiment entered Damascus on 1 October taking large numbers of prisoners. Their last engagement was on 26 October supporting the 15th (Imperial Service) Brigade which was being hard pressed north-west of Aleppo. On 31 October an armistice was signed and the war service of the Poona Horse came to an end.

**The 9th, (Hodson's) Horse 1914-1918**

The war experiences of Hodson's Horse were not dissimilar from that of the Poona Horse, although they arrived in France a little later, disembarking at Marseille on the 7th November 1914. In March 1915 the Brigade moved up into reserve for the Battle of Neuve Chapelle but they were not involved in the fighting. Risaldar-Major Mir Jafar wrote home, perhaps rather optimistically to a pensioned member of the regiment:

> Please God our King will soon get victory and the German King will be defeated. Our King's army has now increased in numbers beyond 40 Lakhs (4 million) and the Germans are being destroyed day by day, that is to say their downfall has commenced.20

Jemadar Hassan Shah wrote to a friend at the regimental depot in Ambala in September 1916:

> We have not yet had the opportunity to act as cavalry, although we have for sometime now been in confident expectation of seeing action. Doubtless

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20 Reports of the Chief Censor, L/MIL/5/825.
our time will come, and God will give the crowning act of victory to the
cavalry.21

Risaldar-Major Ram Singh wrote to a friend in India in November 1916:

"I hope that I shall return to India by the end of December. Risaldar Jai Ram
will accompany me. The Colonel Sahib has been very generous to us and has
given us permission to go to India.22

Of departure of these two senior officers, Antar Singh wrote:

Indur Ram Singh and Jai Ram left for India today, one on pension and one
on leave. The officers treated them with great 'izzat'. The General sent his
motor car to take them to the railway station and the Colonel and Major
Rowcroft with an escort of seven sowars went to the station to see them off.23

In 1917 the regiment took part in the Allied advance as the Germans fell back
to the Hindenburg line, carrying out foot and mounted reconnaissance. By now the
regiment was organised as 'trench regiment', ie an infantry unit, and as such took part
in a raid on the St Helene trench for which Risaldar Nur Ahmed Khan was awarded the
IOM 2nd Class. He wrote in English to a friend in the Punjab:

It is abnormally cold here in these days with snow lying deep everywhere
since the last weeks and the wind makes it really unbearable. It is wonderful
how the Indian soldiers are standing this winter, as well or perhaps even better
than the Europeans themselves. They are very well clothed and fed no doubt.24

The regiment moved up in anticipation of a breakthrough at Passchendaele but
this, too, came to nothing. The regiment was, however involved in the Cambrai

21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
offensive at the end of the year, carrying out a mounted counter-attack alongside the Guards Division. Of this attack, Major Palmer of the (British) 20th Hussars wrote on 16 December 1917:

They advanced in column, shot at from both flanks from ridges at close range.

Shot at from the front much like the Valley of Death at Balaclava, they never wavered nor quickened the pace..... No troops in the world could have acted thus, had they not been bound together by that invisible knot 'esprit-de-corps.25

Two British squadron leaders were killed and three Indian officers were wounded in this charge. Indian officers gained a number of decorations for this action (see Appendix B), including the award of an MC to Lieutenant Dutt of the Indian Medical Services for tending the wounded under fire. A German officer who was being bandaged by Lieutenant Dutt, handed him his own Iron Cross in appreciation. In a regimental order published on 24 of December 1917, General MacAndrew, GOC 5th Cavalry Division, wrote: 'I consider the regiment the finest in France. It has all the spirit and dash of the Canadians and the extra training.'26

The 9th, Hodson’s Horse, in Palestine

In March 1918 the regiment sailed from Marseille bound for the Middle East.

Together with the 18th Lancers and the Gloucestershire Hussars they formed the 5th Cavalry Brigade (later re-numbered the 13th Brigade in the 13th Cavalry Division).

By April they were in bivouac in Palestine. During May they carried out a number of reconnaissance raids in which three Indian officers, Ressaidar Bur Singh, Jemadar

25 A letter from Major Palmer recorded in War Narrative of 9th Hodson’s Horse, anonymous typescript in the National Army Museum, London.
26 Ibid. A Regimental Order dated 24/12/17.
Indar Singh and Jemadar Bhagwan Singh, were wounded. During this period
Ressaidar Bur Singh was awarded the MC and Jemadar Bhagwan Singh the IOM 2nd
class. The regiment continued with patrols, trench digging and wiring until September
when they began mounted training in preparation for the planned big advance. As they
moved forward on the morning of the 19th the leading troop under Risaldar Nur
Ahmed came under heavy fire from Turkish cavalry in a strongly entrenched position.
A mounted attack by the regiment resulted in the capture of three officers, between
fifty and sixty men, two guns and twelve wagons. Later, near Murkhalid, Jemadar Ali
Khan's troop charged a second Turkish entrenchment. At the end of the day they
halted, having advanced twenty six miles, the last sixteen of them in action, and
captured five hundred prisoners. On 21 September they entered Nazareth and were in
Acre on the 23rd which they left on the 25th. On September 30th the 13th and 14th
Brigades were ordered to intercept a large Turkish force (actually the retreating Fourth
Army) on the Deraa - Damascus Road at Kiswe. Risaldar Nur Ahmad accompanied
only by his orderly penetrated Kiswe and reported that the town was full of Turks.
Two troops were sent to his assistance and the Turks were taken prisoner. One
squadron confronted about one thousand Turks and Risaldar Dost Muhamad Khan
was killed. The regiment entered Damascus on 1 October and was at Aleppo, having
marched 519 miles, when the Armistice was signed on the 31st of October. For their
services in Palestine, Risaldar Nur Ahmed Khan IOM was awarded the Military Cross,
Risaldar Dost Muhammad Khan and Jemadar Nawab Ali Khan the IOM and Risaldar-
Major Muhammad Akram Khan Bahadur the DSM.
The Jodhpur Lancers in France 1914-18

From the two regiments of Jodhpur Imperial Service Lancers one composite and complete regiment was mobilised during the second week of April 1914. Maj-Gen HH Sir Pratap Singh, Regent of Marwar, and the sixteen year old ruler of Marwar, HH Maharaja Sumer Singh accompanied the regiment which was under the command of Colonel Maharaja Sher Singhji. Captain Maxwell, who was attached to the regiment, wrote to his brother in August:

The young Maharaja has beautiful manners and a nice fresh way with him. The CO, Maharaja Sher Singh, is a very smart looking fellow. The officers are of course exclusively Rajput and are not very highly trained, the majority of them are of the ruling family. A fair number speak English and all are gentlemen. The men look excellent and probably are, as the Rajputs are one of the great traditional fighting races, but the horses are mostly small Arab ponies, many of them long past the age at which a horse by regulation should be cast from the service. 27

It is interesting that Maxwell thinks it worth mentioning that all of the officers being gentlemen! He is not uncritical of them, however:

As none of the Rajput officers knows anything about preparing for war (or for that matter about war itself) we (the three British officers) find ourselves working fourteen hours a day. 28

The Lancers left Jodhpur on 29 August 1914 bound for the Middle East where it was intended that they should guard the Suez Canal. However, before he left

27 Letters of Capt. Maxwell, National Army Museum, Archive No 7402-34.
28 Ibid.
Bombay, Sir Pratap had telegraphed the King, requesting that the Lancers were to be sent to France and not to any lesser theatre of war. Thus it was that, thanks to Sir Pratap’s intervention, the Jodhpur Lancers became the only Imperial Service cavalry regiment to serve in France. They disembarked at Marseilles on 12 October and moved by train to the depot at Orleans where they drew coats, warm underclothing and bayonets. They were brigaded together with Deccan Horse and the Poona Horse of the Secunderabad Cavalry Brigade.

On 23 November 50 men under Major Strong went into the trenches to act as a reserve and five days later a slightly smaller group with Captain Maxwell joined the Poona Horse in the firing line around Festubert. During their stay in the front-line, although the Germans were so close that they could throw hand-grenades across, only two Lancers were wounded. Captain Maxwell wrote on 27 November:

A party of the regiment is now in the front line under Strong, and in an hour’s time I am going to take 36 lances, or rather rifles, to reinforce the Poona Horse who have a squadron or more in the trenches. It is a life of ceaseless strain, always waiting for something which may or may not happen.29

A few days later he wrote:

They are the worst trenches that I have ever seen and are not really fit to be held. The men of the regiment are certainly in astonishing good health, their only disability arising from feet swollen by the recent cold and so painful as to make their owners useless for any work on foot.

The regiment was in reserve during the first part of December and 200 men went back into the trenches on 19 December. On 21 December these men, under the

29 Ibid.
command of Colonel Thakur Pratap Singh (not to be confused with Sir Pratap Singh) and accompanied by Major Strong, took part in the dismounted attack by the Secunderabad Cavalry Brigade at Givenchy previously discussed in the section on the Poona Horse. In this action Major Strong and Jemadar Guman Singh were both wounded, three men were killed and six men were wounded, one of whom later died of his wounds.

The remnants of the cavalry brigade reformed and re-organised ready to meet a further German attack. The whole of the Indian Corps was relieved on the evening of 22 December. When the regiment withdrew from the line, five Indian officers were suffering from frozen feet. Captain Maxwell wrote in December:

I wondered if they (the Germans) knew that for several hundred yards the trenches were held by Indian cavalry quite untrained to trench work and not skilled in the use of the bayonet. I am sure our fellows would have done very well had they been trained, but they are very much handicapped by the circumstances and hardly have a fair chance.  

During the greater part of 1915 the regiment spent most of its time training, wiring, laying light railways and preparing a track for cavalry advance. In July a working party was shelled and Risaldar Guman Singh was wounded and three men killed. In the same month, Captain Thakur Ragunath Singh, who was acting as ADC to the Raja of Ratlam at Brigade Headquarters, died of pneumonia and was buried at Boulogne. At the opening of the Somme offensive in July 1916 the Division was in reserve behind Gommecourt but, once again, there were few opportunities for

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30 Ibid
mounted action. During the winter of 1916-17 the regiment spent most of its time
training, holding part of the line and in the construction of defensive works.

In spite of their frustration, the officers and men of the Lancers were in no
doubt where their duty lay. Sowar Gampat Singh, wrote home:

I am indeed fortunate in having the opportunity of coming here. Here all
are in good circumstances at all times. When you wrote some little while
back you told me to serve the government as faithfully as my ancestors have
done. This indeed is the very first principle of our Clan and for this reason it
is a matter of greatest pride for us that the Chief of our Clan, Maharaja Pratap
Singh himself, although he is over 72 years of age, was not backward in
serving the King. And we, following in the tradition of our clan and ancestors
in the faithful service of their master, are now in the service of our King and
country.32

The Jodhpur Lancers in Palestine

In July 1918 the regiment was occupying part of the bridgehead over the Jordan which
secured the British right flank when, at 3.30 am on the morning of 14 July, a standing
patrol of nine men on the eastern bank of the river was attacked by the advance guard
of the 2nd Turkish Caucasian Cavalry Brigade. The patrol opened fire on the enemy,
wounding an officer and killing his horse. 'A' squadron (about 80 men) crossed the
Wadi El Rameh at Sangster's Ford in support of the patrol but themselves came under
heavy fire. They were ordered to take up a firing position which they did, doing great
execution throughout the day, the machine-gunner particularly distinguishing himself

32 Reports of the Chief Censor, L/MIL/5/825.

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and gaining the Indian Order of Merit (2nd Class). Pushing out patrols, the Lancers were able to locate the whole of the enemy’s position and two squadrons of the Jodhpur Lancers were ordered to assemble, cross the Jordan and roll up the enemy position from south to north. At 12.10 pm the advance began with one troop under Jemadar Khang Singh in the lead. Once in position, they turned north and galloped straight over the first objective. Seeing the advance of the Lancers, three troops of Turkish cavalry on the extreme right flank immediately made off to the east! The leading troop thundered on towards their second objective, killing all the enemy there. Meanwhile the remainder of the Lancers made for the next ridge further east which was covered with Turkish troops. Major Dalpat Singh led the charge and accompanied only by his trumpet-major, went full-tilt for an enemy machine gun, killing the gunners and capturing the gun. He was awarded the Military Cross for his leadership and courage on that day - one of the first Indian officers to be so honoured.

The citation for his award in the London Gazette reads:

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. This officer, accompanied only by his trumpeter, charged an entrenched machine-gun, killing and scattering the crew and capturing the gun. At the same time he captured the commandant of a regiment and another officer.

Risaldar Shaitan Singh, out in front of his troop, single-handedly attacked a large group of about 50 enemy. The Risaldar had shot two men with his revolver when one of the prisoners tried to shoot him, the bullet going through his horse’s jaw, though his revolver was empty he was able to knock the Turk to the ground with his weighted stick. The citation for Risaldar Saitan Singh’s Indian Order of Merit reads as follows:

For conspicuous gallantry and initiative on 14th July 1918 when serving
with the Egyptian Expeditionary Force in delivering an immediate mounted
attack on the enemy. Accompanied by three men, he charged a formed
body of about thirty dismounted enemy, killed and wounded fourteen and
captured the officer in command.

Fearing a counter-attack from the large number of Turks still in the field, the
regiment fell back towards the river. 100 enemy had been killed or wounded and 70
prisoners taken for the loss of two Indian officers killed and one wounded, 13 sowars
killed, 7 wounded and 5 missing. In addition to Major Dalpat Singh's immediate award
of a Military Cross, six Indian Orders of Merit (2nd Class) and seven Indian
Distinguished Service Medals were distributed among the Lancers. General Allenby
(1861-1936), the Commander in Chief, Egypt and Palestine, who visited the Brigade
on the 27th, wrote that 'The day's operations were one of the great feats of the war!'33

The capture of Haifa

Following a period of re-organisation and intensive training, the Brigade moved out on
17 September and moved steadily northwards, arriving at El Afule on the 21st. The
5th Cavalry Division was ordered to capture Haifa and Acre, ports which were
urgently needed in order to shorten the army's over-stretched supply lines. The
Jodhpur Lancers were ordered to make a mounted attack to capture the town of Acre
which faces north across a bay. Behind the town Mount Carmel rises steeply to height
of about 200 feet and access to the town is along a narrow gap between the ridge and
the river Kishon which feeds into the sea. Through this defile runs a road and a
railway running north into Acre. The ground around the river was very soft and it's

banks were very steep, making it impassable for mounted men. At noon the Jodhpurs moved off in columns of squadrons in line of troop columns; they halted briefly at Yajur and patrols, which were fired on by the Turks, were sent out to discover whether it was possible to cross the river. As the Lancers crossed the railway line running northwards to Acre, the regiment changed formation into column of troops with three paces between files. Reaching the river, with its very steep banks, two scouts were swallowed up by quicksand. One squadron moved northwards in a fruitless attempt to find a crossing while the remainder of the regiment, realising that it was impossible to cross the river at this point, moved forward, increasing their pace and slightly left shouldering. It was here that Major Dalpat Singh was mortally wounded.

It was clear that the only way that the advance could continue was first to open up the defile by destroying the machine guns on Mount Carmel and then to clear the position to the north of the railway line leading into the town. 'B' squadron was in the lead at this point and was ordered to attack the position on the hill. This was the critical moment, as concentrated enemy fire was bringing down a number of the Lancers' horses. Without hesitation, the squadron charged, spearing all the machine gunners, scattering the riflemen and capturing two machine guns and two camel guns. This success opened the defile and 'D' squadron galloped straight down the road towards the town, capturing four howitzers and four machine guns though their squadron commander, Anop Singh, had two horses shot from under him. Meanwhile the remaining two squadrons rode at full speed and without hesitation straight through the town. Once beyond the town, the regiment reformed. Overall, two German officers were captured, 23 Turkish officers and 664 other ranks. Two six-inch naval
guns, ten field guns and ten machine guns were captured. This tremendous success was achieved for the loss of one Indian officer (Major Dalpat Singh) and two sowars killed, five officers and 29 men wounded and 60 horses were killed and 83 wounded.

By any standards, the capture of Haifa on 23 September 1918 by the Jodhpur Lancers was a magnificent feat of arms and unique in military history. The Official History of the campaign comments that 'No more remarkable cavalry action of its scale was fought in the whole course of the campaign.' The Lancers' outstanding achievement was certainly recognised by senior British officers. Major General MacAndrew, commanding the 5th Cavalry Division, wrote to Sir Pratap on 24th September:

I am very sorry to tell you that Major Dalpat Singh died of wounds last night. He led the regiment with great dash and was killed by machine gun fire while galloping across the river into Haifa. The Jodhpur Lancers as usual did splendidly. Their charge across the river with 8 machine guns and six guns firing on them was a great sight. I am so sorry that you had fever and were not with us. I hope to see you back soon. The enemy fought better than any we have met yet. Your regiment had 1 officer (Dalpat) killed and two wounded, 3 men killed and 30 wounded.35

After this triumph, the regiment saw little further action and returned to Jodhpur in 1919. In Palestine, the Jodhpur Lancers demonstrated very clearly that a regiment officered entirely by Indians, with only three British officers acting as

advisers, was as good, if not better than, any of the other cavalry regiments, British or Indian, in the field.

The war correspondence of an Indian officer

The letters which the Indian soldiers wrote and received during the Great War offer a fascinating insight into their view of the war and the ordinary routines and concerns of their daily life. The collection of letters attached to the Chief Censor’s reports includes four to and four from Jemadar Shamshar Ali Khan of the Poona Horse. According to the Army lists, the Jemadar entered the service on 16/4/01, was promoted to Jemadar on 21/12/14, Ressaidar 4/3/18 and Risaldar 24/11/20. He was awarded the IDSM.

The last time his name appears in the Army list is July 1921, so we must assume that he retired then after twenty years service and before the 34th were amalgamated with the 33rd. It is not clear why so many of his letters appear in the collection; was he a particularly prolific writer or was it just chance that his letters were picked out and translated? It is a happy chance that so many letters to and from one officer survive to provide a record of his thoughts and concerns during this period.

Ahmad Khan wrote to the Jemadar from Rawalpindi in November 1915:

I am not surprised that exile and the bad weather and many other troubles have disturbed your mind. God is our only refuge. He can protect you and only He. Everything else is a pretence and an illusion. There is no doubt that Bulgaria’s coming in means a prolongation of the war. May God destroy this enemy, this shameless enemy who has ruined the peace of the world. We may now hope that the power of the enemy in France will be speedily destroyed. It will be an excellent thing if you go away to Egypt where at any rate you will
not have to face an uncongenial climate. We were very worried to hear of His Majesty's fall from his horse but it is a subject for thankfulness that he was not seriously hurt. I am rather afraid that his Indian troops did not get the honour of being reviewed by him. Well, we may hope that he will soon be alright again and gladden your eyes with his presence.36

In fact George V did suffer internal injuries when his horse rolled on top of him.

In October 1916 the Jemadar received a letter from a friend in India.

The war is at its height and the allied armies have recovered much territory from the enemy. May God soon grant the general victory! My idea is that you will not be left to winter in France but will be sent elsewhere but you have said nothing, probably because you have heard nothing. It is the beginning of November and I expect the cold is great. The Indian Cavalry have done brilliant work and faced the attacks of the enemy and the cold climate with great bravery. May God bring you home in fame and safety! I can do nothing but pray for you.

Clearly even in late 1916 there was still considerable support for the war in India as well as an appreciation of the difficulties facing the troops. However, most of the cavalry were to serve in France for another year before their move to the Middle East. The Jemadar himself echoes some of these thoughts in a letter to pensioned Risaldar-Major Hazin Ali Khan OBI at home in India written a month later:

Now the rain and the cold are daily on the increase. The duration of the war is being extended in an appalling manner and there is no end in sight. The hearts of the people have become depressed owing to the indefinite state of

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36 All letters from Reports of the Chief Censor, L/MIL/5/825 and 826.
affairs. The war, coupled with the long distance from home, the separation for years, and the unsuitable climate - cold, wind and rain - have tired everyone out, and crushed them.

Here he paints a rather different, and probably more accurate, picture of the men's morale than that of the more idealised view of his correspondent at home. He comments on the arrangements being made to give at least some of the sowars leave in India.

A few days ago, an order was issued to the effect that the British Government had, as a favour to the Indian troops in France, opened leave for them to India. Five per cent of those who have put in two year's service in France are to be granted leave for three months, and on their return another five per cent will be granted leave and so on. Thus every man granted leave will spend about a month at home.

Leave was arranged for Indian officers in London and rather later the Jemadar was feeling more cheerful, having been on leave, and he wrote to another pensioned colleague, Dafadar Taj Mahomed Khan in the Punjab as follows:-

I went to England on leave, and have now returned to the regiment. Our generous Government made most excellent arrangements for us while on leave. One could not have secured the same results privately by the expenditure of thousands of rupees. May God speedily give victory to our gracious King, and may he blacken the face of the enemy and humiliate him, both in this world and in the world to come. Amen.

Indian officers when on leave in London were very well looked after and this was certainly much appreciated: Jemadar Hassan Shah of Hodson's Horse wrote in 1917,
I had ten days leave in London. Oh my friend what a thing it is to be an Indian officer! It is full of pleasure. Just think of it, what Indian millionaires can do a tour of London? Above all, to see His Majesty, and to speak to him and stand in his presence for three hours. What greater pleasure can there be than this? We got the chance of seeing places we had never dreamt of and were taken round with the greatest izzat.37

Concern for religious customs and observance and the expense involved is a not infrequent topic in the letters to and from India. The Jemadar expresses his concerns in the letter written to Raja Rustam Ali Khan in the Punjab in April 1917:

I regard our existing customs and rules as useless, as it is quite true that that the only result which comes from their observance is expense. For instance, when the Raja Sahib died, you had his corpse brought home and buried it there. Now this was done simply because it was in accord with custom, and the only practical result to you was expense. You must see that in Hindustan it is a matter of daily occurrence that officers, from lieutenant to general, die and are buried in the station where they die. Besides, there is no command either of God or His Prophet (that a man should be buried at home); further, it will be seen that Prophets and Saints have been buried in the place where they died. What then is to be gained by following this practice (of interment in one's home)? Nothing, and it is quite time that poor people should recognise this and adopt more reasonable customs.

The same applies to the case of circumcision. You write and say that you will delay carrying out the ceremony on Mahomed Nazir till I return, and

37 Ibid.
the whole family can be present at the ceremony, which would then be performed with much éclat. In my opinion, not more than Rs 10 should be spent on this ceremony. It amuses when I think that so much ceremony is observed, and so great expense incurred, in the cutting off of an inch of skin which is of no value whatever! I regret that I did not learn anything of 'Doctoring'. otherwise I should have promptly circumcised him myself when I was last at home. Well, I trust that you will now have the ceremony performed promptly and with as little expense as possible.

This war has been prolonged in an amazing manner but there is every indication that it will be followed by an era of peace and plenty, and the signs point to an early termination of the war. Who is there whom this War has not saddened and depressed; but one is bound to discharge the obligation laid on him. It was for this that our family has for generations been eating the salt of the Sirkar and receiving salary and pensions, and therefore, this is no time to be disturbed in mind and for turning one's face away from duty. Rather it is the time for showing valour; and, please God, but a few days remain for the end to come.

This last paragraph indicates the very strong feelings of loyalty and obligation which many Indian soldiers expressed in their letters home. He writes again to Raja Rustam Ali Khan in the Punjab in January:

I am delighted to get your regular letters, but I am very sorry that I cannot give you any detailed reply. The truth is that I am prevented from doing so as the war gets bigger and bigger, and longer and longer, and our work increases accordingly. We cannot improve without working harder, and we cannot work without discomfort; as our work improves day (by day) our discomfort
naturally increases. Well, it does not matter; it will all pass away by God's grace. I am so busy now that every now and then I am unable to write. You will never understand what we have gone through until I tell you all our troubles by word of mouth. It is bitterly cold, and there is snow every day, and the biting wind is bad for us Indians.

When he writes of "increased work", he is presumably referring to the advance up to the Hindenburg line and the subsequent battle of Cambrai in which the Indian cavalry were heavily involved.

The impact of the war on the Indian officers of the Indian cavalry

Honour, Loyalty and Commitment

Better a cairn in France than the noise of thy cowardice throughout the world. (Subedar Shad Muhammad Khan, 28th Punjabis, to his brother Daffadar Faiz Mohammad Khan, 35th Scinde Horse, attached 36th Jacob's Horse, serving in France, 12/04/15)\(^{38}\)

A strong spirit of loyalty to the King-Emperor and of honour and self-sacrifice, of \textit{izzat}, among the Indian soldiers fighting in France comes out in the letters written to and from Indian soldiers serving in France. Sowar Tufazzal Husain Khan, 4th Cavalry, wrote to a friend in India in August 1915:

\begin{quote}
I am a soldier whose business is to kill and fight and die. For men the battlefield is a place of enjoyment. One day we must all die, and if we die making a glorious reputation, 'Praise be to God' goes without saying.\(^{39}\)
\end{quote}

A Subedar of a Garwhali battalion wrote home in February 1915:

\footnote{\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.}

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A Subedar of a Garwhali battalion wrote home in February 1915:

If I am to die for the sake of the great Emperor, then what could be more glorious?40

A year later Sowar Fateh Yar Khan of the 19th Lancers serving in France wrote to a pensioner in Kashmir:

We believe that King George V will secure victory, because whatever he does is done according to the right, and he is fighting this war for the cause of right and justice.41

An unnamed Indian officer of the 6th cavalry wrote to the regimental Clerk at the Depot in India in March 1915:

My regiment is in excellent health, contented and happy. Fighting commences all day long but our Sowars don't mind and carry their lives in their hands ready to sacrifice them for their loyalty, their faces shine and they are extremely joyful. The government has made excellent arrangements for our warm clothing and food...... and all sorts of delicacies come from England for us by the kindness of our Colonel and other officers.42

Loyalty to the regiment was a key factor in this concept of service. Mir Jafar, who became Risaldar-Major of Hodson's Horse in 1915 wrote to a friend in Peshawar in May 1916.

My service extends to 33 years, but I tell you truly that, if in this war I were to lose my life for my King, I would count it as gain. I have been in Hodson's Horse for the whole 33 years. During a railway journey when two people sit

40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
side by side for a couple of hours, one of them feels the absence of the other when he alights, how great then must be the anguish I feel at the thought of having to sever myself from Hodson's Horse. I have heard it rumoured that the CO Sahib Bahadur contemplates sending me back to India. Although, no doubt, I should be pleased to see again my country and my people, that pleasure would be as nothing compared with the sorrow I should feel at having to part with the regiment. 43

Casualties

Although the Indian cavalry did not suffer the very heavy casualties which their counterparts in the infantry incurred, their losses were nonetheless not insignificant. For instance, the casualty list of the Deccan Horse includes three Risaldar-Majors, five Rissaldars and two Jemadars all killed. On the Memorial to the Indian Army at Neuve Chapelle are the names of two Indian officers, Risaldar Muizzud Din Khan (killed at Festubert) and Jemadar Fateh Haidar Shah, together with those of 30 NCOs and sowars of the Poona Horse. This is one of the longest lists of names on the Memorial among the Indian cavalry regiments which fought in France and perhaps reflects the heavy fighting in which the regiment was involved as infantry in the early part of the war though it is also possible that many of the men died of disease rather than wounds. Overall, the casualty list for the Regiment in the Great War was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Killed</th>
<th>Wounded</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British officers</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian officers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
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43 Ibid.
"Some corner of a foreign field....."

(La Chapelette British and Indian Military Cemetery, Peronne, Northern France)
Of the 19 Indian officers of Hodson's Horse who arrived in France in 1914, one, Risaldar-Major Ram Singh, died one year after his retirement in 1915. One cannot but wonder whether the harsh conditions in France over the winter of 1914-15 contributed to his death. Ressaidar Sultan Muhammad Beg was shot by a sniper and left paralysed for life on 22 December 1914. Jemadar Samand Singh was killed while on a working party in July 1915. On 2 December 1917 the regiment took part in a mounted attack in support of the Guards Brigade at Gauche Wood. Two British squadron leaders, Majors Atkins and Fraser, were killed and three Indian officers, Risaldar Harbert Singh and Jemadars Mir Alam and Sardar Khan were wounded. Ressaidar Hardit Singh, the son of Risaldar-Major Ram Singh, was mortally wounded at Vaucelette Farm on 4 December 1917. His mother, therefore, lost both her husband and her son in the space of two years. The Ressaidar is buried in the Indian section of the cemetery at La Chapelette, Peronne. In total, during the War, 6 Indian officers of the regiment were killed or died of their wounds. Five were wounded, one of them very severely. Three Indian officers, Ressaidar Bur Singh and Jemadars Inda Singh and Bhagwan Singh, were wounded while serving in Palestine.

Captain Thakur Ragunath Singh (ADC to the Raja of Ratlam) who died of pneumonia was the only officer of the Jodhpur Lancers who died in France. However over sixty NCOs, sowars and followers of the regiment died in France, the vast majority from illness. Three Indian officers of the regiment were killed in Palestine and twenty NCOs and men.
Awards

The courage and devotion of the Indian officers was suitably rewarded with awards and decorations. (see Appendix B). Distinguished Indian officers were not infrequently granted an audience with the King, who personally presented them with their decorations. This was much appreciated, reinforced their loyalty and had a significant effect on morale. Risaldar Muhammad Akrim Khan wrote to a friend in Peshawar in April 1916:

You have no doubt heard of my good service from other people. I am not given to self-praise and you know the proverb 'It is not the perfumer who gives the perfume to his wares.' On March 26th I went to London to have an interview with His Majesty The King. The King spoke to me in his own auspicious tongue. I am profoundly grateful to His Majesty for his kind treatment and am always praying to that God in justice will grant him the victory.44

Leadership

The key role of an officer, especially in battle, is to provide leadership, the quality which enables a man, or woman, to motivate a group of individuals to successfully complete a task. In war that task will often be dangerous and may well involve loss of life among the members of the group who must respect and trust their leader and have confidence in his/her professionalism. Today, considerable emphasis is placed, quite rightly, in developing leadership skills in young British officers while they are at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. During the nineteenth century there was an

44 Ibid.
assumption that leadership skills were inbred in the young British officers and, furthermore, that such skills would not be present in his Indian counterpart. In the Indian Army, therefore, tradition and training had led to an over-dependence on the leadership of the British officers. However, given the opportunity, Indian officers were perfectly capable of exhibiting leadership of a high order. The number of awards granted to Indian officers is, at least in part, a tribute to their leadership in circumstances to which they were completely unaccustomed. Ressaidar Badhu Singh of the Scinde Horse (attached 29th, Deccan Horse) was the only Indian cavalry officer to win the VC during the Great War. In the Jordan Valley in September 1918 during a charge by his squadron, he noticed that heavy casualties were being caused by fire from a Turkish position on a small hill. Without hesitation he collected six sowars and with an entire disregard of danger he charged and captured the position. He was mortally wounded but not before the Turkish troops had surrendered to him.

The dash and courage shown by Major Dalpat Singh played a great part in the success of the Jodhpur Lancers at El Henu. In a very different situation, Jemadar Abdul Gafur leadership of his patrol of Hodson's Horse displayed leadership skills of a very high order. Ressaidar Badan Singh of the Poona Horse offers another example of leadership in difficult conditions. He was in command of a squadron of the Poona Horse at Festubert in December 1914. Their attack began in the early hours of the morning of the 21st and in the evening he sent a message back to the British lines asking whether or not he and the remnant of his men should retire. They had been lying out in no-mans-land all day, a short distance in front of the German trenches, having taken cover when the enemy's fire made it impossible to advance further. There they had been subject to British artillery fire as well as German bullets. However,
mindful of an earlier instruction by Major Molloy that no retirement was to take place without his express order, the Ressaidar had held his ground. The ressaidar was also in charge of bombing. Major Molloy wrote:

He proved a tower of strength; whenever an unpleasant situation called for my attention I was sure to find him already in the thick of it, his dour face stretched into a huge grin. 45

**Conclusion**

"During the battles in France, Indian officers did not acquit themselves well." 46 This seems to be an unduly harsh judgment by David Omissi. As Lord Curzon wrote in his Foreword to the *Official History of the Indian Corps in France*:

Neither should we forget the conditions under which these Indian soldiers served. They came to a country where the climate, the language, the people, the customs, were entirely different from any of which they had knowledge. They were presently faced with the sharp severity of a northern winter. They, who had never suffered heavy shell fire, who had no experience of high explosive, who had never seen warfare in the air, who were totally ignorant of modern trench fighting, were exposed to all the latest and most scientific developments of the art of destruction. .........In the face of these trials and tribulations, the cheerfulness, the loyalty, the good discipline, the intrepid courage of these denizens of another clime cannot be too highly praised. 47

45 Major Molloy's Diary, quoted in Wylly *The Poona Horse*, p.94.
The Indian soldiers found themselves fighting a war for which they were totally unprepared and ill-equipped. The French and the Germans had fought a major war 40 years earlier and the British army had learnt valuable lessons from the Boer War. In spite of their lack of readiness to fight a war in Europe the Indian Corps was, nevertheless, the only reinforcement available to the hard-pressed BEF in Belgium in 1914. The Indians were flung piece-meal into the battle as units arrived at the front. They found themselves fighting a well-equipped and organised enemy 'with his tail up', in atrocious and unfamiliar conditions and without artillery of their own. Heavy losses among their British officers led to a loss of leadership because the Indian officers sometimes lacked the confidence, training and experience to take over from them. It is perhaps not surprising that in these conditions Indian units did not always give of their best. However, as McLain points out, Indian officers often showed considerable bravery, resource and initiative when opportunity offered. The loss of Indian officers had just a great effect on the fighting ability of units as did the death of the British officers. For the cavalry, the campaign in France was particularly difficult. They often found themselves fighting, with newly issued rifles and bayonets, as infantry or thrown into hastily planned and ill-conceived counter-attacks. When they reverted to their cavalry role of exploitation, they were to experience nothing but frustration, waiting for a breakthrough which never came. It was only in the Middle East that the Indian cavalry was to meet again the opportunities for which it was fitted and to regain something of its reputation.

CHAPTER 4: THE MILITARY CAREER OF AMAR SINGH

Introduction

Amar Singh is very different from the jemadars and rissaldars whose careers we have so far considered. He came from a higher, though not the highest, class, was relatively well-educated and had family influence. In modern India, he would probably have gone to the Military Academy and become a commissioned officer with good career prospects. However, the qualities which make him so different from the average Indian officer of his time, also produced a conflict. As a high class Indian officer serving alongside British officers he was an anomaly, given low-level tasks and in a position which was not always respected by British officers and soldiers.

Amar Singh was a Rajput, born in Jaipur in 1878. His father was a court official in Jaipur and when Amar was ten he was sent to be educated under the tutorship of Sir Pratap Singh, Regent of Jodhpur. He attended the Powlett Nobles' School which had been established by Sir Pratap and later he acted as a private secretary to him. As part of Amar's education, he was instructed to keep a daily diary in English. The first entry is dated 3 September 1898 and the last, unfinished, entry is on the day of his death in 1942, the handwriting having changed little over the years. In addition to the daily entries, beginning in 1900, Amar wrote longer 'Notes' on a variety of topics - his family, polo tournaments, events in the Great War etc - from time to time. He missed only one day, when he was unconscious following a fall from his horse and the diary is one of the longest continuous diaries ever written. It is in 89 bound volumes, each of about 800 pages and is kept at Kanota Fort under the stewardship of Amar's nephew, Thakur Mohan Singhji. Because of the fragility of the
The late Mohan Singhji in the library at Kanota with Amar Singh’s diary
original a set of type-written copies has been prepared and there are two micro-film 
copies, one in New Delhi and one in Chicago.

In 1900, aged 22, Amar Singh went with Sir Pratap's regiment, the Jodhpur 
Lancers, to China as a rissaldar. Between 1902 and 1905 he was one of the first batch 
of cadets (and one of only four to graduate three years later) in the Imperial Cadet 
Corps which had been founded by Lord Curzon in order to encourage high-ranking 
young Indians into the army. After graduation he and his three colleagues were 
commissioned into the Indian Land Forces. He was appointed as an ADC to the 
Divisional Commander at Mhow where he was the only Indian officer in the 
cantonment. In 1914 he was sent to France as ADC to the commander of the 9th 
(Surhind) Infantry Brigade, part of the Lahore Division. He served on the Western 
Front and in Mesopotamia and was mentioned in despatches. In 1916 he was in 
Bombay as an ADC to General Knights.

In 1917, in recognition of India's contribution to the war effort, nine Indian 
officers, including Amar, were granted King's Commissions. Amar was commissioned 
into the 2nd Lancers. He was almost immediately attached to the 16th Cavalry as a 
Major and senior squadron commander and took part in the Third Afghan War of 1919 
-21. However, Amar Singh resigned his commission in 1922 over what he saw as an 
unfavourable confidential report (unfortunately the diary does not explain the nature of 
this report). He returned to Jaipur and in 1923 he raised and commanded the regiment 
of Jaipur Lancers. He retired in 1936 as Commandant of the Jaipur State Forces with 
the rank of Major-General.
The sources used in this chapter

The quotations in this chapter are drawn directly from the diary, except where otherwise indicated. The author first visited Narain Nawas (the house in Jaipur built by Amar Singh, now a hotel) in September 2003 as part of his research into the history of the Jodhpur Lancers. He was presented with a copy of *Reversing the Gaze* which covers Amar Singh's career up to 1903. In order to draw on as much of the diary as possible in the time available, the material in this volume on service on China and in the Imperial Cadet Corps was used directly while the present writer concentrated on Amar Singh's later career up to the time when he left the Indian army in 1922. On a subsequent visit in 2005 the opportunity was taken to extend the coverage up to the end of Amar Singh's service with the Jaipur State Forces in 1932. Between these two visits and after this thesis was written, a second book based upon the diaries, *Between Two Worlds: A Rajput Officer in the Indian Army 1905-21*, was published.

**Service with the Jodhpur Lancers in China**

During the second half of the nineteenth century, European countries were keen to develop stronger commercial links with China especially in the profitable opium trade. From time to time open war broke out and the Chinese were forced to grant concessions which included the establishment of trading posts along the coast - the British at Wei-Hai-Pei, the French at Kwangchowan and the Germans at Kiaochow. The traders were followed by missionaries who wished to convert the Chinese to Christianity. The Chinese responded to what they quite reasonably saw as an invasion of their homeland through a number of secret societies, prominent among

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which were the Boxers. Their slogan was 'Destroy the Foreigner!' and they were secretly supported by the Dowager Empress, Tzu Hsi.

By 1900 the Boxers were out of control; Chinese Christians were massacred, missionaries tortured and killed, a railway station destroyed. In June, now supported by regular Chinese troops, they set fire to a large area of the capital, Peking. On June 20th, they surrounded the Legation Quarter of the city where the foreign embassies were concentrated. The countries whose Legations were besieged responded by assembling the first truly multi-national force in history, containing troops from France, Germany, Great Britain, India, Japan, Russia and the United States of America. The Indian contingent included State Forces from Alwar, Bikanir, Jodhpur and Malkerkotla and they were accompanied by the Maharajahs of Bikanir and Johdpur.

Amar Singh was a rissaldar in the Jodhpur Lancers at this time and acted as regimental adjutant and secretary to Sir Pratab throughout the campaign. Sir Pratab, always keen to see action, was overjoyed at the news that the regiment had been selected for service overseas with him as honorary commandant. The regiment arrived at Shanghai on September 24th after the Legations had been relieved and, having disembarked, waited there for a fortnight before they were assigned a task. On the 8th of October Amar Singh and his squadron were ordered to take part in a reconnaissance sweep around Shanghai. The squadron was divided into four patrols, Amar Singh accompanying one of them under the command of Jemadar Bhaboot Singh with twenty sowars which was to ride out as far as the village of Wusung, about ten miles away. When the patrol reached the village, the street of which was 'narrow and very dirty and paved with stones.' Amar Singh sent back the following report: ‘Way is all clear. No signs of hostility appear at all... Country all flat but full of canals and ditches.'
Horses take to the stone bridges quite willingly. In some places the path lies alongside
the line of houses...

The patrol proceeded on to the railway station among poor paths which were
cut every fifty yards by ditches, and Amar Singh sent a further report, before returning:

Had been out reconnoitring up to Wusung Station. There seems to be not
the slightest sign of hostilities. The ground is absolutely useless for riding.
Every fifty yards you encounter a ditch of some sort or other. All around in
the fields are houses with enclosures in which the enemy can hide and put us
at a disadvantage. We had to go quite close to them for there is no other way.
It is drizzling and for some time it rained. The sowars ought to carry waterproof sheets. The ground is too slippery owing to the showers. We cannot
trot and can hardly ride safely even at a walk.

Rissaldar Amar Singh

Amar Singh's reports were duly passed up to Brigade Headquarters and a staff officer,
Captain Stewart, replied to Major Turner that the General:

'would be glad if you would express to Sir Pratap his appreciation of the way
the Jodhpur Lancers worked today. He is afraid they must have had a very
long and trying day for both men and horses. The country he knew was a very
bad one but he had every confidence, which has not been misplaced, that the
Jodhpur cavalry would get over it if anyone could.'

On October 9th the regiment sailed for Shan Hai Kuan, northeast of Peking,
where the Lancers were to remain throughout the long cold winter - on the night of 31
January 1901 there were thirty-nine degrees of frost and the ink froze in the ink-stands.
Amar Singh commented in his diary that the city was dirty, filthy and very smelly but that the regiment's quarters were good with warm stables for the horses. The troops settled down to a routine of patrols searching for weapons in the surrounding villages. On Christmas Day there was a Gymkhana organised by the allied forces. The staff section of the Jodhpur Lancers won the tent-pegging competition and Amar Singh himself won a race which involved pistol-shooting and riding.

The regiment's only serious engagement with the enemy came on 12 January 1901 when shots were fired by a large body of Chinese armed brigands at a Jodhpur party which was out collecting wood about 5 miles north-east of Shan-Hai-Kuan. Some mules were hit and the men scattered. Three men entered a house in the nearby village of Lamasu but nine others under Dafadar Dool Singh climbed a small rise and opened fire upon the enemy while Sowar Sheoram Singh rode back to the camp to raise the alarm. One of the men in the house was mortally wounded and the Chinese set fire to the roof. However when the two unwounded Lancers were driven out by the heat and smoke, they found that the relief party, under Captain Pinchard, had already arrived and driven off the enemy.

As the Lancers rode further on, a Chinaman armed with a rifle was spotted in a ditch. The colonel and another officer together with Sheoram Singh went forward in an attempt to capture him alive. However, a bullet from the Chinaman badly wounded Sheoram Singh who died shortly afterwards. Amar Singh was leading his troop at a brisk trot when they saw about twenty armed Chinese ahead of them making for the village of Lijapoo. Amar Singh persuaded Major Turner to charge the enemy but the sowars were scattered and it proved impossible to form a proper line for the charge. However, Amar Singh struck three men with his lance and wounded two more with his
revolver. By this time the Lancers were under heavy fire from about one hundred men in the village, Amar Singh getting a bullet through his coat, and so they fell back. In this skirmish, two Lancers had been killed and six of the brigands. Dafadar Dool Dingh was awarded the Indian Order of Merit, the highest decoration available to an Indian soldier before they became eligible for the Victoria Cross in 1911. Amar Singh wrote that during the engagement: 'I can safely say without exaggeration or self-praise that my temper and nerve seemed to be quite calm. Of course I was a little excited.' He wrote in his diary that the regiment had done good work, given every satisfaction expected of it and undergone the winter most admirably with the men bearing all hardships equally well. He believed that the regiment was better than any of the cavalry he had seen in China, the men being more skilful horseman with higher quality horses.

Commentary

Amar Singh was only 22 when he served as a rissaldar and squadron commander in China. In a regular Indian army regiment he might not have become a jemadar until he was in his thirties and the squadron commanders would have been English officers. However, the regiments of the Imperial State Forces, the senior appointments were in the hands of the ruler of the State and Amar Singh presumably owed his position to the fact that he was a protégé of Sir Pratab Singh, commandant of the regiment. The Lancers arrived at the end of the short campaign and saw very little action. However, at least by his own account, Amar Singh seems to have acquitted himself well as an officer. He has a charming readiness to be truthful and even to record his own shortcomings. In his diary for 14 September 1899, he notes the perceptive comments
on himself by Captain Patterson (Assistant Inspecting Officer, Jodhpur Lancers): 'This young officer has first-rate abilities, a good knowledge of English and is a fine horsemen. He however does not know his work and takes no trouble to learn it. It is a pity he is not made to.' Amar Singh comments: 'I think it was all right and much more than I expected.' Unfortunately, this unwillingness to get down to serious work seems to be characteristic of Amar Singh throughout his military career and may account, in part at least, for some of the difficulties which he encounters later.

The Imperial Cadet Corps

Introduction

The Imperial Cadet Corps was founded by Lord Curzon, the then Viceroy, in 1901. His aim was to provide a military education for high-class Indians and to turn them into 'officers and gentlemen', able to serve alongside British officers. He was keen to encourage suitable young men to join the Indian Army or, at least, to become officers in their own State Forces and entry was restricted to the sons of princes and nobles. The students had generally attended one of the four Chiefs' Colleges at Ajmer, Lahore, Rajkot and Indore. The preliminary course lasted two years and then those students who seriously wished to pursue a military career would undergo a more sustained military education lasting another year and a half and similar to the course at Sandhurst. Cadets who graduated successfully would be awarded a commission in the Indian Land Forces - superior to a Viceroy's Commission but inferior to a King's Commission. However, the majority of the entrants left after two years or less and did not go on to serve in the armed forces. Uncertainty about the status of the commissions to be granted to successful graduates was a problem throughout the
Corp's existence, hindering recruiting and retention. There was even a suggestion that service in the Corps was used a punishment; young princes whose behaviour was unacceptable to the Indian Civil Service were to be sent into the unit until they learnt how to behave in a more acceptable manner. During the thirteen years that the Corps was in existence, nearly eighty Cadets passed through the unit. Curzon saw this as a small initial step towards the Indianisation of the Army but was opposed by the majority of the British officers. Lord Kitchener, the Commander-in-Chief in India, commented in 1908:

I cannot escape the conclusion that the Imperial Cadet Corps as it now exists has failed in its two objects of opening a military career to native noblemen and of providing men of the standing and qualifications which would enable them to take advantage of such openings as have, with difficulty, been created.3

Sir Pratap Singh, the Honorary Commandant of the Corps, was able to secure a place in the very first intake for his protégé Amar Singh. The first intake of twenty one cadets included four maharajas and two heirs apparent, the remainder being noblemen or the sons of noblemen. Amar Singh's brother was not accepted into the Corps as he had not been to Mayo College. Of the first intake, only four, including Amar Singh, would graduate successfully. Amar Singh was somewhat different from the majority of the other cadets being older, already married and having been to war. Though he had less formal education, he was far more widely read and had a better command of English than most of his fellow cadets. His attitude was resented by some of the young princes who were his social superiors and who nicknamed him 'The Rough

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3 Kitchener, Lord, Memorandum on the Future of Native Officers, 1908, L/MIL/17/5/1746.
Rider Sergeant Major' - perhaps because he was too bossy and behaved more like a non-commissioned officer than a gentleman. His diary over the period is full of comment, often derogatory, on his colleagues. On graduation Amar Singh wished to join the Jaipur State Forces but this idea was firmly resisted by the Maharaja Madho Singh because of his falling-out with Amar Singh's family. Instead, Amar Singh joined the staff of the 5th Division of the Western Army at Mhow where he spent nine quiet and relatively uneventful years.

The first term

Meerut. Friday 3.1.02

I was up and after washing myself dressed and went out. There was a sergeant from some regiment specially told off to drill us... There are at present only seven cadets including myself. .. He took us for a long double time which finally ended in a run.... The sergeant was leading and we all followed. After that he drilled us. He was simply teaching the timings and a few elementary things.

6.1.02

In the morning I was awake early and sat down to read The Memoirs of Baron Marbot, which I continued until half past eight when we were taken for that long run then drilled at marching and turning. To day Captain Cameron (the Adjutant of the ICC) made us each read our essay aloud (Amar Singh had written on polo). I am quite satisfied to see myself not only compete but be rather ahead of Zorawar Singh who has passed the university degree of Fellow of Arts (a two year intermediate course) examination whereas I do
I only read up to the sixth book of English without any mathematics, history, geography or any other thing.

Friday 10.1.02

Today Major Watson (the Commanding Officer) taught me algebra.

In April Amar Singh wrote a 'Note' about his first term in the Corps which covered the Rules, the Mess, the officers, the other cadets etc. The students appear to have set up two messes, one for Hindus (including Sikhs and Jats) and one for Muslims in order to cope with their differing dietary requirements. Amar Singh and other Rajputs, together with the British officers joined the Muslim mess which served food in the English style. Of his studies he wrote:

These were not much. In the beginning we were taught arithmetic and algebra for a few days but these were done away with and only English was kept. We were divided into three classes... The first class (which included Amar Singh) was taught Green's *Short History of the English People* and *Treasure Island*. Besides this we were supposed to have dictation, writing summaries of what we had read, some Greek and Latin roots and English idioms. We had no lessons to prepare at home except the usual diaries. Besides polo we used to have football and lawn-tennis.

The second term
At the end of April the cadets were inspected by the Viceroy with Amar Singh as one of a mounted escort and he was presented to the Viceroy who asked about his previous military experience.

Tuesday 8.7.02

We were given a lesson in topography. We were shown how to draw a map and what were the different signs of the different places. The subject is rather a difficult one though interesting. I having not learned arithmetic am very dull at it. Captain Cameron (the Adjutant) was trying all he was able to teach me but I could catch nothing of it all.

4.8.0 This morning we were all of us ordered to be present at nine o'clock as there was an examination. In arithmetic I could only do four questions and even they were not rightly done. I fear that I shall fail in this subject.

He actually obtained 145 marks out of 300. The following day for their composition examination the cadets had to write a letter to a friend about life in the Corps and the day after that the cadets were examined on A Short History of the English People by Green. Amar Singh came second overall in the summer examinations to his friend Zorawar Singh out of the twelve cadets though he was well down in arithmetic and only fifth in drill. He was first in composition and second in history - presumably because of his wide reading on the subject. In October 1902 he wrote a 'Note' about his second term in the Corps.

We were not worked hard. The chief thing taught us was the correct way of speaking and writing. The major sahib never got angry but treated us with the greatest love. He was always in good humour and did his best to make
us understand... Among the studies may be counted the diary, which we had to write regularly, and dictation and composition. Sometimes we were given summaries on some chapters of Green's *Short History of the English People*. Taken all together it was quite satisfactory work. (Amar Singh kept two diaries at this time - the public one and the private one from which these quotations are taken.) We had plenty of foot drill. I was never any good at it though I was not considered the worst. The slow marching always put me out and sometimes I used to get out of step.

Amar Singh was also strongly criticised in the riding school because he had learnt to ride when he was young in non-military style and it was not easy for him to change. He was not good at games, which now included hockey and cricket, and took no interest in them.

My experience clearly showed me the difference between the well-educated British officers and the native rank holders. While out in China and even after our return I was under the impression that if only the natives were allowed the higher ranks they would be just as well filled. It is now that I have come to know that there is a vast difference between them. I myself know nothing at all when compared to them. Their education, their military knowledge, is far superior, and I fear that it would take me twenty years or at least five to learn it all. Then I have now begun to understand a bit of English ideas, as to how they like one another and behave. Why they do so is because they have been taught to do so. What is real sport is dawning on me, as well as the way in which it ought to be enjoyed. Then the social ways, of which I have very little knowledge. The respect which juniors pay to seniors is simply wonderful.
These people respect but at the same time retain their independence. There is nothing like the Indian customs that when there is a big person we must all flatter him. Where respect is due they pay it and where self-respect or independence is necessary they maintain it.

At the end of the Note Amar Singh wrote:

May God bless Lord Curzon for starting such a fine thing (the Corps) and giving an opening to the aristocratic families of India for a good service in the British Army. May his successors follow the same policy.

Third term

At the start of his third term, Captain Cameron had a long chat with Amar Singh and told him that he was thought to be too proud and haughty by the other cadets and had treated some of the inexperienced cadets rather roughly to the extent that they were afraid to talk to him. He had not been good at saluting, obeying orders or taking advice and had offended Captain Cameron and the Commandant on more than one occasion. Amar Singh was naturally upset at this criticism and determined to try to improve his behaviour.

This term I am determined to keep all the others pleased if I can. I have asked the sahib (Captain Cameron) to warn me off on the slightest thing he finds wrong with me and he has promised to do so.

In his Note about his third term he wrote:-

There were altogether twenty-three cadets this term. We were taught Forty-One Years in India by Lord Roberts. The book was only taught in portions where the account was about the Indian mutiny of 1857. Every day we had reading and sometimes arithmetic and sometimes dictation. The time was
about two hours and a half. There was not much stress laid upon studies this time.... At arithmetic I am hopelessly bad and am left miles behind. I don't think I shall now again have a chance of standing first or second in examinations as arithmetic is increasing.

Amar Singh expresses concern about the future of the Corps and what sort of commissions will be given to the graduates. Personally, he would not be prepared to be on an equal footing with the jemadars and risaldars who had come up through the ranks.

One thing is certain is that we are not going to get any commissions in the British or Indian armies. The reason is that no British soldier would like to be under native command at present. It will require some generations before this feeling of conqueror and conquered, the rulers and the ruled, and the blacks and the whites will fall away. If we are not to be given commissions, why the devil are they teaching us military work? This is the thing that bothers me most... My ambition is to get a good post in Jaipur state. (16-19 May 1903)

Amar Singh's fourth term was similar to the previous three. Four of the princes who started with him have left and this lowers the prestige of the Corps and lessens the chances of the graduates being commissioned into the Indian Army as opposed to the State Forces.

The Fifth Term

The fifth term was the final term for those cadets who would not qualify for commissions. Four of the most promising cadets, including Amar Singh, were selected to continue with their training for two additional terms. However, the future of those cadets who graduate was still uncertain. Curzon was unable to get the senior British
officers to agree to Indians being given full commissions which would entitle them to command British troops and, eventually, British officers. Equally the cadets were, not unreasonably, unwilling to accept Viceroy's Commissions and to be equated to the rissaldars and subedars. There was a suggestion that a new regiment be established to be officered almost exclusively by Indians with only the commandant, second-in-command and adjutant being British. Eventually a new service, to be known as the Indian Native Land Forces, was set up but Indian officers commissioned into this service were not authorised to command British troops.

Meerut. 8.1.04

I went out sketching on the hills where we cadets had been before. I am now beginning to understand this surveying business a little. This time the commandant taught us slowly and did not hurry up as he had done last time...

At the end of February 1904 Amar Singh recorded a conversation with Major Watson, Commanding Officer of the Corps, who suggested that a Viceroy appointed by a radical government in England might give Indian officers command over Europeans but that such a move would create a lot of discontent which he thought ought to be avoided. He said that the Corps was the beginning of the institution which would finally end in giving posts to Indians which would enable them to command Europeans. It was this bar on Indians commanding Europeans which caused Amar Singh such difficulty and in particular, he would not like to serve under a man who was his junior.

My ideas are not those of a cringing man. Even here I hate it when I have to show undue respect to these officers. There are orders that we must salute every officer we meet on the road if he is wearing his uniform. This is all
nonsense; I do not want to go on saluting every Englishman I come across.

In his notes on his fifth term, dated 5.4.04, Amar Singh comments on the mess, visits to the theatre, his fellow cadets etc.

This term we were taken out on manoeuvres... there were four patrols.....

The practical work is more pleasant and easy than work indoors... I shall always remember these days with the happiest recollections.

Initially Amar Singh was not given command of a patrol but when the Maharaja of Kishengarh left the cadets, Amar Singh was given the command in his place. Zorawar Singh was first in the termly examination and Amar Singh second; and he admitted how much he owed to Zorawar Singh's help. He ended the note as follows:

I must thank God that I have been so lucky to pass my time during this term with credit and have pleased the commandant to some extent. Another thing to be thankful to God is that I have been.... selected for a three year's course. The commandant said openly that the very best had been picked and that we were sure to get some service. Coming out so well in the examination was another bit of luck. Now that we have become a bit more sure about our future prospects we shall work with a better zeal.

The Sixth Term

There were now only sixteen cadets in the Corps as opposed to the one-time maximum of twenty-six. Four were Hindu, and the remainder Muslim but Amar Singh was not impressed by some of the newly arrived cadets. The commandant returned from Simla having been told that those cadets who graduate will get 'real' commissions, though these are likely to be in the Imperial Service Troops. Amar
Singh forgot to enter the results of some earlier examinations and he included these now in his diary. In the spring examinations of English and Arithmetic in 1903, he was sixth overall out of sixteen—his arithmetic letting him down badly. Amar Singh was sixth out of ten in the Summer Term Senior Class Examinations, coming top in fortification but doing very badly in Surveying and, as usual, badly in arithmetic. In the spring of 1904 he had risen to second overall out of six. The subjects covered included Tactics, Topography, Fortification and English and he did well across the board. His friend Zorawar Singh was always top in the exams. During the term Amar Singh was promoted to corporal within the Corps.

14.6.04

At six we had practical fortification and were taught how to make a gabion..... This work is rather amusing. While we making this gabion we had some coolies digging a trench. It is awfully hot and the commandant kindly gets other people to dig for us.

14.7.04

I asked Sergeant Chapman whether I would pass the examination and he said that they would give us very easy questions as they want us all to pass, for they think that if we people don't get anything, there will be no more cadets coming.

Amar Singh wrote his Notes on the Sixth Term on the 25th of August, covering as usual the mess, other cadets, the officers etc:

This term we learned a lot.. the surveying work as well as the combined training were finished... We were taught how to lay out schemes on maps and how to make a sketch with a prismatic compass..... The officers were more pleased with me and the boys (cadets) too were more friendly than they
had been before .... Perhaps the officers were pleased because all the big
swells had gone and the boys were pleased because we were so few...... In
concluding these notes I have simply to say that this was the best and happiest
term that I have passed.

The Seventh and last Term

Given the opposition to the graduates from the Corps obtaining King's
commissions, Amar Singh would have preferred to serve in the Jaipur state forces.
Such a position would have enabled him to be near his wife and to keep an eye on his
estate. After the examinations in March, Amar Singh took ten days leave and went to
Jaipur in a vain attempt to get employment in the Jaipur State Forces. Unfortunately
the Maharaja of Jaipur, Madho Singh, refused to accept this idea, in spite of the
support for Amar Singh given by a number of British officers. The long-standing
quarrel between Madho Singh and Amar Singh's father, together with the cost of
raising a cavalry regiment in Jaipur were arguments which Amar Singh could not
overcome (Jaipur had only a Transport Corps at this time). In 1905, Captain Hughes,
Inspecting Officer of Imperial Service Troops in Rajastan, asked Amar Singh whether
the Maharaja would raise a cavalry regiment in Jaipur. Amar Singh indicated that
either the British Resident in Jaipur or the Agent to the Governor General might be
able to persuade the Maharaja. Jodhpur and Alwar had two cavalry regiments each so
there seemed to be no reason why Jaipur should not have one too. Hughes told Amar
Singh that he and General Beatson (who had helped to train the Jodhpur Lancers and
who was now Inspector General of Imperial Service troops) were thinking of raising a
cavalry regiment in Jaipur.
1.11.04

At half past six Zorawar Singh and I went out sketching. We wanted to give the others the slip. The other boys knew well that they could not do anything without Zorawar Singh and were soon on our tracks...... Zorawar Singh was the only man who did any real work. The rest were copying him. Some of the boys could not even resect their points." (Resection is a method of locating a position on a map by reference to two known points on the map.)

4.2.04

At eight we had practical fortification. We were to dig a trench. I was so stiff with the pain in my back that I could not even stoop down to dig. When the commandant knew I was not well he told me to put on my coat and watch the sand-bag revetments that we were building.

2.4.04

The commandant told us that he had just heard the result of our written examination. In the morning he told us that we had all passed but now he told us the order in which we passed. Zorawar Singh was first, Kasim Shah second, Vali Uddeeen Khan third and myself last. This was a great surprise not only to me but even to the commandant. This Kasim Shah was the greatest blockhead, and I had always beaten him and Vali Uddeeen in all the test papers and it was only at the last moment that they beat me. This was rather curious...

He wrote his 'Notes' on his last term on May 27th:

I did all my work well except those subjects in which there was arithmetic or calculations to make. I was so bad at it that the commandant used to get very angry indeed.... After we had been selected for the third year I knew that I
would pass all right and hence I did not take much trouble. After having gone through this course I think what an ignorant fellow I had been before, but I used to think that I was just as good and clever an officer as any other when I went out to China. I am an awful man at marching. The sergeant major used to say that I never did nor ever will march...

That year, of the sixteen cadets then in the Corps, four, including Amar Singh, were granted commissions in the Indian Land Forces. These officers had a higher status than the VCOs but were not able to command European Troops. They are listed separately in the India Army List of 1906, as Second Lieutenants with commissions dating from the 4th of July 1905 as follows:-

Zorawar Singh  
Aga Cassim Shah (nephew to the Aga Khan)  
Wall-ud-dim Khan  
Kanwar Amar Singh

Commentary

Amar Singh does not seem to have been entirely happy during the first few terms of his three years in the Corps. Older and with a wider knowledge of the world than the other cadets, he seems to have found it difficult to fit in, especially with young men of a higher social status than himself. He found it particularly difficult to play the courtier and flatter the young princes. Although Amar Singh's English was good and he was much more widely read than his contemporaries he nevertheless did not find the academic work easy. He was clearly disappointed by his final examination placing but does not speculate on the possible reasons for this. This result may account for the fact that he was given a staff post rather than being commissioned into a regiment.
Sergeant Chapman's comment on the standard of the examinations is significant; there certainly must have been some pressure to ensure that at least some of the cadets passed out satisfactorily. High status Indians would not have been accustomed to physical work and so coolies were employed to dig their trenches for them!

The curriculum for the Cadets at the start of their course appears designed to bring them up to something like the general level of education of their British equivalents at Sandhurst who had had to pass a fairly stiff entrance exam, often with the aid of a 'crammer'. In 1903 Amar Singh and his fellow-cadets of the Senior Class covered surveying, fortification, drill and equitation, arithmetic and English history. This was very little different from that being offered to British cadets during this period. The curriculum at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst in 1900 covered Military Engineering, Military Topography, Military Administration and Law, French and German together with drill, gymnastics and riding. Admission was by competitive examination and the course lasted one year, shortened at one period of the Great War, (in which over four thousand Sandhurst cadets died) to only three months. However, a Committee of Enquiry, set up in 1902 and chaired by the Rt Hon A Akers-Douglas MP, found that there was 'absolutely no inducement for the cadets to work' once at the Academy since a candidate's ranking, and the regiment to which he was posted, depended on his results in the entrance examination. The Committee found that too much time was spent on drill, though the young men did not learn to take drill. Musketry was neglected; the cadets pipe-clayed their belts but did not clean their rifles!


In 1904 Amar Singh, while in conversation with Colonel Pears, the resident at Jaipur, showed him the question papers of his last examination: ‘He said that they were just what the British officers have to learn at Sandhurst or Woolwich.’ (British officers for entry into the artillery or engineers were trained at Woolwich.)

Amar Singh's comments on the difference between British and Indian officers, written at the end of his second term in the Corps are revealing. He recognises that it is the lack of education which holds the Indians back and that, given their current state of knowledge and experience, they are incapable of filling the higher ranks of command. He also comments upon the differences in social behaviour and the degree to which flattery was so much a part of the lives of high-class Indians and their rulers. Indians of this class are unlikely to wish to make the army their career.

In the Cadet Corps they ought to take people of good families but of such circumstances as will serve for a profession. It is different for the British. They serve for the fun of it but we have not reached that stage as yet. Amar Singh is, perhaps, looking ahead here and recognising the need to have a strong cadre of fully trained Indian officers, capable of commanding an Indian army.

One issue which was to cause considerable dissatisfaction later if not at the time was the nature of the commissions granted to the successful graduates. Such was the antipathy among senior British officers at the time to the idea that Indians might be in a position to give orders to British soldiers - or even worse to British officers - that the Cadets received commissions in the Indian Land Forces rather than the King's Orders granted to their counterparts at Sandhurst. This distinction created a further barrier between the graduates of the Corps and their English counterparts.
There were now three groups of officers within the Indian Army; the British officers, the Indian rissaldars and jemadars who had risen through the ranks and now this new breed of officer with a commission which was neither one nor the other.

In 1907 he attended the Durbar held by Lord Minto (1847-1914), the then Viceroy, and commented on the Imperial Cadet Corps (which his brother had joined in 1905) as follows:-

I am very sorry to say that the Corps is not at all what it used to be. The boys are taught practically nothing at all except words out of the dictionary. They were all making fun of it.... There is no one going on for the commission exam this year and as most of them will be leaving by the end of March and new ones will come there is no chance of anyone getting a commission for the next three years at the earliest. To make the Corps more popular two things are necessary. The first is improving the education of the Chief's college and the other is finding them some sort of employment after they have had the two year course. They get nothing except permission to wear the Corps uniform. Now exactly what good is that?

The Corps was very much Curzons' creation; he referred to it in a speech as 'The favourite of my own heart.' With his resignation there was nobody in government to support it.

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Many of the Cadets were spoilt young men who had little or no intention of following a military career. Some had been sent into the Corps in the vain hope of saving them from a life of dissipation. Their previous education was usually poor so that they had to start by improving their basic skills before they could move onto military matters. The British generals saw no purpose in the Corps; Kitchener, who disliked Curzon intensely, thought that the Corps was little more than a over-dressed bodyguard for the Viceroy. Certainly there seems to have been little idea of what should happen to those Cadets who did graduate successfully or as to their future careers in the Army and this did not encourage the Indian princes to send their sons into the Corps. General Sir O'Moore Creagh (1848-1923), who succeeded Kitchener as Commander-in Chief in 1909 and under whom Amar Singh had served as an ADC, wrote in 1910:

The Imperial Cadet Corps was originally started to provide for the military aspirations of Indians of noble fighting families or clans but for various reasons it has not fulfilled what was expected of it. In the first place the commissions given to the young men were not of a nature to satisfy their ambitions, or to make them feel, as they think they have the right to, that they have the same opportunities as their British confreres. Then it was common talk, whether true or not I am unable to say, that the Cadet Corps was used by the Political Department as a penal settlement; and again, it was under the Foreign Department and in no way connected with the Army, which latter fact gave grounds for the belief that it was never seriously intended as a military institution. Whether these statements made to its detriment were untrue or not,
Amar Singh in the uniform of the Imperial Cadet Corps
(copyright Mohan Singh)
they were certainly believed by the great majority of Chiefs who have spoken
to me on the subject.8

Staff Officer at Mhow

On graduation, Amar Singh's commission was posted in London Gazette dated 4 July
1905 and he was appointed as a special ADC to General Sir O'Moore Creagh, GOC
5th Division, Western Corps. He joined the Headquarters Mess and as a polo player
and sportsman was socially acceptable to his British colleagues. During his time at
Mhow his main responsibility was to arrange for the movement of the staff officers'
horses and baggage when they were on manoeuvres or tours. He was sometimes also
responsible for the messing arrangements and for planning the itinerary. He went on
errands for the General seeking information or supplies as well as planning social
events for the General and his wife.

On 4 October 1907 he was promoted to Lieutenant and in 1908 and 1910 he
studied for and passed the required promotion examinations. The 1910 exam covered
tactics, military engineering and topography, military organisation and administration
(the easiest part according to him), military law and military history (the American
Civil War). He was promoted to the rank of Captain in the summer of 1914. In
April/May 1908 he was allowed to practise as a Section and Company Commander
and he fired on the ranges.

He accompanied the General on visits to Chitor and Udaipur. When visiting
the latter, he wishes to be received by the Maharaja in the same manner as he would
greet a British officer. 'The Maharaja must shake hands with me. Otherwise I shall be

8 Quoted in the Rudolphs and Mohan Singh, Reversing the Gaze, pp.237-238.
looked down on and the Imperial Cadet Corps and the British commission will lose respect.' The British Resident was unable to make an immediate reply on this sensitive issue but eventually it was agreed that if Amar Singh were in uniform, the Maharaja would receive him as an officer, but not if he were in mufti. The General and the other staff officers did not wish to go in uniform so in the end, the General went alone. This was the most delicate social difficulty which Amar Singh faced during his time at Mhow though eating and Rajput customs made occasional difficulties. It illustrates the degree of prejudice, not only from the British but also from the Maharajas; Amar Singh would be treated as an officer if in uniform but not if in mufti!

Amar Singh was now living in two very different but overlapping worlds - the British officers' mess and his own very traditional home with all its complex family politics and intrigues. He was happy to eat European food with a knife and fork while at home he would eat Indian food with his fingers. He would be the only Indian guest at a British officer's wedding while his own wife lived in strict purdah. ‘He has to master the manners and outlook of two societies.’

In 1905 the General asked Amar Singh to prepare a confidential report concerning the troubles that often occurred in the Native States and the causes of those trouble. In February 1906 Amar Singh visited the newly formed 27th Madras Cavalry in order to enquire whether the men preferred to be in a sillardar or non-sillardar regiment. In a sillardar regiment the soldiers had to provide their own horse or an equivalent sum of money. They were then responsible for their mount. The Madras cavalry regiments had always been non-sillardar and it is not surprising that the sowars preferred the latter - the pay was the same but there were fewer worries for

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them. He recognised in the regiment two ex-jemadars and two ex-dafadars of the Jodhpur Lancers with whom he had served.

Amar Singh notes that Lord Kitchener, as Commander-in-Chief, had introduced a series of practical tests in order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the regiments under his command. These were as follows:-

1. A 15 mile march in field service order with each man carrying 100 rounds of ball ammunition.

2. This was to be followed immediately by an attack, using live ammunition, on a position prepared by another unit (but not, presumably, occupied by them!). This phase was to include reconnaissance and the writing of orders.

3. This was followed by a bivouac camp with outposts which would be attacked.

4. There would then be a night operation of some nature, probably opposed.

5. The troops would then prepare a defensive position to be assaulted by other troops.

6. The final phase was to be a retirement of at least 10 miles while followed up by the 'enemy'.

It was expected that the whole exercise would last from 50 to 55 hours. While such a programme would be commonplace in a modern army, this move to a more realistic training schedule must have come as something of a shock to some regiments accustomed to a more leisurely approach to life. For instance, Amar Singh reports in his diary (23.1.08) on the test of the 2nd Battalion East Surreys:-

Phase 1. A load of 28 greatcoats came off a mule. The general commented
that if they could not keep loads on while on the level, God knows what would happen going up and down hills. The battalions commanding officer, Col Dunstaille was at a ford in a nullah supervising the crossing of the baggage. This should have been done by the baggage officer or the quarter-master. The men were drinking too freely.

The attack took a long time starting - the men were allowed to have breakfast first which wasted an hour. The reconnaissance was poor. The troops didn't take much advantage of the natural conditions or ground for taking cover. The rally after the attack was quite good.

The perimeter camp was OK but there was not much water near. Little digging was done, the men complained the ground was too hard - but they should have seen what the 123rd did! (The 123rd, Outram's Rifles, were an Indian regiment, part of the old Bombay Army.)

The bivouacs were blankets supported by two rifles; the men spent the whole time putting up or knocking down their shelters. On the Frontier there would be no end of rifles stolen!

The night march was a mere farce on a metalled road in good visibility.

Surrounding a village was well done.

Taking up defensive positions; the trenches were not deep enough in some places - they were on the sky line and in some cases were too far back with too much dead ground.

The retirement. The most difficult thing to do well; in practise few, if any, of the troops would have got back to Mhow.

The men were very smart and fit and did their work well.
The exercise revealed a number of serious failures in the battalion, failings which could have very serious consequences in battle. Hopefully the officers and men learnt from their mistakes!

The British policy of recruiting only from the so-called 'martial races' was advocated by officers such as Lord Roberts (1832-1914) who became Commander-in-Chief in Madras in 1880. His view was that long periods of peace had made the people of southern India soft and less warlike, though still suited to the more technical arms because they were better educated. Four Madras infantry regiments were disbanded in 1864 and eight more in 1882. Amar Singh's comments on the exercise undergone by the 80th Carnatic Regiment (formerly 20th Madras) in February 1906 points to some of the difficulties produced by this policy though he himself appears to share the British view - or prejudice.

The test was the usual 15 miles march and then entrench and attack a position. Then they had the day and night outposts and the perimeter camp and the retirement. The General thought the men and troops were not at all well trained. The officers did not seem to read their books. The position selected for defence was not good and the attack too was very badly carried out while the perimeter camp was simply awful. In fact all the British officers did not strike me of being of a very high standard. (However, they were better than the 46th Punjab Infantry at Seebore.) There were only two officers that were originally with the regiment. The rest were merely a collection brought in from all the other Madras regiments that have been broken up. There are seventeen of these battalions broken up and I think the officers have been rather badly treated because they had to give up their mess plate and band and such like.
things to the new regiments that have been raised in place of the old ones.

These new ones are raised in the Punjab and they are officered from the Punjab.

The officers of the old Madras regiments are transferred to the remaining Madras regiments.

This Carnatic infantry used to be the 20th Madras Infantry and its war records are quite good. They were the regiments that fought for and conquered the Madras Presidency for the British. This particular regiment had four battles on it colours. As a rule every regiment has two colours but this one has three.

The last was captured in a fight and ever since then they are allowed to have three colours and are allowed an extra Jemadar to carry the third colour. This regiment was present at the taking of Mysore and as a trophy they have got a big black marble cup which was supposed to be Tipoo's Sultan's. The composition of the regiment is four companies of Madrassi Mussulmans, one of Telegau and one on Madras Christians and Dadbers. The last named is a very low class. The Madrassi regiments have been reduced from eight to six company's. The subedar-major is quite a nice fellow and I found out from him that nearly all the officers and NCOs spoke English. This regiment has very intelligent and well-educated men and they look very smart. Their features are good but they are small and weak and most of them are as black as coal. The officers' mess has practically no war or Shikar (hunting) trophies. The mess house is quite a nice one but devoid of furniture on a large scale. I don't think much of these Madras regiments and the subedar-major told me himself that they were not such good soldiers as from northern India. These cannot stand the cold.
Of his role in the Saugor Manoeuvres in Central India in 1910, Amar Singh comments that ‘My chief job in this show was generally to look after the mess and to see that we camped in nice shady places. It was very seldom that I was taken out.’

Rather more usefully, in 1913 he participated in two staff rides under the direction of General Sir John Dixon GOC Southern Army of India. ‘This is the first staff ride where I have been able to pick up some knowledge. Everybody said that this was the most instructive tour that they had ever been on.’ General Edward Barrow (1852-1934), GOC Southern Army, wrote to the Military Secretary:

I have reported most favourably on the Indian officers in the Indian Land forces, viz:

Lt Aga Cassim Shah, ADC to GOC 65th (Poona) Division

Lt Kanwar Amar Singh, ADC to GOC 5th (Mhow) Division

I consider both of them as fit to take their place among British officers of an Indian cavalry regiment whether in an educational, a professional or a social sense and I have reason to believe that they are naturally not altogether satisfied with their present position or prospects.

The General suggested the possibility of posting Amar Singh to the 27th, 38th or 39th cavalry regiments.

Commentary

Amar Singh spent nine years in what was virtually a 'non-job'. It is clear that, as an ADC, he was really an errand boy for his General and that his job was to ensure that the General's life (and that of the General's wife) ran smoothly. While this might be the life of a typical ADC, most young officers would expect to spend only two years in
such a post and would use it as an opportunity to gain experience and to make contacts which might be useful to them later on in their careers. At the outbreak of war in 1914, Amar Singh's role had changed very little from when he joined the staff in 1905. Though he had had the opportunity to see units in training, he remained on the outside of the real world of the Army and he had had little opportunity to perform the duties of a professional soldier.

Not only was Amar Singh's position an anomaly to the British officers but his situation vis-a-vis his own country men was far from clear as the episode with the Maharaja of Udaipur indicates. The graduates of the Imperial Cadet Corps were also resented, perhaps not surprisingly, by the jemadars and risaldars who had come up through the ranks and had gained their commissions through hard work and experience. General Creagh commented to the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, in 1910 that:

I found that in several regiments which I inspected that the native officers objected to Amar Singh, saying that if a commission of this class was to be given, then why not give it to them who had seen service, while the Cadets had seen none, and were nothing more in the village than they were.10

Social status was, and still is, very important in India. An Indian officer who went home on pension after years in the service would expect to be, and indeed was, treated as a person of some importance in his home village. It seems surprising that throughout his nine years as an ADC, Amar Singh seems to have made no attempt to join a cavalry regiment, even on secondment for a short period. It is difficult to believe that General could not, if requested, have arranged such an attachment - possibly to

one of the State Regiments if not to a regular unit. One imagines that, for instance, Sir Pratap Singh could have arranged an attachment to the Jodhpur Lancers.

When, in 1909, O'Moore Creagh became Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army he expressed as his confidential opinion the view that the Government should give Indians full commissions of a particular sort. It would seem reasonable to suppose that his views on this point had been influenced by his experiences with Amar Singh. It was not to be until 1917 that Amar Singh and a few colleagues were to be granted commissions in the Indian Land Forces. These limited commissions did not grant the Indian officers command over Europeans nor were the Indian officers paid on the same scales as British officers. The commissions were not back-dated, so that the newly commissioned officers lost seniority. What might have been a step forward for the Indian officers, though on a very limited scale, was made to seem almost a step backwards.
The Great War

Amar Singh in France

On 17 August 1914 Amar Singh appears somewhat surprised to receive orders to report for active service to Major-General Brunker (1858-1936), 9th (Sirhind) Infantry Brigade at Karachi by 22 August. A second telegram brought forward the deadline by one day as Brigade headquarters was moving earlier. He arrived at Orleans on the 8th of September and was there, kicking his heels, for nearly two months waiting for the arrival of the Sirhind Brigade. This had been held back in Egypt to defend the Suez Canal and did not arrive in France until the beginning of December. While at Orleans he wrote a 'Note' about conditions at his home in India and ideas for improvement. The Sirhind Brigade, which was one of three infantry brigades in the Lahore Division, consisted of:

1st Battalion Highland Light Infantry (HLI)
1st Battalion 1st KGO Ghurkha Rifles
1st Battalion 4th Ghurkha Rifles
125th (Napier's) Rifles

Orleans Saturday 17.10.14

The whole of the Lahore Division is going to Arras. I met the 57th and 9th regiments marching out. The camp was a dismal sight with empty tents and all sorts of quagmire. The day was not pleasant either. There was no rain but the whole day we have a thick mist. It was quite dreary and cold.

(The 57th and 9th regiments were part of the Ferozepore Brigade in the Division.)

Thursday 22.10.14

Met the Maharajas of Bikaner and Kishengarh.
Saturday 24.10.14

Visited the Jodhpur Lancers. Met Sir Pratap Singh; will stay with him until the arrival of 9 Brigade.

Orleans, Monday 2.11.14

Went to the railway station to see the Jodhpurs off on three trains.

Friday 20.11.14

No news of the Jaipur Transport Corps.

The Sirhind Brigade arrived at Marseilles on December 1st and went into the line on December 9th.

Friday 4.12.14

At about half-past five I drove with General Capper (1863-1915) to the Indian Hospital at La Chapelle where I interviewed some of the Indian officers and impressed on their minds that they ought to make no trouble about petty caste prejudice and must combine to help the British officers. This is the first time that Indians have had the honour to fight Europeans on their own soil and must play up to the Government that has brought us up to this level. General Capper was quite pleased with my lecture though he was not actually with me when I spoke to the men.

10.12.14

Visited the Jodhpur Lancers at Busnes.

He made his first visit to the front-line on 15 December (presumably accompanying his General) and saw the 125th (Napier's) Rifles at Givenchy. On the 17th he visited the HLI and the Gurkhas in the trenches.
Gorre, Thursday 17.12.14

The trenches were about three feet in liquid mud and it was very unpleasant walking through and driving too. I think that the British officer is a wonderful man. There were these fellows who have always lived more or less quite comfortably and their one point is to remain clean. Here they were plastered in mud and wet through up to the knees and unshaved, living on hard ration biscuit and tinned meat, sleeping with their clothes on in this cold and in the damp trenches but in spite of all this quite cheerful and setting a good example to the men. It is quite an eye opener. Some of the Indian agitators ought to be brought here to see all this and then they will probably know the value of an English gentleman.

The Lahore Division undertook a limited attack on 19 December near Festubert without much success. This was followed by a strong German counter-attack on the 20th. The Sirhind Brigade came out of the line on the 22nd. The Jodhpur Lancers (dismounted) were involved in an unsuccessful attempt to re-take ground lost to the Germans on the 21st.

Sunday 20.12.14

A lot of cavalry have been sent for, among them the Jodhpur Lancers.

Monday 21.12.14

The attack at about nine o'clock this morning has not been very successful and we lost a great deal of men. The regiments of our Brigade are very badly shaken. They have had nine days lining works in the trenches and on top of that this sudden attack by the enemy who started by blowing up quite a lot of our fire trenches. There have been very heavy casualties among the officers.
Tuesday 22.12.14

I hear that there was quite a heavy casualty list among the Jodhpur Lancers.

Sunday 27.12.14

Went to see the Jodhpur Lancers at the Chateau of Longheim

Tuesday 29.12.14

Went to see Sir Pratap Singh.

On December 30th, Amar Singh attended a conference with General French (1841-1921), C-in-C BEF. Lt Colonel Walker (1869-1936), commanding the 1/4th Gurkhas was promoted and replaced Major General Brunker in command of the Sirhind Division. On the 21st of January 1915 Amar Singh visited the billets of the 1st and 4th Gurkhas, HLI and the Seaforth Highlanders who had replaced the 125th Rifles in the Brigade.

27.1.15

All leave cancelled and Brigade to be in a constant state of readiness.

It seems strange, therefore, that Amar Singh should go to London the very next day!

28.1.15

Leave in London. Went to Shaftesbury Theatre where they had Henry V on.

It was a very fine play indeed, I enjoyed it immensely.

While in London he called on Lord Crewe (1858-1945), the Secretary of State for India, and visited the Tower of London and Madame Tussauds. He met a Mr A. F. Somerset who invited him down to shoot on his estate at Castle Goring, Worthing. He returned to France on 3 February. His Brigade had relieved the Bareilly Brigade in the line in January 1915. The weather in January and February was appalling, causing the trenches to flood.
Sunday 21.2.15

I saw the paper with Sir John French's despatches and the names of all those who are mentioned (in dispatches). All the Maharajas and people like me who are in similar appointments are mentioned except myself. This is probably because none of our Brigade have been mentioned at all.

Tuesday 2.3.15

Went to see the Jodhpur Lancers at Louches.

Wednesday 3.3.15

Went to see regiments practising getting out of trenches; 1st Gurkhas then Highland Light Infantry.

Friday 5.3.15

Ditto but trenches full of water. HLI went back but 4th Ghurkas practised!

He notes the desertion of twenty men and one Indian officer from the 58th Rifles.

The Sirhind Brigade was not initially involved in the Neuve Chapelle assault in mid-March and when they were brought up to attack they made little progress. Amar Singh reports seeing wounded men brought back and he searched for souvenirs in the German trenches.

Saturday 27.3.15

Went to see Jodhpur Lancers at Witternesse. (where they were billeted for the winter)

On 28 March Amar Singh was admitted to hospital in Boulogne with a fever and at the beginning of May he went to London where he saw Sir Pratap, returning on 16 May. His absence during this period meant that he missed his Brigade's involvement in the Second Battle of Ypres, the troops being in action throughout much of April and

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May. When he returned to the front his Brigade was in the trenches but about to move back into reserve. He went with General Brunker to visit the HLI and 1st Gurkhas in their billets. He records meeting Risaldar Musraf Khan, now serving with the 4th Cavalry, who had been a dafadar in the Jodhpur Lancers. Throughout June he was riding out with the General to visit units.

Tuesday 15.6.15

Attack by 4th Gurkhas, HLI and King's Regiment. Bombardment commenced about 5 pm. It was a very poor show indeed. After Neuve Chapelle it did not sound like a bombardment at all. Our attack failed because not enough artillery ammunition had been given. However, this was only a feint. Casualties in the Brigade about 40.

Wednesday 23.6.15

Mentioned in despatches.

Friday 25.6.15

Went to the Mess. The meal was a solemn affair because none of the Brigade HQ officer's names had appeared in the honours list except mine and the blame is put on General Walker (the new commander of the Sirhind Brigade).... I smoked a pipe and then listened to the most scathing remarks. They are all out of humour at not being mentioned in despatches and I don't blame them either.

22.7.15

2/8 Gurkhas, 39th Garwhal Rifles and 57th Rifles are now lent to our Brigade in place of our three Indian battalions.

Amar Singh went with the General to visit the officer's messes of these three new units.
10.8.15

On leave in London; went to see Sir Pratap. Once there, there is no getting away. He is a dear old man and most cheerful.

While in London he went to the Globe Theatre to see Peg of my Heart.

Saturday 25.9.15

Fortunately the wind turned in our favour and we first let out some poisonous gas then attacked and reports said that the Meerut Division took three lines of enemy trenches. Today it rained the whole day and it was a miserable day.

The news is that the Meerut Division has been beaten back and the Germans have retaken the lost trenches.

5.11.15

Leave again in London.

He visited the India Office and friends in Weybridge. He went to see The Scarlet Pimpernel at the theatre.

Wednesday 17.11.15

Went out for a ride with the new Brigade commander, General McAndrew (1866-1919). It was quite a treat riding with a cavalryman who rides properly. For the last year riding with infantry officers has been rather a trial than a pleasure because they never ride a proper and collected pace.

Wednesday 24.11.15

Went to Fricourt to see the Jodhpur Lancers.

25.11.15

Present at the review of the Indian Corps at Linghen by the Prince of Wales.
On 31 March 1915 at St Venant, Amar Singh wrote a long 'Note' in his diary, reviewing the events of the previous winter.

ADC to GOC 9th (Sirhind) Brigade, General Brunker. The General has been appointed Base Commander, Orleans. I had nothing whatever to do so far as work was concerned but amused myself by going out for rides with the General or by myself and sometimes went sight-seeing by car.

Brigade staff:-

- General Brunker  GOC
- Captain Ridgeway  Brigade Major
- Captain Coleridge  Brigade Captain
- Captain Morse  Signals Officer
- Lieutenant Tornowsky  French interpreter
- Amar Singh  ADC

When we went into the trenches, General Brunker divided his line into two sections and put part of the HLI in both of them to leaven up the Indian regiments. I think it was a mistake because it split up the British battalion. The Indian regiments must have felt it as a slur on them. 125th Napier's Rifles suffered so much from cold feet and sickness that they had to be relieved first of all. The trenches were narrow and had several traverses at close intervals and were deep and well made. They were wet and slippery but not very muddy. The Sikhs from the Jullundur Brigade, were very good to me and showed me all that there was to show. They took me at first for some big Indian chief but I soon explained to them who I was. They expressed great satisfaction to see me in the firing line.
Second visit to the trenches - went to the Gurkhas. Their trenches were very bad indeed. They were ankle deep in mud and in parts seven feet deep. The constant dripping of the water had broadened them a good deal and had washed away the parapet so that it was not bullet-proof. We stopped and chatted to several of the British officers who seemed to be quite cheerful in all this misery. The Gurkhas being short men had to stand on parapets to reach the loop-holes. In parts the trenches were quite broad at the top but narrow at the bottom. Two men had the greatest trouble to pass one another. In parts they had put planks to get a firm footing but they had become so slippery that one had the greatest difficulty in keeping oneself from slipping. The Germans were not more than a dozen yards from our trenches in places.

I think that it was the next day after our attack (at Festubert) failed that the Germans retaliated by attacking us. To start with they blew up our trenches - parts of them - and under good artillery fire attacked and took our trenches. We had a very bad handling and were taken at great disadvantage. The whole blame was thrown on our Brigade but it was really the Jullundur brigade on our right which first retired without giving us warning and thus left us as the Infantry who fell back first. These regiments had done jolly good work ever since the beginning but I believe their nerve was a bit shaken. However, no mention was made of that and we got the blame. When the Gurkhas had a chance to get out of their trenches they did so like fury and attacked the Germans. Colonel Robinson commanding the HLI was much struck by them and praised them even though he is known to be very conceited and thinks that

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no other troops but the British know how to fight. This was our first experience. The men were very much upset by the cold and the constant gun and rifle fire and finally by the blowing up of their trenches in two parts. They could not return the fire because most of the rifles were clogged with mud and had jammed. They could not get out of the trenches which were in parts six or seven feet deep. It is not an easy thing to get out of a trench to attack under the best circumstances but for men who were cold and loaded with all their heavy equipment and rifles it was no easy thing especially when your feet stuck in the mud and your hands slipped about on the parapet. The Germans simply shot them like rabbits.

On the 20th December the Germans exploded ten mines under the Sirhind Brigade trenches. There were heavy casualties among the 1/1st Gurkhas and HLI and one company of the 1/4th Gurkhas disappeared without trace. In spite of desperate fighting by the survivors, the Germans took possession of the Indian firing line and the Sirhind Brigade had eventually to fall back towards Festubert and Givenchy was taken by the enemy. While we at Festubert there were several bullets coming over but we saw no one hit. This was the nearest that General Bruncker went to the trenches. After that he never stirred out of the house we used as an HQ.

I think that this taking and retaking of trenches went on for about three days and there was terrible slaughter...... The first day when the fighting was severest there were all sorts of reinforcements and a great deal of cavalry among them some Jodhpur Lancers. There never was such confusion as on the night of the first day. People were launched in to attack but were given no
objective. There were no orders. The consequence was that nothing important was done. The Guards regiment who are supposed to be the flower of the British army could make no impression and the Germans held the advantage they had gained. None of the staff went up except Coleridge (the Brigade Captain) who is reported to have tried a great deal to have stopped the men from running away. The British and Indians were all together in this running away show and none of them showed much pluck to really put up a fight. I must say that the HLI have not done anything so very brilliant on this occasion to think so highly of themselves.

After the Brigade was relieved I met several batches of Gurkhas and I have never seen such miserable beings. They were dead lame and their feet were so very swollen that they could hardly walk. They could not even wear boots and went along supporting one another. They did not know the name of the place where they were going. They did not know the country or the language and had no one to guide them. The troops were quite demoralised and disorganised. We lost over half the men in casualties (over 1800 in our Brigade alone). The Divisional Commander and two Brigade commanders (including Bruncker) were sacked. Everyone is down on the 125th (Napier's) Rifles - they were nearly sent back to Egypt or to India.

There is no doubt that the Indian troops have done very well indeed in the war so far. As regards the future, who can tell? The cold has been most intense but they have withstood it wonderfully well. The sickness has been very little except the sufferings from the cold. As a matter of fact the average sickness has been very much below the British troops. It was not the cold that
worried them so much as the dampness. The morale of the troops has been
wonderfully good both in the firing line and in the billets while they were
resting. The great trouble under which we have laboured is that whenever we
fail in the slightest degree anywhere people raise a hue and cry whereas if
British troops fail under the same circumstances no one mentions it. The
Indian troops had done very well along but when we had the reverse at
Festubert and Givenchy there was a hue and cry. However no one at that time
said that there were British troops there as well. They might have done
something to stop the panic. Then again when we had such a brilliant success
at Neuve Chapelle I heard General Blackadder himself say that people are
singing the praises of the Indian troops as if there were no Britishers with them.
Plainly the thing is that if there is a success in any way it is due to the British
element but if there is a reverse put it all down to the Indians.

One of the Garwhal regiments went into Neuve Chapelle 600 strong
and came out with 55. Three Indian battalions of the Jullundur Brigade could
only muster about 150 men between them. When the 55th Sikhs returned to
India there were only 55 men left of the original 750 who had landed in France.
Of the British officers, only Lt Smythe VC was left. The army in India was
never meant to come to Europe or fight in a such a long drawn struggle. There
is a lack of reserves and reinforcement; the wounded complain that they are
sent back to fight once they are fit. In the future some blighter who has no
sympathy with us will fling it in our face that we were not considered good
enough to fight the Germans. If you talk of scare, I ask you who is not scared.
Even the best troops have it now and then.
Self-inflicted wounds:-

In the beginning of the war it had been noticed that a lot of men shot themselves in the left hand and got away to hospital. This was done both by the Indians as well as Britishers. .... It is true that a bullet coming through a loophole would most probably hit the left hand which was advanced and holding the rifle. Some of the wounded were in the centre of the palm and had made a clean hole. A few men who were detected and on whom guilt was proven were shot and this put an end to the practice.

He reports later on a young sepoy of the 47th Sikhs who shot himself and was sent for trial while serving in Mesopotamia.

In a 'Note' written in April 1916 about his fourth visit to London, Amar Singh wrote about his meeting with the son of Kutub Chandar Sen. This man was responsible for working with Indian students in London and argued that the Government ought to give more commissions to Indians.

When I did not agree with him he said that VCOs should be eligible to rise to the rank of Captain. I said that this cannot be done because these fellows have not got the education and they are quite idiots when compared with British officers. It is quite another thing to run a battalion and be able to live up to the standard of a British officer.

In his diary he noted on the 27th of January 1916:

In my opinion the VCO' status ought to be raised and the British Tommies and sergeants must be made to salute them. That is the only way in which these fellows would be respected. I hear that in Egypt, Tommies have to salute Egyptian officers, why not Indians?
Mesopotamia and India

When the Indian infantry left France at the end of 1915, Amar Singh went too, leaving Toulon on 21 December, passing Corsica and spending a few days in Malta. He was attached to the Headquarters of the 9th Brigade of the 9th Division in Mesopotamia. The Brigade consisted of the 1st and 9th Gurkhas, 93rd Burma Infantry and HLI. He was given little to do; as in France he was responsible merely for seeing to the movement of horses, tents and other supplies and he had difficulties when British soldiers refused to obey his orders. He was sent back from the front because he couldn't eat beef and presumably no other meat was available. At the end of June 1916 he was sent back to Basra because the Army didn't know what to do with him. On September 12th he was appointed ADC to General Knight (1874-1945), commanding the Bombay Brigade. In this role he was given a more meaningful responsibility than any he had held previously. He was treated kindly by the General and spent two years in Bombay until July 1917 when he was commissioned into the 2nd (Gardner's) Horse. On August 17th he transferred to the 16th Cavalry in Delhi.

As a small recognition of India's contribution to the War, nine Indian officers including Amar Singh, and all former cadets from the Imperial Cadet Corps, were given full King's Commissions in 1917. The regiments into which these officers were commissioned appear to have been selected in order of seniority, taking the first five cavalry regiments and the first four infantry regiments. There appears to have been no attempt to take into account any experience, family or class ties or indeed preferences which the officers might have had. Amar Singh was commissioned into the Indian Land forces on 4 July 1905 and promoted to Captain nine years later on 4 July 1914. He would expect to be promoted to Major in 1920. However, he was granted his
King's Commission in 1917 as a Captain with promotion to Major expected in 1927. In other words, after service through the Great War, he 'lost' seven years seniority; after twelve years of service he was placed on the same level as British Captains with four years service. After protests pensions were to count from 1905 but there was no change in the seniority of the Indian officers.

Commentary

Amar Singh gives a very clear picture of the difficulties faced by the inexperienced Indian troops in the trenches. They were trained for fighting tribesmen on the North-West Frontier and were not equipped to fight a highly trained German Army with much stronger artillery support. The trenches at this stage of the war were somewhat makeshift and in places little more than a linking up of shell-holes. The high water table around Ypres meant that trenches were not infrequently flooded. Trenches dug by British troops were often too deep for the smaller Gurkhas. Standing in mud and water for long periods in the winter inevitably led to cases of frostbite and trench foot. Strict adherence to the requirements of caste became all but impossible in these conditions. The Indian troops suffered heavy casualties, especially among their British officers to whom they were accustomed to turn for leadership.

Amar Singh is probably right in pointing out that when things went wrong, the Indian troops tended to get the blame, while they did not always receive due credit for their successes. He himself believes that the Indians have done well. Captain Grimshaw of The Poona Horse, who is not uncritical of Indian troops, wrote in his diary for 1915:
This talk I hear of the Indian army not being staunch makes me very angry. I have seen as much lack of staunchness in certain British regiments as in Indian. The Indian army has frequently been very badly commanded by those in high places. .. The casualties are an eloquent testament to their work. Over 10,000 out of a total of 21,000 killed and wounded.11

There were certainly those, including some who should have known better who, in Amar Singh's words were prepared to 'fling it in our face that we were not considered good enough to fight the Germans.' Indian officers did their best to encourage their troops and to keep up morale. Naik Buland Khan of the 69th Punjabis wrote to the son of Subedar Muhammad Khan in October 1915 to inform him of his father's death:

He showed himself the pattern of valour......and he was a pattern of loyalty to the Government. He was ever on the look-out for the faint-hearted, and if he heard anywhere of a young man who was troubled in mind he went to him and talked to him in such a way that all his discomfort, exile and homesickness faded away.12

Amar Singh's comments on self-inflicted wounds, especially to the left hand, among the Indian soldiers are interesting. Jeffrey Greenhut, a stern critic of the policy of recruiting only from the so-called martial races, suggests that this was a serious problem pointing to low morale among the Indians, with 57% of those Indian soldiers admitted to hospital up to November 3rd 1914 having hand wounds.13 Gordon Corrigan, a former British officer who had served with the Gurkhas, examines the

13 Greenhut J., *The Imperial Reserve: The Indian Corps on the Western Front Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, XII, pp.54-73.
statistics in more detail. He quotes from the report made by Colonel Sir Bruce Seaton, Commanding Officer of the Kitchener Indian Military Hospital in Brighton, which concludes that it was unfair to assume that injuries to the left hand were self-inflicted. A letter written by a wounded Sikh in January 1915 is apposite: ‘I was wounded in the right hand on the trigger finger two months ago and am now well in England. I have done loyal service for the government and am now ready to do it again.’ The trigger finger is of course exposed to the enemy when firing and so it was not surprising that there were a number of wounds of this nature. The fact that this soldier was ready to return to the fighting does not suggest a self-inflicted wound.

What is surprising is that Amar Singh does not seem to have been unduly over-worked during this period! He is frequently on leave in London and seems to find time to ride over to see Sir Pratap Singh and/or the Jodhpur Lancers fairly regularly. He is on good terms with a number of senior officers and political figures. On the 27th January 1915, all leave was cancelled and the Brigade was to be in a constant state or readiness, yet the very next day, Amar Singh goes to London for a week! In these circumstances, one must wonder why he was mentioned in despatches at all. The resentment felt by his colleagues at this time on the Brigade Headquarters staff at not being awarded any honours goes some way to confirming the perception of staff-officers held by front-line troops. Nor is there any suggestion that he might have asked for a posting to one of the Indian cavalry regiments which were in France at this time - not even to the Jodhpur Lancers where he had friends.

Captain Roly Grimshaw had very clear views about the role of young staff officers:

At present Staff officers occasionally - very occasionally - visit the trenches. In my opinion they should always be there in good carefully made bombproofs, connected by a phone to their commands and to one another. They could then carefully study the ground over which attacks must be organised, retirements covered and counter attacks delivered. General Officers of Brigades and Divisions should periodically visit the trenches and discuss with their representative Staff officers details they cannot decide miles in the rear, as at present they often try to do. Young GSOs and Staff Captains are persons who should always be hanging about the firing line instead of concocting trashy maps with coloured flags and chalk marks.16

Amar Singh appears to hold somewhat contradictory views on the status of the Viceroy's Commissioned Officers. On the one hand he wants their status to be raised so that they are saluted by British troops. It certainly must have been galling for the VCOs to see British soldiers saluting Egyptian officers but not themselves, the Indian officers who had fought alongside them in France. Equally, Amar Singh is aware of the difficulties which would be experienced by VCOs who had risen through the ranks and who had neither the basic general education nor the military training for the more senior ranks. He is obviously impressed by the leadership shown by the British officers in the trenches whom he has seen previously only in much more comfortable circumstances.

Service with the 16th Lancers

Introduction

At last Amar Singh has his chance - the opportunity to command a squadron in a regular cavalry regiment of the Indian Army - yet he seems reluctant to seize the opportunity when it presents itself. Although he lacked experience of regimental duty, one might have thought that he would have been less diffident and more confident than he appears to have been. The reason that Amar Singh served with the Sixteenth Lancers rather than the regiment into which he was commissioned appears to be that in 1917 the 2nd Lancers had 15 squadron officers against an establishment of nine while the 16th had only eight. It is, perhaps, also possible that his presence would have been less acceptable in the mess of the more senior regiment. For some reason, however, at this time the Army List shows him as serving with the 2nd, with no note of the attachment to the 16th. It is not until the edition for April 1919 that he is listed as with the 16th. The date of his commission is shown as 25.8.17, his rank as Captain and his date of appointment to his present appointment within the regiment is shown as 15.7.18. The 16th Lancers were based in Delhi at the time and the commandant throughout Amar Singh's service with them was Lt-Colonel C D Mears MVO.

Regimental duty

The following entry offers a description of a typical day in Amar Singh's life during his service with the regiment:-

5.9.19

In the morning I woke at about half past five and after washing, dressed myself and had tea. Then I went on parade and had riding school practice with the
lance at the dummies and jumping until eight when I came to the mess and had breakfast. After that I saw the paper and then went to stables and attended the stables and offices of both B and C squadrons. Then I went to the regimental office and after that came to the mess and read *The Pioneer*. Just then a veterinary officer came from Meerut and I took him to the horse hospital. When he had gone I came to my house and read a little of *Vanity Fair* by W M Thackeray. After that I read a little of a Sanskrit drama translated into Hindi. This done I wrote my appreciation of a scheme set by Hill and then washed, shaved and dressed. At about six I went to the lines. General Roberts, commanding the Meerut Cavalry Brigade, came to inspect us. I was with my remounts and was surprised to see how quickly these have been trained. The General was still at the Tabloid Sports when the rain came on and we dismissed the parade. I now came to my home, changed and bathed, wrote my diary and read till half past eight when I went to the mess...

Colonel Mears seems to have tried his best to give Amar Singh a clearer insight into the duties of a squadron commander:

**Delhi cantonment Saturday 18.1.19**

I was doing a road reconnaissance. The idea was that when there were patrols sent from each of the squadrons I was to have gone too. However, I thought I had got out of it on the excuse of playing polo, but Colonel Mears set a special route for me and I had to do it. I was to reconnoitre the roads to the following places:- Mehrauli, Chatarpur, Assaula, Bahrampur, Kalipur, Badshapur and Gurgaon. The others had to do it on their horses but Colonel Mears told me
that I could go to Mehrauli in my car and then send it on to Gurgaon to meet me.

Amar Singh also gained experience by taking part in manoeuvres with his regiment.

13.2.19

At about nine Colonel Mears explained to us the general idea of the field operation that we were going to have. The hill near the water towers was to be defended by the 72nd Punjabis who were supposed to be one battalion.

The Bedfordshire Regiment were to attack and take it while one squadron of the 16th Cavalry was to dismount and deliver a flank attack as a surprise on the left of the Bedfords. We moved off to the east and then came to Basantnagar where we dismounted and I took my squadron and attacked the hill. The 72nd did not see me until I was within 150 yards. I rushed the position and the umpire told me I had taken the hill. I now began firing on the backs of the remainder of the 72nd. The Bedfords were very late in coming up.

Our Divisional commander got fed up and rode away. The second phase of the operation was that our other squadrons were to take up the pursuit and then throw out a line of outposts. This was done but General Neugent had had enough and so the 'Dismiss' was sounded and all the officers were collected near the water towers where Neugent criticised the whole of the operation.

Experience of a different kind came when his knowledge of Indian languages was used in the examination of British officers who were required to pass test in at least one language in addition to Urdu, the lingua franca of the Army.
5.4.19

At about half past one I had to go over to the mess and examine six officers in colloquial Hindustani. Major Hill and I were on the Board; we passed four and failed two - Lieutenants Warren and Cantwell both of the 16th!

He appears to take a full part in the life of the British officer's mess to the extent that he joins the other British officers in a visit to the Indian officer's mess.

25.2.19

We went to our lines where the Indian officers had given a tea party in honour of Rissaldar Major Agya Ram who is going away on pension. When the Colonel arrived (20 minutes late) Rissaldar Hoshya Singh read out a speech extolling the virtues and services of the retiring officer. After that Agya Ram read out his speech in a very fine and becoming manner.

Agya Ram Bahadur OBI had joined the service in 1886 reaching the rank of Rissaldar Major in 1914, twenty eight years later. One wonders what were his views on Amar Singh's position.

The next day the British officers also gave a farewell tea-party for the Rissaldar Major. The Colonel read out a very fine and complimentary speech in Urdu full of praise of the good work of the retiring Rissaldar Major who then replied. This over we had our tea while the Indian officers sat at their table and we gave them tea as well.

Note that the Indian officers apparently sat at a separate table, apart from the British officers including, presumably, Amar Singh.

The date of commissioning of the Indian officers
The newly commissioned Indian officers were not entirely satisfied as to from when their commissions were to be dated, which affected their seniority among their British colleagues.

Delhi cantonment 14.4.19

I have been agitating (about my commission) through my CO and found that we would be allowed to count our services from the dates of our commissions in the Indian Land Forces but as regard seniority we would have to take the date of our captaincy from 25.8.17. The C-in-C has duly considered the matter and was not going to discuss the point any more.

In fact the Commander in Chief had wanted to put this group of Indian officers on the bottom rung of the promotion ladder and gazette them all as Second Lieutenants.

Amar Singh discussed this point with some of the other Indian officers in the same position.

I told them simply and plainly that I was fed up with the whole thing and would go as soon I had done my eighteen years and was eligible for my first pension.

I told them that my Maharaja was not on good terms with my family and the minute he found that I was losing the support of the British officials he would pounce upon me.

Squadron Commander

Delhi cantonment, Wednesday 25th June 1919. Notes on how I got command of a squadron.

When I first joined the 16th Cavalry in July 1918 I was put in C squadron under Major Digges La Touche. As training commandant, he and the
adjutant were the only two senior officers to me in the regiment. I knew
nothing at all of regimental work so I did not mind. It was the hot weather and
most of C squadron were on leave so there was practically no work to be done.
I learned some work in the office and La Touche was awfully good to me and
taught me a lot of things. Later on Major Hill came. He was the second in
command. His squadron were doing field firing just then so the commandant
put me under him to learn some practical work.

Colonel Mears then offered Amar Singh command of C squadron but he turned it
down. After various changes in squadron commanders Amar Singh went to the
Colonel to ask for command of C squadron. The colonel told him that he could have
had it at any time he asked for it - he was only waiting for Amar Singh to ask.

I said that this was most kind of him. To this he said that there was no
kindness about it. It was my right and he had not given it me before because I
had not been ready to command a squadron.

However, some of the British officers thought that Amar Singh was only with the
regiment for instruction and did not count as a regular officer and he comments that
‘the Indian officers specifically had this idea.’

12.3.19

This morning I went to B squadron which I have taken over. I went all round
and saw the horses. That over I went to the squadron office and worked for
over half an hour. I hear that the Indian officers are very sorry that
Lieutenant Critall is going. I do not wonder at this because Critall allowed
them to run the squadron exactly as they liked. He himself knew nothing about
India. I am an Indian and the officers know that they will have to be more careful.

Amar Singh was not involved in the peace-keeping duties linked to the 1919 riots which followed the passing of the Rowlatt Acts.

The Colonel said that he did not wish to put me in a position that was not to my liking. The Colonel does not think me fit to command a small mixed force and there was also the difficulty of an Indian officer commanding British troops. He told me that I had started learning rather late in life. I did not tell the Colonel anything but thought that a man who does not talk about himself gets left behind. I have passed more examinations and have 14 years of service and still I am not considered know was much as Wordswill or Brown (two young British officers).

On the 9th of October 1919 the regiment was ordered to mobilise for operations in Waziristan.

I saw Colonel Mears yesterday (the 16th) and he told me that he did not think that I knew enough to command a squadron in the field and asked whether I thought that I could command it. I told him that it was no use asking me as I would probably say that I could command the whole Waziristan Field Force. It was for him to judge whether I was capable or not. On this he told me that he did not find himself justified in risking the lives of a whole squadron as I was quite inexperienced - I could not have learnt much as an ADC. I said that I never even had a proper ADC's work either and if he thought that I could not command I would not grouse at him taking the squadron from me.

In the event Amar Singh served under Major Hill.
Relationship between the Government and the Princely States

In 1919 Amar Singh attended a conference between the Viceroy and the rulers of the Princely States.

The only good thing that these conferences do is that they bring the Princes together and it broadens their views and they also get a chance of making one another's acquaintance and exchanging their views. It is very funny and annoying that these Maharajas will go and call on any European in a high or even an ordinary position but they think it beneath their dignity to pay that respect to an Indian member of the Council.

The Government is very acute. During the war there was shortage of recruits, money and material of all sorts and the chiefs, in a majority at least, subscribed handsomely and some even beyond their means. So did the public of British India and the government of India started by making liberal promises even up to giving India a sort of home rule. Then the chiefs began to get frightened and wanted to know what would be their position and status in India in case India got home rule. If they had been wise and patriotic they would have consented to hold the same position under the Indian Council or Parliament or whatever it would have matured into...

Amar Singh's position vis-a-vis the British officers

Amar Singh's position within the regiment was not an easy one and some of the junior British officers were prepared to challenge his authority. 2nd Lieutenant Wilks had been a clerk at Simla and was commissioned from the ranks. Possibly because he was unsure of his own position, he attempted to make himself independent of Amar
Singh, who was his squadron commander, by appearing late on parade etc in a manner which he would not have attempted with a British officer. The other British officers noted this behaviour and Lieutenant Scott told Amar Singh that Wilks was getting too bumptious and that he must show him his proper place. Wilks then went to the Colonel and said that he would not take orders from Amar Singh. The Colonel said to Amar Singh that he had told Wilks off and ordered him to go back on parade and not be a bloody fool. ‘I was his squadron commander and he was to take orders from me.’

(12.7.19) The tricky position in which Amar Singh could find himself among the British officers is further exemplified by the following entry for 29.7.20:

Last night after dinner I smoked a cigar and talked in the mess until about eleven. I get into a rather delicate position these days when these young and hot-headed boys start talking about the late riots at Amritsar and defend General Dyer. They extol him as a hero while I look on him as nothing more than a murderer. I try not to speak at all but when it comes to an acute point I cannot contain myself.....

**Leaving the regiment**

In the following year, and for some unexplained reason, there was a major difference of opinion between Amar Singh and Major Hill together with his Colonel.

7.7. 20

Major Hill (then second in command) has given me a thoroughly bad confidential report though General (illegible) has added some excellent remarks."

There is, unfortunately, no explanation in the diary as to the nature of Major Hill's report. Later in the month, Amar Singh notes:
28.7.20

Ever since Colonel Mears had proposed to send me to do the Field Treasure Chest Officer’s work and the row I had with him I lost all interest in my work. Now all I wanted to do was to go away on leave. I told him plainly that the best he could do was to get me a year’s leave.

Amar Singh planned to take six months leave and then retire under the new pension rules. He then found that he could not retire until he had completed 18 years service. There are three more weary years to get through though I hope the greater part of them will be on leave.

He noted in his diary for 5.7.20 that he began his sixteenth year of service that morning. In spite of these difficulties, when Sir Charles Cleveland asked Amar Singh in 1921 how he got on with his brother officers and how they liked his being with them, Amar Singh replied that:

From the CO to the latest joined subaltern they are all very good to me and I have no complaint. They respect me and I respect them. I do not try to mix too much amongst them and still I do not try to hold off too. Of course I am in rather a difficult position as I am too junior for my age and too old for my rank.

In April 1921 Amar Singh asked General Holman for two years leave pending retirement and he left the 16th Lancers at Kohat in June of that year. However, in October 1922 he received a telegram from the 2nd Lancers (to which regiment he had been originally gazetted) to join them at Poona. On arrival at the cavalry lines at Ghorpur he was told by Major Pearce the Commandant that the regiment was very short of officers and that he must serve with them for a few weeks at least until some others turned up which came as a something of a shock to Amar Singh. He is again
listed among the officers of the 2nd Lancers but as on leave and then very briefly as with the 6th Lancers but on leave. In his diary he does not mention this second change of regiment and he finally left British service in January 1923

Commentary

Amar Singh's diary for this period shows very clearly the ambiguity of his position. The Indian officers - the rissaldars and jemadars who have risen through the ranks are uncertain of his status and role. An Indian, he is treated as a British officer, going with the British officers to the tea party given by the Indian officers in their mess and on the following day receiving the Indian officers in the British officer's mess. However, when the regiment is on peace-keeping duties, Amar Singh is left behind, in order that he may not be put into an invidious position. Such consideration would not be extended to the rissaldars and jemadars who were expected to lead their troops against their fellow countrymen. The decision regarding the date on which the Indian officers' seniority was based seems typical of the petty-minded official attitude of the British towards them.

Amar Singh, coming as he did from one princely state (Jaipur) and with strong links to another (Jodhpur), was naturally interested in the relationship between these states and the British government. Many of the Maharajas had put their forces at the disposal of the British and many of these troops, such as the Jodhpur Lancers, had fought with great distinction. The States' rulers had also offered considerable financial support to the Allies. With the first murmurings of a demand for home rule for India, the Maharajas were uncertain of their position. They all had treaties with the British - treaties which they might have thought their recent sacrifices might have strengthened. They were to offer similar, if not even greater, support during the Second World War.
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treaties which they might have thought their recent sacrifices might have strengthened.
They were to offer similar, if not even greater, support during the Second World War.
Alas, when Independence finally came in 1947, the Maharajas were left largely to fend
for themselves and any treaty obligations were blithely ignored by the British.

Colonel Mears appears to have treated Amar Singh well though he appears to
have thought him inexperienced and possibly lacking in confidence; he may have been
being tactful when he referred to Amar Singh's late start. Nevertheless, Amar Singh
was perfectly correct to draw attention the anomaly that his experience was much
greater than that of younger British officers who are somehow supposed to know more
than he did. The attitude of Wilks in publicly flouting Amar Singh's authority and
refusing to take orders from him illustrates the other side of the double bind in which
Amar Singh found himself. To what extent did very experienced Indian officers such
as the Rissaldar-Major, who had come up through the ranks, resent what they might
see as Amar Singh's privileged status? It is difficult to reconcile Amar Singh's
comment to General Cleveland that "from the CO to the latest joined subaltern they
are all very good to me and I have no complaint" with his difficulty with Lieutenant
Wilks and his disagreement with Major Hill and the Colonel. Was he giving Cleveland
a tactful answer or just what he thought that the General wanted to hear?

It is, unfortunately, not untypical of Amar Singh that he should have tried to
avoid the road reconnaissance exercise. An ambitious officer, eager to learn and to
show his keenness, would surely not have wished to miss out on this opportunity to
gain experience. Or did he believe that such work was too trivial and was beneath
him? He might well have had command of a squadron in the regiment earlier but

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Commandant of the Jaipur State Forces

Until the end of the Great War, Jaipur's only contribution to the Imperial Service scheme was a Transport Corps which had gained a high reputation for itself: 'A very efficient Corps which does much work for the State and has a fine record of service.'

In 1923 a cavalry regiment and an infantry battalion were to be established and come into the scheme. The quarrel between Amar Singh's family and the Maharaja was resolved and he was appointed with the rank of Major as the first Commandant of the Lancers which were to consist of a Headquarters, Headquarters Wing and three squadrons with a total of 530 men. Initially one squadron was set up, commanded by Major Badam Singh who had seen service during the war. Lieutenant David Ali Khan, who had served on the Frontier and in the war, was the squadron officer. In a regular Indian Army unit these posts would have been filled by British officers. The Annual Report on Indian State Forces for 1924/25 commented that:

One squadron of cavalry has been completed. The commanding officer is very keen and in time a good regiment should be raised. New lines (barracks) of a very good pattern have been commenced for the cavalry and infantry.

Setting up the new regiment

Amar Singh's initial impressions were not good. In July 1923 when he went to inspect an infantry unit 'there were only about a dozen men present and the barracks were filthy.' In August he inspected the whole of the cavalry: 'They are a pretty bad lot and I will have to work hard to put them right.' On September 6th he held a saddle

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18 Indian State Forces List July 1924.
parade of the 5th Risala (troop). ‘This is the first time these people have had such an inspection probably since they were raised.’ Three days later he disposed of over 120 horses as unfit for duty.

17.7.23

The Tonk Risala was a joke. The men were all old decrepit fellows while their horses were most of them the size of a donkey or a big goat.

A new and more healthy site with water available was selected for new cantonments with room for drilling and it was decided to raise one squadron at a time rather than a whole new regiment. He arranged to obtain instructors and Indian officers from the Nagra Mahomedan squadron of the 30th Lancers which was being disbanded upon the amalgamation of the regiment. At the end of September Rissaldar-Major Bhagwant Singh came to see Amar Singh in the hope of being employed in the new regiment. He had served in the Jodhpur Lancers before transferring to the 28th Light Cavalry and retired just before the War. ‘He did good work as a recruiting officer and was made an Honorary Lieutenant.’ (24.9.23) New colours were presented in October 1923 but Amar Singh was still having difficulties in finding a sufficient number of fit horses for the first squadron.

9.12.23

Saw the new squadron at drill; they are only doing foot drill. Then I also saw the work of getting the lines cleaned up. This work is not proceeding as rapidly as it might.

Even twelve months later there were still problems.
5. 7. 24

Inspected camel saddles which were disgraceful beyond words. No attempt whatever had been made even to wipe the saddles some of which were covered with bird droppings. No part of the harness had ever been greased or oiled or washed. Cleaning the iron parts had never even been dreamed of.

Amar Singh had to consider every detail concerning the administration of the regiment.

3.1.24

Last night after dinner I smoked a hookah and talked to Luxman Singh jee whom I had sent to Pandit Madhu Sudan jee to find out from him whether there would be any objection in having lance pennons of five colours like the standard (presumably red, yellow, orange, white and green) and also what colours we ought to have in case we decided to have only two coloured pennons. There was also the question as to what colour we ought to have under the badges of the NCOs. Madhu Singh jee said that there was no harm in having five coloured lance pennons. In case we had only two colours then the proper colours are red and orange. Then as regards the colour under the badges we could have either red or orange.

Later he wrote:

I have decided to have five coloured pennons and orange under the NCOs badges.

The lance pennons met with official approval!

23. 3. 24
General Sir Harry Watson inspects - allows Badam Singh jee to drill men.

Took special notice of my lance pennons as they are fine coloured ones.

Nor was Amar Singh necessarily able to rely upon his officers.

23. 1. 24

The men’s uniforms do not fit properly. I told off all my officers very severely for their negligence. I asked them whether they had tried their own coats on or not before they were finished. They said that they had. On this I asked them as to why they had not seen the men fitted as I had given very definite orders that every man's coat and breeches ought to fit just as my own would fit.

10. 6. 24

I went to the Jinsi Najiba and Fateh Teeba to inspect their equipment and uniforms. The barracks for the men are better in this place as they are all built of masonry while the place for guns and stores are better out at Ram Bagh. The men's barracks there are merely mud huts and all in a tumble down condition. The ground for drill is better at Ram Bagh. Here too there is quite enough land but it is not so clean and is rather heavy sand. The equipment here is not quite as good as at Ram Bagh. I am thinking of organising one regiment out of the two and I think that Fateh Teeba would be a better place to keep them on the whole. Sheds would have to be built for the guns though.

Gradually, however, things began to improve.

31. 1. 24

I went to the parade ground and drilled my squadron until Major Reynolds arrived when I asked him to inspect my squadron. He congratulated me on my success in getting the squadron up (to standard) in such a short time.
And three days later:

2.2.24

The Maharaja Sahib of Jodhpur inspected the squadron. First he rode round the squadron and after that he drilled the squadron at the trot and at the gallop and finally brought them down to the charge. The Maharaja expressed great pleasure and satisfaction and said that we had made a very good start.

**Discipline**

Setting proper standards of discipline among both officers and men was not easy and family ties did not make the job easier.

30. 4. 24

Explained to my father that I could not overlook a rissaldar and my own relation (uncle) breaking the rules by galloping on a hard road. If I did I would not be able to keep any discipline.

Amar Singh was still having problems with the lax behaviour of his officers.

27. 5. 24

I went to the Hawa Mahal where I attended the parade of the Bootaiti Rissalas. Not one of the officers was present in time and only a couple turned up later. There were only 65 men present on parade though the daily parade state shows nearly a hundred or so attending. Rissaldar Jojan Singhjee kept on his horse until I had to order him to dismount but then he would not do any drill. They none of them ever happen to do anything thing any day.

1. 7. 24

Embezzlement by rissaldars of Bootah Rissala; they take from the grain ration and from the pay of absent syces (grooms).
14. 6. 24
Dismissed a daffadar of the 2nd Rissala. While on guard he stopped a woman and made her pay for going through a gateway. He also raped another woman.

3. 7. 24
Had an argument with the officers re the number of their days leave; need to establish rules.

**Dismissing men too old to serve**

It became necessary to dismiss some of the men who were no longer fit for work.

6. 2. 24
Discharged ten men; four refused to sign on for ten years and six said they could not do the work.

There were arguments about which men should be dismissed. It was suggested that the regiment should be half Hindu and half Mohommedan but Amar Singh pointed out that the majority of the men were Mohommedan and he was doing things as fairly as possible. It was particularly difficult with the infantry because of the limited budget available.

26. 7. 24
I had to go through the list of officers and NCOs and staff of the Bootaiti Rissalas as I have got orders to amalgamate the six rissalas into one. I am to keep all the men but the staff and officers are to be reduced to one rissala. I have six rissaldars but they are all pensionable except one so there is no problem there. In the same manner there was not much trouble with the naib
rissaldars except that there are two who are both young. I kept the senior of them who also has a hereditary claim as his father and grandfather held the same appointment.

The comment on a hereditary claim is an interesting one as we have already seen how often in the regular Indian regiments the son of a rissaldar-major became rissaldar-major in his turn.

6.8.24

Rissaldar Chagan Singhjee was almost in tears as he is about to be pensioned off. He is really very hard up. I will try to keep him on as he is the only unique instance of an honest man in the whole of the Jaipur army.

This too is a revealing comment indicating the degree of corruption which appears to have existed at that time. This point is confirmed by an earlier diary entry.

11.7.24

Talking with Mr Reynolds. He told me that he had never come across a place like Jaipur. Everyone seems to be paid for doing nothing.

Training

Amar Singh had considerable military experience and had a clear understanding of the standards expected. He was keen to take on young men wherever possible.

17.2.24

I watched the lancers and nakdi (paid soldiers) at riding school. When this was over I had the lancers over the jumps - really better than the old sowars. In
future I shall take as few demobilised men as possible as they are likely to be troublesome whereas a new recruit you can train the way you like.

1.4. 25

A recruit on a remount fell off and broke his collar bone. I had to tell the officers off; I did not care one hoot for the broken bone - it was all in the game - but what I cared about was that if anyone heard both they and I would be called fools for putting a recruit on a remount. Get the recruits passed as sowars and then let them break all their bones and I would not say a word.

Tent-pegging was seen as an important part of a cavalryman's training.

10.10.24

The Maharaja sahib arrived and we commenced tent-pegging. I took several pegs though I was not quite as successful as I ought to have been. Only such of my sowars who were good performed. When this was over I had the squadrons over a jump. The recruits went over with crossed stirrups. They left the reins and held their ears.

Tent-pegging was not without its risks however, even with experienced riders!

23.3.25

Badam Singh jhee fractured his skull while tent pegging.

He was out of danger by the 28th.

The Annual Report on State Forces for 1931/32 comments on the Lancers that Educational training is carried out as laid down for the Indian Army. The whole regiment was in camp for six weeks. One squadron attached for manoeuvres with the Nasirabad Brigade. One cadre class has been held (on field work and tactics). Tactical training has improved as a result of the six
weeks in camp and it is hoped that better and more systematic progress will be
made in training this year.\textsuperscript{20}

\section*{An important inspection}

In December 1924 Jaipur was visited by the Military Adviser-in-Chief to State Forces, General Fagan (1871-1955).

The squadrons were ready formed up and he went down the ranks and found fault with the men for not having both stirrups the same length. Then he saw each man as they went past him in single file at the march. Now Badan Singh jee took some squadron drill and after that the General ordered him to form his squadron on a marker. He had two tries and failed. Then Dand Ali was given a trial but he was not much use. After this an advance guard was sent out and then the General saw some dismounted work. Now he asked me what else I wanted to show to him and I mentioned my favourite thing, the charge. I was allowed to do this and brought them down to it. This was not done at the pace and dressing that I had expected.

After this we went down to the jumps and the men were sent over in sections. One man came down. After this the General went to the lines and saw the standings and the quarter guard and the QM stores. Now he met all the officers and went away. Cullum commented that he thought the parade was very good and much better than he expected. The General had said that the turnout was very good and considering the ground (which was very uneven) was 'quite good' which means 'very good'.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid, 1931/32
The following month the Maharaja inspected the squadron and was met with a royal salute followed by drill and a charge.

10. 1. 25

Now we went to the jumps at a gallop. The darbar was rather surprised to see the jump which was pretty big and Colonel Kidd asked whether the men were to jump with lances and rifles. I said that of course they were. The men as they came went over the jumps in sections so we did not take long over it.

The Maharaja was very pleased with what he saw and gave 150 Rs to hold a feast for the men and gave them two days holiday.

Ceremonial parades

One of the functions of the regiment was to provide escorts of mounted men on ceremonial occasions. For instance:

8.1.24

Inspected the 25 sowars in chain armour that are to go to Jodhpur for the Maharajah's wedding. After that I inspected the horses that are to go for them and also the armour for the horses and weapons for the men. The armour both for the horses and the men requires a lot of repair.

3.2.24

I saw the escort that had been ordered for the Maharaja of Alwar. I had to tell off and send back the rissaldar who was wearing a black lungi instead of khaki. Then to make the whole show ridiculous there was a sowar in red full dress of the Viceroy's bodyguard and I had to turn him out as well.
7.10.24

The Lancers looked very smart indeed in the procession. Mr Reynolds congratulated me on the fine appearance and turnout of the cavalry and told me that they looked just like Indian cavalry (ie regulars). Colonel Kidd also congratulated me on the fine turn-out of the Lancers.

Reports on the Regiment

The Annual Report on Indian State Forces for 1926/27\textsuperscript{21} commented on the Lancers that:

This new unit is getting on satisfactorily. Lt Colonel Thakur Amar Singh is keen on his work. Some of the State's officers, who are mostly pensioned officers of the Indian Army, and have been useful in raising and training the unit, are getting a little bit old and might be discharged when the regiment is complete.

The following year when the Military Adviser in Chief visited personally the Report read as follows:

He (Amar Singh) is well served by his officers who are up to the standard of the Indian army. There has been a great improvement in this unit since it moved into new lines. I foresee that in a couple of years this unit is going to be first-class. There is now an atmosphere of keenness throughout and a keen spirit. All that is required is an organised system of training and plenty of work in the field. Not yet fit (for service).\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid, 1926/27.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid, 1927/28
Commentary

The situation which Amar Singh found when he took over command of the Jaipur Lancers in 1923 seems not to have been untypical of State Forces which were outside the Imperial Service scheme. Old and decrepit men, worn out and broken down horses, poor equipment and inadequate accommodation appear to have been the norm. Judging by the Annual Reports, even some of the Imperial Service units were not much better. In April 1921 Amar Singh had a discussion with Sir James Roberts and Sir Charles Cleveland regarding the Imperial State Forces who suggested that these should be done away with and the Princes allowed to organise their own State Forces to the same standard of efficiency as the Indian Army. Amar Singh pointed out that under the present arrangement the Inspecting Officers kept the numbers and efficiency of these units up to scratch. Amar Singh seems to have been able to muster enough enthusiasm among officers and men and to influence the Maharajah sufficiently so that the Annual report for 1930/31 states that he is:

A very keen and capable officer, fit to command in war. Takes the greatest interest in his unit and is gradually getting them on the right road to efficiency.\(^\text{23}\)

Because of the large number of recruits and remounts the Lancers were not judged fit for war though they would be able to undertake internal security operations. It was expected that following appropriate training of both horses and men that the Lancers would become ‘a really first rate unit.’ By this time Amar Singh was acting as

\(^{23}\) Ibid 1930/31
Commandant of the whole Corps of Jaipur troops in which position he served until his retirement in 1936

Conclusion

Amar Singh's diary is undoubtedly a most valuable ethnographic study, giving, as it does, a detailed picture of life in an upper class Indian family in the first half of the nineteenth century. Although the entries devoted to military matters form only a small part of the whole, they are nonetheless most interesting. For instance, his diary may well be the only account of life in the Imperial Cadet Corps as perceived by one of the cadets. His comments on the contribution made by the Indian Corps in France and the difficulties which the troops faced are also a most important commentary on these events as seen from the Indian standpoint.

Throughout his military career, Amar Singh found himself in an anomalous position, on the divide between two cultures and organisations. He started as a young squadron commander in China with the Jodhpur Lancers and apparently acquitted himself well. However, the Lancers were a State Force unit and not part of the mainstream Indian Army. Amar Singh came from a very different background than the Indian officers in the regular cavalry regiments. He then entered the Imperial Cadet Corps and found himself among a group of gilded youths with varying aspirations, some of whom were of considerably higher social standing in Indian society. Nor was the purpose and status of the Corps itself entirely clear and its very existence is deplored by the Commander-in Chief. One of a handful of cadets to graduate, Amar Singh was then posted to what was virtually a 'non-job'. His commission in the Indian Land Forces was neither one thing nor the other; it was not a full King's commission.
entitling him to command European troops but it was of higher status than a Viceroy's commission. While he might be socially acceptable, at least to some extent, to his British colleagues, his status among the Indian officers was less clear, some of them resenting what they see as his privileged position. Nor were high class Indians ready to accept him as they would a British officer. Unable or unwilling to move on, Amar Singh's position only changed with the outbreak of war when he accompanies the Indian Corps to France.

Social status is as important, if not more important to an Indian as to an Englishman and with the Indian there is the additional dimension of caste. Captain Grimshaw of the Poona Horse wrote a semi-fictional account of an Indian cavalry dafadar's experience in France which is clearly based upon his own service with the regiment. The dafadar Ram Singh, a Rajput, is wounded and ends up in hospital in the Royal Pavilion, Brighton where he is treated by an Indian commissioned doctor who turns out to be the son of a dealer in leather goods.

Ram Singh with studied care drew the bedclothes about him, showing by every gesture and expression his utter disdain for a creature who, whatever rank a foreign government might confer on him, was almost untouchable. For a moment their eyes met. The Rajput stared the other down - the former had 3,000 years of unchallenged social precedence behind him which, when weighed in the balance against a carefully selected shade in socks, ties and Shirtings, even if supported by a B.A. (Cantab) will, so long as the Hindu religion prevails, sweep all before it."

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24 Grimshaw, Capt. R., *Indian Cavalry Officer*, p.175.
Even when Amar Singh is given command of the Jaipur Lancers his position was still delicate because Indian officers of the State Forces were, to some extent at least, an anomaly in the system. The regular Indian army had its British and its Indian officers and the relationship between them was tolerably clear, if not always giving due status to the Indians. However, Indian officers in the State Forces did not fit into this clear pattern of subordination and inferiority. British officers were attached to these units as 'advisers', but how far did their authority extend? Often Indians were given commissions in the State Forces because of their social standing within the state rather than any military aptitude or experience which they might possess. Indeed the British often encouraged the practice of giving commissions to such men. The annual report on Indian State Forces for 1930/31 stated that 'The principle of giving direct commissions to cadets of good houses instead of promoting Indian officers is working well.'

The British seem obsessed with the notion that high status guarantees military efficiency. It was certainly more likely to provide a higher standard of general education but, as the Imperial Cadet Corps experiment showed, high birth was not always linked to energy and enthusiasm for a military life. Chandar Sundaram suggests that the Imperial Cadet corps failed for three reasons. Firstly, the Princes for whom it was designed to benefit were disappointed that they were not to be granted full commissions which would enable them to fill senior commend positions. Placing the Corps under the Foreign Department rather than the Army led to a lack of cooperation. Finally, when it was clear that the Corps was not developing as had been

25 Annual Report on Indian State Forces, 1930/31

hoped, no steps were taken to improve the situation. The position of Indian Princes was even more complex when the Jodhpur Lancers and other State Forces served abroad. To what extent were the maharajas, with their treaties with the raj, allies of the British, on an equal footing with them, rather than beholden to them? Captain Grimshaw reported on a row he had in France with a British officer of the RAMC who wanted to turn the Indian officers of the Poona Horse out of their first class compartments on a train in order to make way for British warrant officers.27

Amar Singh noted that, while they were in China, Sir Pratap Singh prevented the Indian officers of the Jodhpur lancers being treated in the same demeaning manner in which British officers tended to treat other Indian officers. The Indian States were in a semi-autonomous situation vis-a-vis the Raj and Sir Pratap expected British officers to recognise this and to treat the Indian officers of the State Forces accordingly. Those officers also were likely to come, as Amar Singh himself did, from a very different background than the VCOs of the regular Indian Army. His experience in China made Amar Singh unwilling to serve in the Indian army because he did not wish to be 'treated like a coolie.' In his notes on the campaign in China written in 1901, Amar Singh commented:

The Indians are looked upon as inferior in the scale of humanity. The British are better treated, supplied, fed, clothed and paid than the Indians. No Indian can rise above the rank of rissaldar- or subedar-major, and however young or junior a British officer may be he always looks down upon the other as an ignorant fellow, even though he may be much more experienced and possessed of a better head.

27 Grimshaw, Capt. R., Indian Cavalry Officer, p.28.
He goes on to give a number of examples where Indian officers were treated as inferiors. The fact that British soldiers were not required to salute Indian officers, not even Sir Pratap, seems particularly to have rankled.

Taking command of the Jaipur Lancers, Amar Singh seems at last to have found his niche and he tackled the task of setting up this new regiment with enthusiasm. However, (and there is often a 'however' in Amar Singh's career), not all of the British inspecting officers were equally impressed by him. The Military Adviser in Chief, writing in the official published Report on State Forces for 1927/28 stated that Amar Singh was 'very keen but is weak.' Is this another instance of the flaw in Amar Singh's character which seems to have been present throughout his career? One is reminded of the comments of Captain Patterson way back in 1889: 'He however does not know his work and takes no trouble to learn it. It is a pity he is not made to.'

Why was Amar Singh content to remain as an ADC for so long? Why did he not seek a more active posting? Why did he leave the 16th Lancers? His diaries are clear evidence that Amar Singh was undoubtedly a shrewd observer of the scene around him. Was he, in the end, a better observer than he was player?

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CHAPTER FIVE: THE SELECTION, EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF INDIAN OFFICERS

Introduction

There is nothing in the military history of any of the Native armies of India to justify a belief that with fair opportunities the Native soldier is not capable of becoming an efficient troop or company commander, under the careful selection, education and training of his troop officer.¹

So wrote Lord Napier of Magdala (1810-1890) in 1875. Prior to the Mutiny, promotion to and within the officer ranks was solely on the basis of seniority within the regiment. This meant that they were old men by the time that they reached the senior rank. Sita Ram was promoted to Jemadar after 35 years hard service and to Subedar thirteen years later at the age of sixty-five.

I would have been much better fitted for this position thirty years earlier. What could I do now at the head of my company? Could I double-march or perform Light Infantry drill? But I was expected to be as active as ever and no allowance was made for my 48 years service.²

An even more extreme example was the Subedar-Major of the 8th Bengal Light Cavalry was killed charging at the battle of Ramnagar. He was 78 years old with 60 years' service!³ The situation only changed after the Mutiny and then rather slowly, so that for a number of years afterwards, there were still elderly and unfit senior Indian officers serving with their regiments.

¹ Response by Lord Napier to a letter from the Military Department, 1875. L/MIL/7/7240.
² Lunt, J From Sepoy to Subedar, p. 172.
At the beginning of the nineteenth century, when promotion went by seniority, the Indian officer's education - or more usually complete lack of it - was of little significance. All that was required of him was that he knew the words of command and stood bravely in front of his troops. However, as tactics and weaponry became more complex, their lack of even a basic education became an increasingly significant handicap for many, though not all, Indian officers. This was a problem which was to last until at least the Second World War and may be the one of the reasons why the Indian army has retained a role for junior commissioned officers who have not attended the Indian Military Academy. Regimental schools went some way to mitigating this difficulty but one suspects that they received greater encouragement in some units than in others. Captain Morton of the 24th Punjabis wrote in 1907:

90% of recruits enlisted are entirely illiterate, and the ambition to rise in their profession will, at best, only come after several years service in the ranks, combined with a good deal of unpalatable instruction in the Regimental School. Only a comparatively small percentage of men enlist with any idea of completing the full term of 21 years service.

The level of training, too, once the NCO became an officer, was variable. Specifically, there seems to have been an almost total lack of any leadership training for the Indian officers; they were expected to have developed their leadership skills through their, often long, experience as an NCO. This situation, too, lasted into the Second World War, except for those, relatively few, Indians who received the King's Commission having attended the College at Dehra Dun.
Selection

The pre-Mutiny system of promotion by seniority was seen, for example by the Marquis of Dalhousie, as 'the bane of the Indian service. The governing principle should be ...... the selection of no man who is not confessedly capable and efficient.'

A sepoy who entered the service at 16 could not expect to become a naik before he was 36, havildar at 45, jemadar at 54 and subedar at 60. Their duties were generally monotonous and irksome unless on active service. The system produces 'a great feebleness of character and physical incapacity arising from age and infirmity in the higher native officers of the service.'

The problem persisted after the Mutiny. In 1872, Inspection Reports show that in 26 out of the 49 regiments of infantry in the Bengal Army, one or more Indian officers were unfit for service. By 1874, this figure had risen to 34 regiments i.e. nearly 70% of the whole. Typical comments were: 'old and worn-out, too old for active service, six officers unfit on account of age and infirmities'. There were implied reservations in the reports of the inspecting officers as to the capacity of the existing Indian officers for the more extended duties imposed by the new regimental organisation, though there was no doubting their smartness, cleanliness and willingness.

Immediately after the Mutiny the degree of trust which had existed between the Indian sepoy and his British officers was shattered and would take many years to rebuild. The loyalty of the Indian troops and especially that of their officers who

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6 Macan, Captain, Parliamentary Papers 1831-32 XIII (735-5) House of Commons, p. 150.
7 Abstract of Confidential Reports on Native Regiments as to the efficiency of Native Officers, L/MIL/7/7240.
might, perhaps, lead the men in any future uprising, was a major concern. Some British officers still had serious doubts regarding the abilities of the Indian officers - there was 'very vehement and persistent opposition from men representing the old school.' The objections were based on the perceived inefficiency of the Native Officers, especially in Madras, and the consequent necessity of having more British officers. The lack of trust which followed the Mutiny meant that it was felt that there were dangers in giving the Indian officers too much responsibility and authority. However, some British officers still believed in the importance and value of the Indian officer. Sir Henry Norman (1826-1904) wrote:

I do not conceive it possible to have a satisfactory Native army without thoroughly good Native officers. We should have thoroughly efficient and, if possible, thoroughly loyal and contented Native officers; and I think we do our best to secure them under a system under which we give our Native officers responsible and honourable positions, with a suitable and adequate training.

The system of promotion based purely on seniority changed and Indian officers were now compulsorily retired after 32 years of service.

The Mutiny had brought a number of officers into the service who had received immediate posting into the officer ranks. Such a privilege was usually dependent upon the number of recruits which the potential officer brought with him. For instance, when the 2nd Punjab regiment was raised in 1849, Tota Ram and Nasrullah Khan who had each brought in a complete troop came up from Hindustan, were given command of their respective troops. The practice of giving direct commissions to men who

7 Departmental Minute No 438 of 1876, p. 4, L/MIL/7/7240.
8 Norman, Sir H., Note on the organisation of the Indian Army, 11.10/1875, Chap 1, para 15. L/MIL/7/7240.
brought in a sufficient number of recruits appears to have continued at least until 1865 when Mamara Kan, the son of the late Rissaldar-Major Lahras Khan, was appointed as a Jemadar in the 2nd Punjab on bringing in 14 men with 250 rupees each. The practice of linking rank to the number of men and horses which a recruit brought with him harked back to the Moghuls and was employed by James Skinner when he was raising his irregular regiment. He gave the rank of risaldar to anyone bringing in 100 horsemen while those who brought in 60 men became naib-risaldars and 30 men, jemadars. This arrangement had brought a number of advantages.

As Lord Napier wrote in 1875:

> In recent years some men have become Jemadars and Subedar more quickly and many of them were immediately promoted if they brought young men for enlistment during the Mutiny. This is a much better system. These officers were men of influence and were much more highly regarded by the sepoys, being looked upon as fathers of the company. Those Native officers who became Jemadars and Subedars at once did good service during the Mutiny and led their men well. They were young and full of spirit.

Supporting the system of promotion on merit, he wrote:

> The officers of the three armies (Bengal, Bombay and Madras) who have never believed in the ability of the Native Officer, and, consequently, have never thought of selecting the best men, and cultivating and bringing out their intelligence and capacity, would give an adverse opinion. On the other hand, the opinion of many distinguished officers who have tried the Natives of every class of Hindustan, and have proved their capacity in many a hard service,

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9 History of the 2nd Panjab Cavalry, p. 19.
appears to me a far weightier one, and it is supported by all the histories of the
actions of the Native armies of India.\textsuperscript{10}

However, not everyone was pleased by the new arrangements and the sepoy was concerned at the possibility of unfairness and favouritism: Sita Ram was not impressed:

They now have examinations and promotion goes by supposed merit, which means in effect at the pleasure of the commanding officer, which is very precarious thing to depend on for promotion.\textsuperscript{11}

Nor did the changes have immediate effect. In 1872 the Duke of Argyll inspected the system adopted in 1857 for the selection and training of Indian Officers and reported little change or marked improvement overall although there had been some advance in the Bengal Army.\textsuperscript{12} The sons of the Indian Rajahs and Maharajahs were seen as an alternative source of Indian officers. It was hoped that 'Native gentlemen' might be encouraged to accept direct appointment. The Secretary of State wrote in 1876:

The selection and appointment of a few Native gentlemen of good family, of approved loyalty, and of good education to hold the position of Native commissioned officers ..... could not fail, especially if they had the further claim of being sons of distinguished Native officers, to promote a feeling of professional pride and self-respect among other members of the same class and enhance the dignity and importance of their position.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{10} Response by Lord Napier to a letter from the Military Department, 1875. L/MIL/7/7240.
\textsuperscript{11} Lunt, J. From Sepoy to Subedar, pp. 172/3.
\textsuperscript{12} Napier, Lord, Memorandum, L/MIL/17/5/1674.
\textsuperscript{13} The Secretary of State for India to the Governor General, 10.8.1876, para 11, L/MIL/7/7240.
Unfortunately these hopes were not generally realised; Indian young men of good family had little taste for the boring routines of regimental life.

Selection for promotion was on a regimental basis and the balance of classes within a regiment had to be taken into account. Thus a promising officer might find his way upwards blocked because there were many candidates of his own class. Jemadar Jamyat Singh joined the 2nd Punjab Cavalry in 1853\(^{14}\) and served with it for 25 years. He was promoted to Jemadar in 1859 and advanced to the 1st Class of the Order of Merit in 1862, following the campaign in Afghanistan. However, in 1878 he transferred to the 5th Punjab Cavalry as a Risaidar as an excess of officers of his rank and class meant that further advancement in the 2nd was unlikely. Right up to the end of the Second World War, Viceroy's Commissioned officers were still battalion appointments.\(^{15}\)

**Education**

It is highly desirable that, in conjunction with other improvements, the standard of education of native officers should be gradually raised. Perhaps in the distant future we can picture an Indian Sandhurst, peopled by the sons of well-educated Indian gentlemen and sending forth a race of native officers, loyal to the State, high in principle, active in body, intelligent in mind and devoted to duty.\(^{16}\)

During the nineteenth century the recruits were mainly illiterate peasants; they could not read or write their own language and did not speak any English. In an effort to remedy these difficulties, regimental schools were established, although not without

\(^{14}\) Bengal Army List for 1877.

\(^{15}\) Montagu, Lt-Col, 2\(^{nd}\) Battn, 2\(^{nd}\) Punjab Regiment, private communication.

\(^{16}\) Elsmic, Major A.M.S., 56\(^{th}\) Punjab Rifles FF. Native officers of the Indian Army in *Journal of the Indian United Services Institute* Vol XXXVI No 167 April 1907.
some opposition. For instance, in Madras in 1830 two schoolmasters were authorised per unit while it was in garrison.\textsuperscript{17} There was, however, a fear among British officers that if the Indian officers became too highly educated they would be tempted by higher paid jobs in the civilian life. Lord Napier wrote:

If we educate too highly we shall be unable to satisfy either the social wants or the ambition of the Native officer. The amount of education contemplated in the regimental schools is sufficient for our purposes.\textsuperscript{18}

In spite of the opposition, schools were established and were effective. The Record Book of the 28th regiment Bombay Infantry shows that in 1869 'the number of men who can read and write is large and creditable to the educational efforts of the past year.' In 1870 the Commander-in-Chief remarked with pleasure on the number attending school in the regiment.\textsuperscript{19} Some British officers went further in their suggestions. Captain Hennell, writing in the Journal of the India United Services Institute suggested that Soldiers' Institutes be established.\textsuperscript{20}

My proposal for the establishment of Soldiers' Institutes in the Native army must be divided into three parts:- First - as a preliminary measure - I would advocate the extension of our present regimental school system. Second, I would advocate the formation of small regimental libraries and recreation rooms. Thirdly, I would suggest the establishment of a service printing press at every large station.

\textsuperscript{17} Singh Sandhu, Major General, \textit{The Indian Cavalry}, p. 57.
\textsuperscript{18} Lord Napier, 1875, L/MIL/7/7240.
\textsuperscript{19} Record Book, 28\textsuperscript{th} Regiment Bombay Infantry in the Indian National Archives, Delhi.
\textsuperscript{20} Hennill, Captain R., Bombay Army. Soldiers' Institutes for the Native Army of India in \textit{Journal of the Indian United Services Institute}, Vol 5, 1876, p. 71.
He refers to a great improvement in regimental schools in recent years; girls' schools were formed in every regiment in the Bombay army at the instigation of Lord Napier.

There are now 3 or 4 classes where English is eagerly studied by sepoys seeking promotion. Native officers now read English newspapers and take an interest in the world around them of which they knew little or nothing before. Company orderlies now keep their pay accounts and rolls in English. English copies of the 'Field Exercise' and 'Rifle Instruction' now may be seen in a good number of regiments.

As early as 1888, the idea of a Military College for Indian officers was being put forward by enlightened officers such as Sir George Chesney (1830-1905), Military Member of the Supreme Council. He recognised the lack of education among the Indian officers:

Good officers as they are according to their lights, brave faithful and intelligent, their education is defective and they cannot come into line with our own officers until it is improved.

The ability of the Indian officer to speak English was seen as crucial; as he wrote:

A man can have all the military instruction, but until he can transact regimental business in the English language and study his profession in it, he cannot take his place in the Army alongside the English officer.²¹

He proposed the addition of a senior department for military training to the schools which already existed for the education of Indian princes and nobility. If student numbers were small, a single military school might give the best results. However, their lack of a basic general education remained as a further handicap for the potential

Indian officers. Major Laing of the 12th Pioneers wrote that: ‘It is manifest that the educational qualifications of both native officers and NCOs are generally of the poorest quality due to want of early schooling.’

Before promotion to lance-havildar, soldiers were expected to be in possession of the 3rd class educational certificate (the 3 Rs, a little geography etc), havildars to have the 2nd class certificate and VCOs the 1st Class. In order to further improve the situation, it was proposed that military schools would be established to provide training for NCOs and that, in future, no Indian NCO would be promoted to jemadar unless he had attended one of these schools. However, this training was not to be the equivalent of the training offered at Sandhurst; a minute by ‘E.G.B.’ suggests that:

The bulk of the officers we require for the ranks of jemadar and subedar have not the education necessary to absorb the teachings of a school on the lines of Sandhurst. Few of them know English and any attempt to insist on such knowledge as a qualification would be most unpopular. It is not necessary to give (Indian) officers the high standard of training which Sandhurst implies. The Sandhurst boy can aspire to the highest ranks in the army and to appointments requiring the highest attainments. The class from which we get our native officers is quite unfitted for any such positions.

Indian soldiers in France during the First World War noted the value and importance of education. The Chief Censor commented that

\[\text{Laing, Major F.C., 12th Pioneers, Education in the Native Army in Journal of the Indian United Services Institute, VolXXXVIII 1909, p. 193.}\]

\[\text{Report of the India Sandhurst Committee, evidence of Col Walshe RA, L/MIL/17/5/1785.}\]

\[\text{Minute by ‘E.G.B.’ signed and dated 20.3.1917. L/MIL/7/19006.}\]
The Indians have not been slow to draw a moral from the close connection between wealth and knowledge which they have seen in the West, and there is no doubt the cause of education had received a large impetus.\textsuperscript{25}

and that

Under the stress of necessity many Indian soldiers during their stay in Europe have learned to read and write their own languages, and primers and spelling books have come in large quantities from India to the Army.

Fateh Yar Khan of the 19th Lancers wrote home: ‘Get the children (boys and girls) taught to read and write well. Here teaching is obligatory.’\textsuperscript{26}

However, literacy was to remain a problem for some sepoys until 1947.

Brigadier Bristow in command of the Dogras' Regimental Centre where recruits were trained reported that ‘some recruits arrived illiterate, probably because the nearest school was too far from home; the rest would have been to primary school, and a fair number to secondary school.’\textsuperscript{27} This problem affected the technical arms especially.

At the Jodhpur Lancers' Training Centre in the nineteen-forties. ‘Education was another problem as comparatively few educated boys were prepared to enlist as recruits.’ This affected the armoured car regiment especially ‘because of the technical nature of their role and so education had to be included alongside the technical training.’\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{25} Chief Censor's Report, 18.12.15. L/MIL/5/825.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
Training

It is unfair, if not immoral, to give a person a leadership job without giving him some training for leadership.\textsuperscript{29}

The first steps to improve the standard of horsemanship and training in the Madras cavalry was taken in 1787 when a riding master was appointed. A cavalry riding school had been established at Arcot in 1807 for the instruction of joining officers and recruits. A recruit training depot at the same place in 1816 for the Madras Cavalry regiments.\textsuperscript{30} This depot was to train 200 recruits at a time. Unfortunately, the depot was closed in 1820 and the training of recruits became, once again, a regimental responsibility. Later during the nineteenth century other schools of instruction were set up and appropriate qualifications awarded. The Cavalry School at Sagour opened in 1910. The course was six months long and most officers and a large proportion of NCOs attended. The curriculum included equitation, skill at arms, remount training, cavalry training and its tactical handling.\textsuperscript{31} Two other schools which cavalry officers attended were the Small-Arms School at Pachmari and the Machine-Gun School at Ahmednagar. Each regiment had a least one officer and a few NCOs trained in the handling of the Vickers machine gun.

The Permanent Order Book of the 2nd Punjab Cavalry offers some valuable insights into the training of Officers and NCOs. An entry for 8th Dec 1884 reads as follows:

The training in details of the work of Native Officers and NCOs is of the greatest importance and up to the present time there has been no organised system of instructing them. The Commanding Officer considers that this duty

\textsuperscript{30} Singh Sandhu, \textit{The Indian Cavalry}, p. 57.
can fairly be entrusted to officers commanding squadrons and that this
instruction can easiest be given at their quarters. He, therefore, proposes that
reports on Wednesdays should, for the present, be held by Squadron
Commanders at their bungalows and suggests that they take the opportunity of
having up the Native Officers, NCOs and Lance Duffadars of their respective
squadrons in undress and giving them the necessary instruction which he thinks
will best be conveyed by question and answers.

The points which seem to require special notice are: Duties of Native
officers and NCOs on parade in all positions, care being taken to impress upon
them the points in which it may have been noticed that they have failed. Duties
of reconnoitring parties, scouts, advanced and rear guards, outposts, in which
duties hundreds of simple questions could be suggested. Musketry instruction
and theory which will require to kept up now more than ever now that the
inducement of NCOs to qualify themselves has been removed by the
discontinuance of the Musketry Prize.

To these principal points might be added hereafter questions on the conduct of
Native Officers and NCOs in detached command of small parties, either on
duty at the outposts or on service, in any contingency that might arise and a
few simple questions to elicit their knowledge in stable management and the
general care and treatment of horses, in which many of them are sadly
deficient. 32

31 Ibid, p. 421.
32 Permanent Order Book, Sam Browne’s Cavalry, entry for 8.12.84.
In 1898 the practice of examining NCOs every Wednesday in drill, riding school drill and detached duties was introduced into the 2nd Punjab:

In the next Squadron training native officers should be placed in charge of patrols and given a general bearing on a previously selected position starting from different points with the object of being able to find the position. They should also be instructed how to prepare a rough sketch of the position, together with a report on the strength of the enemy, nature of the surroundings and the most suitable line of attack. Native officers will be expected to acquaint themselves with the use of the compass and the method of preparing a simple sketch.33

The areas in which the Indian officers and NCOs were to be instructed are generally fairly basic but there is a clear expectation that at times they are likely to find themselves on their own without a British officer and in command of a small group of men. It seems unlikely the instruction would have included topics such as leadership and morale. Towards the end of the nineteenth century it was suggested that a college be set up to train Indian officers. The syllabus for such a college might include elementary topography, map-reading, tactics, fortification, law, company accounts with the students being taught in Urdu.34 H W Norman, writing in 1878 in the Indian United Services Journal, argued that the experience of the Franco-Prussian and Turkish Wars showed that more officers would be needed per unit. There were now higher officer casualties due to more accurate weapons and the tactic of picking off the officers first. His view was that for the Indian Army in such a situation, the onus

33 Ibid, entry for 1898.
would fall upon the Indian officers who would therefore need to be trained to take
over in such an eventuality.

It seems to me that if heavy casualties occur among the European officers, we
must expect companies and troops often to fall under Native officers, and
naturally the command will devolve upon the latter after much loss and at
critical times. They should therefore be habituated to command, which cannot
be the case in any system by which there is a large number of European
officers.35

'J McD B' made the same point even more forcefully in the same publication a few
years later

Does the system of training in vogue tend to prepare the native officers for this
contingency (British officers becoming casualties)? Most decidedly not. Every
shred of individuality is denied him. Until self-dependence is recognised,
inculcated and encouraged, we most assuredly court disaster. British officers
assume command - even if inexperienced - to the detriment of native officers.
Many instances might be cited from the records of our own small campaigns in
which the native officer has borne himself intelligently and with credit to his
regiment. We must devote more time than now to practical battle training.36

The anonymous writer asserted that, properly selected and trained and given the right
experience, the average native officer was quite capable of leading his men on as
European battlefield. He also wished to see opportunities for Indian officers to rise to
higher ranks than subedar- and risaldar-major.

35 Norman H.W., Note on officering the Indian Army, 5.7.1878, L/MIL/17/5/1686.
36 'J.McD B., The Higher Training of infantry officers, Journal of the Indian United Services
Institute 1892, p. 251.
When Lord Napier became Commander-in-Chief, he made field training, which had previously been restricted to sham fights lasting a few hours, more realistic by introducing exercise camps.37 Earlier, training had been mostly confined to the parade ground and the endless repetition of drill movements. The *Cavalry Training* manual which was distributed in the 1880s preached 'shock tactics' and laid great stress on the drilling of the troops, and in succession, the squadrons, the regiment, the brigade and finally the division. However, in a Memorandum on Army Training in India 1910-11, Sir Douglas Haig (1861-1928) wrote:

Reports show that in too many cases (cavalry) regiments arrive at brigade concentrations or manoeuvres insufficiently grounded in the first elements of cavalry evolutions. The faults have been pointed out regularly year after year, but, except in the case of a few regiments, insufficient steps have been taken to correct them.38

The Brigade training of the Bannu Brigade carried out in 190839 was a very well-planned exercise, including infantry and artillery as well as two cavalry regiments. A mock 'village' with targets was built so that live firing could be carried out. The setting for the exercise was, however, based upon tribal warfare on the frontier. The report makes no specific reference to the performance of the Indian officers. Valuable training also took place during the First World War as exemplified by Grimshaw's note.

Saturday 12 December. Reconnaissance scheme with squadron. Most useful for teaching the men to work in a foreign country. All the Indian officers told me on their return that the scheme was full of instructional value.40

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37 Shamid Hamid, *The Indian Cavalry*, p. 41
38 Haig, Gen Sir D., Memorandum on Army Training in India, 1910-11, p. 4, L/MIL/17/5/2198.
40 Grimshaw Captain R. *Indian Cavalry Officer*, p. 52.
For the cavalry still in France there was training in the mounted role in April 1916 at regimental, brigade and divisional level which did much to enhance their efficiency.41

A study of the Army Lists enable us to compare the qualifications of Indian officers at various dates (see appendix A). For instance, in the Poona Horse in 1903 the seventeen Indian officers held between them five Musketry Certificates, nothing more. By 1914 the same number of officers in the same regiment held thirteen Musketry Certificates, nine of them were qualified in MG plus three at extra or distinguished level and six held Equitation Certificates. This is clearly a significant increase in the level of training. In Hodson's Horse in 1914 of the seventeen Indian officers, seven held a musketry certificate, one was qualified on the machine-gun with another holding a 'Distinguished' qualification on this weapon. None of them held the equitation certificate but five had attended the Army Transport Course and two were qualified as assistant instructors in army signalling. However, not all regiments were up to the same standard. In Skinner's Horse in 1914 the nineteen Indian officers held only nine Musketry Certificates between them. This seems very surprising for the senior cavalry regiment!

Colonel Maunsell, who commanded the Scinde Horse between the World Wars, was scathing in his criticism of the Indian cavalry immediately prior to the First World War.

Regiments appeared to be judged more by the sporting character of their officers than by the latter's professional capacity. It is, indeed, hardly an exaggeration to say that a regiment with a good polo team might almost be said to have been able to snap its fingers at inspecting officers. The troops worked

41 Singh Sandhu, Maj Gen The Indian Cavalry, p. 304.
hard enough: the work was frequently misdirected through lack of capable supervision. This was more marked in the cavalry than in the infantry

As a result of inadequate training nearly the whole of the NCOs were quite incapable of imparting instruction, and a number of the Indian officers as well. The proportion of either who could read a map was very small. There were numbers of Indian ranks who were too soft or too old to stand the strain of active service, and who, moreover, did not want to go when their chance came.

It was a matter of the greatest difficulty to get rid of an incapable Indian officer owing to lack of support from higher authority. A commanding officer in a bad regiment might find himself saddled with Indian officers and NCOs who were working harm, but against whom it was a matter of great difficulty to get tangible evidence for trial. With the Indian officers only partially trained and, what is more, brought up under the slipshod tradition of the 'Irregular Horse', discipline was by no means of the precise and strict nature a great war demands.  

It is regrettable that the need to give Indian officers greater experience of independent command was not grasped before the First World War when heavy casualties among the British officers led to difficulties because of the inexperience and lack of confidence among the Indian officers. The need to offer Indian officers better training and more responsibility and to take more care in their selection had been made before the War; Captain Barrett again:

The requirements of modern war, and the great width of front which armies now occupy, in compare to what they formerly did, tend to throw more and

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42 Maunsell, Col, The Scinde Horse, pp. 45-46

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more responsibility on the native officers and call for increased initiative, self-reliance and skill on their part. They may find themselves far removed from any possibility of consulting with their British officers, and the decisions they then arrive at may seriously affect the whole course of operations. It becomes therefore continually more and more necessary that they should be thoroughly well grounded in the science of their profession. The material is excellent, it only remains to make the best of it.43

Another British officer wrote that:

Responsibility and initiative are not subjects that can be taught at a college but are abstract qualities that are bred in a man. To bring these qualities forward in sufficient prominence, the only method is to give frequent opportunities and ample encouragement to the young native officer to practise himself in the exercise of them.44

Both these writers deprecated the practice whereby the young inexperienced British officer inevitably took precedence over his older and more experienced Indian counterpart.

After the Great War and the change in organisation of infantry companies from two half-companies to four platoons, the argument for a college to train Indian officers re-surfaced. The new system required the platoon commanders to operate much more independently in battle and rendered central control by the company commander more difficult. Captain Bonham-Carter of the 40th Pathans who had commanded a District Platoon Commander's School wrote a long article in the Journal of the Indian United

43 Captain Barrett, JUSI, p. 177.
Services Institute in 1922. He argued that Indian officers had been given very little responsibility under the old system of half-companies and had been restricted to passing on the orders of their British officers. "They were given little opportunity of using their own initiative and possessed no sense of command." He contrasted the training - or rather lack of training - which the Indian officers received with that of their British counterparts who emerged from Sandhurst at the end of an eighteen-month course.

In the Indian Army, the training that a candidate receives as an NCO, and the examination which he now has to pass for promotion are considered sufficient, and the platoon commander is created at the stroke of a pen. He has no special training, no school to go through to help him understand the duties and responsibilities of his new position. He is merely created a platoon commander and left to work out his own salvation.

The Annual Report on Indian State forces for 1926/27 contains in an Appendix details of a course held at Gwalior in 1927 between January and March for senior officers of the State forces. Lectures from the course commandant and his second-in-command covered topics such as Map Reading, Training of NCOs, Use of Sand Models, Attack, Defence, Reconnaissance, Night operations, Reaguards and Retirement and Mountain Warfare. On the whole, these appear to the sort of topics which might be taught to British officers though it does depend on the level at which the tactics are being taught. Judging by the demonstrations the tactics are bring taught at company and squadron level. One would not expect senior British officers to have to be taught map-reading. Mountain warfare

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presumably is related to service on the North-West Frontier. Demonstrations, carried out by the 4th Gwalior Infantry and 3rd Gwalior Lancers included the company as an advanced guard to a battalion, inter-communication in the field, the personnel of a battalion in attack, a squadron as an advanced guard, the company in the attack, an out-post Company etc, together with a demonstration by the Royal Engineers and one on the Lewis gun. Schemes were linked to the lectures and demonstrations and there were more specialised lectures on topics such as camouflage, armoured cars, machine guns, supply in the field etc. Each member of the course was also required to give a lecture on a topic of his choosing. In addition to these courses, officers and men from the State Forces went on courses with comrades from the regular Indian Army and/or went on attachment to Indian Army units.

Between the two world wars, recruit training in the Royal Bombay Sappers and Miners began with field craft, weapon training, drill, physical training and map-reading before the men moved on to their specialist training. Educational training consisted of preparation for the Recruits' Test and 3rd Class Urdu exams. In the Sappers and Miners, VCOs were selected from the ranks and there was no special training on promotion. Most of them were of long service, had risen through the ranks and were very able in practical terms at their work but they were not able to do the calculations, designs etc expected of British officers. During the Second World War, a field troop of the Bengal Sappers and Miners built a Bailey bridge in circumstances thought impossible by the British, American, Polish and Canadian engineers and without a single casualty. In general, there do not appear to have been any special training schools established solely for the benefit of potential VCOs. Qualifications for

47 Leslie-Jones, Colonel RE, served with the Royal Bombay Sappers and Miners, private communication.
48 Thomas and Mansingh Lt-Gen P S Bhagat
promotion to the rank of jemadar was based on meritorious service in the ranks and there were no short cuts or special entry schemes. In 1945/6 The Indian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers started a scheme to train suitably educated young men as artificers and for WOI and II ranks but there was a lack of suitable candidates with leadership and command qualities.

Conclusion

Can it be believed that the countries which produced the armies of Hyder Ali and Tippoo cannot now give so many as two men out of a hundred possessed of courage and intellect enough to command a troop or company under every circumstance, if they are properly trained by officers capable of giving the necessary instruction? History and practical experience are opposed to such an opinion.

The abolition of promotion on the basis of purely age and seniority was clearly a correct decision and enabled, in theory at least, the promotion of the best candidate for the post. Considerations of class and clan continued, however, to intrude. Havildar Lebh Singh, of the 69th Punjabis, serving in France in 1915 wrote to a Subedar in the Punjab: 'Our men are suffering greatly because we have no Subedar of our class.... I was hopeful myself of promotion but now an Ambala man has got the appointment.'

Sometimes this discrimination, perceived or otherwise, could have serious

50 Francis, Major P.W., Machine Gun Btn, 9th Jat Regiment, private communication.
51 Napier, Lord, Memorandum 1875, para 22 L/MIL/7/7240.
52 L/MIL/5/825.
53 Ibid.
consequences A soldier of the 38th Central India Horse wrote to a friend in India in 1916:53

The news here is that on the 8th of July, Hikmat of Duri village was made acting Dafadar and on this someone fired a bullet at Risaldar Kamal-ud-Din Khan. He fired twice, one bullet hit and the other was a miss. The Risaldar was wounded in the thigh. The Risaldar did not accuse anyone. The night being very dark he did not identify the man.

Promoting men from within the regiment meant that they had friends or even relations serving under them and led to accusations of corruption and patronage.

Lack of even an elementary education was to be a problem for recruits to the Indian Army throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth as, indeed it was in the British Army. The difference was that in the British Army the officers came from the educated upper class whereas the Indian officers were promoted from the ranks. The establishment of regimental schools and the insistence on NCOs (and thus eventually Indian officers) being in possession of educational certificates went at least some way towards remedying this deficiency but improvement was slow and patchy. Talking to a subedar and jemadar of the 61st Cavalry (not a typical regiment perhaps) in 2005, it was clear that their command of English was very limited.

Much more serious was the total lack of officer training until after the First World War for the Indian officers. Even when the 'Indian Sandhurst' was established at Dehra Dun and Indians were awarded the King's Commission, Viceroy's Commissioned Officers received no special training either prior to, or on, appointment. Amar Singh and his handful of colleagues, relatively well-educated and with the

53 Ibid.
benefit of the training provided by the short-lived Imperial Cadet Corps, were very much the exception rather than the rule. However, there is no link between educational qualifications and the ability to lead men in battle. In spite of their often limited educational background many Indian officers could, and did, prove to be highly effective leaders.
CHAPTER SIX: THE CHANGING PERCEPTION OF THE ROLE OF THE INDIAN OFFICER

Introduction

Two vignettes, separated by almost exactly one hundred years, illustrate the professional competence of the Indian officer. In 1853, General Robertson inspected the Scinde Horse. His report included the following comments:

On separate mornings, I caused the regiments to parade singly under the personal command of the senior native officers, Rissaldars Shaik Abdool Nabbee and Mohbut Khan Bahadoor. The words of command were given in the most excellent English and repeated by squadron officers and troop commanders in a most perfect manner. Both regiments worked under these native officers in a most creditable style and all praise is due to Major Jacob and his officers for the manner in which they have taught those under their command to conduct themselves in every situation.\(^1\)

The second incident, which took place towards the end of the Seconds World War, is reported by John Masters, a British officer who had served with the Gurkhas and who at that time was commanding a brigade. The Indian army had not been allowed to possess any field artillery from the time of the Mutiny until just before the Second World War.

Now, the Indian (artillery) colonel, bending close to an English colonel over a map, straightened and said with a smile, 'OK George. Thanks, I've got it.

\(^{1}\) Record Book of the Scinde Irregular Horse, Vol II, 3\(^{rd}\) October 1851 to 13\(^{th}\) June 1855, p. 81.
We'll take over all tasks (ie predetermined artillery targets) at 1800. What about a beer?²

Sadly, in the intervening ninety years between 1857 and 1947, many Indian officers were to be denied opportunities to demonstrate their leadership qualities through a mixture of prejudice and fear on the part of the British.

The degree of responsibility allowed to Indian officers varied considerably throughout the period under consideration. Initially, Indian officers had a considerable amount of autonomy, especially in the so-called 'irregular' regiments. This degree of freedom was to decline during the first half of the nineteenth century as the numbers of British officers in units increased. The Mutiny gave rise to a re-appraisal and throughout the second half of the century there was an on-going debate between those who argued for better training and more responsibility for the Indian officers and those who wished to restrict their role. Unfortunately it was the latter group who won the argument with the result that when the Indian Army went to war in 1914, the Indian officers were unused to responsibility and were unable to use their initiative when their British officers became casualties. After the Great War, King's Commissions were offered to a small number of Indians and the 'Indian Sandhurst' was set up at Dehra Dun and a programme of 'Indianisation' introduced. This was envisaged as leading - eventually - to all officers in the Indian army being Indians though it was to be a very gradual process. A side effect, foreseen or otherwise, was to downgrade the position of the jemadars and risaldars who had gained their Viceroy's Commissions through service in the ranks who, in many cases, came to be seen as glorified NCOs.

The great debate: What should be the role of Indian officers?

Hardly had the dust settled as the last mutineer was blown from a cannon, than a debate about to proper role and responsibility of Indian officers within the Indian Army began. Enlightened officers such as John Jacob and George Chesney argued that not only ought Indian officers to be given more responsibility but that change was inevitable. It was an argument that was to rumble on throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth - indeed it took the Second World War to bring about the large-scale commissioning of Indian officers on the same basis as their British counterparts. Nor was there always any clear definition of the part which Indian officers were expected to play within the regiment. As early as 1826 Captain W Badenach pointed out, when discussing the posting of British sergeants and sergeant-majors to each Indian infantry battalion:

Strange as it may appear, up to the present period, the most important point connected with their (Indian officers) duty has never been sufficiently defined... it has sometimes been productive of very serious consequences and created discontent among the native officers.³

Opinion among the British officers regarding the ability of the Indian officers to take greater responsibility and to act independently was divided. Some British officers argued strongly in favour of Indian officers and their capability. Lord Napier⁴ stated that his:

Personal knowledge satisfied his Excellency of their (Indian officers) general efficiency and of their ability to command their troops and companies and to

³ Quoted in Menezes, Lt-Gen S.L., The Indian Army, p. 105.
⁴ Lord Napier: Response to a letter from the Military Department to the Adjutant General in India, the Governors of Madras and Bombay and the Lt Governor of the Punjab, L/MIL/7/7240.
perform their duties when on detached command and removed from the immediate control of British officers. He particularly noticed the intelligence and comparatively superior education of many of the Native commissioned officers and non-commissioned officers of the Bombay army. The Native officers of the Bengal army showed during the famine a very high standard of intelligence, administrative ability and integrity.

General Jacob in an Appendix to the same memorandum, wrote that:

The Native officers under a proper organisation would be the very nerve of the whole body, of which the sepoys formed the bones and muscles and the European gentlemen the brains.5

Jacob was a strong supporter of the Indian officer and argued, on the basis of his experience as a commander of irregular cavalry regiments (the 1st and 2nd Scinde Horse), that there should be the absolute minimum of hand-picked British officers. Mason quotes Jacob as saying that if there were too many British officers, ‘the native officer finds himself of no importance and the sepoy becomes a lifeless automaton.’6

Indian officers, picked for their energy and efficiency, should be trusted and given real responsibility. Jacob went so far as to suggest that Indian officers were better than junior British officers as commanders of isolated outposts. However, as Mason points out, one of the difficulties with the arrangement proposed by Jacob was, that with such a small number of British officers in a unit, they were on duty virtually all the time and it was unclear what would happen if they all became casualties.

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5 Jacob, Gen J., Appendix to the Memorandum which includes comments from a number of eminent British officers, L/MIL/7/7240.
How would the Scinde Horse function when their three officers were dead? Their Indian officers had no experience of commanding anything more than a squadron.7

Sir George Chesney, Military Member of the Supreme Council wrote in 1888 regarding the military education of Indians:

I venture to suggest that the time has come when, on grounds of justice no less than of policy, it is right and proper to open a military career to the higher classes of the Native subjects of the Queen, including the Native soldiers already in the army who are deserving of advancement. The present status of a Native officer is very suitable for the class which in the main has hitherto filled it - the ignorant peasant promoted from the ranks. But there have always been serving in the cavalry many Native gentlemen of a much higher class, although they too are most of them illiterate, and, although good soldiers, uneducated ones. The class of Native officers in all branches is now, however, rapidly improving and selection from the ranks is now made on merit rather than on seniority and in the infantry as well as in the cavalry, direct commissions are frequently given to men of good family.8

Chesney drew attention to the opportunities for advancement which were opening up for Indians in the Civil administration, while at the same time there were no similar opportunities for Indians serving with the Army. ‘The class which remains loyal and silent, and which asks for nothing, gets nothing.’ He believed that it was impossible to maintain the status quo.

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7 Ibid, p. 325.
I am persuaded that it is far more dangerous to stand still than to advance, to maintain the policy of repression than to enter a policy of trust. For good or evil, the increasing pressure of opinion must inevitably lead to change in our military system, and I submit that it will be easier to lead rather than follow in carrying it out.

He suggested that enhancing the status and role of Indian officers would have not only a practical but also pecuniary advantage.

The readiest way (of overcoming a shortage of British officers and at the same time creating a reserve of officers) of doing this and at the same time the cheapest, seems to be to improve the position of the Native officer by giving him increased power and responsibilities, and to so educate him in modern military requirements, that he may, should the necessity ever arise, be found not wholly unequal to supplying the place of the British officer in the absence of the latter.

Unfortunately, these progressive ideas were not taken up and the traditional view of the Indian officer and his abilities was maintained. The conservative view was based largely on racial prejudice.

Be the native officer ever so capable, ever so zealous, ever so trustworthy, ever so plucky, the sepoy does not believe in him, nor will he attempt, under his native officer, feats which he will both attempt and succeed in under a British one.⁹

⁹ Young, G. F., Major AQMG. The Efficiency of our Native Regiments with a view to their preparation to meet an European Army. *Journal of the Indian United Services Institute*. 1885, p 128.
Lord Roberts, who was a strong advocate of the Indian Army and very popular with the sepoys, was probably expressing the views of typical British officers when he wrote:

Native officers can never take the place of British officers...... Eastern races, however brave and accustomed to war, do not possess the qualities that go to make good leaders of men.... I have known many natives whose gallantry and devotion could not be surpassed but I have never known one who would not have looked to the youngest British officer for support in time of difficulty or danger.\(^\text{10}\)

However, as Mason points out, the Indian officers were taught to turn to the British officers - they were subordinates who might well be blamed if they did not.

Progressively, as the (nineteenth) century wore on to the Mutiny, the native officer became less of an ally and more of a foreman. The new native officer was a subordinate, if an honoured one. He was emphatically much closer to the men than to the British officers.\(^\text{11}\)

Mason suggests that the growth of the idea that the sepoys must be commanded by: “gentlemen, men of education and understanding” is due, in part at least, to the change in the English class system which followed the French Revolution and which created a deeper division between the classes.

In the latter days of Queen Victoria the English, without much consciousness of what they were doing, were building up an imperial ruling class of public-school boys, trained on the classics, cold baths and bodily exercise.\(^\text{12}\)

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\(^\text{10}\) Quoted in Mason, *A Matter of Honour*, p. 347.
\(^\text{11}\) Ibid, p. 174.
\(^\text{12}\) Ibid, p. 328.
The Indian officer, who had not had the benefit of an English public school education, if indeed he had received any education at all, came increasingly to be seen as a second-class citizen when compared to his English counterpart. Respected and trusted he might be, but there was certainly no possibility of him being promoted to command a battalion. Sir George Chesney stated that:

> For the ordinary Native officer as he is found at present, the question of educating him to a higher standard practically does not arise. The Native officers whose merits have brought them to notice as deserving of further advancement are practically illiterate and middle-aged men, who cannot now be sent to school, and they all, I believe, labour under the disadvantage of not knowing English. Some of the best of them have had little or no education of any kind, even to the extent of being able to read and write in their own language.\(^\text{13}\)

**The Indian officer as intermediary.**

Because in the early days of the Indian Army the British officers did not speak the language of their men nor understand their customs, they needed intermediaries - the Indian officers - in the command structure to interpret their orders to their men.

Brigadier Grant suggests that the latter's:

> Main job was to interpret to the men the thought process of the British officer by suitably translating it into the Indian pattern of thinking and execution. His

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\(^{13}\) Chesney, Sir G., Military Education for the Natives of India, 1888. L/MIL/17/5/2202.
second task was to relieve the British officer of the strain and stress of direct
command, and to take the first shock of any indiscipline or mismanagement.14

Major John Jacob, then commanding the Scinde Irregular Horse wrote to the Assistant
Adjutant General (who dealt with appointments and promotions) of the Scinde
Division in 1849 asking for appointment of a Rissaldar-Major.

The Risaldar-Major completes the connection between the European
Commandant and the Native soldiers on all manner of subjects, not always
directly connected with the ordinary routine of military duty but on which the
excellence of the Native soldier very greatly depend. In fact, in a Native
regiment, an officer in the position of Risaldar-Major, by whatever name called,
is required to ensure a perfect understanding and mutual confidence between
the Englishman and the Asiatic. In the absence of one superior Native officer,
undue influence (or the reputation of such, which is equally injurious) is likely
to be possessed by the Woordie-Major (the Native Adjutant), and jealousies
may thereby arise between him and the commanders of Troops which would
otherwise never have existed. The principal task of the Native Adjutant is
with the men on duty. The Risaldar-Major is chiefly valuable off duty. Both,
in their proper places, are essential to the well-being of a Corps. It is certain
that a Risaldar-Major properly selected is of the greatest advantage to the well-
being of the regiment. He completes the chain connecting the Natives to the
Europeans and when really what he ought to be, affords the greatest support to
the Commanding Officer: besides which, the appointment is one of great

14 Grant, Brigadier N.B., ‘Carry on Subedar’ in Journal of the Indian United Services Institute,
repute and respectability and is something to look forward to as a reward for long and meritorious service.¹⁵

The view of the function of the Indian officer as an intermediary continued until the end of the Raj; Brigadier Grant¹⁶ quotes the Commander-in-Chief's Instructions of 1945 which define the duties of the senior VCO who is seen as occupying the position of confidential adviser to the commanding officer and is supposed to reflect the pulse of the unit to him. The best Indian officers were in close touch with the sepoys or sowars and could pass on grievances to their commanding officers. When the relatively minor mutinies of the period 1858 to 1947 occurred, it was often because this system had broken down, for whatever reason.

Not all British officers were happy with the Indian officer as an intermediary; Major Young again:

The idea that a native officer is necessary as a 'link' between the British officer and the sepoy is, I believe, a fallacy - at all events as far as the Punjab sepoy is concerned. Over and over again I have felt that the native officer stood like an impenetrable wall between me and the men. Only now and then, out shooting perhaps with one or two, does one get any insight into their real character and ways of thought; once in the presence of, or near, a native officer the sepoy becomes a thing of wood and without any idea other than what he knows his native officer intends him to have. And the native officer, as a rule, prefers he should be blind, and deaf and dumb.¹⁷

¹⁵ Jacob, Gen J., Letter to the Assistant Adjutant General in Record Book of the Scinde Irregular Horse, Vol I 1839-1856, p. 317.
¹⁶ Grant Brigadier N.B., 'Carry on Subedar, p. 138.
¹⁷ Young, Major G.F., The Efficiency of our Native Regiments, p. 130.
It is not, of course, unknown for a British soldier to be struck dumb when questioned by an officer in the presence of the RSM!

The status of Indian officers

The Indian officers enjoyed a position of considerable importance and status within their regiments. Even though the oldest and most senior of them were subordinate to the most newly joined British subaltern, they carried swords, were saluted by other ranks and were addressed as 'sahib'. According to Charles Allen:

Although the most senior Native Officer was nominally junior to the lowliest British subaltern, no junior British officer worth his salt would do other than confer with and defer to his Native officers, many of whom were twice or even three times his age.

and Byron Farwell supports this view.

The senior Indian officer enjoyed enormous prestige. For the young soldier he served as the village patriarch; for the commanding officer he was an adviser on Indian customs and personnel matters. He was treated with respect by the junior British officers who took care not to offend him.

However, the greater the number of British officers in a unit, the lower the status of the Indian officers and lessened their authority. A further difficulty was the perceived impossibility of placing Indian officers in command of British troops again due to prejudice. Sir Charles Egerton (1848-1921), C-in-C Madras, stated that:

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19 Farwell B., Armies of the Raj, p. 28.
It is not only impolitic but practically impossible to place European officers or soldiers in any position of subordination to Natives of India. How can we encourage an increase in the self-reliance and importance of the native officer without weakening or diminishing that almost unconscious assumption of authority over indigenous races on the part of junior British officers, which however open to condemnation theoretically, is an essential characteristic of our nationality.20

He suggested that the status of Indian officers could be enhanced by their more honourable recognition by the Civil Authorities. Their commissions to be signed by the Sovereign himself (as those of British officers were) and there should be positions of Honorary rank for specially selected officers: ‘Only men of undoubted social position and influence should be selected with whom the Imperial Cadets could associate on equal terms.’ There is a note on Egerton's paper by 'AE' who sounds a warning.

There seems to be a danger that we shall be treating the Native officer like the possessor of the one talent and 'take away even that which he seemeth to have'. An officer who identified himself only under the pseudonym 'Verb Sap' wished to see the Indian officers given more responsibility and greater status and wrote in the Indian United Services Journal in 1908:

The British officer is made to dwarf the native officer out of existence......

What is wanted is for the native officer to be taken seriously. He is an officer and must receive an officer's treatment21

20 Egerton, Sir C., Military Education for the Natives of India, L/MIL/17/5/2202.
He realised that the system then current did not encourage the Indian officers to take responsibility or to use their initiative.

Responsibility and initiative are not subjects that can be taught at a college but are abstract qualities that are bred in a man. To bring these qualities forward in sufficient prominence, the only method is to give frequent opportunities and ample encouragement to the young native officer to practise himself in the exercise of them.

The Relationship between British and Indian officers

'A commander should treat his native officers as gentlemen.'

Brigadier G E Dennison, who served in the 7th Battn, 2nd Punjab Regt before and during the Second World War, states that there was an excellent working relationship that fostered friendship, loyalty and superb team spirit between the Indian and British officers. The subedar-major was the commanding officer's right hand man and, together with the other Indian officers, set the tone and ensured the highest standards throughout the unit. The subedar-major was thus something rather more than a British Regimental Sergeant Major. The Indian officers were perceived by the soldiers as wise elders, authoritative and gallant soldiers; they were seen by the British officers as experienced, wise, reliable soldiers who were entirely trustworthy - an excellent link in the chain of command. Brigadier Dennison's comments are echoed by Lt Col Montagu of the 2nd Battn, 2nd Punjab Regt who states that Indian officers were given rather more respect by the British officers than they would British NCOs. In his view, there was a strong and deep link between the British officers and the Indian

officers encompassing mutual respect, loyalty and affection. The Indian officers were a necessary and very effective strata of command and they were selected because they already possessed military skills, had a grounding of literacy and were able to read and write Urdu. In many regiments the newly promoted new VCO was brought to officer’s mess for a drink by Risaldar-Major and his Squadron Risaldar; this was an important occasion and all British officers expected to be present.

The influence of Indian officers on young British officers

"The VCOs were the middlemen, 'God's own gentlemen' who stood at the elbow of every inexperienced British subaltern." Chevenix-Trench in his study of the Indian Army includes a story related by a young British officer serving in the 45th (Rattray's) Sikhs. The young man having been selected to attend a young officers' rifle course at Pachmarhi was practising his bayonet fighting under the best instructor in the regiment, watched by the Subedar Major. The officer thought that he was doing well but was taken aside by the Subedar Major who said

Huzoor, I hope you will forgive me mentioning it, but your bayonet fighting leaves more than a little to be desired. I hope that you will put in considerably more practice before you go to Pachmarhi. When you get there, you must never forget that you represent the 45th Sikhs.

25 Keown, Capt., Probyn's Horse. Private Communication.
27 Chevenix-Trench C., The Indian Army and the King's Enemies, p. 16.
Colonel Adrian Hayter describes the assistance which he received from the subedar who was second-in-command of his company when he joined the 2nd Ghurkha Rifles as a young officer. The Subedar had years of experience in the regiment and was addressed as 'father' by the young soldiers.

He guided me through those early years without my fully realising it then. Slowly he built up my morale and self-confidence by leading the discussion of any problem in such a way that the answer became obvious out of my own mind; he never directly corrected me to leave my own mind unexercised and with a feeling of inadequacy..................... He shielded the men from my worst blunders, by his never failing support of me showing an example to them, and so he gradually brought understanding of each other to both.28

The responsibility offered to Indian officers

'The whole history of the Native army teems with instances of skill and courage shown by Native officers when thrown upon their own resources.'29  

At the start of the nineteenth century, Indian officers could be given considerable responsibility. An article by Sir John Malcolm recounts how, in 1799, during the Fourth Mysore War, Subedar Cawder Beg, of the 3rd Regiment of Native Cavalry in the Madras Army, was given command of a force of 2000 men. This force consisted of infantry from the 11th (Madras) Regiment and cavalry provided by the Nizam of Hyderabad and its purpose was to prevent bandits attacking the supply trains of the main army.

29 Egerton, Sir C., Note on the Status of Indian Officers, L/MIL/7/7152.
Scarcely a load of grain was lost, hardly a day passed that the activity and strategies of Cawder Beg did not delude some of the enemy’s plunderers to their destruction.\textsuperscript{30}

Apparently Cawder Beg’s appointment was not to the liking of some of the Nizam’s officers;

The high born and titled leaders of the horse placed under my orders looked at my close jacket, straight pantaloons and European boots with contempt and felt themselves disgraced by being told to obey me.

Cawder Beg’s response to this was to challenge one of the best mounted of Tippo’s men to single mounted combat and, having killed him, to wound a relative who came out to avenge him. This apparently was sufficient to convince the doubters!

Cawder Beg had already distinguished himself when acting as orderly Subedar to Colonel Floyd in 1790. When they were out reconnoitring with a small party they were attacked by a much larger enemy group and only escaped due to the efforts of the Subedar. For this exploit, he was presented with a sabre by the Colonel.

But personal courage was the least quality of Cawder Beg. His talents eminently fitted him for the exercise of military command.

Nor was he the only example; a pension equal to the full pay of his rank was awarded to Subadar Cawder Nawauz Khan for:

Having acquitted himself to the entire satisfaction of the Hon Major-General Wellesley in situations of a confidential and important nature during the late campaign in the Deccan.

\textsuperscript{30} Malcolm, Sir J. An article in the \textit{Quarterly Review} for January 1818, quoted in Wilson, Lt Col W. J., \textit{The Historical Records of the 4th PWO Madras Light Cavalry} (1877, Madras, Foster and Co).
One longs to know what were the 'situations of a confidential and important nature'; is it too fanciful to suggest that the Subedar might have been a forerunner of Colquhoun Grant, Wellington's 'exploring officer' in the Peninsula?

**Limitations affecting the Indian officer**

While many Indian officers such as Cawder Beg could, and did, take on great responsibility, there were, at the same time, many who, because of their lack of education, could not. Although recognising the many virtues of the Indian officer, Sir Charles Egerton wrote:

> The Native officer no doubt has his limitations and it is not pretended that even the best of them by birth and breeding can compare in point of general education with the average British officer, nor do their ideas of moral and financial integrity come up to Western standards. Admitting these drawbacks which are those of their traditions and surroundings, much remains that is entirely good. Though their education may be deficient according to our standards, they possess a natural shrewdness, combined with a gift of observation, and a power of adapting themselves to circumstances, that go far to make up that deficiency. They are keen judges of character and of course understand the idiosyncrasies of their fellow countrymen as no European can ever hope to do.\(^3\)

These preconceptions lasted into the twentieth century. Farwell comments that:

> The VCOs were men of great ability, naturally highly intelligent, knowing everything that could be known about low-level soldiering and with a deep knowledge and understanding of their men and the background from whence
they came - a background they shared. They were brave, outstandingly loyal and impeccably disciplined. They were not, however, educated men. They had little knowledge of, and less interest in, the Army outside their own immediate regimental family. They had limited technical understanding, they had tribal and kinship interests within the bodies of men they commanded and they had the innate conservatism of men from a rural, subsistence economy where very little changes.32

and, as Mason points out:

Nearly all the British young men joining the Indian civil and military services shared the common background of the English public schools. The better public schools - in particular Rugby, Marlborough and Wellington - supplied the Indian Army with its officer material.33

There were, sadly, prejudiced officers such as a Major Radcliffe who believed that only an Englishman, and, moreover, one who had had the benefit of such an English public-school education, possessed the necessary leadership qualities to make an officer.

It has been suggested that the native officer might be trained to take the place of his British leader; but this could never be, as the native of this country, although a grand soldier when led, would never be the equal of his British officer in the many qualifications which an officer must possess to be a resolute leader of men.34

Those same officers would almost certainly take a similar prejudiced view of the lower classes back home.

31 Egerton, Sir C., Note on the Status of Indian Officers, I/MIL/77152.
33 Mason, P A Matter of Honour, p. 38.
Promotion, medals and other rewards for Indian officers

The rank of subedar-major was initially instituted in 1818 in order to increase the prospects for Indian officers. An officer of this rank received a brevet pay of 25 Rupees per month in addition to his pay as a subedar - 119.50 Rupees per month. At this time, subedars received a pension of 25 Rupees after 15 years service and 40 rupees after 40 years service; there was thus a significant incentive to serve for as long as possible. The Indian officer was usually promoted on the basis of seniority after many years service - subedar-majors of aged sixty or seventy were not uncommon. However, the promotion structure for the average Indian soldier changed little. Unless the sepoy had an excellent army record, could speak English and had taken advantage of the army's training and educational facilities, he could not hope to rise to become an Indian officer.

Sir Henry Russell, Resident of Hyderabad stated in evidence in 1832 to the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company that:

The chief cause of discontent of native officers is that once they have attained the rank of Subedar, they have nothing more to look to; having got all that they can get, they have no further inducement to exert themselves; they first become indolent, then dissatisfied. There ought to be some higher object kept in their view to which by diligence and fidelity they may still attain. There was a native officer of the Madras establishment of the name of Mohammed Yusuf, who was entrusted in the early British operations with a considerable independent command, of which he discharged the duties with judgement and fidelity.

35 Singh Sandhu Maj Gen, The Indian Cavalry, p. 61.
36 Quoted in Menezes Lt Gen The Indian Army, p. 23.
In 1844, Sir Henry Lawrence (1806-1857, killed at Lucknow) pointed out that despite the sop of the creation of the ranks of subedar-major and risaldar-major

There are many commandants in the Maratta and Seikh service, who were privates in our army.. Is it not absurd that the ranks of subedar-major and risaldar-major is the highest that a native can attain in a native army of nearly three hundred thousand men, in a land too that above all others has been accustomed to see its military merit rewarded and to witness the successive rise of families from the lowest conditions, owing to gallantry in the field.37

From the earliest days, soldiers who did well in battle were rewarded with money, promotion, presentation swords - even loot! The Indian Order of Merit was established (the latter with a small stipend of 2 rupees a day) as an incentive in 1837. The IOM was issued in three classes and the soldier had to be awarded the bronze and silver medals before being entitled to consideration for the gold medal. The gold medal was abolished when Indian soldiers became eligible for the Victoria Cross in 1911. Between 1911 and 1947, some 40 Indian soldiers were awarded the VC. Indian officers on retirement were occasionally given honorary commissions as lieutenant or captains. This was not only an honour but it doubled the officer's pension which in 1900 was only about 10 rupees a month. Sometimes pensions included land grants.

After the Great War, all those soldiers who had received decorations or rendered distinguished service were given titles and allotted large areas of fertile land so that they could live in comfort in their old age. 420,000 acres of land were distributed among the 5,902 VCOs and other ranking Indian officers. Specially

37 Ibid, p. 25.
selected Viceroy's Commissioned Officers received grants of land and pensions and some two hundred of them were granted honorary King's Commissions which entitled them to higher pensions.

**Conclusion**

We have seen in Chapter 5 how, during the period under discussion, the Indian officer was normally promoted from within the non-commissioned ranks of his own unit, although there were instances right up to the end of the nineteenth century of officers of higher social standing being awarded direct commissions, especially in the cavalry. Generally, therefore, Indian officers were appointed on the basis of their experience and performance as NCOs. They were usually poorly educated and little different in this respect from the men still serving in the ranks. Although they might have considerable potential, there was no specific officer-training open to them. Certainly they had had none of the training or educational advantages of the British officers. In the State Forces, however, officers tended to come from the higher classes and were usually somewhat better educated.

Given the general lack of education and low social background, coupled with the high degree of racial and social prejudice within the British community at this time, it is not surprising that the position of the Indian officer was always anomalous. Those far-sighted British officers who argued for change and for enhanced status for their Indian colleagues were always in the minority, right up to the Second World War. Indian officers might be rewarded with medals, pensions and grants of land but the perception during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century was
that they could never be the equal of the public school educated and Sandhurst trained British officer. The commonly held view was that, when the crunch came, the sepoy, and indeed the Indian officer, would always turn to the British officer for leadership. Certainly there was to be no possibility of an Indian officer ever being in command of British troops. It was this failure to recognise that, given the education and training of his British counter-part, the Indian officer was at least his equal, that led, in part at least, to the difficulties experienced by the Indian Corps in France in 1914-15.
CHAPTER SEVEN: INDIANISATION AND DEVELOPMENTS, 1918 - 1947

Introduction

The Native officer is very much a fifth wheel to the coach, and can never normally exercise the command of even a squadron or company, still less a regiment or battalion, all such commands being reserved for British officers, so long as any, however junior, are available.¹

This chapter is included in order to take the story of the Indian officer up to Independence in 1947. Under the East India Company, potential British officers studied at the Company's Military Seminary at Addiscombe for two years, after which they were commissioned into one of the native or European regiments although their commissions held no validity west of the Cape of Good Hope. Promotion thereafter went entirely upon seniority so that it took nearly thirty years to reach the rank of major and field officers (majors and above) were aged between their late forties and their early sixties. Following the Mutiny, when the Company's armies were transferred to the Crown, British officers were trained at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, Addiscombe having been closed in 1861. The top thirty in the passing-out list were accepted for the Indian Army but, although they all held the same Queen's Commission, officers serving with the British Army always took precedence over those serving with the Indian Army. Although promotion was now by length of service, it still took 26 years to reach the rank of lieutenant colonel by which time the officer would be in his late forties.

¹ Memo by Sir Bindon Blood (1842-1940), dated 30 Dec.14, L/MIL/7/19006

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The first tentative step towards Indianisation, the replacement of British officers by Indians, came with the formation in 1901 by Lord Curzon of the Imperial Cadet Corps. A School was established initially at Meerut and later at Dehra Dun to train Indian officers for the Indian army and for the armies of the Princely States. Amar Singh was a member of the first intake (see Chapter 4). Although Curzon had publicly announced in 1903 that Indians would be eligible for the King's Commission, little was done due to the opposition of the military establishment. The first Indians to obtain the King's Commission were doctors who, in 1912, were permitted to hold regular commissions in the Indian Medical Service of the Indian Army; nearly 700 were commissioned during the War. However, although more than one million Indians served abroad in the Great War and some 60,000 died, none of the 9,000 officers granted temporary King's commissions in the Indian army during the war were Indian (although four Indian officers had been commissioned into the Royal Flying Corps). After the war Indian soldiers were given pensions and grants of land, and 200 selected VCOs were awarded honorary commissions with pay and pension benefits. Due to their age, these officers would not be expected to be on the active list for long, if at all. In addition, the Viceroy proposed that, in recognition of the contribution of the Indian Army to the war effort Indians would in future be able to obtain the King's Commission, and that ten places would henceforward be reserved for suitable candidates at RMA Sandhurst. At this rate, though, it would have taken one hundred years to produce a substantial proportion of Indian officers in the Indian army.

The Great War gave rise to considerable pressure from both Indian soldiers and

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3 Menezes Lt-Gen, *Fidelity and Honour*, p. 261.
4 Ibid, p. 313
politicians for Indians to receive full King’s commissions. In 1919 the Esher Committee was established in order to report on the organisation and administration of the Indian Army, but recommended few changes and made no recommendation for any increase in the number of King’s commissions awarded to Indian officers. However, resolutions moved in the Indian Legislative Assembly following the publication of the Committee’s report included one suggestion that one quarter of the number of officers commissioned annually into the Indian army should be Indian and that an Indian equivalent to RMA Sandhurst should be established. The Military Requirements Committee established in 1921 under the Chairmanship of Lord Rawlinson agreed with these ideas but these proposals were not acceptable in Whitehall.

The pressure for change

When the Indian Corps had fought on the Western Front, there had been very heavy casualties among the British officers. The lack of adequate training before the war meant that the Indian officers were unable to take over in this situation. As early as 1908 Lord Kitchener had been aware of the problem:

The heavy casualties which may occur in a few minutes fighting shows that Indian officers commanding platoons must be trained to take the place of their British officers in command of companies. The failure of Indian officers on various occasions in the present war [presumably the fighting on the North-West frontier in 1908] has been largely due to them not having been trained in peace for the duties and responsibilities appertaining to higher rank. The

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Indian officers lack the initiative to carry on because they have never been in a position to command, and consequently have never been taught initiative.\(^7\) Indian officers were often reluctant to take on responsibility. One of them wrote: ‘If I do my work well, I need not be afraid of anybody. The Indian officers know how to do their work, but have not the courage to undertake it, because they fancy that if by any chance anything goes wrong, they will be entirely to blame.’\(^8\) Indian troops had passed through a baptism of fire in Europe and had seen their British officers swept away. They had seen and heard that in the French and Russian armies men of African and Asiatic origin were given full commissioned rank and had seen Turkish officers bravely leading their men in the most modern warfare. British politicians were well aware of the hopes that would arise among the Indian officers. ‘They must ask themselves why to Indians alone this privilege was denied.’\(^9\) Indian politicians, looking towards independence, were agitating for an Indian army officered by Indians. As Rajendra Nath pointed out ‘Without an efficient Indian Army, officered by our own nationals, self-government for India must be a very unreal and shadowy thing.’\(^10\) Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya speaking in the Legislative Assembly in 1928, said ‘The question whether a military college shall or shall not be established in India is a question of life or death to the people of this country.’\(^11\)

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\(^7\) Lord Kitchener, Memo on the future of Native officers, 1908, L/MIL/17/5/1746
\(^8\) Quoted in an Appendix by the Lt-Gov of Burma to a Note by the Viceroy on the granting of commissions to Indians, 1915. L/MIL/7/19006.
\(^9\) Despatch from the Government of India 24.11.16, L/MIL/7/19006
\(^10\) Rajendra Nath Military Leadership in India, p. 252
\(^11\) Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya in the Legislative Assembly, 1928, quoted in Rajendra Nath, Military Leadership in India, p. 252.
Among British officers there was considerable opposition to the idea that Indians might be given King’s Commissions. In some cases this was because of a belief that only a British public school education fitted young men to lead. Others were concerned that the sepoys would not follow an Indian officer, especially if he came from another class. General Lord Rawlinson (1864-1925), Commander in Chief in India from 1920 to 1925 wrote:

I am in favour of setting up military schools at Dehra Dun and Bangalore at once; but it would be a foolish waste to start a Sandhurst (in India) before a suitable supply of young men of the right type is assured. Will we ever get a young educated Indian to lead a charge of veteran Sikhs against a sangar (defense made of rocks) held by Mahsuds, and if he did so, would the Sikhs follow him?12

Rawlinson was concerned at the impact of replacing British officers by Indians on the efficiency of the Army and believed that it would take two or more probably threee generations to produce sufficient Indian officers of the right type.

The view of Lt-Colonel Craster (Commanding Officer of the 16th Light Cavalry) was that ‘My own belief is that the desire for Indianisation and for speedy Indianisation is in the political court more than with the people concerned.’13 The major obstacle to the granting of full commissions to Indians was the War Office's refusal to countenance the idea that they might then be in a situation where they would

be in command of European troops. This opposition is shown very clearly in a letter from the War Office to the India Office written in July 1917. ‘The Army Council after careful consideration have come to the conclusion that to grant commissions to natives of Indian would entail a great risk from the military point of view, in that it involves placing Indian officers in a position where they would be entitled to command European troops.’

The Commander in Chief, India wrote ‘There is no lack of physical courage among Indians, but I think there is a distinct lack of that moral courage which is involved in unhesitating acceptance of heavy personal responsibility.’

The Viceroy responded by suggesting that ‘It is not, I believe, as the C in C’s note indicates, the British soldier who will be unwilling to accept the Indian officer’s orders ...... but the British officer.’

Nor were the C in C’s sentiments shared by all British officers. The Governor-General of the North West Provinces wrote ‘My twenty five years of service across India have been spent in intimate contact with warlike races amongst whom I have known men who by character and hereditary instinct had every qualification to become with proper training thoroughly efficient officers, the equal at least of the average officers of any army.’

General Skeen, Chairman of the India Sandhurst Committee wrote that, ‘The curious thing as regards the attachment of young Indian officers to British units is that no prejudice is shown by the British soldier at all. The attached Indian officer always says that he gets on very well with his men.’

Colonel Walshe (1876-1940), then Commandant RA, Eastern

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14 Letter from the War Office to the India Office, 5.7.17., L/MIL/7/19006.
15 Appendix by C-in-C India to Note by the Viceroy on the granting of commissions to Indians, October 1915. L/MIL/7/19006.
16 Note by the Viceroy, October 1915, L/MIL/7/19006.
17 Appendix to the Viceroy’s Note by the Governor General, North West Province, L/MIL/17/5/19006.
and Western Command added that ‘If the individual is good and plays games with his men, and they feel that he is a sportsman and a gentleman, he gets on all right.’

With the objections from the War Office in mind, the Secretary of State for India wrote in a secret memorandum to the Cabinet in July 1917. ‘The granting of King’s commissions to Indians had been under consideration for many years, both in India and at home but no progress has been made with it owing the the unwillingness of the War Office to concede the principle of giving Indians command over Europeans.’ In order to make some progress it was proposed that places at Sandhurst were to ‘be allotted to Indian youths who by birth, character and education are fitted to aspire to high military rank.’ In addition, commissions would be awarded to exceptional Indian officers for services in the field and to distinguished Indian officers whose age and limited education meant that they were unfit for the higher commissioned ranks. Finally, the Viceroy hoped that commissions would also be granted to some soldiers who had come up through the ranks. On leaving Sandhurst, successful cadets would spend a year with British unit before being posted to an Indian regiment. The granting of commissions in this way was intended to reward representatives of the martial classes who had fought so well beside the British during the war. It was argued that men of the martial races could only be handled by officers of the same race and that the martial races were entitled to the lion’s share of the commissions as they had made the greatest sacrifices during the War.

Interestingly, Amar Singh, who one might have thought to be in favour of Indianisation, was very firmly against it. He drew attention to the potential difficulties

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20 Secret Memo from the Secretary of State for India to the Cabinet 20.7.17, L/MIL/7/19006.
21 Cohen, The Indian Army, p. 80.
caused by differences in class and in social status. Amar Singh had become Commandant of the Jaipur Lancers in 1926 and he recorded a discussion in his diary for 1930 with Captain King, the British Military Adviser to the Jaipur State Forces:

'I told him that this could never be a success at present, the reason being that there is great enmity amongst the various classes and they will never be able to pull amicably together. I told him that I was as level-headed and as little prejudiced as anyone you could find but even I always have a leaning towards the Rajputs.'\textsuperscript{22} In February the following year he recorded a conversation with Lt-General Sir Cyril Deverell (1874-1942) on the same subject.

I told him that I was no authority to give an opinion but as far as I could see it was doomed to bitter failure. However fair an Indian might be he could never overcome the hatred and jealousy prevalent among the various classes. They will never trust one another; human nature will not allow it. I asked him where they were going to get the right sort of officers from. The people to whom you are giving commissions to at present are not the right sort. You are giving commissions these days to people whose relations are serving as sepoys in these same regiments. How could they possibly command the necessary respect? Probably a number of those in the ranks hold a higher social standard than these officers so the thing would not work. Here in my own regiment I have some State officers who have risen from the ranks and who find it very difficult to keep up their position amongst those who are their equals and are in the ranks.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{22} Amar Singh's diary, 17.9.30.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid, 2.2.31
Indianisation

'The term Indianisation is used to describe the process of introducing Indians into the commissioned ranks of the defence forces of India.' 24 It was envisaged that these forces would be a Dominion Army, responsible for India's defence and organised on similar lines to the forces of Australia and Canada, rather than an Imperial Army which would have commitments overseas. 25 Viceroy's Commissions would be phased out and eventually all Indian officers would have undertaken a course at the Indian equivalent of the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst and would be commissioned into the Indian Land Forces.

The Shea Report

As a first step towards Indianisation a committee was set up in 1922 under the chairmanship of Lt-Gen Shea (1869-1966), then CIGS India. The Committee consisted of eleven British officers including General MacMunn. Their Report 26 proposed that complete Indianisation (excluding Gurkha units) should be completed in three phases of fourteen years each. If the first phase was successful, the second phase would be reduced to nine years and the third phase to seven. From the second phase, British officers would cease to be commissioned into the Indian army and eventually the VCOs would disappear. The Indian army would thus be completely Indianised by 1955. Eventually Whitehall agreed to six infantry battalions and two cavalry regiments being Indianised in the first phase and the opening of a pre-Sandhurst institution (The

24 L/MIL/17/5/1787.
26 L/MIL/17/5/1778.
Prince of Wales Royal Indian Military College) on the old campus of the Imperial Cadet Corps.

No more British officers would be posted to the eight units to be Indianised and eventually all of the officers would be Indian, holding the King's Commission. The old VCOs would eventually disappear although it might be possible for some of the youngest and most promising to obtain a King's Commission though the majority were too old and lacking in education to be considered. Indian officers would be placed in command of platoons, a process known as 'platoonisation'. This was unpopular with the newly-commissioned Indian officers who felt that, although newly-commissioned officers commanded platoons in the British army, their British counterparts in the Indian army commanded companies. Their chances of reaching command of their regiments were thus reduced from 3:1 to 8:1.27 At the same time, the sepoys saw their chances of reaching commissioned rank virtually disappearing although there were to be exceptions. Naik Ghalam Mohd, son of Subedar Karam Khan, of the 16th Punjabis entered Dehra Dun in 1934 and eventually rose to command the 16th Punjabis. One difficulty in the Indianisation process was the setting up of criteria for selection for prospective officers and this problem was not solved until WWII.28 In the years between 1918 and 1926, only 243 Indians competed for the 83 places at Sandhurst. The Committee recognised the importance of re-assuring the present corps of VCOs:

The success of any scheme of Indianisation must depend very largely upon securing the goodwill and safeguarding the interests of the fine body of Indian officers of the existing type to whom India is greatly indebted.

27 Farwell, Armies of the Raj, p. 299.
28 Cohen, The Indian Army, p. 64.
The Progress of Indianisation Committee

The Progress of Indianization Committee consisting of seven British officers under the Chairmanship of General Claude Jacob met in 1923. They produced a short and very negative Report.29 ‘Progress up to date has been negligible and the demand for Indianisation is largely imaginary.’ The Report stressed the possible impact on the Army’s effectiveness of appointing Indian officers who might lack impartiality and tend to favour men of their own class. The Committee believed very strongly in the importance of a public school education and expressed the view that those Indians who held the King's Commission should resemble British officers, men who had been to public schools, as closely as possible. Officers, and potential officers, were to be judged not only on their professional qualities but on their social behaviour as well - the sort of behaviour which was taught in the public-schools. As the Viceroy observed:

The best guarantee for the elimination of racial prejudice and the reception of young Indian officers by their British counterparts in a spirit of camaraderie is to give them such an education as will ensure them starting on their careers with the manners, ideas and speech of an English gentleman.30

A battalion commanding officer echoed these views when he stated that ‘By the right type of man, I mean a boy like the one I have under me. He has been to an English public school as he belongs to a Rajah's family.’31

The establishment of the Prince of Wales Royal Indian Military College was an attempt to give selected Indian boys 'a public-school education' so that they might

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29 L/MIL/17/5/1779.
30 Letter from the Viceroy to the India Office, 17.4.17, L/MIL/7/19006.

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compete on equal terms with their British counterparts for the rigorous demands of the course at Sandhurst. Those who were selected for places at the College came from families whose loyalty to the Government was unquestioned. The year which the newly-commissioned Indian officers spent with a British regiment before joining their Indian units was also seen as an important part of this education. 'The mess of a British regiment creates a social environment which is of high educational value, especially in the case of officers now entering the army as they are drawn from a much wider field than was the case before the war.'

The Committee commented upon the poor results achieved by Indian cadets at Sandhurst. Indian boys who did not have a public-school background found themselves struggling at Sandhurst and of the first 25 Indian boys admitted to Sandhurst, only ten passed out successfully. The Army found itself caught in a trap of its own making with its insistence on recruitment from the so-called martial races:

It is an unfortunate fact that the fighting races of India, from which the Indian Army is recruited, are the very classes who are most backward as regard education, and on the other hand those classes whose intellectual qualifications are the highest are generally regarded as lacking in martial qualities.

The failure rate among the Indian cadets who were sent to Sandhurst between 1918 and 1925 was 30 per cent, compared with only 3 per cent for British cadets. The lack of suitable candidates was ascribed to: the reluctance of those who could afford a good education to go into the army; the unsoundness of the education of most of the boys who wished to enter the army; the fact that the average Indian education

32 Ibid.
34 Lt-Gen Cobbe, Secretary to the Military Department in the India Office, quoted in Farwell B, Armies of the Raj, p. 296.
appeared to be quite unsuitable for the army's requirements, either scholastically, physically or socially; the rejection of many candidates on medical grounds; and, finally, an apparent ignorance among the Indian public generally regarding what a King's Commissioned service in the Army involved.35

The India Sandhurst Committee (the Skeen Committee)

This Committee met in 1926 and their Report36 was published in 1927. The membership of this Committee consisted almost entirely of Indian politicians under the chairmanship of General Skeen (1873-1945).37 Its main recommendations were that the scope for employment of Indian officers in the higher ranks of the army was to be greatly extended and facilities were to be provided in India for training officers to hold the King's Commission. Indians were to be eligible for commissions in the Artillery and Engineers, technical arms which previously had been the preserve of the British. The number of vacancies for Indian cadets at Sandhurst was to be doubled and these vacancies were to continue after the opening of the 'Indian Sandhurst'. This was to be established by 1933 with cadets completing their training in England and it was planned that half of the total number of officers in the Indian Army would be Indian by 1952.

Following the report of the Indian Sandhurst Committee, it was decided to cease sending Indians to Sandhurst and to set up the Indian Military Academy at Dehra Dun. This opened in 1932 and entry was by open competition for 15 places with the remainder being made up by nomination, ten from the State Forces and 15 from the

36 L/MIL/17/5/1785.
Army. Of the 15 taken via the examination, 12 were taken on merit and three by
nomination in order to ensure that there was some representation from the minority
communities. The course was on the Sandhurst model with a strong emphasis on drill
and 'spit-and-polish' in the early stages with standards as high, if not higher, than at
Sandhurst. However, the salary, allowances and conditions of service of the ICOS
passing out of the IMA were less favourable than those of the KCIOs from Sandhurst
or Woolwich and the fact that Indian officers could only command Indian troops
further lowered their status.

The difficulties facing potential Indian officers

Their lack of a good general education was a significant handicap for the potential
Indian officers. Before promotion to lance-havildar, soldiers were expected to be in
possession of the 3rd class educational certificate (the 3 Rs, a little geography etc),
havildars to have the 2nd class certificate and VCOs the 1st Class.38 In order to
further improve the situation, it was proposed that military schools would be
established to provide training for NCOs and that, in future, no Indian NCO would be
promoted to Jemadar unless he had attended one of these schools. However, this
training was not to be the equivalent of the training offered at Sandhurst: 'An India
Sandhurst training in the literal sense of the term is inapplicable to men of this class.'39
An anonymous official wrote in 1917:

The bulk of the officers we require for the ranks of jemadar and subedar
have not the education necessary to absorb the teachings of a school on the

39 Secretary of State to the Viceroy, dated 5.4.17., L/MIL/17/5/19006.
lines of Sandhurst. Few of them know English and any attempt to insist on
such knowledge as a qualification would be most unpopular. It is not
necessary to give [Indian] officers the high standard of training which
Sandhurst implies. The Sandhurst boy can aspire to the highest ranks in the
army and to appointments requiring the highest attainments. The class from
which we get our native officers is quite unfitted for any such positions."

The Indian Sandhurst Committee Report commented that:

"In the United Kingdom the great majority of army officers are drawn from
families with a tradition of military service and military distinction extending
through many generations. In India, and so far as Indians are concerned, the
position is entirely different. As is well known, there are classes of the
population with whom the profession of arms is hereditary and prima facie they
should readily produce good material of the kind required, but their experience
of military service is confined to service in the ranks, or service as VCOs
whose authority and responsibility are strictly limited."

There was also the the problem, real or perceived, of caste and position in the
community. The Military Secretary to the Government of India wrote in 1914 that:

"The son of any Bunniah or Vatreel may become a doctor, but no Bunniah's son is fit
to be an officer as no men of good caste would tolerate him in command." Another
Indian officer, Risaldar Sarder Khan, echoed Amar Singh's comments and foresaw
difficulties regarding the relative social standing of Indians holding the King's and
Viceroy's commissions: "It might happen that a KCO had not much wealth or landed

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40 Minute signed 'E.G.B.', dated 20.3.17, L/MIL/7/19006
41 Report of the India Sandhurst Committee, L/MIL/17/5/1785
42 Minute by the Military Secretary, 28.9.14, L/MIL/7/19006

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property in comparison to a VCO serving in the same unit in which case the former will be looked upon with some lack of respect not only by the latter but also by the rank and file who come from the same part of the country.43

The Report of the India Sandhurst Committee had concluded that: ‘It is not too much to say that until quite recently the educated middle classes have been definitely debarred from a career as military officers [in India].’44 In his evidence to the India Sandhurst Committee, Lt Col McCleverty, OC 1/7th Rajput regiment, referred to the Indian cadets as: having a dislike of responsibility; being too easily content with the second best where the best is never good enough; being unable to give orders properly; not having a general education up to that of the British Sandhurst.45

The impact of Indianisation upon the VCOs

Possible difficulties were foreseen in the relationship between the newly-commissioned Indian officers holding the King's commission and the old style Viceroy's commissioned officers. Lt-General Shea, stated that:

When the British officers have been eliminated, it will be out of the question from the point of view of organisation to contemplate having in one unit Indians holding two types of commission. The VCO who is at present responsible to a great degree for the working of the interior economy of the unit has acquired during his service considerable power in and knowledge of it. All this is placed at the disposal of the British officer who controls it. I question whether the same relationship could possible exist between Indian

44 Report of the India Sandhurst Committee, L/MIL/17/5/1785
officers holding the King's and Viceroy's commissions, especially where a
difference of caste exists.46

He would be sorry to see the disappearance of the old style VCO: 'We will be faced
with the elimination of a class of soldier which is an invaluable asset to the army, and it
remains to be seen whether his successor will adequately replace him.' The VCO was
seen as important link between the British officers and the men, living, as they did, in
such close contact with the latter. Indian officers living alongside their British
counterparts in the officers' mess would not have that close contact with the sepoys.

'The VCO lives in the lines and can very well look after his men in the way of
discipline and interior economy; he has thus got a better influence upon the men than
the officer who lives outside the lines.'47 Many sepoys enlisted with the hope that they
might eventually become VCOs but could never aspire to the King's commission.

VCOs were held in great respect in their own communities. 'The VCO is treated with
extreme cordiality and great consideration wherever he goes. The senior NCOs of the
British army when they enter social life are given no consideration by their people. A
retired Indian officer is in a very different position.'48

The progress of Indianisation in practice

John Gaylor illustrates the effect of Indianisation by reproducing two pages from the
Army List of 1939.49 In the 1st battalion of the 7th Rajput regiment - an Indianised

45 Report of the India Sandhurst Committee, evidence of Lt-Col McCleverty, OC 1/7th Rajput Rifles,
L/MIL/17/5/1785.
46 Report of the India Sandhurst Committee, evidence of Lt-General Shea, Adjutant General in
India, L/MIL/17/5/1785.

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unit - there were only three British officers - the Commanding officer and two out of
the four company commanders (there is no second-in command shown). Two out of
the 25 Indian Officers had passed the Staff College course. There were only 8 VCOs
- even the VCO Head Clerk has been replaced by an Indian Warrant Officer. By
contrast, in the second battalion of the same regiment - a non-Indianised unit - there
were still 18 British officers. There was one honorary Indian officer listed, together
with 25 VCOs, including the Head Clerk. Omissi compares the situation in the eight
Indianised regiments between 1923 and 1932:\textsuperscript{50}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>King's Commissioned officers</th>
<th>1923</th>
<th>1932</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British Indian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/1 Punjab</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/5Maharatta</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/7 Rajput</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/4 Punjab</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/19 Hyderabad</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Madras Pioneer</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Light Cavalry</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Light Cavalry</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{50} Omissi, \textit{The Sepoy and the Raj}, p. 185.

The Second World War and Independence

In order to accommodate the additional Indian officers who would emerge from the
Indian Military College, it was decided that three cavalry regiments and twelve infantry
battalions were to be eventually officered entirely by Indians but these plans were overtaken by the advent of the Second World War. The VCOs returned and 'platoonisation' ended. Courses at Dehra Dun were shortened and Emergency Commissioned Officers appeared - both British and Indian. Whereas regular officers passing out of the IMA had undergone two years of training, these ECOs received only a few months training. Such were the numbers of Indian officers produced under these arrangements that where formerly there had been ten British officers to each Indian officer, by 1945 there were only four British to each Indian. The scheme was not popular among the British officers; Mason writes that: 'No one could disguise the fact that most Englishmen believed that hardly any Indians were really good enough to lead Indian troops. Almost every British officer believed that only the British public-school system could produce the right sort of officer and only the right kind of officer could give Indian troops the leadership they needed.'

There were uncertainties about the status of the ICOs; in one regiment the ICOs were made to live and eat with the VCOs and were not allowed into the British officers' mess. Nor was prejudice confined to the British. Brigadier Yadav recounts how, as a young officer, his Subedar Major had suggested to him that he, an Indian, did not understand the men in his regiment as well as the British officers who took pains to study their habits and way of life! This VCO had served for 31 years and had fought in the First World War and on the North West Frontier where he had been decorated. Although he was an extremely experienced and competent regimental soldier, he lacked education and was indeed proud of the fact that he could not sign his

Field-Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck, the last C in C India, wrote in 1946 that:

The policy of segregation of Indian officers into separate units, the differential treatment in respect to pay and terms of service as compared with British officers and the prejudice and lack of manners shown by some - by no means all - British officers and their wives, all went to produce a very deep and bitter feeling of racial discrimination in the minds of the most intelligent and progressive of the Indian officers.\(^53\)

The Second World War which provided the necessary impetus to make Indianisation a reality. The only way of meeting the needs of a vastly expanded army for more officers was by granting many more commissions to Indians and these new arrivals were to acquit themselves well.

When queried about the special merits and demerits of Indian officers, British commanders agreed almost unanimously on the superior ability of the Indian officer to handle his troops.\(^54\)

Immediately after the Japanese surrender, Auckinleck convened a committee as to the future status of Viceroy's Commissioned Officers, presided over by Maj-Gen Briggs. Pandit Nehru did not favour a new category of officer being introduced in place of the VCO. Following Independence, the title 'Viceroy's Commissioned Officer' became anomalous and they were termed 'Junior Commissioned Officers'. Brigadier Grant, writing in 1965, argued that the antiquated and imperialistic system of command

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\(^{53}\) quoted in Farwell, *Armies of India*, p. 300.

through the JCOs led to poor officer-man relationships.\(^{55}\) The original purpose and mission of the old VCO no longer existed and the JCO lacked confidence in his new status and, at the same time, his senior officer lacked the confidence needed to place complete trust in him. He argued that:

As long as the JCO rank remains, the young subaltern will never have the real confidence of his men, and, what is worse, he himself will never feel confident in giving orders to them.

Retired Subedar-Major Kunju, writing in 1990, is equally critical of the system.

The Indian officers found the JCOs handy. They would get the work done without the Commissioned officers getting in contact with the jawans. That protected their [the Indian officers] Brahminism.\(^{56}\)

By ‘Brahminism’ the subedar-major refers to an elitism and reluctance to get involved in the day-to-day running of the unit. The only possible reason for maintaining the JCOs would seem to be the lack of a general basic education still to be found in many Indian recruits. As educational opportunities continue to improve throughout India it may well be that the JCOs will be phased out.

Conclusion

In a letter to the MP Leo Amery, General Auchinlek wrote in 1940

In my opinion, we have been playing a losing hand from the start in this matter of 'Indianization'. The Indian has always thought, rightly or wrongly, that we never intended the scheme to succeed and expected it to fail. Colour

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\(^{55}\) Grant, Brig N.B., "Carry on Subedar Sahib" in *Journal of the USI* July/Sept 1965, p. 139.

matter of 'Indianization'. The Indian has always thought, rightly or wrongly, that we never intended the scheme to succeed and expected it to fail. Colour was lent to this view by the way in which each new step forward had to be wrested from us, instead of being freely given. Now that we have given a lot we get no credit because there was little grace in our giving. 57

It is regrettable but, given the entrenched attitudes of many British officers, almost inevitable that Indianisation should have proceeded so slowly between the two World Wars. More Indian officers in senior posts and with experience of higher command could have helped the Indian Army significantly not only during the Second World War, but after it.

Indianisation in the inter-war years provides a history of wasted opportunity. Had the intention existed, Britain could have bequeathed a firm, impressive legacy to India in a highly professional Army. That this eventually happened was due to the massive expansion caused by the war, and the exceptional qualities of the Indian officers, and to some extent the younger British officers. That the transfer of power was completed with relative ease was more by luck than judgment. 58

That said, even had there been more Indian officers in place, the early defeats at the hands of the Japanese would probably not have been avoided. No one appears to have anticipated or taken seriously the potential threat to India of a Japanese invasion through the Burmese jungle. The Indian army had to re-train and adopt new tactics

57 Auchinleck to Leo Amery MP, 1940, quoted in Farwell, Armies of the Raj, p.300
before it was able to defeat the Japanese but this was in no way the fault of the Indian officers.

General Auchinleck, the much-respected and last British commander of the Indian Army was firmly in favour of Indianisation and did much to smooth the path for Indian officers. He was only too aware of the difficulties which had been placed in their way and of the resentment which some of them felt. After the war, having debriefed officers of the Indian National Army (who had deserted and joined the Japanese) he wrote:

"The policy of segregation of Indian officers into separate units, the differential treatment in respect of pay and terms of service as compared with British officers and the lack of manners by some, by no means all, British officers and their wives, all went to produce a deep and very bitter feeling of racial discrimination in the minds of the most intelligent and progressive of the Indian officers."\(^{59}\)

This study set out to show that Indian officers, given the appropriate education and training, were perfectly capable of leading troops in battle. It is regrettable that the realisation that this was the case should have come so late to the British High Command.

\(^{59}\) Ibid.

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CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The British owe an enormous debt to the Indian Army. They were with us in the First World War, they were at Gallipoli, they were with us in the Second World War. The British had the benefit of a wonderful Army which they used in many places.¹

This study set out ‘to explore the changing role and responsibilities of Indian officers in the Indian Army between 1858 until 1918, to consider their selection, education and training and the relationship between the Indian and British officers’. This Army, like its predecessors since the early days of the East India Company, was unique in having two sets of officers, one British and one Indian. As far as the author is aware, this is the first detailed study of the role of the Indian officers within that system and it is important, therefore, not only from the historical perspective, but also from the sociological viewpoint. How did these two very disparate groups of officers function together in order to produce a highly professional army, an army in which regimental tradition and the bond between British and Indians enabled the soldiers to overcome the most appalling conditions? In order to make the task manageable within the time and space limitations, a case-study approach was adopted, focusing on just four cavalry regiments.

From this study, four main themes emerge. These are: firstly, the attitude of the British towards Indian officers, and then the reluctance on the part of the British, founded on that attitude, to give Indian officers the status and responsibility that they...

¹ A British Officer speaking on Radio 4 Stand at East, a programme on the Indian Army transmitted 4/06/05.

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A third theme is the generally limited education and training of the vast majority of the Indian officers, which in itself is linked, in part at least, to the subordinate position in which they found themselves. The final theme is the considerable contribution which those Indian officers made to the well-being of their regiments, particularly through their family traditions, and the undoubted leadership, or at the very least potential for leadership, displayed by many of those officers.

Although this study has been restricted, in the main, to cavalry officers in only four regiments, there is no reason to doubt that the conclusions drawn are not equally applicable to Indian officers throughout the Indian Army. The professionalism displayed by the today's Indian Army is only one indicator of the truth of that assertion.

The attitude of the British towards Indian officers

Imperialism appears to be inevitably linked to condescension and a feeling of superiority; the conqueror almost always looks down upon the conquered—their customs, culture and their abilities. Examples may be found throughout history starting with the Romans and the barbarians, through the Spaniards and the Incas to the British in Africa and India. The British in India often treated the Indians with an appalling lack of good manners. Lord Napier wrote that:

I confess that the Native officers (in Bengal) did not appear to me to be treated generally as Native Officers are treated on this side of India; that is, with the courtesy and consideration due to gentlemen holding commissions. I may have been misled by appearances but such was my impression.2

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2 Lord Napier, Memorandum, L/MIL/17/5/1674.
Though there were a few honourable exceptions to the general pattern, the sheer racial prejudice and snobbery of the majority of British officers was one of the main reasons why Indian officers were not permitted to advance to the higher ranks of command before the Second World War. Even Amar Singh, reasonably well educated and a graduate of the Imperial Cadet Corps, was unable to break through the carapace of belief in the necessity of a British public school education for army officers. Mason argues that, on the whole, bad manners were due to ignorance and that this tendency increased during the nineteenth century perhaps because the position of the British in India was growing ever stronger - the English were becoming intoxicated with power. But a deeper reason was perhaps a dislike among the less well-educated English for the official doctrine of trusteeship, that is, the notion that the British were holding the country in trust for the Indians. This was accompanied by jealousy of the increasing education and employment opportunities for Indians and a consequent fear that Indians would take over jobs hitherto held by British men.

The view that Indians were second class citizens and to be treated as such was, if not endemic, certainly widespread in both civil and military circles. In 1901, two drunken troopers of a British cavalry regiment – the 9th Lancers – kicked an Indian cook to death. When their officers refused to take action against the two men, the Commander-in-Chief cancelled winter leave for the whole unit. Subsequently, the regiment was loudly cheered by the British as they rode past in the Delhi Durbar of January 1903! James uses EM Forster’s *A Passage to India* to illustrate the manner in which most British people in India of the time, the nineteen twenties, regarded the

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Indians. Forster had worked a private secretary to the Maharaja of Dewas and so had first-hand experience of how even high-born Indians were treated by the British administrators who deliberately cultivated aloofness in order to preserve their reputation for impartiality. On the other hand, British men serving in India, whether in the Army or in the Civil Service, often made considerable sacrifices, such as long separations from their children, in order to serve their adopted country.

The social gulf between British and Indians - even high class Indians - was very real and very deep and the attitude of British women was particularly significant. British wives never entirely integrated with the Indian people and this was very significant as far as the whole ethos of the Raj was concerned. The men, who worked closely with Indians on a day-to-day basis, were inevitably much more closely integrated while their wives kept themselves aloof. The events of 1857 undoubtedly had a major impact on the attitude of the British women in India.

So far as the men were concerned, the Mutiny meant nothing to them. But the Englishwomen remembered the Mutiny and they influenced to a certain extent the behaviour and feelings of their menfolk. I think that they were very largely responsible for the break-up of relations between the British and the Indians. However, while it is undoubtedly there were some terrible events during the Mutiny, most notably at Cawnpore, it is equally true that many of the stories of assaults on European women were much exaggerated. William Russell of The Times was unable to substantiate the stories which he was told; 'I wanted proof but none was forthcoming.' In spite of this, bored women, who could quarrel amongst themselves

about precedence at the dinner table, were perfectly capable of believing horror stories about Indians and their attitudes undoubtedly influenced their menfolk.

The reluctance on the part of the British to give Indian officers the status and responsibility which they deserved

It may have been the fear of a repetition of the awful events of 1857 which underpinned some of the prejudice against Indian officers. If Indian officers were trained and given experience of command might they not one day rise up and lead their men against the British? The fact that the Indian artillery was restricted to mountain guns was certainly one practical example of concern about a possible uprising in the future. But there was a more fundamental issue. Reference has already been made to the report written by Sir Charles Egerton in 1908 on the status of Indian officers and suggestions as to how that status might be improved. This encapsulates what may be termed the 'official' view at that time. Though they were less well educated than the British, the Indian officers were seen to possess personal qualities such as shrewdness and the ability to adapt themselves to circumstances which went some way to make up that deficiency. They might well be able to assume command, even in difficult circumstances, but they were thought of as lacking the moral and financial integrity of a British officer. In particular there was a fear, not always entirely unjustified, that Indian officers would favour members of their own caste or clan unduly.

A further concern was the perceived difficulty which would arise an officer of one class was asked to lead men of another. It is worth noting that official policy in the modern Indian Army is to deliberately post officers of one class to regiments

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7 Egerton, Sir Charles, The Status of Indian officers in the Native Army and suggestions for its improvement, 1908, L/MIL/7/7152.

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consisting of men of another. We have already seen that integrity and the ability to
deal equal-handedly with all classes within the regiment without giving preference to
his own was seen as an important quality in an Indian officer. For instance in. Colonel
Westropp’s comments on Rissaldar-Major Gholam Hyder of the Poona Horse:

‘When Woordie-Major of the Regiment he was especially marked for his strict
impartiality to all classes in the Regiment.’

As to the Indian officers’ ability to command, no less an authority than Lord
Napier stated in 1875 that:

His personal knowledge satisfied his Excellency of their (Indian officers)
general efficiency and of their ability to command their troops and companies
and to perform their duties when on detached command and removed from the
immediate control of British officers. He particularly noticed the intelligence
and comparatively superior education of many of the Native commissioned
officers and non-commissioned officers of the Bombay army. The native
officers of the Bengal army showed during the famine a very high standard of
intelligence, administrative ability and integrity.

The British perception at the end of the nineteenth century as to the Indian
officer’s unsuitability for independent command was founded on a stereotypical view
of the Indian as a brave and loyal soldier but lacking the qualities which would fit
him for higher command. We have seen that there was considerable evidence even at that
time as to the inaccuracies in that stereotype. At the same time, the structure and
organization of the Army ensured that Indians were permitted very few opportunities

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8 Hogg and Erskine, *Historical Records of the Poona Horse*, p. 59.
9 Napier, Lord, Response to a letter from the Military Department in 1875, L/MIL/7/7240.
to step outside the boundaries laid down for them so that the stereotype could be maintained.

The lack of education and training among the majority of Indian officers

Apart from the attitude of the British towards them, another important reason which hindered Indian officers was their lack of basic education even down, in many cases, to their inability to read and write. This is not to say that they were incompetent or that they lacked ability or military skills. Lord Ismay wrote in his autobiography:

> Our senior Indian officer could not even sign his name. For all his illiteracy,
> there was no better troop leader in frontier warfare in any army in the world.¹⁰

This lack of education reflected the overall lack of educational opportunities for most Indians during the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. Even today, places in secondary schools are severely limited and highly sought after; particularly amongst the poorest classes. The regrettable thing is that the British made such limited efforts to improve the situation. Setting up regimental schools was certainly a step forward but the curriculum which they offered was very basic and in no way to be compared with that offered in the British public schools. The training offered to cadets, ie potential officers, in the Imperial Cadet Corps, while on similar lines to that provided at the time at Sandhurst, was, perhaps inevitably, at a lower overall level.

Not until after the First World War was serious consideration given to setting up an Indian Military Academy together with a school which would prepare boys for entry into such an institution. Even then it appears that right up until the end of the Second World War that no specific leadership training or preparation was given to the

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havildars when they became jemadars. One morning they could be living in the sergeant's mess and by the evening have transferred to the officers' mess without any training or preparation for their new role.

The contribution to regimental life of Indian officers

In spite of the difficulties in their path, it is clear that many, if not all, Indian officers made a vital contribution to their regiments and to the Army as a whole and many British officers were quick to recognise this contribution. The Indian officers were a crucial link between the British officers and the soldiers. Promotion to jemadar offered an opportunity for advancement to the able and ambitious sepoy. The subedar-major, in particular, was a very significant figure in the regiment. He acted a father figure to the younger sepoys and adviser to the British subalterns. Cohen points out that he might well have entered the regiment at the same time as the Colonel:

They often formed bonds of friendship and military brotherhood that were unbreakable under stress. The experienced VCO was vitally needed in the peasant army, and the combination of VCO, sepoy and British officer formed a stronger whole than the sum of the individual components.11

The senior Indian officer combined many of the functions of the Second-in-Command, the RSM, the Chaplain, the Adjutant and the Station Families Officer in a British unit as well as being prophet, soothsayer, unofficial justice of the peace, marriage broker, historian and a spare company commander when needed! He was the custodian of all that made the regiment what it was.12

11 Cohen S.P., The Indian Army, p.44.
12 Corrigan G., Sepoys in the Trenches, p.10.
Captain Guest of the 8th Cavalry wrote:

The real stability of an Indian Cavalry regiment undoubtedly lay in the reliable hands of the senior Indian officers. These wonderful men with their long periods of service - many of them serving for thirty years or more - were the mainstay of any regiment. With their great experience they were always ready to advise and guide any young British officer through the many problems which confronted him from time to time.\(^\text{13}\)

An experienced British officer who served throughout the Second World War explained that the Viceroy's Commissioned Officers provided the close link between British officers and their Indian soldiers whose different nationality and religions and customs, it was considered, made this necessary. Whatever the origins, it provided an excellent working relationship that fostered friendship, loyalty and superb team spirit. The subedar-major, as the commanding officer's right hand man, set the tone of the regiment and ensured the highest standards throughout the unit. Viceroy's Commissioned Officers were selected within a unit from the best and most experienced havildars, keeping a balance of the races within the unit. British officers, Viceroy's Commissioned Officers and jawans accepted the King's Commissioned Indian officers for what they were, reliable, dedicated, able officers who had the Army's interests as their prime concern.\(^\text{14}\)


\(^{14}\) Dennison, Brig G.E., 7\(^{th}\) Btn, 2\(^{nd}\) Punjab Regt., telephone interview.
Major Corrigan, who served with the Gurkhas, writes that:

"The Viceroy's Commissioned Officers were men of great ability, naturally highly intelligent, knowing everything that could be known about low-level soldiering and with a deep knowledge and understanding of their men and the background whence they came.... They were brave, outstandingly loyal and impeccably disciplined. The Indian officer saw himself as having a vital role to play... and as having a vested interest in ensuring that the British officer's ideas were correctly put into practice. To function properly an Indian regiment needed both British and Indian officers and neither was capable of doing the job of the other except for short periods."¹⁵

In spite of this recognition of the qualities of the Indian VCOs, no attempt was made to fit them for higher command; the stereotype required that they were always to be subordinate to, and dependent upon, their British officers. As weapons and tactics became increasingly more sophisticated, the lack of education and experience on the part of the majority of Indian officers became ever more of a handicap. The ability, for instance, to read a map is a sine qua non for an officer. Until the Second World War, Indian officers had, for instance, little experience of logistics or co-operation between different arms of the service. It was the events of 1939-45 and the vast increase in the size of the Indian Army which provided the spur which finally brought about real Indianisation.

A family tradition

The closeness of the 'regimental family' is a key aspect in determining the efficiency and effectiveness of a unit. This was especially so in the Indian Army with its notion of 'izzat' because upholding the honour of the family was an important aspect of social life. We have already seen a number of examples where son followed father into the regiment, often eventually succeeding him in a senior post and other examples abound. For instance, one of the first recruits into the Guides was Gulbaz Khan. His two sons served in the regiment, one of them being killed in the famous last stand at the Bala Hissar in Kabul in 1878. A great-grandson was the first member of the family to be given a King's Commission and commanded the Guides Cavalry in the 1960s and his great-great-grandson hopes to follow in his father's footsteps and also to command the regiment. Subedar Major Mansing Bohra of the 2/2nd Gurkhas was killed in France in 1914. His father had been Subedar Major of the same battalion and his three sons also became subedar majors, two in the 2/2nd and one in the 9th Ghurkha Rifles. Honorary Captain Rannu Thapa, Rai Bahadur had followed a grandfather, father and one brother into the regiment (4th Ghurkha Rifles) One of his sons became Subedar-Major of 1st Battalion, his other son being killed at Givenchy in 1914. He had no fewer than eight grandsons serving in regiment His great-grandfather had enlisted in 1790 so that the family had between them 146 years service!

The leadership and leadership potential of Indian officers

In October 1915 Naik Bulard Khan wrote to the son of Subedar Gul Mohamed Khan of the 69th Punjabis who was killed on the 25th September:
He showed himself the pattern of valour. He was also a very strict observer of
every practice laid down for the orthodox Mohammedan and he was besides,
God knows, a pattern of loyalty to the Government. He was ever on the look-
out for the faint-hearted, and if he heard anywhere of a young man who was
troubled in mind, he went to him and talked in such a way that all his
discomfort of exile and his homesickness faded away.16

It does not seem possible seriously to doubt the courage and leadership potential of the
Indian officers and we have already seen a number of examples of this in the case-
studies. For instance, Hakdad Khan of the 2nd Punjab Cavalry rallying the men of the
Black Watch at Sissiah in 1859 or Major Dalpat Singh of the Jodhpur Lancers leading
the charge at El Henu. The courage and excellent horsemanship of the Indian officers
were such as to be almost taken for granted but these men possessed other qualities
necessary in a leader such as integrity and the respect of their men. Sir Charles
Egerton commented in 1908 that

They (Indian officers) have frequently shown marvellous courage, resource and
readiness to assume command and responsibility under extremely difficult and
trying circumstances. Subedar Naranger Singh of the 1st Sikh Infantry at
Maizan in June 1897 carried out a steady and orderly retirement over 9 miles of
difficult country - no British officer could better have displayed greater skill in
extricating the troops from their position.17

During the second battle of Ypres, Jemadar Mir Dast of the 55th Coke's Rifles was
awarded a Victoria Cross for his bravery in holding a position close to the enemy line

16 Reports of the Chief Censor, L/MIL/5/825.
17 Egerton, Sir Charles, The Status of Indian officers in the Native Army and suggestions for its
improvement, 1908, L/MIL/7/7152.
for a whole day, only retiring at nightfall and then bringing in large numbers of wounded men. Courage of a very different kind in the face of the enemy was demonstrated by Subedar-Major Khitab Gul of the 120th Rajputana Rifles who was captured after the surrender at Kut. Great efforts were made by the Turks to suborn the Muslim prisoners - especially the Indian officers. The Sultan offered him a sword of honour but he refused and it was largely due to the example set by him and the Subedar-Major of the 140th that these attempts to win over the prisoners failed. He was made an Honorary Captain and received the Croix de Guerre, IOM and OBI. Of Cawder Beg of the 3rd Madras Cavalry a century earlier his commanding officer said of him: ‘Personal courage was the least quality of Cawder Beg. His talents eminently fitted him for the exercise of military command.’

Sources and Reliability

A major issue for the historian must be the reliability of his or her sources. The social scientist studying a contemporary issue will seek to ensure greater reliability by a process of triangulation, drawing data from a variety of sources and by a range of techniques – interviews, questionnaires, observation etc. This is a luxury denied to the historian who will usually be working only from printed material. It is a truism that history is written by the victors. The campaign and regimental histories, more especially contemporary volumes, tend to gloss over the less glorious episodes and failings. Full information may be unavailable to the historian; Chester Wilmott’s epic Struggle for Europe was written before a full understanding of the contribution made

18 Malcolm, Sir J., quoted in Wilson, Lt-Col W. J., Historical Records of the 4th PWO Madras Cavalry, p.
19 (London, Collins, 1952)
to the Allies success by Ultra intelligence became public knowledge. The letters written home by the sepoys may have deliberately glossed over some of the horrors of war in order to protect their loved ones from this knowledge. Historians will differ in their interpretation of the same events: Major Corrigan, an ex-Gurkha officer, takes a very different view of contribution made by the Indian Corps in France from that espoused by the American Jeffrey Greenhut. Ultimately, all that the writer can do is to present the picture to the reader as honestly as he can, at the same time being aware of his own personal prejudices.

Conclusion

The Indian Army has a proud record stretching back to the time of the Great Moghuls and beyond and the army of the British Raj was but a brief spell in that long history. The Raj gave India a railway system, cricket and a common language in English (no small memento in this day of computerisation and call centres). It also bequeathed an Army, an Army which would cherish its enhanced traditions gained under British rule, which would become as highly professional as its ancestors, and which in many ways might be said to be more British than the British with its insistence on the importance of tradition and spit-and-polish. Indian soldiers fought bravely in two World Wars as well as in many minor campaigns. Because the Indian infantry left France after a year, their exploits have been largely forgotten and overshadowed by those of the Australians, Canadians and New Zealanders who followed them. But the Indians were the first of the troops from the Empire in the field and their contribution to the First

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20 Corrigan G., *Sepoys in the Trenches: The Indian Corps on the Western Front 1914-15*.  
21 Greenhut, J. *The Imperial Reserve: The Indian Corps on the Western Front 1914-15*.  

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Battle of Ypres was vital. It is just possible that, without their presence, the Germans might have broken though.

Though the Indian cavalry had little opportunity to show their mettle in France, they achieved great success in Palestine, even though this was and still is regarded as sideshow to the Western Front. The Indian Army of the Second World War was the largest ever volunteer army ever assembled which carried out the longest retreat in the history of the British Army and gave the Japanese Army its greatest ever defeat on land.

When Independence was declared in 1947 the old Indian Army was torn in twain, being divided, with much heart-searching and administrative difficulty, between India and Pakistan. Sadly, the two armies this created from the one root were to fight one another in wars between the new nations, wars which, almost inevitably, were won by the larger and more powerful country. India also fought, and lost, a bitter border struggle with China. The post '47 Indian Army owed much to the old and its traditions; the battle honours, regimental titles and badges of the Raj. For instance, the Poona Horse is still on the Order of Battle and its officers still wear, when in mufti, the badge of the silver hand. Critics argue against the notion of bearing titles and battle honours which were gained fighting against Indian nationalist aspirations. However, regimental tradition is a vital part of an army's morale and few can argue against the professionalism and dedication of the officers of the modern Indian Army. The most recently published regimental history of the Poona Horse includes biographies of two officers who, post Independence, both of whom won the Param Vir Chakra, the

22 Kunju N., Subedar-Major (retd), *The Indian Army*, pp. 53 et seq.
Indian equivalent of the Victoria Cross. In *The Times*, dated December 21st 2004, an anonymous leader writer discusses the misconduct of the troops of the multi-national UN Force operating at that time in the Congo.

Peace-keeping forces should be drawn from as wide a pool as possible, in practice few armies have the necessary discipline, training and combat experience. British, French (with occasional exceptions) and Indian troops have all performed effectively in harsh, unfamiliar conditions.

The British government on India functioned only on the basis of the work of a vast number of Indians, clerks, policemen, soldiers etc, who were controlled by a mere handful of British men. Kipling points out in one of his short stories\(^{24}\) that a small error by a minor clerk could have consequences across the whole of the sub-continent. There was thus a symbiotic relationship between the British government in India and the Indian Army. Though the army was just part of the network of collaboration upon which the British depended in order to govern India, they needed the Army in particular in order, in the last resort, to take over from the police and to control the country. Indian nationalists saw the sepoys as mercenaries fighting for a foreign power and made some, generally unsuccessful, attempts to suborn them. As Independence drew near, however, the nationalists realised that that they, too would depend upon the Army just as much as the British had. In order to keep the soldiers loyal the British saw to it that they were relatively well paid and retired on good pensions often with grants of land. This made soldiering an attractive career, especially to those races with

a martial background. As Omissi puts it: 'Not only did the British choose their recruits – the recruits chose the British.25

But pay alone would not be sufficient for a man to risk his life in battle. What was it that made the Indian Army so professional and effective? Indians have always seen soldiering as an honourable profession in a way in which the British never have. For a Hindu, bearing arms is a profession second only to the priesthood while it is the highest possible calling for a Muslim. To be a soldier in India is to enjoy respect in one's community in a manner to which the average British squaddie is quite unaccustomed. The concept of izzat, of honour which made sepoys ready to risk their lives, is another potent factor in determining the effectiveness of the Indian soldier. It was this concept, that of not letting down one's family, village or regiment which gave a very special fervour to well-led Indian troops. In a less innocent and more materialistic world the almost mystical reverence shown by the Indian soldiers towards the King-Emperor, a figure whom many of them will have never seen or at best glimpsed in the distance at some review or durbar, seems hard to understand. Linked to the concept of honour was the Indian's more fatalistic approach to death. Balwant Singh, of the Jodhpur Lancers wrote home in September 1917: 'It is the special duty of a Kshastriya to give his life for his King on the battlefield.'26

Leadership is crucial in determining the effectiveness of any military unit. It is a truism that there are no bad soldiers, only bad officers. Mason suggests that the best British officers of Victorian times were like schoolmasters, devoting themselves to the instruction and encouragement of young men.27 Their dedication inspired an allegiance

26 Report of the Chief Censor, L/MIL/5/827
and a devotion from their men. Men like Jacob were able to identify and bring out the best qualities in the Indian troops and also recognized that Indians could be just as capable leaders as they themselves were. The Indian officers provided experience and continuity; they were the bedrock on which a regiment depended.

Unfortunately, only gradually, and often unwillingly, did the British as a whole come to recognise the truth of this. Indianisation proceeded very much more slowly in the Army than in did in the civil administration. Queen Victoria's proclamation of a career open to all Indians was more honoured in the breach than in the observance. The demand for Indianisation of the Army raised serious questions about British policy and British stereotypes. It seemed unthinkable to many British officers that Indians could perform as well as they themselves did. If they accepted this then their own secure positions in the military hierarchy were at risk. It took the Second World War and the vast increase in numbers required in the Army to expose the myth of the so-called martial races. Thus a valuable resource was wasted. What, for instance, might have been the impact of two well-trained, fully equipped Indian Corps coming into the line at the first Battle of Ypres?

What this study has sought to demonstrate, perhaps for the first time, is that the Indian officers of the Raj were just as capable as their British counterparts, in spite of the latter's superior education, and that the part which they played in the maintenance of high standards within their units was crucial. The Indian officers were 'ordinary' men from the villages of India; the equivalent, perhaps, of Gray's 'village Hampdens and Cromwells'\textsuperscript{28} They may have been uneducated but they were brave – almost foolhardy at times, proud, incredibly loyal and often deeply religious. They

\textsuperscript{28} Gray, T., \textit{Elegy in a Country Churchyard}. 280
offered unstinting support to their British officers, many of who were much less experienced than they themselves. Their letters home reveal that their concerns were those of ordinary men. Yet they were capable, when given the opportunity, of providing inspirational leadership. The American historian Roger Beaumont wrote

The Indian Army may yet appear to be an imperfect and flawed but brilliant jewel in the now-fallen crown of empire.....If there is any significance in the Indian Army it is that, like life itself, in spite of all the reasons why it should not have been at all, it grew, and it endures.29

The British have been slow to recognise the efforts made by the Indian Army in the winning of their wars; there was, for instance, very little Indian representation at the VJ Day celebration in London in 2005. Indians, including British Asians, should be very proud of the contribution made by their forebears. In this context, it is encouraging to note the increasing attendance at the annual Remembrance Service held at the Chattri in Brighton where Sikhs and Hindus who died in the hospital there in 1914/5 were cremated. A recently published booklet30 based upon the work of the Indian Ex-Servicemen's Association in Slough aims to explore the significance of the Indian Army in the two World Wars for the benefit of their descendants. The contribution which Indian officers made to the success and effectiveness of the Indian Army during the period of British rule in India has been overlooked for many years; their 'swords' were indeed glittering, but have been kept in the scabbard for far too long!

30 English Heritage, *Remembering Forgotten Heroes*, 2005
APPENDIX A

The Indian Officers of four cavalry regiments in 1914/15

1. 9th Hodson's Horse, July 1914.

Risaldar-Major: Ram Singh, Sardar Bahadur (2). Thirty years service.

His father and grandfather had each raised a squadron for Hodson in 1857. OBI, 1st Class, 32 years service. He served at Suakin in 1885 (medal and bronze star), with the Chitral Relief Force in 1895 (medal and clasp) and with the Tirah Expeditionary Force in 1897-8 (clasp). He retired in 1915 with the honorary rank of Captain & died in 1916.

Risaldars: Mir Dad Khan (2), 30 years service.

Mir Jafa Khan, Sardar Bahadur (2). OBI 1st Class. He served at Suakin in 1885 (wounded - medal and bronze star), with the Chitral Relief Force in 1895 (medal and clasp) and with the Tirah Expeditionary Force in 1897-8 (Order of Merit for gallant conduct). He became risaldar-major in 1915, retiring in 1917 with the honorary rank of Captain and a jaghir grant of Rs 600 per year. He contributed Rs 30 per month throughout the War to funds to buy comforts for the troops. For his service in France he was mentioned in despatches twice and awarded three campaign medals.

Malik Khan Muhamad. 20 years service

Jai Ram. 27 years service

Ressaidars: Muhammad Akrim Khan (2, 7), 20 years service.

1 India Army, List July 1914.
Jemadars: Ram Singh (2) 30 years service.

Prem Singh (2, 8) 23 years service. Woordie-Major

Dost Muhammad (2, 6, 7) 12 years service.

Nur Ahmad Khan (1, 4) 13 years service.

Raid on St Helene trenches 1917 - IOM 2nd class. Cambrai 1917, IOM 1st class. MC in 1918 – Orderly Officer to General Allenby. Became Risaldar - major in 1921, 2nd Lieutenant in 1922 & Lieutenant in 1924

Harditt Singh (6, 7) 6 years service. Promoted to ressaidar, he was mortally wounded 4.12.17. Buried La Chaplette British and Indian Military Cemetery Peronne. (See photograph)

Harband Singh (6, 7) 5 years service.

Sultan Muhammad Beg. 19 years service. Promoted to Ressaidar he was shot by a sniper and paralysed for life, 22.12.14

Malak Muhammad Hayat Khan (2, 6) 10 years service.

Sarup Singh (6, 7) 22 years service.

Tek Singh (2, 8), 20 years service. Slightly wounded May 1915

Fateh Muhammad Beg - appears to have joined as a jemadar

1 Qualified in MG
2 Musketry Certificate
3 Equitation Certificate
4 Qualified in MG (Extra or Distinguished
5 Gymnastic Certificate
6 Cavalry School Proficiency Certificate

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Risaldar-Major: Agar Singh (1, 2, 3) - 19 years service. Had served on the NW Frontier and had been awarded a medal and clasp for the battle of Hazara in 1891

Risaldars: Ali Akbar Khan - 17 years service
Served in South Africa, 1902 and awarded a medal and clasp.

Muaz-ud-din Khan (3) - 15 years service.
Killed 20.12.14, listed on the Memorial at Neuve-Chapelle

Hamir Singh (1, 2) - 10 years service, wounded 2.11.14

Ressaidars: Husain Bakhsh Khan (1, 2) - 17 years service
Promoted to Risaldar 10.8.14, Risaldar-Major 15.1.15

Karim Bakhish Khan (1, 2, 5) - 25 years service.
Promoted to Risaldar 21.12.14

Dhul Singh (2, 4) - 13 years service.
Promoted to Risaldar 3.11.14

Sultan Mohammed Khan I.O.M (1, 2, 3) - 20 years service.
He was awarded the Indian Order of Merit in 1903 for capturing, while on leave, two members of a gang of outlaws who had murdered his brother. Wounded 20.12.14

Jemadars: Badan Singh (3) - 17 years service
Promoted to Ressaider 10.8.14 (A Squadron) - put in charge of

2 Ibid
bombing. Promoted Risaldar 9.12.14

Balwant Singh - 10 years service.

Wounded 2.11.14, promoted to Ressaidar, 3.11.14

Sultan Singh (1, 2) - 18 years service

Rawat Singh I (1, 2, 3, 6) - 10 years service. Woordie Major.

Promoted ressaidar 2.11.14 and Risaldar 15.1.15

Wazir Khan - 21 years service

Rawat Singh II (1,2) - 18 years service.

Promoted ressaidar 9.12.14

Satta Shah - 20 years service

Faiz Muhammad Khan (1, 2, 3, 6) - 12 years service.


Promoted Ressaidar 21.12.14

Amar Singh - 7 years service. Promoted ressaidar 21.12.14

(according to Grimshaw – Jemadars Dhool Singh and Nathoo Singh in hospital January 1915, p 61)

The following were promoted to Jemadar 10.8.14:-

Rewat Singh - promoted ressaidar 21.12.14

Firoz Khan - promoted ressaidar 15.1.15

Isa Khan - promoted ressaidar 15.1.15

1 Qualified in MG

2 Musketry Certificate

3 Equitation Certificate

4 Qualified in MG (Extra or Distinguished)
3. The 22nd, Sam Browne's, Cavalry (formerly 2nd Punjab cavalry) 1914  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Years of Service</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rissaldar-Major</td>
<td>Agar Singh Bahadur (2,4,6)</td>
<td>Thirty two years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rissaldars</td>
<td>Sirdar Sant Singh (2,3,4)</td>
<td>Twenty years</td>
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<td>Kishan Singh (2,3,4)</td>
<td>Nineteen years</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dhuman Khan (3)</td>
<td>Thirty two years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ressaidars</td>
<td>Bhagwan Singh (3)</td>
<td>Twenty two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Azam Ali (2,4)</td>
<td>Eighteen years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mir Alam (3,4,8)</td>
<td>Twenty two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gands Singh (1,2,4)</td>
<td>Twenty years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jemadars</td>
<td>Sirdar Autar Singh (1, 2, 3, 4, 6)</td>
<td>Nine years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Woordie Major</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shibdea Singh (1,3,4)</td>
<td>Thirteen years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sukhpal Singh (1, 2, 3, 4, 6)</td>
<td>Nine years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sikander Khan (2)</td>
<td>Twenty years</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Habib Khan (3, 5, 6)</td>
<td>Thirteen years</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kaim Khan (1,2,3)</td>
<td>Nine years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ram Kunwar Singh (1,2,3,4)</td>
<td>Eight years</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inayat Beg (1,2,3)</td>
<td>Twenty two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hamam Singh (1)</td>
<td>Twenty years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 Ibid

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Qualified in MG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Musketry Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Equitation Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Qualified in MG (Extra or Distinguished)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Gymnastic Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Cavalry School Proficiency Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Transport Instruction Course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Assistant Instructor Army Signalling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. The Jodhpur Lancers in 1915

Major-General Sir Pratap Singh, KCSI, GCVO, KCB:
Honorary Colonel, The 34th Poona Horse.
Mentioned in despatches 1915.

Major HH Sir Sarjan Singh, KCSI, Raja of Ratlam,
Honorary Colonel, The 39th Central India Horse

Colonel-in-Chief: HH Maharaja Sumer Singh. Mentioned in despatches 1915

Staff Officer to the Colonel in Chief: Thakur Dhonkal Singh

Commandant: Thakur Pratap Singh

Squadron Commanders:- Ram Singh
Maharaj Akhai Singh
Padam Singh
Kishore Singh
Kunwar Gaj Singh
Thakur Dalpat Singh

Adjutant:- Mohbat Singh

Risaldar-Major:- Panne Singh

Risaldars:- Hamid Khan
Kesri Singh
Himmat Singh
Anop Singh
Sabal Singh
Kushal Singh
Agar Singh

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Jemadars:­

Bhagwant Singh
Agar Singh
Kishan Singh
Bahadur Singh
Pem Singh
Jethu Singh
Dal Singh
Chatersal Singh

Medical Officer:­

Prasono Kumar Ghose LMS, Assistant Surgeon

Veterinary Officer:­

Jemadar Khino Singh

By 1918 Squadron Commanders Ram Singh, who joined the Army in 1879 and Padam Singh, who joined in 1881, had left the regiment. The Rissaldar Major Panne Singh together with Rissaldars Anop Singh and Kesrir Singh had all been promoted to command squadrons with the rank of Captain. Bahadur Singh, Chatersal Singh and Pem Singh had been promoted to Rissaldar and there were number of newly-appointed Jemadars including Dool Singh IOM. In an Imperial Service Regiment the officers are all Indian as compared with a regular Indian army regiment in which the senior posts would be held by British officers.
## APPENDIX B: Honours and Awards

### Honours and awards to the Indian officers of the 9th Hodson's Horse up to 1914

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Order of Merit, 1st Class:</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Mutiny</td>
<td>Risaldar Man Singh</td>
<td>Risaldar</td>
<td>Muhammad Raza Khan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(with a pension of Rs 200 in perpetuity)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jemadar Changan Singh</td>
<td>Jemadar</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Risaldar</td>
<td>Harditt Singh</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Risaldar</td>
<td>Fateh Ali Shah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jemadar</td>
<td>Nihal Singh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 O&amp;M, 2nd Class</td>
<td>Risaldar Mirza Ata-ullah Khan</td>
<td>Ressaidar</td>
<td>Mirza Jiwan Beg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Naib Ressaidar</td>
<td>Jahangir Khan</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jemadar</td>
<td>Deva Singh</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jemadar</td>
<td>Huna Ali Khan</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jemadar</td>
<td>Mirza Ahmed Beg</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jemadar</td>
<td>Jawala Singh</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jemadar</td>
<td>Madat Ali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jemadar</td>
<td>Parkha Singh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suakim 1885</td>
<td>Risaldar Hukim Singh</td>
<td>Risaldar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 O&amp;M, 3rd Class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Decorations awarded to Indian officers of Hodson's Horse, 1914-18

Risaldar-Majors:  
Ram Singh, Sardar Bahadur. Retired in 1915 with the honorary rank of Captain.

Mir Jafa Khan. He became RM in 1915, retiring in 1917 with the honorary rank of Captain and a jaghir grant of Rs 600 per year. For his service in France he was twice mentioned in despatches and awarded the OBI 1st Class.

Malik Khan Muhamad. Promoted RM in 1917 OBI 2nd Class, honorary rank of lieutenant

Indian Order of Merit, 1st Class

Risaldar Nur Ahmed Khan MC. Awarded the IOM, 2nd class for a 'well-planned & executed night raid' 18/19 June 1917. Advanced to the 1st class in December 1917 for an action near Cambrai & awarded the MC for the Palestine campaign.

Risaldar Dost Muhammad Khan, IDSM. He was awarded the IOM 2nd Class for a raid on the St Helene trench and advanced to the 1st class after the Battle of Cambrai.

Indian Order of Merit, 2nd Class

Risaldar Sardar Khan, IDSM. For the action near Cambrai when he was Woordie-Major. Also awarded a grant of land

Jemadar Bhagwan Singh. For a raid on a Turkish position 22/23 May 1918 in which he was wounded.

Jemadar Nawab Ali Khan, IDSM and Croix de Guerre de

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4 Cardew, Major F. G., *Hodson's Horse*, (1928, Blackwood, London)
Belgium. The IOM was awarded for the Palestine campaign.

Order of British India, 2nd Class

Risaldar-Major Malik Khan Muhammad (Honorary rank of Lieutenant)
Risaldar Mir Dad Khan
Risaldar Jai Ram

Military Cross
Risaldar Hassan Khan, Nedha Order of the Hedjaz
Ressaidar Bur Singh (16th Lancers attached) He was also awarded a grant of land.

Indian Distinguished Service Medal
Risaldar-Major Muhammad Akrim Khan
Risaldar Tek Singh
Ressaidar Hardit Singh (posthumous)
Jemadar Habib Gul
Honours and Awards to the Jodhpur Lancers in the Great War.

France 1914-17

Commandant Thakur Partap Singh (Sadar Bahadur)  OBI, 1st Class
Squadron Commander Aman Singh, Bahadur  OBI, 2nd Class
Squadron Commander Anop Singh, Bahadur  OBI, 2nd Class
Capt (Squadron Commander) Paney Singh, Bahadur  OBI, 2nd Class
Rissaldar Agar Singh, Bahadur  OBI, 2nd Class

Palestine 1918

Lt Col  H N Holden  DSO  Mention in Despatches
Major  P F Gell  DSO  Mention in Despatches
Major  A J Reynolds  DSO
Major  Thakur Dalpat Singh  MC
Captain  Thakur Arup Singh  MC  IOM (2nd Class)
Captain  HFP Hornsby  MC
Captain  Aman Singh Bahadur  IOM (2nd Class)
Captain  Khim Singh  Mention in Despatches
Captain  Sankar Narain Singh  Mention in Despatches
Lt  A B Knight  MC
2/Lt  Kunwar Sagat Singh  MC
Rissaldar  Shaitan Singh Bahadur  IOM (2nd Class)
Rissaldar  Keshen Singh Bahadur  IOM (2nd Class)
Jemadar  Asoo Singh Bahadur  IOM (2nd Class)
Jemadar  Khang Singh Bahadur  IOM (2nd Class)
| Jemadar | Jowar Singh | IDSM |
| Jemadar | Bishen Singh | IDSM |
| Jemadar | Bahadur Singh | IDSM |

**In India**

| Major | Kishore Singh | OBI (2nd Class) |
It was hardly surprising that after 1857 there should be a change in recruitment policy. Instead of recruiting Brahmins from Oudh, from whence the mutineers had come, there was a shift towards men, such as Sikhs and Gurkhas, who had remained loyal to the government during the crisis. The old Bengal Army was swept away and replaced by new regiments recruited from the Punjab and Nepal. There was, however, a further and more insidious development as the century wore on. A belief developed among influential British officers that men from southern India had lost their fighting spirit. Regiments from Madras were disbanded and replaced by even more regiments consisting of men from the Punjab so that by the start of the First World War, about half of the Indian Army was made up by men from that area. Three quarters of men of the Army were from the so-called ‘martial races’ – Sikhs, Jats, Rajputs, Gurkhas etc.. By 1933 there was not one infantry regiment from Madras and this remained the case until the demands of the Second World War drove the recruiters to look once more in that direction.

The martial race theory was linked to the quasi-scientific ideas of racial superiority which were prevalent among Europeans at the end of the nineteenth century. It was unfortunate that Lord Roberts, who was Commander in Chief of the Madras Army from 1881 to 1885 before becoming Commander in Chief of the newly united Indian
Army from 1885 until 1893, should be one of the foremost proponents of the martial race theory and in a position to put his ideas into practice. In 1882, Roberts wrote to Major-General Stewart, then Military Member of the Indian Council:

"The fact is that the Madras sepoy has never met a formidable enemy, and nearly 100 years of peace have almost quenched any martial spirit there may have been in him."2

Greenhut ascribes what he sees as the failure of the Indian infantry in France in 1914-15 to the martial race theory, bringing as it did into the army 'men whose backgrounds made them a poor choice to fight a modern war.'3 Had the sepoys been led by Indian officers there might have been a greater chance of success.

As late as 1932, General Sir George MacMunn could write:

"In India we speak of the martial races as a thing apart and because the mass of the people have neither martial aptitude not physical courage... the courage that we should talk of colloquially as 'guts.'4

Mason points out that the idea that some people will make soldiers and some will not is much older than the Raj, being implicit in the Hindu caste system.5 However, it was the British in India who, after the Mutiny, formulated and developed the theory to its

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1 Menezes Lt-Gen, Fidelity and Honour, p.300.
5 Mason P. A Matter of Honour, p. 349
fullest extent. Heather Streets argues in her recent book that the exploits of Sikhs and Gurkhas in the Mutiny and afterwards were deliberately 'talked up' in the press, their deeds often being linked with the 'glamorous' Highlanders of the period.

It took two World Wars to demonstrate that courage was not confined to the few. Chevenix-Trench tells of the behaviour of a Madras Sapper during an opposed river crossing in Mesopotamia. He was the last rower left alive in his boat and when his oar was smashed he jumped overboard, tied a rope around his waist and attempted to tow the boat by swimming before he too was killed.

"If ever a deed deserved the VC it was his; but there was no survivor to tell his name. He was just an anonymous, little, blackish, low-caste Madrassi."

During the First World War, Men from seventy five classes previously considered 'non-martial were now recruited into the Army. Some of these, such as the Mahars, Telegus and Moplahs had formerly been recruited but had gradually been excluded while men were also taken from classes, such as the Punjabi Christians who had never previously served. At the end of the War, however, these men were gradually discharged and newly raised regiments disbanded. However, the even greater demands of the Second World War led to the re-raising of the Madras Regiment, the Mahar regiment and the Sikh Light infantry. Other regiments were made up of such apparently 'non-martial' classes as the Rawats, Minas and Assamese. A number of these regiments are still on the order of battle of the modern Indian Army.

7 Chevenix-Trench C., The Indian Army and the King's Enemies, p.85.
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