

Regimental Histories and Army Handbooks: A Bibliography of the Gurkha Regiments.

Mary Des Chene
Dept. of Anthropology
Stanford University

In the course of research on the Gurkhas I have amassed a large and eclectic bibliography. While the titles it includes have come to seem familiar, as might the horizon to a sailor long at sea, I have discovered in conversation with other students of South Asia that to the world at large it is a rather obscure collection. I offer here a list of regimental histories, army handbooks and other titles of an official nature about the Gurkhas in the hope that it may prove useful to others. For those interested in any aspect of the Indian Army¹ this bibliography will serve to bring to attention a type of literature whose value may not be readily apparent. While not sufficient in themselves for doing research on the Indian military, as a supplement and an initial guide to archival sources these works can be of significant value.

Regimental Histories

As a standard general work on the Indian Army² describes them, regimental histories are

of considerable breadth but uneven quality. They were usually written by some literary-minded officer in his spare time, and are often simple paeans to his colleagues' valor and the regiment's history. A few contain important data.

Most regimental histories do make for rather heavy going, and in most cases they are far from critical of their subjects. The Gurkha regimental histories had to pass the approval of a Regimental History Committee before they were published and so contain little that senior officers were not proud to recall. The authors are indeed often retired officers (occasionally from another regiment), but in fact many have written other historical works. Despite the conditions under which they were produced, and the evident bias of their authors, not just a few, but all, of these histories, contain much information, which is valuable in several ways.

A regimental history follows a fairly standard format. Arranged chronologically, each volume gives most attention to periods of combat and particularly to those engagements considered well-executed or which involve famous members of the regiment. All the same the authors are sufficiently dutiful and punctilious frequently to mention minor events and individuals of low rank who perform actions thought worthy of note. The various appendixes often contain

¹Reference throughout the text to the 'Indian Army' should be taken to refer to the pre-1947 British-Indian Army.

²Stephen P. Cohen *The Indian Army*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971. p. 205.

detailed information that would be difficult and time-consuming to collect elsewhere, such as:

- Changes in name of regiment and additions, deletions of battalions.
- Lists of medal recipients, usually with individual name and rank.
- Lists of men killed in battle, with date, name and rank.
- Lists of Commanding Officers of the regiment, with dates of tenure.

Anyone attempting to trace individual soldiers, even those of low rank, should check the appropriate regimental histories. If one's interest is rather a battle or, say, a shift in military policy, a comparison of accounts in all the relevant volumes³ may bring to light sources one might not otherwise discover. Most of us have limited time in the archives and these histories are published sources, relatively easily available, which can be consulted beforehand. Just *because* they are anecdotal they can make one aware of the existence of documents such as correspondence between Commanding Officers and Army Headquarters or position papers submitted to the India Office, that may be available in archives. Finally, for a social historian, these histories are in themselves valuable cultural documents. They provide some sense of daily life in a regiment, albeit from the British officers' perspective, and can be useful in the study of representations of native troops, of the (ideal) relationship between native soldiers and their officers, theories of discipline, racial determinism, and so on.

In oral history research, where independent lines of evidence are so important, regimental histories are again valuable. One can compile detailed chronologies of the movements and activities of a regiment which will help one to follow an informant's account and also serve as a cross-check on matters of fact. Stories and accounts from regimental histories can be a rich source of topics for investigation, suggest lines of questioning, and even provide names of individuals one might wish to interview.

Handbooks of the Indian Army

Handbooks on the ethnic groups recruited by the British were published from the late nineteenth century up until World War II. They were written by and for officers of the various regiments, and were in effect practical ethnographies intended to aid the British in controlling and, it was hoped, gaining the respect and loyalty of their troops. The handbooks cover such topics as religious practices and taboos, dietary prohibitions, caste and social organization, and strengths and weaknesses of temperament. While some are much more accurate than others, all were widely consulted by officers and therefore provide much insight into the working assumptions upon which regimental organization and discipline rested. Since most handbooks went through several revisions, a historian who wishes to track changes in these assumptions will find the comparison of different editions to be a worthwhile undertaking. These books, being in a sense 'internal documents',

³If one needs to consult a wide range of regimental histories it would be worthwhile to consult this bibliographical source: R.A. Myers, *Regimental Histories of the Indian Army: A Bibliography*. Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of London, 1957.

provide, moreover, a useful contrast to the more public presentation found in the regimental histories.

A complete set of the Handbooks of the Indian Army is, I believe, available at the Ministry of Defense Library, India, and at the United Services Institution of India Library in New Delhi. A good collection is also to be found at the Ames Library of the University of Minnesota.

Other Works

There is, of course, a wealth of published material on the Indian Army beyond the official publications mentioned here. I include in this part of the bibliography below only volumes that may alert readers to unusual sources for published material, and the occasional volumes of regimental history which defy neat bibliographical classification. These include abridged and short works, and volumes on war-raised and other special battalions.

For the Gurkha regiments there are several unusual sources of published material. The Brigade of Gurkhas publishes occasional volumes, usually in commemoration of anniversaries and other special occasions. The Gurkha Welfare Trust, established in Britain to provide relief funds to retired Gurkha soldiers, also publishes occasional pamphlets. At the army base in Aldershot, U.K., there is a Gurkha Museum which has published several works, including a bibliography, in very limited editions. The Gurkhas are a special case in that some regiments went to the British Army after Indian independence, but some sources of these types may be available for other regiments as well.

Bibliography

I. Regimental Histories

1st Gurkha Rifles

Petre, F. L. *The 1st King George's Own Gurkha Rifles, the Malaun Regiment, 1815-1921*. London: Royal United Service Institution. 1925

Bellers, Brig. E.V.R. *The history of the 1st King George V's Own Gurkha Rifles (The Malaun Regiment). Vol II (1920-47)*. Aldershot: Gale and Polden. 1956.

2nd Gurkha Rifles

Shakespear, Col. L.W. *History of the 2nd King Edward's Own Goorkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles), 1815-1910*. Vol I. Aldershot: Gale & Polden, 1912. [Reprint, 1950].

Shakespear, Col. L.W. *History of the 2nd King Edward's Own Goorkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles), 1911-1921*. Vol. II. Aldershot: Gale & Polden, 1924. [Reprint, 1950].

Stevens, Lieut-Col. G.R. *History of the 2nd King Edward's Own Goorkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles), 1921-1948*. Vol. III. Aldershot: Gale & Polden, 1952.

James, Harold & Denis Sheil-Small. *A Pride of Gurkhas: The 2nd King Edward's Own Goorkhas (The Sirmoor Rifles) 1948-1971*. London: Leo Cooper, 1975.

3rd Gurkha Rifles

Woodyatt, Nigel G. *The regimental history of the 3rd Queen Alexandra's Own Gurkha Rifles, 1815 to 1927*. London: Philip Allen, 1929. [Reprint, Simla: J. Ray, 1951].

Barclay, Brig. C.N., ed. *The regimental history of the 3rd Queen Alexandra's Own Gurkha Rifles, 1927-1947*. Vol. II. London: W. C. Lowes, 1953.

Proudfoot, C.L. *Flash of the Khukri. History of the 3rd Gurkha Rifles (1947 to 1980)*. New Delhi: Vision Books, 1984.

4th Gurkha Rifles

Macdonell, Ronald & Marcus Macauley, compilers. *A history of the 4th Prince of Wales' Own Gurkha Rifles, 1857-1937*. 2 vols. With illustrations by Lieut-Col. C.G. Borrowman. Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood, 1940. [250 copies issued].

Mackay, Col. J.N., compiler. *A history of the 4th Prince of Wales' Own Gurkha Rifles, (1938-1948)*. Vol. III. Edited & illustrated by Lieut-Col. C.G. Borrowman. London: William Blackwood, 1952. [350 copies issued].

5th Gurkha Rifles

History of the 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles (Frontier Force), 1858-1928. Vol. I. Aldershot: Printed and published for the Regimental Committee by Gale & Polden, 1930. [Printed for private circulation only].

History of the 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles (Frontier Force), (1929-1947). Vol II. Aldershot: Gale & Polden, 1956.

6th Gurkha Rifles

Ryan, Maj. D. G. J., Maj. G. C. Strahan & Capt. J. C. Jones. *The Historical Record of the 6th Gurkha Rifles (Queen Elizabeth's Own Gurkha Rifles). Vol 1., (1817-1919)*. Aldershot: Gale & Polden, 1925.

Gibbs, H. R. K. *Historical record of the 6th Gurkha Rifles, Vol. 2*. Aldershot: Gale & Polden, 1955.

Messenger, Charles. *The Steadfast Gurkha: Historical Record of the 6th Queen Elizabeth's Own Gurkha Rifles, Vol. 3, 1948-1983*. London: Secker (Martin) & Warburg, 1986.

7th Gurkha Rifles

Mackay, Col. J.N. *History of the 7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles*. Vol. I. Edinburgh & London: William Blackwood, 1962.

Smith, E.D. *East of Kathmandu: The story of the 7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles, Vol. II, 1948-1973*. London: Leo Cooper, 1976.

8th Gurkha Rifles

Huxford, H.J., compiler. *History of the 8th Gurkha Rifles, 1824-1949*. Vol. I. Aldershot: Gale & Polden, 1952.

9th Gurkha Rifles

Poynder, Lieut-Col. F.S. *Regimental History of the 9th Gurkha Rifles, 1817-1936*. Vol. I. London: Royal United Service Institution, 1937.

Stevens, Lieut-Col. *Regimental History of the 9th Gurkha Rifles, Vol. 2 (1937-1947)*. s.l.: s.n., 1953.

Choudhuri, Col. P. *9 Gurkha Rifles: A Regimental History, (1817-1947)*. New Delhi: Vision Books, 1984. [Condensed version of above volumes which are out of print].

10th Gurkha Rifles

Mullaly, Col. B.R. *History of the 10th Gurkha Rifles, The First Battalion, 1890-1921*. Aldershot: Printed for the Regimental Committee by Gale & Polden, 1924.

_____. *Bugle and Kukri: The Story of the 10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles*. Edinburgh & London: William Blackwood, 1957.

McAlister, Maj-Gen. R.W.C. *Bugle and Kukri: The Story of the 10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles. Vol. 2, 1948-1975*. Isle of Wight: s.n., 1978.

II. Indian Army Handbooks, Gurkhas (Arranged Chronologically)

Vansittart, Eden. *Notes on Goorkhas, being a short account of their country, history, characteristics, clans, etc.* Calcutta: Office of the Document Superintendent of Government Printing, India, 1890. 69 p.

_____. *Notes on Nepal*. Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, India, 1896. 212 p. [An expanded version of 'Notes on Goorkhas', 1890.].

_____. *Gurkhas*. Revised by B.U. Nicolay. Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1915. 231 p.

_____. *Gurkhas*. Revised by B.U. Nicolay. Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1918. ii, 231 p., fold. col. map (in pocket).
 Morris, C. J. *The Gurkhas, A Handbook for the India Army*. Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1933.
 Vansittart, Eden. *The Goorkhas*. 2nd Revised Edition. New Delhi: Ariana Publ. House, 1980. 100 p. [Appears to be a partial reprint of the 1896 edition].
Nepal and the Gurkhas. London: Ministry of Defense, H.M.S.O., 1965.

III. Other Works

The Brigade of Gurkhas. Aldershot: s.n., 1969. 32 p., illus.
The Brigade of Gurkhas. 150 Years of Service. Aldershot: Brigade of Gurkhas, 1965.
The Brigade of Gurkhas at the Coronation of H.M. Queen Elizabeth II. (Supplement to The Kukri: The Journal of the Brigade of Gurkhas). Kuala Lumpur: s.n., 1953. 96 p., illus.
 Chapple, John L. *Bibliography of Gurkha Regiments and Related Subjects*. London: Gurkha Museum Publications, No. 4, 1980. [Revised Edition, 1982. Both very limited printings.]
 _____. *The Lineages and Composition of Gurkha Regiments in British Service*. Revised Edition. London: Gurkha Museum Publication, No. 1, 1982. [Orig. publ., 1978].
Extracts from the History of the Seventh Gurkha Rifle. Aldershot: Gale and Polden, 1954. 39 p., illus., ports., 2 fold. maps.
The Gurkha Welfare Appeal. London: The Gurkha Welfare Trusts., s.d. [A booklet put out to solicit funds for the Welfare Trusts]
The Historical Record of the 5th Goorkha Regiment of the Hazara Goorkha Battalion, Punjab Frontier Force. Lahore: Punjab Government Press, 1886.
Historical Record of the Services of the 2nd Goorkha (The Sirmoor Rifle) Regiment (1815-1876). Bombay: s.n., 1877. 15, 3 p.
 Hutchinson, Henry Doveton. *A Short History of the 3rd (Queen's Own) Gurkha Rifles*. London: Hugh Rees, 1907. 52 p., plates, ports. & other illus.
 Kitson, Lieut.-Col. J.A. *The Story of the 4th Battalion, 2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles*. Aldershot: s.n., 1949. 52 p., illus., 3 maps.
 Limbu, Lieut. (QGO) Rambahadur, V.C. 'My life story', As Told to Kulbahadur Rai. London: The Gurkha Welfare Trusts., s.d.
 Neild, Eric. *With Pegasus in India: The story of the 153 Gurkha Parachute Battalion*. Singapore: Jay Burch, s.d.
 Perowne, Maj-Gen. L. E. C. M. *Gurkha Sapper: The story of the Gurkha Engineers, 1948-1970*. Hong Kong: s.n., 1973.
Presentation of Pipe Banners to the 6th Queen Elizabeth's Own Gurkha Rifles by Her Majesty the Queen, Buckingham Palace, 17th June, 1962. Aldershot: s.n., 1962. 6 p., port., col. plate.

The Queen's Truncheon, 2nd King Edward VII's Own Goorkhas (The Sirmoor Rifles). Aldershot: s.n., 1951. 14 p.

Roe, Lieut-Col. C. H. *Historical record of the 2nd "Queen's Own" Sappers and Miners from 1780 to 1909*. Bangalore: s.n., 1909

