

THE EAST INDIA COMPANY

The East India Company an English company formed for the exploitation of trade with East and Southeast Asia and India, incorporated by royal charter on December 31st 1600 as a monopolistic trading body, the company became involved in politics and functioned as an agent of British imperialism in India from the early 18th century to the mid-19th century.

In addition, the activities of the company in China in the 19th century served as a catalyst for the expansion of British influence there. The company was formed to share in the East Indian spice trade. That trade had been a monopoly of Spain and Portugal until the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 gave the English the chance to break the monopoly. Until 1612 the company conducted separate voyages, separately subscribed. There were temporary joint stocks until 1657, when a permanent joint stock was raised.

The company met with opposition from the Dutch in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) and the Portuguese. The Dutch virtually excluded company members from the East Indies after the Amboina Massacre in 1623 (an incident in which English, Japanese, and Portuguese traders were executed by Dutch authorities), but the company's defeat of the Portuguese in India (1612) won them trading concessions from the Mughal Empire. The company settled down to a trade in cotton and silk piece goods, indigo, and saltpetre, with spices from South India. It extended its activities to the Persian Gulf, Southeast Asia, and East Asia.

Beginning in the early 1620s, the East India Company began using slave labour and transporting enslaved people to its facilities in Southeast Asia and India as well as to the island of St. Helena in the Atlantic Ocean, west of Angola. Although some of those enslaved by the company came from Indonesia and West Africa, the majority came from East Africa, from Mozambique, or especially from Madagascar and were primarily transported to the company's holdings in India and Indonesia. Large-scale transportation of slaves by the company was prevalent from the 1730s to the early 1750s and ended in the 1770s.

After the mid-18th century, the cotton-goods trade declined, while tea became an important import from China. Beginning in the early 19th century, the company financed the tea trade with illegal opium exports to China. Chinese opposition to that trade precipitated the first Opium War (1839–42), which resulted in a Chinese defeat and the expansion of British trading privileges; a second conflict, often called the Arrow War (1856–60), brought increased trading rights for Europeans.

The original company faced opposition to its monopoly, which led to the establishment of a rival company and the fusion in 1708 of the two as the United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies. The United Company was organized into a court of twenty-four directors who worked through committees. They were elected annually by the Court of Proprietors, or shareholders. When the company acquired control of Bengal in 1757, Indian policy was until 1773 influenced by shareholders' meetings, where votes could be bought by the purchase of shares. That arrangement led to government intervention. The Regulating Act (1773) and William Pitt the Younger's India Act (1784) established government control of political policy through a regulatory board responsible to Parliament. Thereafter the company gradually lost both commercial and political control. Its commercial monopoly was broken in 1813, and from 1834 it was merely a managing agency for the British government of India. It was deprived of that role after the Indian Mutiny (1857), and it ceased to exist as a legal entity in 1873.

Amboina Massacre

Amboina Massacre, execution that took place in Amboina (now Ambon, Indonesia) in 1623, when ten Englishmen, ten Japanese, and one Portuguese were put to death by local Dutch authorities. The incident ended any hope of Anglo-Dutch cooperation in the area, a goal that

both governments had been pursuing for several years and marked the beginning of Dutch ascendancy in the Indies.

During the first quarter of the 17th century the Dutch East India Company had already established itself in Amboina, one of the Spice Islands (Maluku, formerly Moluccas). A Dutch garrison was stationed in Fort Victoria and a local Dutch governor was appointed. The English merchants associated with the British East India Company, however, were also attracted to the island, and their interests eventually came into conflict with those of the Dutch. Early in 1623 the Dutch local governor, Herman van Speult, believed that the English merchants, helped by Japanese mercenaries, planned to kill him, and overwhelm the Dutch garrison as soon as an English ship arrived to support them. He then ordered the arrest of the alleged plotters. Under torture they admitted their guilt and were found guilty by the court of Amboina and executed in February 1623. The term massacre was applied to this incident by the English.



'The Death of Colonel Moorhouse at the Storming of the Pettah Gate of Bangalore, 7 March 1791'

Following the loss of the American colonies in the War of Independence (1775-83), India became the centrepiece of Britain's overseas possessions. This was partly the product of ongoing Anglo-French conflict, but also of the East India Company's interventions in the political and commercial rivalries of the fragmenting Mughal Empire.

Origins

The East India Company, as it grew, it needed to secure its Indian settlements from European rivals and hostile locals. It purchased land from Indian rulers and recruited troops to protect these 'Presidencies.' Eventually, these forces evolved into the Bengal, Bombay, and Madras Armies.

Joseph Moorhouse, pictured above, was commissioned from the ranks, joining the Madras Artillery in 1768. He was killed, aged forty-seven, leading an assault on the Pettah Gate at Bangalore during the 3rd Mysore War (1790-1792). Mortally wounded, he lies in the centre of the scene, supported by Captain Douglas of the 74th (Highland) Regiment. Others include the second-in-command, Major-General William Medows, riding a brown horse to the right, and Captains Wight, Wynch and Burn in the centre.

The assault on the Pettah Gate proved successful and the enemy was routed. Tipu Sultan, the ruler of the State of Mysore, was forced back to his capital of Seringapatam where, after a few months, peace was signed. Robert Home arrived in India in January 1791 and in March gained permission to accompany Lieutenant-General Lord Cornwallis, Governor-General of India, on his expedition against Tipu.

Although the East India Company lost its trade monopoly in 1813, its ships still dominated the eastern markets until its demise in the aftermath of the Indian Mutiny (1857-1859). Every season, its fleet of ships, known as East Indiamen, sailed between London and the east. Between 1600 and 1833 the Company's ships made about 4600 voyages from London. The eastern trade of spices, tea, opium, porcelain, calicoes, and silk was so lucrative that at one time, a tenth of the British exchequer's revenue came from customs duties on the Company's



imports.

Shipping on the River Hoogly, Calcutta, c1857.

One of twenty lithographs, 'Views in India, from drawings taken during the Seapoy Mutiny', from drawings by D Sarsfield Greene, Royal Artillery. Published by Thomas McLean, 1859.

Sepoy of Madras Native Infantry and his wife, 1810 (c) Watercolour on Oriental paper, by a Company artist, Tanjore, 1810 (c).

By 1810 there were forty-six regiments of Madras Native Infantry in existence alongside three regiments of European infantry. The Madras Army also included nine cavalry regiments and three artillery units.



The caste marks on this sepoy's face show that he is a Hindu. In 1806 the Madras Army offended both Hindu and Muslim soldiers when it banned the wearing of caste marks and required Muslim soldiers to shave their beards. The resulting mutiny at Vellore demonstrated that the East India Company needed to respect the customs of its men. The new regulations were abolished.

Dominance

The Company became India's dominant power following victories at the Battles of Plassey (1757), Wandewash (1760) and Buxar (1764). Its supremacy was confirmed in 1765, when it secured from the weak Mughal Emperor the right to gather tax and customs duties in Bengal, India's richest province.

Now an imperial administrator, the Company expanded its domains at the expense of native powers like Mysore (1767-99), the Marathas (1775-1818) and the Sikhs (1845-49). This expansion was driven by a mixture of personal ambition, commercial interest, concerns about security, and the need for revenue. By the mid-1850s, the Company governed two thirds of the subcontinent.

The Battle of Assaye on 23 September 1803. Coloured aquatint by J C Stadler after William Heath, published by Thomas Tegg, 1 April 1818.

The battle, fought during the 2nd Maratha War (1803-1805), was the first of Major-General Arthur Wellesley's great victories. With about 4,500 troops, only 1,300 of whom were Europeans, he routed the opposing forces of over 30,000 after a desperate struggle. Wellington considered this the bloodiest action, for the numbers of men engaged, that he ever fought.



Battle of Ferozshah (2nd Day), 22 Dec 1845. Coloured aquatint by J Harris after H Martens from a sketch by Maj G F White, 31st Regiment, published by Rudolph Ackermann, 1848 (c).

During the First Sikh War (1845-1846) on 21st December 1845, a British Indian force commanded by General Sir Hugh Gough encountered a Sikh army of around 40,000 troops led

by General Lal Singh in an entrenched position at Ferozeshah. Gough's 18,000 formidable force attacked the defences and by evening only part of them had been taken. A renewed assault the following morning forced the Sikhs out, but at heavy cost to the British.

A new Sikh army then arrived, and Gough withdrew his weakened force to the entrenchments to await an attack, but the Sikhs withdrew, possibly believing that they would not be able to eject the British and overestimating their strength and supplies. Whatever the reason for the retirement, it was a lucky escape for Gough.

Company rule

The Company's rule in India was heavily criticised by many at home. Several of its leading figures - including two governors of Bengal, Sir Warren Hastings and Major-General Robert Clive - were denounced as corrupt 'nabobs' who used their political and military influence to amass personal fortunes. But as long as the profits rolled in, the British state took an arms-length approach to regulation, at least initially. At one time, a tenth of the British exchequer's revenue came from customs duties on Company imports.

Eventually, Company misrule and a series of financial crises led to government bail-outs, greater state intervention in its affairs and the removal of its trading monopolies in the East.



Major-General Lord Robert Clive, 1764. Oil on canvas by Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), 1764 (c).

Robert Clive (1725-1774) arrived in India a pauper and left it a millionaire. On his way from very poor to very rich, he established East India Company control of Bengal.

Clive began his career in India in 1744, as a Writer (clerk) of the East India Company, but soon switched to the Company's military service. His tactical flair and personal bravery earned him rapid promotion and popular acclaim. After his victory at the Battle of Plassey (1757), the Company appointed him Governor of Bengal. At just 32 years old,

he had already made a personal fortune from lucrative Company posts and gifts from Indian rulers.

In his later years as Governor of Bengal, Clive attempted to stamp out corruption and profiteering by Company employees - amongst other things he forbade the acceptance of gifts which had made him so wealthy. In 1765, he secured for the Company the diwani (the right to collect the tax revenues) of Bengal. This gave Britain a political stake in India.

Clive has been viewed not only as a courageous and resourceful military commander and statesman, but also as a greedy speculator who used his political and military influence to amass a fortune, at India's expense. When he died in 1774, he was worth about £500,000 (£32 million today).

Sir Warren Hastings, Governor General of Bengal, c1773. Mezzotint by Thomas Watson, after Sir Joshua Reynolds, published by Thomas Watson, London, 1777.

As the first governor general of Bengal (1773-1785), Warren Hastings (1732-1818) laid many of the legal and administrative foundations of British rule in India. He was appointed via the Regulating Act of 1773, which signalled the British state's growing influence over the Company's affairs. Although Hastings was very open about receiving gifts, the Company's opponents in

Britain denounced him as a corrupt 'nabob' and he was impeached in 1787. After spending much of his fortune defending himself, he was acquitted in 1795.

Armies

Each of the Company's three 'Presidencies' - Bengal, Bombay and Madras - maintained its own army. At first, these amounted to no more than a handful of factory guards. But from the 1740s onwards, as Anglo-French rivalry spread to India, they started to grow.

The Company troops' superior European training and weaponry also enabled them to defeat Indian forces many times their size. At Buxar (1764), for example, around 7,000 Company troops defeated 40,000 enemy soldiers.



Eventually, the Bengal Army became the largest and most important of the three forces. Its commander-in-chief was recognised as the senior Company military figure in India.

British Army units were sometimes attached to the three armies. The Crown lent these in times of need, with the Company usually underwriting the cost of their deployment. The first British regiment posted to India was the 39th Foot, which arrived in 1753. Many British Army officers first came to prominence serving alongside and leading Company troops, including General Sir Eyre Coote and General Sir Arthur Wellesley (the future Duke of Wellington).

Sepoys of the 3rd Battalion of native infantry at Bombay, 1773



Bengal Army Troops, 1785. Watercolour on European paper, by a Company artist, 1785 (c).

This early painting is typical in showing examples of different ranks and regiments in the Bengal Army: a golandaz (artillery private), a sepoy (infantry private) and a subadar (a senior Indian officer). The style is designed to appeal to European taste with an exotic, picturesque background painted with thin watercolour washes.

The Bombay Army was the army of the Bombay Presidency, one of the three presidencies of British India. It was established in 1668 and governed by the East India Company until the Government of India Act 1858 transferred all presidencies to the direct authority of the British Crown. On 1 April 1895, the army was incorporated into the newly created Indian Army and became known as the Bombay Command until 1908.

18th century

In the early stages of Company rule in India, Bombay was rated as an unhealthy and unprofitable region. Accordingly, only a small garrison was maintained while emphasis was

placed on creating a local navy (the "Bombay Marine") to control piracy. In 1742 the Bombay Army consisted of eight companies of European and Eurasian garrison troops, numbering 1,593 of all ranks. These had evolved from independent companies dating back as far as 1668 when the Company took over control of the city of Bombay. The Mahars served in both Bombay Army and Marine battalions. Prior to the Indian Rebellion of 1857 they were heavily recruited and constituted between a fifth and a quarter of the entire Bombay Army.

By 1783 the Bombay Army had grown to 15,000 men, a force that was still significantly smaller than the other two Presidency armies. Recruitment from the 1750s on had however been expanded to include a majority of Indigenous sepoys, initially employed as irregulars for particular campaigns. The first two regular sepoy battalions were raised in 1768, a third in 1760 and a fourth ten years later. The non-Indian (mostly British but also including Swiss and German mercenaries) element was organized in a single Bombay European Regiment.

In 1796 the Bombay Native Infantry was reorganized into four regiments, each of two battalions. The Bombay Foot Artillery, which traced its history back nearly 50 years prior to this date, was brought up to six companies in strength in 1797. The Bombay Army was heavily involved in the First Maratha War and the defeat of Tipu Sultan of Mysore in 1799.

19th century.

Prior to the cessation of Company rule in 1861, the Bombay Army played a substantial role in campaigns against the Bani Bu Ali in 1821, in North-Western India, notably the 1st Afghan War of 1838–1842, the Sind War of 1843, the 2nd Sikh War of 1848–49 and the Persian War of 1856–57. The Bombay Army had acquired responsibility for garrisoning Aden, and The 1st Bombay European Regiment, The Bombay Marine Battalion and the 24th Bombay Native Infantry all saw service there in 1839.



Native Officers of the Bombay Army in dress uniform, 1818

The Bombay native infantry establishment continued to expand until it reached twenty-six regiments in 1845. Three Bombay Light Cavalry regiments were raised after 1817, plus a few troops of irregular horse. One brigade of Bombay Horse Artillery comprising both British and Indian personnel had been established by 1845, plus three battalions of foot artillery.

The Bombay Presidency's Army was also supplemented by regular British Army Regiments and in 1842 one cavalry and four infantry regiments were deployed on the "Bombay Establishment".

The Indian Rebellion of 1857 was almost entirely confined to the Bengal Army. Of the thirty-two Bombay infantry regiments in existence at the time only two mutinied. After some initial uncertainty as to the loyalty of the remainder, it was deemed possible to send most of the British troops in the Presidency to Bengal, while the Bombay sepoy and sowar (cavalry) units held the southern districts of the North-West Frontier. Some Bombay units saw active service during the repression of the rebellion in Central India.

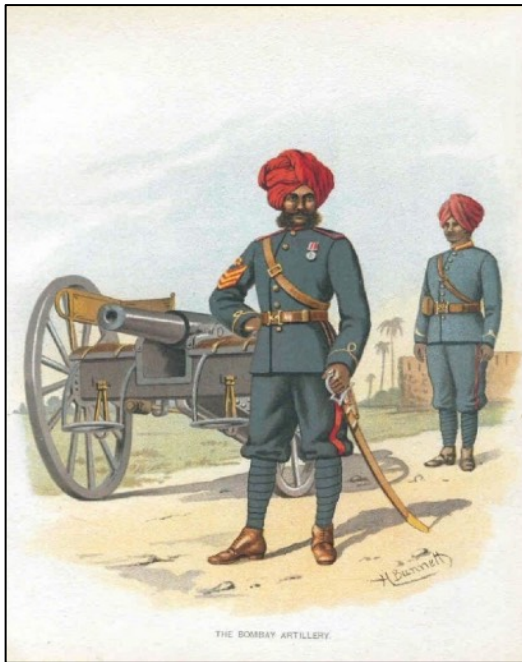
Post mutiny

Following the transfer from East India Company rule to that of the British government in 1861 the Bombay Army underwent a series of changes. These included the disbandment of three regiments of Bombay Native Infantry and the recruitment of replacement units from the Beluchi population. Originally created as irregular units, the three "Belooch" regiments in their red trousers were to remain a conspicuous part of the Bombay Army for the remainder of its separate existence.

By 1864 the Bombay Army had been reorganised as follows:

The Northern Division
The Poona Division
The Mhow Division
The Scinde Division.

With brigades at Bombay, Belgaum, Neemuch, Poona, Ahmednuggur, Nusseerabad and Deesa; as well as a garrison in Aden. During the remainder of the 19th century Bombay Army units participated in the 1868 Expedition to Abyssinia, the Second Afghan War of 1878–80, and the Third Anglo-Burmese War of 1885–87.



A havildar and gunner of Bombay Presidency Army Artillery.

In 1895 the three separate Presidency Armies were abolished, and the Army of India was divided into four commands, each commanded by a lieutenant general. These comprised Madras (including Burma), Punjab (including the NorthWest Frontier), Bengal and Bombay (including Aden).

End of the separate Bombay Army.

In 1895 the three separate Presidency Armies began a process of unification which was not to be concluded until the Kitchener reforms of eight years later. As an initial step the Army of India was divided into four commands, each commanded by a lieutenant general. These comprised Bombay (including Aden), Madras (including Burma), Punjab (including the Northwest Frontier) and Bengal. In 1903 the separately numbered regiments of

the Bombay, Madras and Bengal Armies were unified in a single organisational sequence and the presidency affiliations disappeared.

A British officer and soldiers of the 29th Bombay Native Infantry on field training, 1885

The Bengal Army was the army of the Bengal Presidency, one of the three presidencies of British India within the British Empire.

The presidency armies, like the presidencies themselves, belonged to the East India Company (EIC) until the Government of India Act 1858, passed in the aftermath of the Indian Rebellion of 1857, transferred all three presidencies to the direct authority of the British Crown. In 1895 all three presidency armies were merged into the Indian Army.

The Bengal Army originated with the establishment of a European Regiment in 1756. While the East India Company had previously maintained a small force of Dutch and Eurasian

mercenaries in Bengal, this was destroyed when Calcutta was captured by the Nawab of Bengal on 30th June that year.

In 1757 the first locally recruited unit of Bengal sepoys was created in the form of the Lal Paltan battalion. It was recruited from soldiers that had served in the Nawab's Army from Bihar and the Awadh (Oudh) who were collectively called Purbiyas. Drilled and armed along British army lines this force served well at the Battle of Plassey in 1757, and 20 more Indian battalions were raised by 1764. In 1766, the Monghyr Mutiny, quelled by Robert Clive, affected many of the white officers of the Bengal Army.



In his deposition, Lieutenant General Jasper Nicolls, who was an army commander stationed in India, stated of the Bengal Army's recruitment that: "It may well be said that the whole sepoy army of Bengal is drawn from the Company's province of Bihar and Oudh, with very few exceptions".

The East India Company steadily expanded its Bengal Army and by 1796 the establishment was set at three battalions of European artillery, three regiments of European infantry, ten regiments of Indian cavalry and twelve regiments (each of two battalions) of Indian infantry.

In 1824 the Bengal Army underwent reorganisation, with the regular infantry being grouped into sixty-eight single battalion regiments numbered according to their date of establishment. Nine additional infantry regiments were subsequently raised, though several existing units were disbanded between 1826 and 1843. On the eve of the First Afghan War (1839–42) the Bengal Army had achieved a dominant role in the forces of the HEIC. There were seventy-four battalions of Bengal regular infantry against only fifty-two from Madras, twenty-six from Bombay and 24 British (Queen's and Company). On average an inch and a half taller and a stone heavier than the southern Indian troops, the Bengal sepoy was highly regarded by a military establishment that tended to evaluate its soldiers by physical appearance.

A new feature in the Bengal Army was the creation of irregular infantry and cavalry regiments during the 1840s. Originally designated as "Local Infantry" these were permanently established units but with less formal drill and fewer British officers than the regular Bengal line regiments.

The Bengal Presidency at its greatest extent in 1858

The main source of recruitment continued to be high caste Brahmins, Bhumihars and Rajputs from Bihar and Oudh, although the eight regular cavalry regiments consisted mainly of Muslim sowars from the Indian Muslim biradaris such as the Ranghar (Rajput Muslims), Sheikhs, Sayyids, Mughals, and Hindustani Pathans. Another innovation introduced prior to 1845 was to designate specific regiments as "Volunteers" – that is recruited for general service, with sepoys who had accepted a commitment for possible overseas duty. Recruits for the Bengal Army who were prepared to travel by ship if required, received a special allowance or batta. Two of these BNI regiments were serving in China in 1857 and so escaped any involvement in the great rebellion of that year.

The East India Company's Bengal Army in 1857 consisted of 151,361 men of all ranks, of whom the great majority - 128,663 - were Indians.

1857

A total of 64 Bengal Army regular infantry and cavalry regiments rebelled during the Indian Rebellion of 1857 or were disbanded after their continued loyalty was considered doubtful. From 1858 onwards the Chamars (Outcaste) and the actual high-caste Awadhi and Bihari Hindu presence in the Bengal Army was reduced because of their perceived primary role as "mutineers" in the 1857 rebellion.



The new and less homogeneous Bengal Army was essentially drawn from Punjabi Muslims, Sikhs, Gurkhas, Baluchis and Pathans, although twelve of the pre-mutiny Bengal line infantry regiments continued in service with the same basis of recruitment, traditions, and uniform colours as before.

A largely unspoken rationale was that an army of diverse origins was unlikely to unite in rebellion.

Soldiers of the 1st European Bengal Fusiliers, pre-1862

Hindu priest garlanding the flags of the Bengal Light Infantry at a presentation of colours ceremony, c. 1847.

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The Bengal infantry units in existence at the end of the Presidency era continued as the senior regiments (1st Brahmans to 48th Pioneers) of the newly unified Indian Army.

The Madras Army was the army of the Presidency of Madras, one of the three presidencies of British India within the British Empire. The presidency armies, like the presidencies themselves, belonged to the East India Company until the Government of India Act 1858 (passed in the aftermath of the Indian Rebellion of 1857) transferred all three presidencies to the direct

authority of the British Crown. In 1895 all three presidency armies were merged into the Indian Army.

The Madras Army of the Honourable East India Company came into being through the need to protect the Company's commercial interests. These were mostly untrained guards, with only some bearing arms. The French attack and capture of Madras in 1746 forced the British hand. In 1757, the East India Company decided to raise well-trained military units to conduct operations, conquer territory, and demand allegiance from local rulers.



The loosely organised military units were later combined into battalions with Indian officers commanding local troops. One of the first major actions fought by these troops was the battle of Wandiwash in 1760. The troops were highly praised for their steadiness under fire. Earlier a good part of the force was sent to Bengal under young Clive, who made history and a personal fortune after the Battle of Plassey.

The Madras Army officers were in the early years very conscious of the soldiers' local customs, caste rituals, dress, and social hierarchy. Some leading landowners joined the Madras Army, one of whom is recorded as Mootoo (Muthu) Nayak from the nobility in Madura. As the army expanded and new officers came in, mostly from Company sources, the leadership style and care of the men changed for the worse. The most famous incident in the Madras Army was the Vellore mutiny. After Tipu Sultan was killed, his two sons were held in British custody in Vellore Fort. On the night of 10th July 1806, the sepoys of three Madras regiments garrisoning Vellore Fort mutinied, killing 129 British officers and soldiers. The rising, caused by a mixture of military and political grievances, was suppressed within hours by a force which included loyal Madras cavalry.

In the 1830s the Madras Army was concerned with internal security and support for the civil administration. This was a multi-ethnic army in which the British officers were encouraged to learn and speak Asian languages. In 1832–33 superior discipline and training enabled the Madras Army to put down a rebellion in the Visakhapatnam district.

Under the British Raj - Post-1857 history.

The Army of the Madras Presidency remained almost unaffected by the Indian Rebellion of 1857. By contrast with the larger Bengal Army where all but twelve (out of eighty-four) infantry and cavalry regiments either mutinied or were disbanded, all fifty-two regiments of Madras Native Infantry remained loyal and passed into the new Indian Army when direct British Crown rule replaced that of the Honourable East India Company. Four regiments of Madras Light Cavalry and the Madras Artillery batteries did however disappear in the post-1858 reorganisation of the Presidency Armies. The Madras Fusiliers (a regiment of European infantry recruited by the East India Company for service in India) was transferred to the regular British Army.

End of the separate Madras Army.

In 1895, the three separate Presidency Armies began a process of unification which was not to be concluded until the Kitchener reforms of eight years later. As an initial step the Army of India was divided into four commands, each commanded by a lieutenant general. These comprised Madras (including Burma), Punjab (including the Northwest Frontier), Bengal and Bombay (including Aden). In 1903 the separately numbered regiments of the Madras, Bombay and Bengal Armies were unified in a single organisational sequence and the presidency affiliations disappeared.

The 1st Madras

Pioneers, c. 1890

Disbanding of Madras infantry regiments.

While the Madras Army remained in existence as a separate entity until 1895, twelve of the Madras Native Infantry regiments were disbanded between 1862 and 1864. A further eight went in 1882, three between 1902 and 1904, two in 1907 and four in 1922. The remainder were disbanded between 1923 and 1933, leaving the highly regarded Madras Sappers and Miners as the only Madrasi unit in the Indian Army until a new Madras Regiment was raised in 1942, during World War II. Both regiments continue to exist in the modern Indian Army.



The gradual phasing out of Madrasi recruitment for the Indian Army in the late 19th century, in favour of Sikhs, Rajputs, Dogras and Punjabi Mussalmans, was justified by General Sir Frederick Roberts on the grounds that long periods of peace and inactivity in Southern India had rendered the Madras infantry soldier inferior to the Martial Races of the North. The military historians John Keegan and Philip Mason have however pointed out that under the "watertight" Presidency Army system, Madras regiments had little opportunity of active service on the North-West Frontier. As a result, the more ambitious and capable British officers of the Indian Army opted for service with Punjabi and other northern units and the overall efficiency of the Madras Army suffered accordingly.



Officers of the Madras Light Infantry at Trichinopoly, 1800.

The Market Place of Trichinopoly showing officers of the Madras Light Infantry, 1800. Oil on canvas by Philip Le Couteur (1777-1807), 1800.

Trichinopoly (Tiruchchirappalli, Tamil Nadu) is situated on the bank of the River Cauvery (Kaveri) about fifty-six miles (90km) from the sea, south-west of Madras (Chennai). At the time this picture was painted, it was the third most important post in the Madras Presidency. This was due both to its strategic location in southern India and because it is dominated by a well-protected

fort, situated on the distinctive rock which rises steeply out of the plain to a height of about 83m. The town itself is on the plain below. In the mid-eighteenth century, it was a frequent centre of conflict between French and British forces. The town also suffered attacks during the Mysore Wars of the second half of the century, when it was devastated more than once.

Philip Le Couteur entered the service of the East India Company's Madras Army in 1798, aged twenty-one. He was commissioned a lieutenant in the 12th (Madras) Native Infantry on 1st January 1800 and was captain lieutenant from 31st January 1806. He died at St. Thomé in Madras on 14th October 1807, where his burial is registered in the name of Peter, although the signature on this painting serves to prove this incorrect.

Officers and men

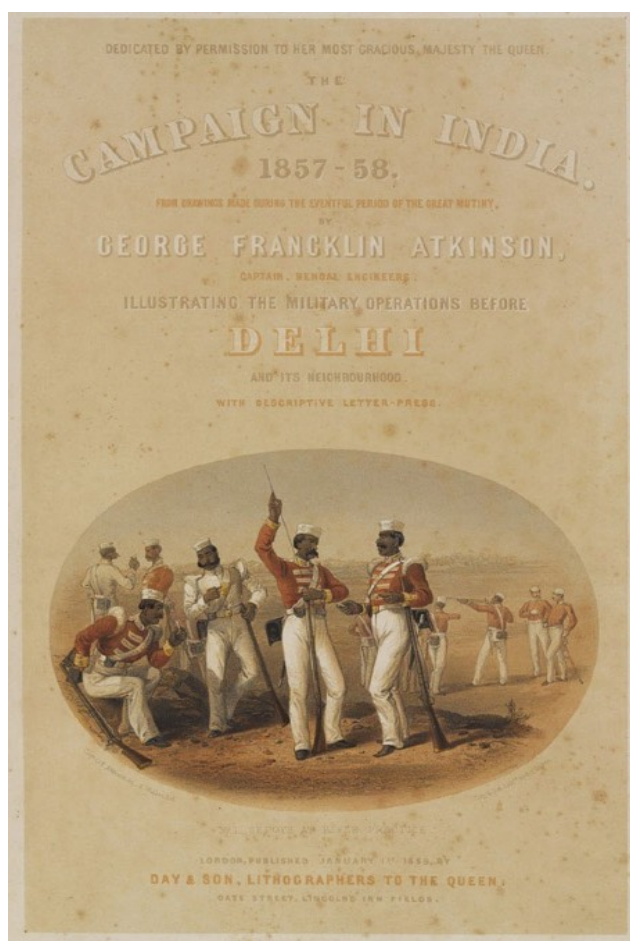
By the early 19th century, the Company's army was 250,000-strong, larger than that of many nations. The officers were British and there were several regiments composed only of Europeans. But most Company soldiers were Indian. The Company was quick to combine Western weapons, uniform, and military training with Indian martial traditions. In a society where warriors were well respected, it could always attract new recruits with the prospect of good pay, pensions, land grants and honoured status.

Although some British Army officers transferred to its service, the Company also operated a system of patronage in Britain to commission officers directly. In 1809, the Company established a college at Addiscombe in Surrey to train its officer cadets in military subjects and Indian languages.

Sepoys at Rifle Practice, 1857 (c)

Coloured lithograph title page from 'The Campaign in India 1857-58', a series of twenty-six coloured lithographs by William Simpson, E Walker, and others, after G F Atkinson, published by Day and Son, 1857-1858.

By 1857 the morale of the Bengal Army's Indian 'sepoys' (infantry) was very low. Unease had been increasing for years due to declining terms of service. Bad pay, the reduction of 'batta' allowances (foreign service pay) and poor pensions were the main concerns. This resulted in five serious mutinies in the Bengal Army between 1824 and 1852. Equally important was the declining relationship between native troops and European officers. Whereas an earlier generation of officers had been interested in the religion and culture of their men, by the 1850s there were few such individuals in the Bengal Army. Instead, officers of an evangelical persuasion had started preaching in the hope of converting sepoys to Christianity. Officers looked down on their men as racial inferiors, at best to be avoided in favour of European society.



Matters in the Bengal Army came to a head with the introduction of the Enfield Pattern 1853 Percussion Rifle Musket. The rumour spread that its cartridges, which had to be bit open before use, were, to facilitate loading, greased with pig and cow fat. This was deeply offensive to Muslims and Hindus. In February 1857, the 19th Bengal Native Infantry refused to use the new

cartridges. They were quickly disbanded, but their actions sparked the Indian Mutiny (1857-1859), an uprising that almost toppled British rule in India.



Cadets at the Company's Military Seminary, Addiscombe, 1857. Fourth Term, East India Company's Military Seminary, Addiscombe, June 1857. Photograph, 1857.

Intended to train the Company's military cadets, Addiscombe (in Surrey) was opened in 1809. It cost about £300 to put a young gentleman through the course. As usual with 19th century educational institutions, the pupils led a tough existence, which might have helped them to cope with the hard career path they had chosen in India. They also learned Indian languages which were essential if they were to

successfully command native infantry, cavalry, and engineer units. The college closed in 1861 after the abolition of Company rule. The Company also maintained training camps at Newport on the Isle of White, Warley in Essex and Chatham in Kent.

Princely states.

During many campaigns, the Company's armies were assisted by the forces of Indian 'princely states'. These were not British possessions, but semi-independent territories subject to varying degrees of political supervision through a system of subsidiary alliances.

These states maintained their own armies and often employed Company officers to command their troops. In large states like Hyderabad and Gwalior, the Company also maintained small armies - known as the Hyderabad/Gwalior Contingents - which operated besides the states' own small forces.



Nizam's Army, (3rd Cavalry) Native Officer in full dress, 1846. Coloured aquatint by J Harris after Henry Martens. Number seven in the series 'Costumes of the Indian Army' published by R Ackermann, 1846.

Almost a quarter of the population of 'British India' lived in over a hundred semi-independent princely states who had entered into treaty relationships first with the East India Company and later with the Crown. These states maintained their own armed forces, usually supplied with British officers. In the case of the large state of Hyderabad, the Crown maintained a small army known as the Hyderabad Contingent besides the Nizam of Hyderabad's own small forces.

Colonel Alexander Dewar of Vogrie, Midlothian,

1st Cavalry Gwalior (Scindia's) Contingent, 1850 (c). Coloured photograph of painting, after Colvin Smith (1795-1875), 1850 (c).

The Gwalior Contingent was a body of Indian troops, commanded by British officers of the East India Company, in the service of Maharajah Sindia, the pro-British ruler of the Indian princely state of Gwalior. During the Indian Mutiny (1857-1859) the contingent rebelled against Sindia and their British officers.

Global campaigns

The main priorities for the East India Company's soldiers were the defence and internal order of India. But they also allowed Britain to project its power more broadly across the eastern hemisphere.

As well as intervening in states that neighboured British India, including Nepal (1814-6), Burma (1824-53), Afghanistan (1839-42) and Persia (1856-57), they were despatched further afield, to places such as Egypt (1801), Java (1811) and China (1839-42).



'The Storming of Ghuznee. The Storming Column entering the Fortress', 23 July 1839. Lithograph from a volume of fourteen coloured lithographs 'The Storming of Ghuznee and Kelat' by W Taylor after Lieutenant Thomas Wingate, 2nd Queen's Royal Regiment, 1839 (c).

After forcing the Bolan Pass and capturing Kandahar without a fight, Sir John Keane's Army of the Indus advanced on the formidable Ghazni fortress. Protected by thick, 60-foot high walls it presented a major problem for the British who lacked heavy artillery. They were only able to capture it because Mohan Lal, a Kashmiri interpreter, spy, and assistant to the political officer Captain Sir Alexander Burnes, managed to discover that one of the gates was poorly defended.

'Storming of the forts and entrenchments of Chuepee on 7th January 1841'. Coloured lithograph by Dickenson, after F J White, published by Dickenson and Son, 1841 (c).

Chuenpi was one of the Bogue forts (along with Tycocktow) that guarded the mouth of the Pearl River. During the 1st China War (1839-1842) a combined Royal Navy and Army force captured the forts on 7th January 1841.

The Army detachment was commanded by Major J. L. Pratt of the 26th (Cameronian) Regiment of Foot and suffered only thirty-eight casualties. Of the Chinese fleet of thirteen war-junks, ten were captured and their flagship was destroyed.

Mutiny

The Company's mismanagement of India contributed to the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny (1857-59), an uprising of Indian soldiers against their British commanders. Native rulers and thousands of ordinary people joined in this struggle that threatened to destroy British colonial power on the subcontinent.

The British eventually prevailed in the conflict, but it marked the end of Company rule. Political control in India was transferred to the British Crown. A secretary of state for India was appointed and the Crown's viceroy became head of the government.



'Mutinuous Sepoys', 1857 (c). Coloured lithograph from 'The Campaign in India 1857-58', a series of twenty-six coloured lithographs by William Simpson, E Walker, and others, after G F Atkinson, published by Day and Son, 1857-1858.

Although Hindu sepoy of the Bengal Army formed the majority of the rebel forces during the Indian Mutiny (1857-1859), many others took part. The revolt spread beyond the army to include Indian rulers angered by the East India Company's annexation of native states.

Thousands of common people rose up for religious reasons, out of loyalty to their old kingdoms or simply to engage in looting. Jihadis and other non-sepoys made up at least half of the Indian forces during the siege of Delhi. Others wanted to destroy the zamindari landlord system by which the Company collected taxes.

Europeans transferred.

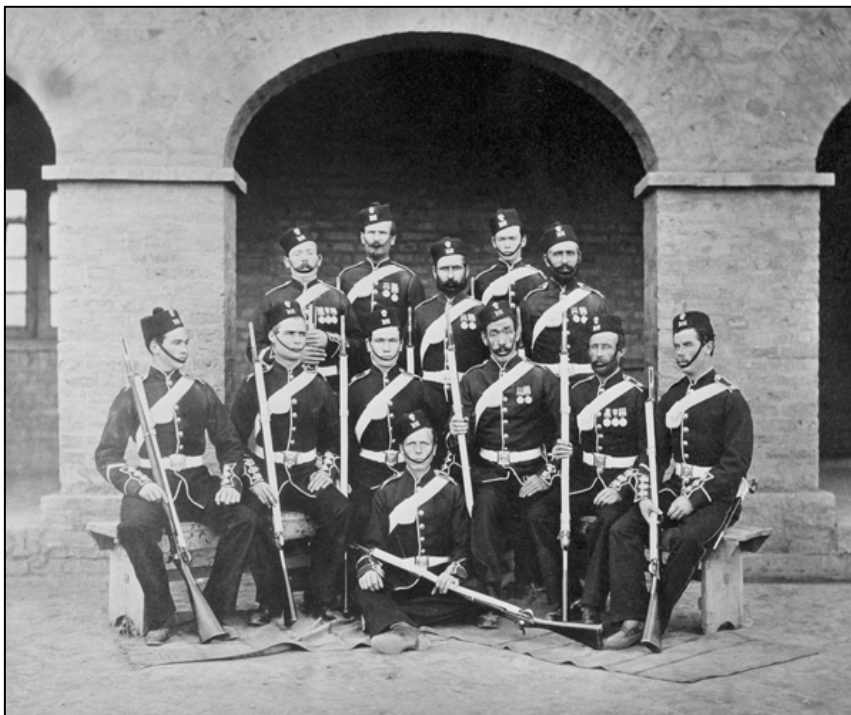
In the aftermath of the Mutiny, the Company's European units switched to British Army service. The artillery was integrated into the Royal Artillery, while the infantry was retitled as regiments of foot (numbering 100 to 109 in the order of precedence). Following further reforms of the British

Army, some of these became famous Irish regiments like the Royal Munster Fusiliers and the Royal Dublin Fusiliers.

Members of the 101st Regiment of Foot (Royal Bengal Fusiliers) at Rawalpindi, 1864.

The 101st Foot was originally an East India Company regiment (raised in 1652) that switched to British Army control in 1862. This photograph was taken just after the regiment had taken part in the Umbeyla campaign on the Northwest Frontier (1863-1864).

In 1868 it embarked at Bombay and landed in England for the first time the following year.



Sikh and Punjabi Muslim Indian Army Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers, 2nd Regiment of Cavalry, Punjab Frontier Force, 1863 (c). Oil on canvas by Gordon Hayward, 1890 (c). All holders of the Indian Order of Merit seated and standing under an exterior archway.

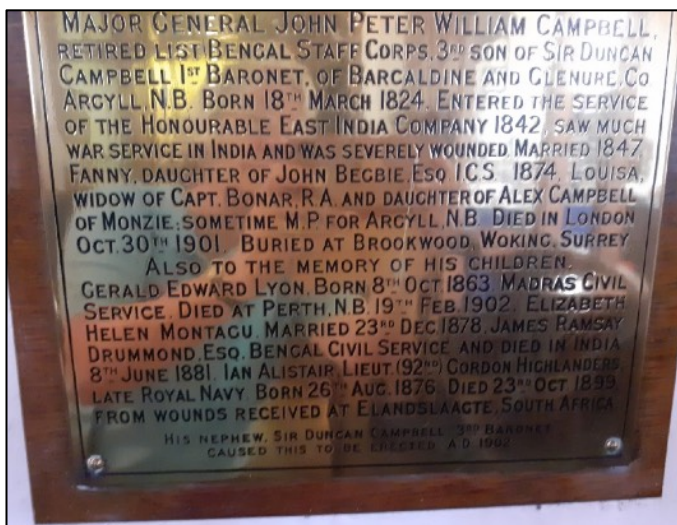


The painting was based on photograph taken as early as 1859 of eight officers and NCOs awarded the IOM for gallantry in action during the Indian Mutiny (1857-1859). However, alongside the IOM stars, the artist has added Indian Mutiny medals which were not distributed until 1863.

The sitters are Rissaldars Bishan Singh and Hakdad Khan; Daffadars Bishan Singh, Sarmukh Singh and Panjab Singh; and Jemadars Jamyat Singh, Jiwan Singh, and Sher

Singh. Jamyat or Jumeeyuyt Singh, standing at the back on the right was responsible for saving the life of Captain (later Major-General Sir) Dighton Probyn early in the Mutiny and on 31 August 1858 he was one of the three men who saved Captain (later General Sir) Samuel Browne at Seerporah, in the action for which the latter was awarded the Victoria Cross but lost his arm.

First raised at Lahore in 1849 by Sam Browne when a Lieutenant, the regiment was titled the 2nd Regiment Punjab Cavalry. Also known as Sam Browne's Cavalry, it also saw action during the 2nd Afghan War (1878-1880).



Memorial plaque at St. Margaret's Church Bowers Gifford.

Indian Army.

The Crown took over what remained of the Company's armies. These units were restructured and merged, eventually becoming the Indian Army. Recruitment of Indian soldiers also changed. The high-caste Hindus from the Ganges Valley who had dominated the Bengal Army - the Company's most important force - were now distrusted due to their role in the Mutiny. They were replaced by Punjabi Muslims, Sikhs, Gurkhas, Baluchis and Pathans.

This restructured force went on to serve in many campaigns on India's unruly North-West Frontier, but also in Afghanistan, China, Burma and elsewhere. During the two World Wars, the Indian Army made a vital contribution to Allied victory, serving in most theatres of war.

In October 1914 an Indian Corps, including cavalry units, arrived in France. While the infantry was withdrawn to Mesopotamia in December 1915, most of the cavalry remained on the Western Front until 1918.



This photograph depicts the 20th Deccan Horse, part of the 2nd Indian Cavalry Division, in Carnoy Valley shortly before their unsuccessful attack at High Wood on 14 July. Together with the 7th (The Princess Royal's) Dragoon Guards, they suffered 102 casualties and lost 130 horses.

Compiled by Norman Bambridge
Basildon Borough Heritage Society
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