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### THE JAVA CAMPAIGN OF 1811-1816 - PART III

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#### THE COURT MARTIAL OF CORNET FREDERICK PERET, THE RETURN OF THE JAVA LIGHT CAVALRY TO INDIA AND THE MUTINY OF THE 7TH (OR BENGAL LIGHT INFANTRY) VOLUNTEER BATTALION DURING 1815

##### CORNET FREDERICK PERET AND THE JAVA LIGHT CAVALRY

At page 52 of 'The Java Campaign of 1811-1816', (Durbar, Volume 24, Number 1, Spring 2007), reference is made to the Court Martial of Cornet Frederick Peret of the Java Light Cavalry. Peret, who was born at Villeneuve, canton Vaud, Switzerland on 5 August 1788 was baptised Henri Vincent Frederick Perret on 22 August 1788. He became a Company Cadet in 1805 and arrived in India on 11 July 1806 and joined Barasat (Barasett) as a Company Cadet. He was posted to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bengal Native Cavalry in 1807<sup>1</sup> and volunteered for service with the expeditionary force in Java and was appointed as a Cornet in the Java Light Cavalry. The unit arrived in Java during March 1813 and was stationed at Salatiga which was 'in land' south of Samarang on the north coast.

Peret married Miss Eliza Hutchinson at Calcutta on 16 July 1812<sup>2</sup> and on being posted to Java to serve with the Java Light Cavalry during 1813 he was either accompanied by his wife, or she voluntarily joined him later. He was the only officer in that unit who was married but the marriage did not last long and they became separated. The situation would have been difficult as there were no married quarters available for officers, therefore Peret would have had to rent a private residence, probably a bungalow. There appears to be no record of the cause of the breakdown of the marriage but a comment was made by Lieutenant-General Miles Nightingall which refers to the Peret marital breakdown. From what little has been recorded it would appear that as the only accompanied married officer he and the other officers of the Java Light Cavalry were unable to work together amicably, which resulted in the charges being made in respect of his conduct.

During 1814 Comet Peret was placed on a 'charge' by Major Lucius Robert O'Brien, the Officer Commanding the Java Light Cavalry, in respect of his conduct and was duly the subject of a Court Martial, which acquitted him.

The Court Martial papers were passed to Lieutenant General Sir Miles Nightingall who recommended that he return to his parent regiment and wrote in a letter to Lieutenant-Governor Raffles:

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<sup>1</sup> National Army Museum Hodson Index of Biographical Date on Officers of the East India Company and Indian Armies – Lieutenant Frederick Peret.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

“I have one more thing to mention in strict confidence, as I have not yet had time to express my opinion publicly on the sentence of the Court Martial, which is that Cornet Perret (sic) has been fully and even honourably acquitted of the Charges brought against him, and I am sorry to inform you that he has been so shamefully treated by both O'Brien and the rest of the Officers that it will become my duty to express the strong displeasure I feel at the harsh and improper treatment which he has experienced and to convey a marked censure on Major O'Brien and the officers of the Corps. ... It is very distressing to me to be forced to censure an officer of Major O'Brien's Rank and one for whom I have hitherto always entertained the highest opinion and respect as an officer, but he has brought it entirely upon himself and I must do my duty. It is my intention to offer Mr Perrett (sic) leave to proceed to Bengal (for the poor fellow can never (re)join the Java Cavalry and to furnish him with a copy of my orders and observations on the Sentence of the Court, as a complete vindication of his Military Character, as to his unfortunate dispute with his Wife it is a subject I do not intend to touch upon. Indeed it is only fit to go before a Civil Tribunal, should Mr Perrett prefer remaining on this island and you could give him any small situation, I should have no objection to the measure on the contrary I should be glad of an opportunity of serving a poor fellow, whose greatest crime appears to be his having been born a foreigner, at least nothing has appeared on the proceedings of the Court, which in any degree attaches improper Conduct to him.”<sup>3</sup>

Raffles did not accede to Nightingall's request and Peret returned to continue his service with the Java Light Cavalry.

With the planned withdrawal of some troops from Java Nightingall wrote to the Adjutant-General of the King's Troops, Calcutta (Colonel Thomas McMahan) on 21 June 1815 notifying him of the return of troops to Bengal which included the Java Light Cavalry.<sup>4</sup>

The return of the Java Light Cavalry to Bengal was confirmed by Nightingall in his letter to N.B. Edmonstone, Member of the Supreme Council at Calcutta in which he writes:

“I lost no time in commencing on the Reduction and Reforms I originally intended to have entered upon ..... But you are already acquainted with the arrangement I have made [which includes] .... getting rid of that useless Corps the Java Light Cavalry and Horse Artillery.”<sup>5</sup>

An annotation on page 233 of the *Bengal Military Statement* for 1814/1815 states that the unit had been ordered to return from Java to Bengal. However, not all the officers returned to India immediately. Cornet George Roxburgh was stationed at Sourabaya and was killed on 6 December 1815 when he was struck by lightning.<sup>6</sup>

Although the *East-India Registers* continue to record officers as serving with the 'Java Lt Cav' in 1815, 1816 and 1817 editions, the *Bengal Military Statement* for 1816-1817 does not

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<sup>3</sup> NAM, 1976-07-82-1. Letter book of Lt-Gen Sir Miles Nightingall, Commander-in-Chief Java, 4 June – 1 October 1814. Letter to Raffles dated 16 Sep 1814.

<sup>4</sup> NAM, 1976-07-82-2. Nightingall's letter book 24 June-4 Nov 1815. Letter dated 21 June 1815.

<sup>5</sup> NAM, 1976-07-82-2. Letter to Neil Benjamin Edmonstone (1765-1841) dated 24 June 1815.

<sup>6</sup> His death was not recorded until it was published in *The East India Register and Directory for 1818*, page 445. The date is also recorded in Dodswell & Miles, *Alphabetical List of Officers of the Indian Army from 1760 to 1843*, (London 1838), pp 222-3

show any strength figures for the unit.<sup>7</sup> The Java Light Cavalry and the Horse Artillery returned to India on two transport ships, the *Ganjam* and the *James Drummond* and the disembarkation return is a combined order covering both elements. The following officers of the Java Light Cavalry disembarked:

- Cornet G.A. Kempland, 8th Bengal Native Cavalry
- Cornet T.M. Taylor, 5th Bengal Native Cavalry
- Cornet not named
- Riding Master McAuliffe.<sup>8</sup>

In addition 'one European Woman' travelled from Java to India with the Java Light Cavalry, but her identity is not given in the disembarkation document.<sup>9</sup>

Following their arrival in India the combined unit of the Java Light Cavalry and Horse Artillery was disbanded, and under an order dated 2 August 1815 the troops were paid up to the 31st July ... granted a Gratuity of one month's Pay and Full Batta ... and granted leave which was not to exceed 8 months.<sup>10</sup>

Peret re-joined his parent unit and served during the siege and capture of Hathras in 1817, and was promoted to 'Lieutenant' which was back-dated to 12 November 1813. He was then granted furlough to Java in 1817 and died at Samarang, Java on 28 April 1818. Although granted a long furlough it is noted that he was not accompanied by his wife, Eliza, and it is therefore presumed that they had separated. The question remains why did he take leave to such a remote, as it was at that time, location as Samarang [Semarang] in Java. Was it because he had purchased what was formerly a Dutch property or had he formed an 'attachment' during his service in the Salatiga-Samarang area? His record of service does not give an answer, but if this was so it would seem that Nightingall had misjudged his character.

#### MUTINY OF THE 7TH (OR BENGAL LIGHT INFANTRY) VOLUNTEER BATTALION

The 7th (or Light Infantry) Volunteer Battalion was stationed at Djoejocarta and thus formed the garrison at that location. It was not a popular location with the Bengal troops and the situation was aggravated by the fact that the Commanding Officer was also serving as 'Commanding [the troops] at Macassar' and, of the 13 other officers, only five were actually serving with the battalion. After the coronation of the third Sultan on 22 June 1812 the Sepoys were retained at 'Yogyakarta'.<sup>11</sup> Among the native Javanese the Sepoys aroused a continual feeling of dread and dislike and it was for this reason that Raffles maintained the Bengal Sepoys as garrison troops in the central Javanese Courts. With the lack of European East India Company officers, the command of the smaller garrisons devolved largely into the hands of the Indian junior officers and NCOs who then had ample opportunity to abuse their position of trust.<sup>12</sup> Among the Sepoys in the 7th Battalion were a number of Hindus who gradually integrated themselves into the Javanese Court at Surakarta and received presents of Spanish dollars, gold necklaces and bangles etc. The initial instigator of the acceptance of

<sup>7</sup> BL, (IOR), L/MIL/8/26, 1816-1817

<sup>8</sup> BL, (IOR), *Bengal Military Consultations*, 19 May 1815, Nos. 50 and 51.

<sup>9</sup> It seems quite probable that the lady accompanying the unit was Mrs Eliza Peret.

<sup>10</sup> National Archives of India, *Military General Orders 1815, Order of 2 Aug 1815*.

<sup>11</sup> There are a number of spellings of Yogyakarta. It is also spelt as Djoejocarta. [In addition see Note 83].

<sup>12</sup> Carey, P.B.R., *The Sepoy Conspiracy of 1815 in Java, Bijdragen tot de Taal, Land-en Volkenkunde*, Volume 133, Parts 2 and 3 (Leiden, 1977), p.297.

gifts was Dhaugkul Singh whose knowledge of the Hindu religion greatly impressed the Sunan<sup>13</sup> and this contact was followed by that of Sepoy Ripaul Singh. He, in turn, introduced Naik Mata Deen, who could speak good Malay and had become the master of ceremonies for the Sepoy garrison's Hindu religious festivals. This proved to be of great interest to the Sunan who frequently visited the fort and attended such festivals, doing so without any attendants although occasionally being accompanied by members of his family. On these occasions he was met by Mata Deen and Dhaugkul Singh but the meetings lapsed for a time as Ripaul Singh and Mata Deen, who were Malay interpreters, were moved to Yogyakarta to serve at the battalion's headquarters.

The withdrawal of 59th Regiment of Foot from Samarang in mid-1815, and the general running down of the British and East India Company's presence in Java in preparation for the return of the Dutch administration, encouraged the Sepoys into thinking that they could defy the British government with impunity.<sup>14</sup> The reports that the Dutch were to take over control of Java had reawakened old fears that Sepoy battalions were about to be sold to the Dutch. At this time Mata Deen entered into correspondence with the Sepoy garrisons at Weltevreden [Weltevreden] and Surabaya to co-ordinate plans for an uprising. Close contact was also maintained with the troops that were stationed at Klaten and Bayalali as well as with the Sepoys in Kedhu. A Sepoy officer, Subadar Fakir Singh, promised that he would use his influence and win over the Malay battalions<sup>15</sup> and therefore secure the capital Batavia.

The plan for the conspiracy was made at Surakarta in conjunction with the members of the Court but the final details were agreed in Yogyakarta where the 7th (or Light Infantry) Volunteer Battalion was based. The intention was to murder the British officers that were serving with the battalion and stationed at that location. The Sunan was unhappy about the impending massacre of the British Officers but wished ultimately to gain control over the whole of Central Java with the help of the Sepoys, who he then hoped would either return to their homes in Bengal or settle on the west coast of Java and thus cease to be a threat to his planned kingdom.

Following Mata Deen's return from Surakarta on 12 October 1815 events began to happen and groups of Sepoys began secretly to meet on the ramparts of the fortification at night. On 21 October the European Sergeant Major was warned by his bearer that there was trouble in the battalion and he was again warned five days later to 'secure his door at night'.<sup>16</sup>

At this time there were only three officers on duty with the battalion, the remaining officers either having been allocated various civil posts or were serving with local units.<sup>17</sup> The command of the Battalion therefore rested with the three officers and the European Sergeant Major.

In addition to the plot led by Mata Deen there was disaffection among the other Sepoys in the battalion in that they were not permitted to have their families with them and were expected to remit part of their meagre pay back to Bengal. This, combined with the fact that the men

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* p.302 – Sunan = Emperor

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* p.304

<sup>15</sup> The units were probably the Javanese and Amboynese Corps.

<sup>16</sup> Carey, *Op.Cit.* p.306

<sup>17</sup> BL (IOR) Bengal Secret and Political Consultations, Vol. 278

were having difficulty in actually remitting money back to their relatives,<sup>18</sup> all tended to lead to the general unrest and discontent in the Central Javanese garrisons.

On 24 October some twenty-nine officers and Sepoys gathered at the ruins of the *Taman Sari*<sup>19</sup> to pledge their support for the forthcoming uprising. It was during this meeting, which took place in the afternoon at one o'clock, that one Sepoy NCO supposedly declared that the British officers should be murdered that night between 6.30 and 7 o'clock. Mata Deen then declared to be leader of the group who were to murder the British officers. At 7 o'clock the conspirators again met on the north-west bastion of the fort but deferred the attack in the hope that they would be able to entice more men to join them. In addition Captain Robert Cock was away at Surakarta so that the attack was then planned for two days' time, 26 October, when Cock would be back 'on station'. Throughout this intervening period an almost continuous meeting was held at Dhaugkul Singh's quarter which was inside the fort. It was then planned to march at 4 o'clock in the morning to the *dalem*<sup>20</sup> of Pangeran Paku Alam and seize the Sultan's treasure which was being kept there as he, Paku Alam, was the Regent of the young Sultan. The conspirators then intended to bring the treasure back to the Residency after which it was their intention to murder Paku Alam and all Chinese inhabitants of Yogyakarta. A 101 gun salute was to be fired and Dhaugkul Singh would then be appointed 'Governor'.

The conspirators again delayed the uprising until 29 October. However, with the number of meetings being held it became inevitable that the conspiracy would be discovered and Lieutenant James Steel, who was the acting commanding officer, became aware of what was happening and paraded the Sepoys, warning them that anyone convicted of being involved would be executed by being 'blown away' from the mouth of a cannon. The threat had the desired effect and two of the ring-leaders, Mata Deen and Jemadar Dai Ram changed their plans.

Captain Robert Cock returned from Yogyakarta and carried out an investigation which lasted from 9 to 16 November. As a result of this inquiry, during which many men of the battalion gave evidence against the conspirators, the ring-leaders and twenty others were sent under guard to Serondol, near Samarang, to await a Court Martial which was held in January 1816. Arrests were also made in Surakarta of some of the sepoy who were implicated in the uprising.

Raffles, having been made aware of the uprising, had to wait for two months before obtaining a report on the involvement of the Surakarta Court by Major [Jeremiah Martin) Johnson. The Lieutenant-Governor issued a stern warning to the Sunan but also promised that the Dutch would not tamper with any existing treaty when they arrived in August 1816. When it became known that the Sunan was more implicated than was first supposed Raffles maintained his promises, but made arrangements for a small locally enlisted cavalry unit to 'keep an eye on the activities of the court.'<sup>21</sup> The mounted troop, which initially amounted to twenty-five men, was recruited from Dutch and German residents of the Central Javanese court towns, all of whom had Javanese (Indonesian) mothers.<sup>22</sup> The troop, which does not appear to have been

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<sup>18</sup> BL (IOR) Bengal Secret and Political Consultations, Vol. 279, 4 May 1816, No. 25

<sup>19</sup> Taman Sari – the first Sultan's massive water palace to the west of the Yogya Kraton [residence of the ruler].

<sup>20</sup> Carey, *Op.Cit.* p.541. *Dalem* - a Princely residence.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.309

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

given a title, was augmented by troops of the Amboynese Corns which was commanded by a European officer.

The Court Martial of those charged took place at Serondol, which was garrisoned by 78th (Highland) Regiment of Foot (Ross-shire Buffs),<sup>23</sup> and the Sepoys who were convicted were swiftly dealt with by the military authorities. Seventeen were shot by a firing squad at Samarang, and 'about 50 were shipped back in irons to Bengal'.<sup>24</sup> It was the intention of Raffles to return the 7th (or Light Infantry) Volunteer Battalion to Bengal as soon as possible, but in the event the 7th Battalion was one of the last units to leave Java. With the European East India Company officers having acted swiftly and with determination, the garrison troops in Java settled down with the understanding that they would be returning home to their families later in 1816.

In 1816 the 78th Highland Regiment of Foot moved from Serondol, which was near Samarang, to the barracks at Weltevreden, remaining there until their departure from Java.

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## OBITUARY

It is with regret that we record the passing late last year of Major General Chand N Das OBE.

General Das was educated in Government College, Lahore, and received his military training at RMC Sandhurst and at the Staff College, Quetta. He was commissioned in 1933 and started army life with the Lancashire Fusiliers. He joined 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion The Rajputana Rifles in Razmak on the North West Frontier in 1934. In the 32 years of his army service he held both command and staff appointments at all levels. During the Second World War he served in Hong Kong, Burma, Italy and Greece and was awarded the OBE for his war service. Subsequent appointments included Deputy Director of Military Training, Director of Military Intelligence and Commander of the Saurashtra Brigade. He was Chairman of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Cambodia, GOC 5th Indian Division, Military Advisor to the State Government of Assam and later GOC Uttar Pradesh Area and Maharashtra and Gujerat Areas.

General Das was the author of *"The Traditions and Customs of the Indian Armed Forces"*, *"Hour of Glory of the Indian Army"*, and *"The Rajputana Rifles - Brief History"*. He had frequently contributed articles to Durbar and had a ready welcome for any Society members who called on him in New Delhi. Unfortunately I only learnt of his passing a couple of months ago, otherwise this note would have appeared much earlier in the year.

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<sup>23</sup> *Original Calcutta Annual Directory & Bengal Register for 1816*, p.147 gives the location of the 78<sup>th</sup> (Highland) Regiment of Foot as 'Serandee'.

<sup>24</sup> Carey, *Op. Cit.* p.310

## KOTAH AND THE UPRISING OF 1857-58

Victoria Singh

(Note: Tim Ash asked Victoria Singh of Kotah if she would put together an article for Durbar to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1857 Indian Mutiny. She did so, and the full article, including illustrations, can be found at [www.colsudhirfarm.com](http://www.colsudhirfarm.com). We are grateful to Victoria Singh for allowing us to reproduce a part of that article in these pages. Anyone interested in contributing to the upkeep of the cemetery is invited to contribute £10 a year to the Kota Heritage Society - details from the above web site.)

The year 2007 is the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Kotah Uprising of 1857-58. To commemorate this anniversary, we have put together a trail of discovery of the fortifications of Kotah.

The guided trail we organise is in a horse-drawn carriage called a tonga. Our guided tour starts and ends at Sukhdham Kothi, the house which was built for the British Surgeon soon after 1857.

The original fort, or Garh, at Kotah was built on an excellent strategic position on high ground on the right bank of the river Chambal, at the point where the river emerges from a deep gorge. Overtime further walls and fortifications were added right up to the beginning of the twentieth century which came to enclose the walled city of Kotah. These walls and fortifications were well maintained until India's independence in 1947 when Kotah State was absorbed in the Union of India and the justification for their upkeep lost its immediate relevance.

The Garh is situated at the southern tip of the walled city and was protected by a series of three concentric walls. Massive gates in each concentric wall can still be seen today which once guarded the flow in and out of the fortified city and allowed for its division into independently defensible enclaves. This fortified city is the backdrop to our Tonga Treasure Hunt.

Our background to the 1857 Uprising starts with Zalim Singh Jhala. Though he died in 1823, his policies may have had indirect influence on what was to follow. He built the outermost walls of the city between 1745 and 1818 to a standard and thickness not found anywhere else in India. The walls are still virtually complete. The inner walls and fortifications withstood a siege lasting two months in 1745 by a combined force of Jaipur State and the Marathas.



Zalim Singh Jhala, the Diwan (Prime Minister) and Faujdar<sup>1</sup> of Kotah State, was an astute administrator and visionary. He had started his career as a general and adopted European weapons and founded a gun foundry.

Zalim Singh was appointed Regent in 1771 until the 10-year old minor Umaid Singh came of age to become the Maharao, but stayed on as the de facto ruler of Kotah State for over 50 years. He was a close personal friend of Colonel James Tod, who represented the East India Company in Rajasthan and wrote *The Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*. In 1817 Kotah became one of the first states to sign a treaty with the East India Company under Zalim Singh's leadership. He worked ceaselessly to further the ends of his own family and persuaded the Company to include an amendment to the treaty the following year that gave his descendants the right to be Diwan and Faujdar of Kotah State in perpetuity. This was in recognition of his loyalty and help in defeating the Pindaris.<sup>2</sup>

Zalim controlled the forces of Kotah State. He appointed a Muslim, Dalel Khan, as the commander-in-chief, rather than giving the post to a Hindu Rajput<sup>3</sup> whose loyalties would have been to the Maharao rather than to him. Dalel Khan was responsible for rebuilding and strengthening all the walls and fortresses in the State.

Disagreement between the Diwan Zalim and Umaid Singh's son, Maharao Kishor Singh, finally led to a battle in 1821 in which the British found that they had treaties with both sides but decided to support the Diwan, who then won. A reconciliation was effected, but there was a continuing power struggle between the Diwan and the Maharao of the day. This was finally resolved by the British in 1838 when they carved up Kotah State and gave one-third (17 parganas or districts) to Zalim Singh's grandson to be incorporated into a new state called Jhalawar, of which he became the first ruler.<sup>4</sup> Independent authority for the Maharao had come at a heavy price, but he was prepared to pay it to see the end to the hereditary post of Diwan that Zalim had created. The British arranged a new treaty with Kotah State. The financial tribute was reduced; instead a force of auxiliary troops had to be maintained by Kotah State. This force came to be called the Kotah Contingent and comprised mainly Biharis who were not local people. In 1855 the force consisted of 3000 men stationed in Deoli, 85 kms. north-west of Kotah, under British officers and control. In his unpublished memoirs "*Some Reminiscences of My Life*", General Julius B. Dennys the then commanding officer of the Kotah Contingent wrote:

*"The Kotah Contingent was a force raised by ourselves, consisting of Artillery, two 9-pounder guns and two 24- pound Howitzers - horsed, a Regiment of Irregular Cavalry and a Regiment of Native Infantry. There were only three European officers for the whole, a Commandant, a second in command and the Adjutant. The Rajah of*

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<sup>1</sup> The post involved raising troops and collecting revenue.

<sup>2</sup> The Pindaris originated as Muslim irregular cavalry who operated as mercenaries and extracted tribute. The East India Company finally gained the upper hand and forced them to disband in 1818. One of their ablest leaders Amir Khan was settled at Tonk as a Nawab.

<sup>3</sup> Rajputs were the Warrior caste and were Hindu. They could be expected to be loyal to the Maharao.

<sup>4</sup> In 1899, 15 parganas would be returned to Kotah State by order of the Privy Council in London.

*Kotah was under treaty bound to maintain this force out of the revenues of his state, but he resented its maintenance by firstly declining to have it quartered inside its dominions."*

In 1844 Major Charles Burton became the Political Agent for Kotah, and spent 13 happy years there until 1857. Early in 1857, taking heed of the uprising in northern India in which many British women and children had been killed, he sent his wife, Elizabeth, and five children to the military station at Neemuch, 128 kms. to the south-west of Kotah, where they had a house. But on June 3rd the troops in Neemuch also mutinied and the Burtons had to flee for their lives. In the process they lost all their possessions. Major Burton and remnants of the Kotah Contingent<sup>5</sup> at Deoli came to their rescue and saved their lives and the lives of other British women and children as they sheltered in a small fort nearby at Jewud, which coincidentally was under the command of Burton's eldest son, James. Major Burton at this point doubting the loyalty of the Kotah Contingent decided to replace them with Raj Paltan troops that had been stationed in Kota. Later he replaced the sepoy on duty at his Agency bungalow in Kotah with irregular forces made up of Baba Nagas<sup>6</sup>, Dadupanthi<sup>7</sup> and Sikh horsemen.

In October 1857 the Maharao of Kota requested the return of Major Burton. The Maharao had ordered Jai Dayal<sup>8</sup> and Mehrab Khan<sup>9</sup> out of Kotah with rebellious elements of his forces and thought he could guarantee the safety of the Political Agent. The British had recaptured Delhi and the Maharao was probably keen to show that he was a supporter of the British. But to the Maharao's embarrassment Dayal and Khan refused to go. The Maharao sent his lawyer to advise Burton not to continue to Kotah, but he refused and arrived on October 12th with his two youngest sons. Arthur Robert (a twin) aged 20, and Francis Clerke aged 19.

October 13, 1857

Major Burton had an audience with Maharao Ram Singh on his return from Neemuch to discuss the situation

October 15, 1857

About 2000 of the Kotah troops, with most of the artillery, went over to the rebel command led by Pathan Mehrab Khan and Jai Dayal. They collected a mob and marched on the Agency Bungalow and besieged it for 4 hours. The newly engaged irregular forces all ran away. The

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<sup>5</sup> In June 1857, most of the Kotah Contingent was sent to Agra to suppress the troubles, but mutinied when ordered to meet the mutineers from Neemuch who had reached Agra on July 4th of the same year and who held the Kotah Contingent men's families as prisoners. Burton marched with the remnants whose continuing loyalty would have been suspect.

<sup>6</sup> Monks, trained in martial arts, who were followers of Shiva

<sup>7</sup> Followers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century mystic Rajasthani saint Dadu and thus also Hindu.

<sup>8</sup> Jai Dayal bore a grudge against Burton who had caused him to lose his job as a lawyer.

<sup>9</sup> Mehrab Khan had fought for the British in the past as an infantry commander and had been one of Zalim Singh's most loyal supporters. He wanted to take over Kotah State and divide it with Jai Dayal.

Sikh horsemen did nothing as they were under the impression that since the forces had come from the Garh palace, the Maharao had sent them and it would be prudent to remain neutral. Major Burton and his two sons, Francis ("Frank") and Arthur were killed, as were Doctor Sadler and one or two others, including an Indian Christian, Mr Saviell (Cantem), who worked at the dispensary in the city.

The Maharao left the Garh to assist Burton but was persuaded to turn back as he had no control over his troops. Koela House, home to one of the leading Rajput families, was also besieged, presumably on this date for 2 days. The rebels blew open the wooden gates. The young heir survived somehow, but the other male family members died heroically.

October 16, 1857 Onwards

The Maharao shut himself in the Garh with a handful of loyalists and Garh Zapta troops. He had 9 cannons inside as against 250 outside. The rebels tried to storm the Garh several times but were repulsed. They captured the ferry and boats and took control of the river.

Seth Dan Mal's haveli (now known as Bapna Haveli) came under attack. He was rescued by Raj Arjun Singh of Kunadi and managed to flee to the safety of the Garh on the back of an elephant, scattering asharifis (gold coins) to distract the rebels.

Over the next weeks loyalists managed to slip into the Garh from the riverside through the Water Gate and swell the numbers. The people of Kotah, who numbered 35,000, lived in constant fear of the rabble which was solely under the command of Jai Dayal and Mehrab Khan.

November, 1857

After the rebels were defeated at Mandisor (near Ratlam in Madhya Pradesh, and the centre of opium cultivation), a sizable rebel force sought food and loot in Kotah, swelling the ranks to 30,000. The Nawab of Jhajjar and Naseer Mohammed Khan of Tonk were two of the notable rebels. (On the whole, the Hindu Rulers in Rajputana stayed loyal to the British and did not offer their support to the Mughal Emperor in Delhi. They were rewarded for this after the Uprising.)

January 1, 1858

The rebels held the whole city until the First Offensive launched by the Maharao's supporters to try and regain Kotah on January 1, 1858. 500 men attacked Patan Pol, a gate in the inner walls, and managed to capture it. Another 500 attacked Kaithooni Pol, a gate further to the south in the inner walls, and although they suffered heavy casualties the loyalists managed to drag 20 captured cannons back to the Garh.

January 18, 1858

1,500 infantry arrived at Keshorai Patan from Karauli. The heir apparent of Kotah was married into Karauli and they came to the rescue. Karauli is approximately 200 kms. to the north of Kotah. Keshorai Patan is on the river Chambal downstream of Kotah. (In 1853 the Thakur of Karauli had rebelled and the Kotah Contingent had been called upon to put down the rebellion.)

January 19, 1858

A peace was negotiated at Mathureshji's Temple, just within the walls at Patan Pol, to last until Holi on February 27<sup>th</sup>.

January 25, 1858

The Karauli troops camped at Nanta across the river to the north.

February 9, 1858

The Karauli troops landed at Nazar Niwas Bagh, just below the present day Kota Barrage.

February 25, 1858

They were invited into the Garh for a feast and managed to get back to camp safely.

February 26, 1858

Holi was celebrated.

February 27, 1858

The loyalist Second Offensive was launched. 3,000 loyalists managed to retake the ferry, the boats and the river. They captured more cannons, bringing their total up to 50. For 25 days the fighting continued unabated and the city was covered in a pall of smoke by day and lit up by gunfire at night.

March 20, 1858

Major General Roberts, GOC Rajputana Field Force arrived at Nanta with 5,500 men.

March 21, 1858

Maharao Ram Singh with 200 men managed to slip across the river under enemy fire to meet him. Major General Roberts landed by boat entered the Garh through the Water Gate. He surveyed the City from the Jantar Bastion with the Garh for enemy targets.

March 23, 1858

The British set up a gun battery (Unit 1) at Saketpura opposite the Garh on the other side of the river Chambal, ready to provide covering fire for a troop crossing. Unit 4 was also sited there. Units 2, 3 and 5 were sited at Kunadi, a little to the north from where they could fire across the river at Rampura in the NW corner of Kotah.

March 25, 1858

300 men of the 83rd Regiment reinforced loyalist troops in the Garh.

March 27, 1858

Major General Roberts and 600 men of the 95<sup>th</sup> Regiment with two 9-pounder guns crossed over at night. There was heavy bombardment by the British on the rebel gun emplacements.

March 30, 1858

From 0100-0700 hrs. one thousand British troops and one thousand Indian troops crossed over the river in boats and on rafts made from arrack barrels lashed together that had been brought from Ajmer. The combined troops stormed the rebel held city. The British troops went around the outer walls on the inside and took the cannons from behind. Fatehgarh, which was the main bastion overlooking the river and is the corner one nearest to the present day bridge, was captured. It was all over within a day.

(6,000 rebel men and women escaped but some were captured and the rebel officers blown-up by cannons - their bodies placed or attached in front of a cannon which was then fired. Some of the loyalists, including the wakil (lawyer) who had been sent to warn Burton, were also killed in this way.)

April 4, 1858

The Maharao Ram Singh paid another courtesy call on Major General Roberts to thank him. (Later the Maharao's gun salute would be reduced from 15 to 11 by Governor General Canning for not having done more to save the agent Major Burton, only to be restored a few years later during the reign of Maharao Shatru Sal II who succeeded Ram Singh)

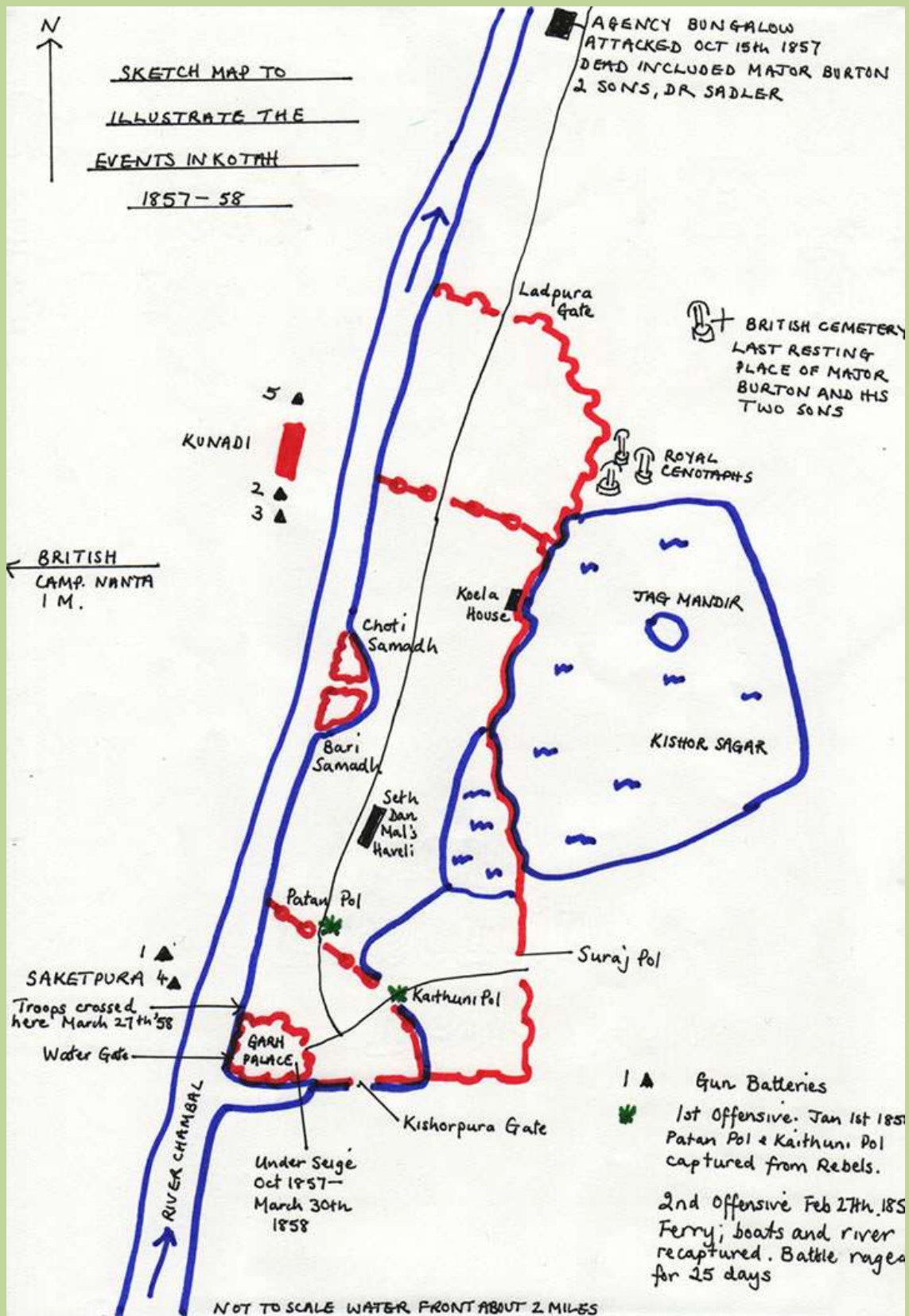
April 20, 1858

Kotah was handed back to Maharao Ram Singh.

September 17, 1860

Jai Dayal was hanged inside the Agency Bungalow. Burton's eldest son, James, was instrumental in tracking down his father's killers. Pathan Mehrab Khan was also hanged after a trial. (One version has it that they were both strung from neem trees while seated on elephants; then the elephants were led away. It is not clear whether they swung or their end was even more gruesome.)





Who were Jai Dayal and Mehrab Khan and how did they persuade the troops to mutiny? In 1857 more than half the troops were Muslim (and thus more likely to support the Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zaffar), but Dayal was a Hindu as were many of the rebels. They had a history of being controlled by the Diwan, Zalim Singh, and not by the Maharao. The power of the Hada Rajputs, who would traditionally have been in control of the state forces, had been systematically undermined by Zalim Singh. All the artillery, since the earliest days of the Mughals, had been traditionally manned by Muslims. The Kotah Contingent stationed in Deoli had already rebelled in July 1857 in Agra. Dayal had been employed by the Maharao as Burton's lawyer and had lost his job due to Burton's report of his intemperance. He thus had a powerful grudge against Burton. In the heady revolutionary atmosphere of 1857 the troops were ready to be roused. Since the Muslim soldiers had sworn on the Koran that they would be loyal to the Maharao, he believed they would not revolt, rather mistakenly as events were to prove.

The British had already taken Delhi in October 1857. Did the rebel leaders really think that they could wrest the state from the Maharao and divide it up between themselves?

There is also a suggestion that the opium trade may have played a part in the Uprising. Opium was the recreational drug of the time and was routinely consumed before a battle. It was grown in pockets of land by the tribal people of the region who were granted licences, a system that continues to this day. Opium taxing and trading were the backbone of the Kotah economy and the East India Company bought it to export it (despite no mention of this in Colonel Tod's *The Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*). The opium growing areas were lost to Jhalawar when the state was created, which must have caused resentment. At least one Kotah trader had his own wholesale office in Peking. Opium was totally banned by the British in 1899, which was a serious blow to the state economy.

When Major Burton was killed on 15 October 1857, his head was taken in triumph by the rebels and paraded around town before being attached to a cannon and blown up. What happened to his headless body and the bodies of his two sons immediately after they were killed is a matter of conjecture, but at the insistence of the Maharao they were buried in the British Cemetery in Kotah. Whether this happened on 16 October or was a reburial sometime later is not precisely verifiable. They were placed next to the grave of Elizabeth Burton, a daughter who had died in 1854.

#### CONTEMPORARY NOTES ON THE KOTAH CONTINGENT

The following notes are based on "*Some Reminiscences of My Life*" by General Julius B. Dennys the then commanding officer of the Kotah Contingent.

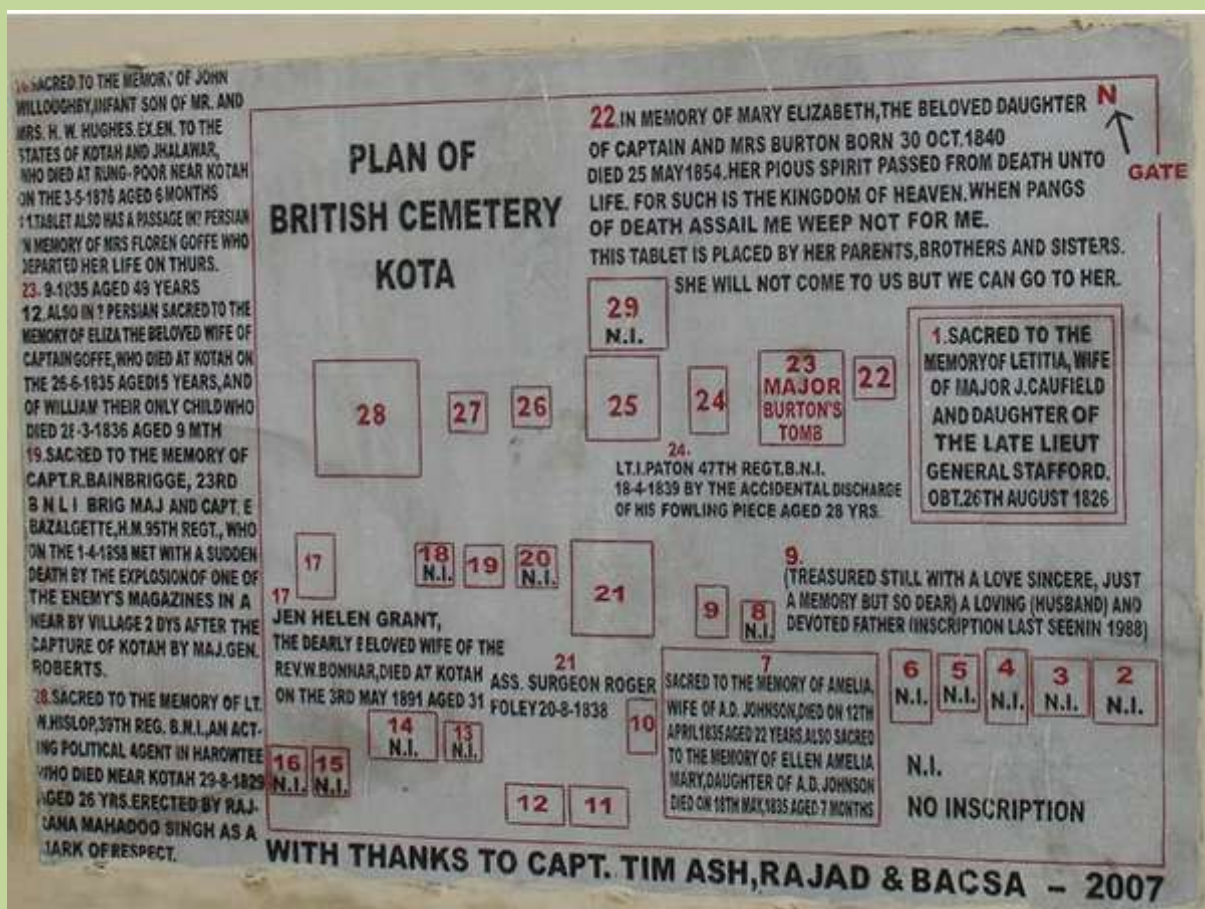
On December 31st 1856 Captain Dennys was appointed to the command of the Kotah Contingent with a salary of 1,500 rupees a month. He was very much in debt and imagined that in a few years he could get his head above water.

*"The contingent was ordered to a place called Deoli, and again we set to work to build lines for the men and houses for ourselves. Mine cost 11,000 rupees. And in 1853 I had sent home our three eldest children. But I had the house and everything in it all of a first-class description, which I imagined to be about 20,000 rupees in value."*

If the British officers found themselves in financial difficulties, the condition of the sepoys was desperate.

*"The contingent under my command were, in the matter of pay and pensions, in a much inferior position to their brethren of the regular army, though performing exactly the same duties."*

*"...our men had good reason to believe that if ever an opportunity came of their being employed on active service their grievances in the matter of pay and pensions would be rectified but the cavalry were chiefly composed of Mohamodans. They were almost without exception deeply in debt. The pay of the Sowars (privates) 20 rupees a month, was insufficient for their wants. As a body I always felt that our cavalry could not be relied upon; they were well dressed and very fairly mounted but their general state of indebtedness was sufficient to prevent their remaining loyal. "*



The uprising at Meerut started on May 10th 1857. The Kotah Contingent was ordered to march for Delhi and they set off on May 19th leaving 100 sepoys to guard all the women and children. Dennys then received orders to march for Agra. *"At Agra itself the Native Troops had been disbanded and allowed to proceed to their homes, which, in nine cases out of ten, probably meant that they joined the rebels."* The Contingent restored order at Mathura on the way to Agra.

The news arrived that the troops at Neemuch had mutinied and en route for Delhi had sacked Deoli, burnt the cantonment and captured all the wives and children. (In fact the European

families had been rescued before the attack and were being looked after in Jodhpur and Udaipur) The Neemuch rebels changed course and headed for Agra with their hostages. This put a great strain on the loyalty of the troops.

Captain Dennys begged for his men to be disarmed but was ignored. On July 4th the Contingent was ordered to march against the Neemuch mutineers. The officers felt that the Agra authorities were as much as forcing the men to mutiny. Once in position, a violent dust storm arose. In the chaos a cavalry Sowar tried to shoot Dennys but missed. A Havildar of the artillery deliberately shot a British Sergeant and fired at Dennys. Some of the Infantry wept and begged their officers to leave them. The main body of the Cavalry galloped off to join the Neemuch mutineers. In despair, the remaining officers fled to Agra and joined the 2000 women and children sheltering in the fort.

*"By July my own men had mutinied and I was without employment on a bare Captain's pay. My house and every single thing in it had been burned to the ground. I was a beggar and some 40,000 rupees in debt, and could not see a ray of light which might help me through. "*



#### SOME ADDITIONAL NOTES ON THE KOTAH ARMY

Richard Head and Tony McClenaghan

Following on from Victoria Singh's fascinating account I thought it might be of interest to bring the record more up to date with a brief account of the Kotah Army, based on work that Richard Head and I have been doing.

In 1873 a memorandum was issued by the India Office which gave information in regard to the strength and armament of the troops of the native States. At that time the Kotah Army consisted of:

##### Regulars

Cavalry	200	
Infantry	2,600	
Artillerymen	200	3,000

##### Irregulars

Cavalry	500	
Infantry	2,000	2,500

Total 5,500

## Artillery equipment

Field guns	20 (5 serviceable)
Other guns	99 (81 serviceable)
Total	119 (101 serviceable)

The troops were described as being "little better than a rabble".

The State did not join the Imperial Service Troops Scheme when it was introduced in the late nineteenth century, so information available until 1929 is somewhat sparse. In 1905 the actual strength of the Kotah Army was 7,913 all ranks:-

Cavalry	910 (609 Irregulars)
Artillery	353
Infantry	6,650 (5,456 Irregulars)
Guns	193 (62 Serviceable)
Cost	4.8 Lakhs Rs.

By 1911 the total numbers appeared to have dropped significantly to a total of 2,348, including armed police.

In November 1929 the State joined the Indian State Forces Scheme and the 1<sup>st</sup> Umed Infantry was raised by conversion of the Gordhan Paltan, initially as a half battalion. At the same time the remainder of the Kotah military forces were re-organised. Some of the units were disbanded or reduced in strength.

At the outbreak of the Second World War the Kotah State Forces consisted of the following:-

1<sup>st</sup> Umed Infantry 677 (Indian States Forces Battalion)

### Irregular

Cavalry	53
Infantry	336
Artillery	75
Total	1,141

The strength of the State Forces increased substantially as the war progressed so that by 1945 1,947 men were enlisted. These figures reflected the raising of an Internal Security Company and an Infantry Training Centre. The Irregulars remained substantially the same, 518 in 1940 and 512 in 1941.

The Umed Infantry moved to Lahore in July 1941, organised as a half battalion but soon increased to a full battalion, after which it moved to Sind and in 1943 saw service in the Hur Operations. It then moved to Drigh Road where it was employed on airfield defence duties. On 16 August 1944 the Battalion left India for the Middle East where it saw service in Iraq, Persia and Syria, for a time forming part of the 24<sup>th</sup> Indian Infantry Brigade. It returned to the State on 13 May 1946.

With the end of the war and the gradual return to peace time soldiering the Umed Infantry was reduced to three quarters of a battalion whilst the Internal Security Company and the Training Centre were disbanded.

Following Independence, and during the upheaval in Jammu and Kashmir, the Battalion was deployed near Batala in the Punjab, while two companies were attached to the 4th Battalion, 11<sup>th</sup> Gurkha Rifles, in the Dera Baba Nanak area for the defence of a strategic bridge. It later served in the Jammu and Kashmir Theatre at Dras during the winter of 1947/48.

In 1950, with the merger of elements of the Indian State Forces into the Indian Army, the Kotah Army was demobilised and volunteers from Kotah, Alwar and Bharatpur were absorbed into the Udaipur Mewar Infantry. On 26<sup>th</sup> June 1954 the Mewar Infantry was re-designated 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Mewar), The Grenadiers.

Apart from the 1<sup>st</sup> Umed Infantry Kotah also provided a section for the 59<sup>th</sup> (Rajputana) General Purposes Transport Company for the Indian Army during the Second World War.

## IRREGULAR UNITS

### Artillery

The State maintained an artillery arm since 1625. In later years it was organised into two main detachments; The Topkhana controlled the heavy and medium guns while The Zamboor Khana had light guns mounted on camels. Old smooth bore cannons were mounted in various forts but there was also a detachment of about 50 cannon and howitzers mounted on wheels for transportation by mules. The unit was disbanded in 1948.

### State Lancers

All we can say of this unit is that it first appeared in reference notes in 1927 and was last seen referred to in 1941. It was organised as a single squadron armed with lances, tulwars and muzzle loading carbines.

### Body Guard

A single squadron unit which acted as the Maharao's personal body guard. It was disbanded in 1948.

### Paiga Maharaja Chhaggan Singhii

Raised in about 1880 by the Jagirdar of Kotda, it was initially maintained by the Kotda estate but later taken over by the Kotah State. This was an irregular troop of cavalry, usually 45

strong though during the period 1927-1929 it was 141 strong. It was armed with tulwars, lances and shields. The unit was disbanded in 1930.

#### Jamna Infantry

We have been unable to trace a date of raising for this unit but it was probably soon after 1713. The battalion comprised four companies with an overall strength of about 450, armed with Martini-Henry carbines. The unit was disbanded in 1948.

#### Krishna Infantry

Again, we have been unable to trace a date of raising for this unit but it was probably soon after 1713. The unit comprised three companies armed with muzzle loaders. It was disbanded in 1930.

#### Kanaiya Paltan

We know even less about this unit. It was approximately 450 strong, armed with muzzle loading rifles and employed mostly on garrison and auxiliary duty.

#### Bhim Cadet Corps

A Cadet School for Rajput boys 18 to 20 years of age, it acted as a feeder to the State Forces and also to the State Administration. It was disbanded in 1948.

#### Sehbandi, Jamaits, Fort Garrisons

These three units' details were combined in the 1927 to 1929 Administration Reports, where they were shown as having a total of 281 men and 75 guns.

The Sehbandi were mounted sowars organised into two companies who were posted at various police posts or "thanas". They were used as message carriers and in operations against dacoits.

The Jamait was an irregular troop of Naga Baba ascetics who mainly carried staffs and tulwars. They were used to control local riots and fracas. The idea of the Naga Baba force was that they provided protection for the Hindu religion. They were disbanded in 1905.

#### Fort Garrison Troops (Garh Zapta)

Stationed at Kotah Fort and elsewhere, they comprised 250 all ranks and were armed with muzzle loaders. They were disbanded in 1948.



## BOOK NOTES

● *THE GREAT UPRISING IN INDIA 1857-58 -UNTOLD STORIES, INDIAN AND BRITISH* by Rosie Llewellyn-Jones. 2007: The Boydell Press. Boydell & Brewer Ltd., P 0 Box 9, Woodbridge, IP 12 3DF, UK. www.boydell.co.uk. 248 pages, casebound, 19 monochrome illustrations, index and endnotes. £30/US\$55. ISBN 1-9781843833048.

A flyer for this book was circulated with the last edition of *Durbar*. Dr Rosie Llewellyn-Jones is a member of our Society and has produced this eminently readable book to commemorate all the victims of 1857 and 1858. Unusually, it features eyewitness accounts from the Indian side as well as the British. As she writes in her preface:

*"This is an unconventional history of the events of 1857 and 1858. It attempts to integrate the military events of the Uprising with the breakdown, and subsequent restoration, of civilian administration that took place across northern India when the 'Wind of Madness' shook the foundations of British rule. "*

An introductory chapter on Indian in 1857 is followed by an account of those who joined the Uprising, focussing on some of the lesser known names while acknowledging that many will remain nameless forever. It includes details of some Europeans or Anglo-Indians who were either coerced into fighting with the rebels, or joined them in fighting the British.

There is a complete chapter on the Kotah Residency murders of Major Burton and his two sons, and of Sub-Assistant Surgeon Salder and an Indian Christian doctor, Saviel Cantem. Again, to quote the author:

*"The Kotah Residency murders only merit a footnote in most histories of the Uprising because more dramatic events were taking place in Delhi, Agra, Lucknow, Cawnpore, Gwalior and Jhansi. But to examine this small tragedy in detail is to become aware of the many different strands that make up the idea of 'mutiny'. It was not a straightforward fight between the ruling East India Company and its oppressed subjects. One side was not totally right, the other totally wrong. There were different reasons for the revolts in different parts of India, subtle undercurrents, old grievances long cherished, wounded amour-propre, and many others, often more complicated than we think. "*

The book includes several photographs by the young Greek photographer, Felice Beato, who had cut his teeth as a war photographer in the Crimea and who, having sailed to Calcutta on hearing of the Uprising, was given an eight month permit by the East India Company. Chapters on the Great Wall of Lucknow and the role of Prize Agents are followed by a discussion of punishments meted out to captured rebels - "...hung in perpetual chains on the scenes of the atrocities" as Outram had put it. Even for those familiar with the well-worn stories of the 1857-58 period will, I think, find much here of interest that will be new to them. Highly recommended.

● *CHURCHILL'S LIONS. A BIOGRAPHICAL GUIDE TO THE KEY BRITISH GENERALS OF WORLD WAR II* by Richard Mead. 2007: Spellmount Publishers, NPI Media Group, The Mill, Brimscombe Port, Stroud, Glos. GL5 2QG, UK. www.npi-mediagroup.com. 544 pages, casebound, 51 monochrome photographs, index. £30. ISBN 978-1-86227-431-0

Another Society member, Richard Mead, has just produced this biographical guide to 125 of the key generals of the Second World War, with detailed information on the units, formations and other organisations in which they served, with another 125 listed in a table in Appendix I showing their key appointments. Slim, Montgomery, Wavell, Auchinleck, Brook and Hobart are, of course, given due prominence, but members of this Society will also be interested in the details provided on Frank Messervy, Hastings Ismay, Robert Cassels, Denys Reid, Harold Briggs, Lewis Heath, Reginald Savory, John Smyth, Dudley Russell, Edward Quinan, Douglas Gracey, Frederick Loftus-Tottenham, Geoffrey Scoones, Francis Toker, Joe Lentaigne and David Cowan, as well as at least another 21 who appear in Appendix I - all Indian Army officers.

The book has only just arrived as this journal is being finalised, so I have not had time to read it in any detail, but it looks as if it will become an indispensable reference guide to anyone interested in the Second World War.

