

## **"Bravest of the Brave": The making and re-making of 'the Gurkhas', 1857-2009**

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*Thanks: Matthew, audience...*

Many of you, I am sure, will be familiar with the image of the 'martial Gurkha'. The image dates from nineteenth century India, and though the suggestion that the Nepalese are inherently martial appears dubious, images of 'warlike Gurkhas' continue to circulate in contemporary discourse. Only last week, Dipprasad Pun, of the Royal Gurkha Rifles, was awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross for single-handedly fighting off up to 30 Taliban insurgents. In 2010, reports surfaced that an (unnamed) Gurkha had been reprimanded for using his 'traditional' kukri knife to behead a Taliban insurgent, an act which prompted the *Daily Mail* to exclaim 'Thank god they're on our side!) Thus, the bravery and the brutality of the Gurkhas – two staple elements of nineteenth century representations – continue to be replayed.

Such images have also been mobilised in other contexts. On 4 November 2008, Chief Superintendent Kevin Hurley, of the Metropolitan Police, told the Commons' Home Affairs Select Committee, that Gurkhas would make excellent 'recruits' to the capital's police service. Describing the British Army's Nepalese veterans as loyal, disciplined, hardworking and brave, Hurley reported that the Met's senior commanders believed that ex-Gurkhas could provide a valuable resource to London's police. Many Gurkhas, it was noted, were multilingual (in subcontinental languages, useful for policing the capital's diverse population), fearless (and therefore unlikely to be intimidated by the apparently rising tide of knife and gun crime) and, Hurley noted, the recruiting of these 'loyal', 'brave' and 'disciplined' Nepalese would also provide an excellent (and, one is tempted to add, convenient) means of diversifying the workforce.

In an attempt to provide 'context' for their discussions, Martin Howe, the solicitor acting on behalf of a number of ex-Gurkhas, told the Committee, that

The Gurkhas have served Britain loyally for the last 200 years. This is not a new matter. The Gurkhas have a fierce reputation as fine soldiers; they are known as the bravest of the brave. Their motto is: It is better to die than to live a coward. They have died for Britain. 50,000 of them have died for Britain. 150,000 of them have been seriously wounded in battles over the last 200 years defending our interests. They are our soldiers.

The Home Affairs Committee was hearing evidence in considering the rights of Gurkhas to settle in the United Kingdom. In the previous September, in a case brought by five Gurkha veterans and the widow of a deceased sixth soldier, the High Court instructed the Home Office to reconsider directions which prevented some Gurkha veterans from obtaining visas to settle in the United Kingdom. According to the judgement, the existing policy – which prohibited those veterans who retired from British service before 1997 from settling in Britain – gave rise to ‘irrational and unlawful’ restrictions. Mr Justice Blake said that ‘Rewarding long and distinguished service by the grant of residence in this country for whom the service was performed would be a vindication and an enhancement of [the military] covenant’.<sup>1</sup> The judgment was a notable success for the high-profile ‘Gurkha Justice’ campaign, which has attracted the support of a number of prominent individuals, most notably Joanna Lumley, whose father served with the Gurkhas.

Having heard the evidence supplied by the witnesses, the select committee recommended that all ex-Gurkhas be allowed settlement rights in the UK.<sup>2</sup> Keith Vaz, the Committee’s Chairman, wrote to the Home Secretary, reporting [that the committee felt ] ‘that the UK owes an historic debt of gratitude to the Gurkhas for their brave, loyal and distinguished service in the defence of this country’. Though the recommendation was initially rejected by the government, in May 2009, then Home Secretary Jacqui Smith announced that all Gurkhas with at least four years’ service would be entitled to settle in the UK. Lumley declared that the ‘debt of honour’ owed to the Gurkhas would now be paid.

As these examples make clear, it is ‘the Gurkhas’ peculiar history which is central to their claims, and to the claims made on their behalf. This history, and the debate over Gurkha settlement rights, reprises a number of debates which occupied the Indian Army and the Government of India over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Between 1857 and 1947, for example, the Government of India massively expanded the Indian Army’s recruitment of Gurkhas and considered schemes to establish ‘colonies’ of Nepalese veterans within India, which advocates suggested would provide a self-sustaining source for future recruits and sediment a loyal population within India’s borders.<sup>3</sup>

As the most martial of the continent’s martial races – the ‘bravest of the brave’, as Martin Howe told the HASC – the history of the Gurkhas is a relatively familiar one, and it is precisely this history which was invoked, rather effectively, by the Gurkha Justice Campaign. I want to look again at part of this history, and to explore in more detail how the familiar image of the brave, loyal and

disciplined Gurkha developed. The construction of the martial Gurkha reflects a wider process in which various Indian communities emerged as so-called 'martial races' and I want to explore the mechanics of the process by which in just a few decades in the late nineteenth century, the notion of 'the martial races' became ingrained in the colonial mindset. Whilst we know a good deal about the proverbial 'martiality' of various Indian communities – Sikhs, Pathans, as well Gurkhas etc – and whilst the emergence of these new discourses of race and ethnography has been usefully connected to wider debates about race, Orientalism and imperial masculinities, the process by which martial identities were ascribed to various communities remains somewhat obscure.

I want to suggest that looking at this process in more detail not only helps to illuminate the way in which ideas of race evolved during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but that such an exploration can also demonstrate the variety of interests which were invested in the articulation of such identities, and which have, in different ways, been revisited in contemporary debates about the right to settlement. I begin by, very briefly, recapping the history of martial race recruiting, and then consider some of the ways in which this process has been explained/analysed in the extant literature, before exploring in more detail how the marshalling of various communities was made possible and to what ends these alliances were put. I conclude, where I began, with some more tentative remarks about the roles, both theoretical and practical, of the 'martial races' in the late- and post-colonial periods.

### *Context: the 'martial race theory'*

In the fifty or so years that followed the 'mutiny' of 1857, the recruiting base of the imperial military was thoroughly reconstituted. In place of recruits from Southern and Eastern India (the recruits who had sustained the expansionist campaigns of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries), the British turned to the Punjab and Nepal, as well as to (what became) the Northwest Frontier Province, to provide the bulk of recruits for imperial service. The shift in imperial focus – from the South and East to the North and West – is reflected starkly in the composition of the Indian Army. Between 1862 and 1914, 29 of the 40 Madras battalions were disbanded; 30 Bombay battalions were reduced to 18; 28 Hindustani battalions were pared down to 15. In marked contrast, over the same period, the number of Nepalese 'Gurkha' battalions, was increased four-fold, from five to twenty. A further 29 battalions were added to the 28 raised from the Punjab. At the outbreak of war in 1914, perhaps three-quarters of the Indian infantry were recruited from the continent's 'martial races'. Though the exigencies of the First World War did away (temporarily at least) with the

selective recruiting practices of the pre-war era, the notion of martiality survived, in various forms, through the process of Indianisation in the 1920s and 1930s, and continued to exercise some hold during the Second World War.<sup>4</sup>

In statistical terms alone, this is a remarkable shift. As might be expected, the rapid expansion of 'martial' regiments was mirrored by a veritable explosion of writing on India's martial races. The Gurkhas, Sikhs and Pathans – as well as a whole raft of other races and/or castes specified as more or less 'martial' – were made the subjects of an increasingly extensive colonial literature. Although a number of colonial officials had identified certain 'martial tribes' as early as 1750, and B.H. Hodgson, the British resident at Nepal, had urged recruiting from the kingdom during the 1830s, it was in the late nineteenth century that the martial race theory really took hold of the imperial imagination.<sup>5</sup> The notion of the martial races came to permeate late imperial culture: in 1933, George MacMunn, formerly QMG in charge of recruiting for the Indian Army, published his book *The Martial Races of India*, in which he argued that 'to understand what is meant by the martial races of India is to understand from the inside the real story of India. We do not speak of the martial races of Britain as distinct from the non-martial... But in India we speak of the martial races as a thing apart because the mass of the people have neither martial aptitude nor physical courage... the courage that we should talk of colloquially as "guts"'.<sup>6</sup>

MacMunn's oft-quoted account is frequently cited as an example of the kind of essentialising discourse characteristic of nineteenth century Orientalism, and much of the recent historiography has been concerned with situating the growth of the martial race theory within this framework. In a slight variation on this theme, Heather Streets, has suggested that the martial race discourse is best understood as part of a pan-imperial discourse of martial masculinities, linking Scottish Highlanders with the northern recruits from the subcontinent.<sup>7</sup> Noting the important roles played by the key 'martial races' – especially the Sikhs and the Gurkhas, as well as the Highlanders – during the rebellion, Streets account is based largely on an analysis of metropolitan reportage.<sup>8</sup> While popular accounts of the mutiny campaigns (and especially of the role played by particular groups in such operations) undoubtedly fed into narratives of martial masculinity, it is hard to believe that the good service of such regiments during 1857-58 was the key to the genesis of the martial race theory.<sup>9</sup> Other explanations emphasise the strategic ends which martial race recruiting was made to serve. Cynthia Enloe, for example, suggests that the martial race theory provided a convenient means to pursue a strategy of divide and rule, rewarding the 'loyalty' of certain groups, like Sikhs, Gurkhas etc, whilst justifying the exclusion and denigration of those groups which had challenged colonial authority in 1857. Kaushik Roy, with a slightly different focus, locates the genesis

of the theory in the growing anxiety felt about Russian designs on India. Alternatively, Richard Fox has argued that the genesis of the theory was connected with the development of metropolitan notions of biological determinism, highlighting the importance of ecological and environmental factors in undergirding concepts of martiality.

Perhaps unsurprisingly much of the historiography has been concerned with 'the reality' (or otherwise) which the martial race theory claimed to represent: did the British really 'believe' in Indian martiality, or was the martial race discourse the product a calculated strategy of divide and rule? As valid, in some ways, as these questions are, I think they have rather overshadowed other significant issues. The concern to explain the emergence of the martial race discourse in terms of metropolitan notions of race has obscured the mechanisms through which martial recruiting actually developed. A more attentive reading of these mechanisms – and it was these mechanisms, I think, which lead to the 'invention' of the Gurkhas – helps us to gain a better grasp of the theory itself and can also throw some light on the way in which race informed colonial government during the century or so following 1857.

#### *Reconstructing the Imperial Military after 1857*

Most accounts of the Indian empire in the late nineteenth century have emphasised the practical and reactive nature of colonial policy in this period. The hardening of a notion of Indian racial difference is generally seen, in part at least, as a reaction to the 1857 uprising. The mutiny, it was said, had revealed India as fundamentally unsuited to western forms of government, thus exposing the reformist aspirations of the so-called liberal imperialists of the 1830s. Given the centrality of the military question in the aftermath of 1857 – and the impossibility of garrisoning India without native troops – it is surprising that the history of the imperial military has not featured more centrally in the historiographical debates about the period. In fact, in the aftermath of the rebellion, the reorganisation of the Indian Army was the central problematic of colonial government. As the Political and Military Committee of the Council of India remarked, the question of military reorganisation was 'far from being a mere technical matter', it was, in fact, they suggested, one of 'grave political, financial and even social considerations, and claims to be considered as a measure of imperial moment'.<sup>10</sup>

In the aftermath of 1857, military policy certainly was pragmatic and reactive. It is also clear that a reified notion of Indian difference did indeed play an important role in the reshaping of the Army. The Royal Commission charged with reorganising the imperial military emphasised that no

single community should predominate within the Army. There was a determined attempt, for example, to monitor and regulate the ethnography of those Indians who had volunteered to fight in the counter-insurgency operations of 1857-58.<sup>11</sup> Whilst there was little agreement over the degree of ethnic diversity necessary to ensure imperial security, it was widely agreed that the key to such security lay in regulating the ethnographic composition of the native armies. Rose, the Commander in Chief, wrote to Wood, the Secretary of State, in 1862, to say that there were simply too many good arguments to reach a definitive conclusion 'The authorities, and arguments, used by them, in support of their different systems or sorts of mixture are so good, that as long as the principle of non-unity of races or sects in Regiments is acted on, it would, perhaps be safer not to insist, too rigidly, on the assertion of any particular principles of mixture, but watch carefully the progress and success of each of them'.<sup>12</sup> [*Some blamed Muslim recruits, others blamed high-caste Brahmins; unsure as to the real causes of the rebellion, the military authorities fudged the matter...*]

In any case, after 1857, the strategic logic of divide and rule was premised on an administrative regime of monitor and record. This regime was administered by the Military Department, which was made responsible for compiling annual returns to record the ethnography of those Indians serving under the Crown and for policing the prescribed ethnic composition of native regiments (though, perhaps unsurprisingly, there is little evidence that this was very successful).<sup>13</sup>

In one sense, then, the reorganisation of the military after 1857 certainly reflects the 'rule of difference' described in much of the literature.<sup>141516</sup> However, we should be careful not to overstate the coherence of this 'strategy'. In the main, the British were forced to muddle through with the regiments they inherited from the anti-insurgency campaigns of the 1857-8. In the 1870s, however, by which point the shock of the uprising had begun to recede, officials in the Military Department talked in much more confident terms about how their knowledge of the Indian population could be turned to administrative advantage. The monitoring of regimental ethnography, along with the expansion of the District Gazeteers and the introduction of the census, helped to assemble more wide-ranging and synoptic taxonomies of race which fed into military planning. The proliferation of such knowledge about the native armies after the rebellion mirrors the wide-ranging attempts of the new Crown Raj to constitute itself in place of the East India Company.<sup>17</sup>

Because of the way in which regimental organisation had been settled after the rebellion, routine enquiries into matters of efficiency, discipline and economy were framed in terms of race. Such matters were increasingly viewed through an optic which stressed the ethnographic distinctiveness of the classes which composed the various regiments.<sup>18</sup> After 1857, officers who wrote about their experience with Indian regiments described commanding certain 'races' or

'castes', rather than (as previous officers had) their experience in charge of composite regiments. Inevitably, these accounts frequently stressed the 'distinctive' characteristics of the officer's troops. The administrative settlement centred on ethnography – which really developed accidentally in the aftermath of the rebellion – thus developed a self-reinforcing momentum in which race and caste came to seem evermore pertinent to military strategy and organisation. In 1871 and 1872, a series of papers authored by serving officers, was published in the Indian military journals, each emphasising the particular, martial characteristics of various Indian races, including the Gurkhas, Sikhs and Dogras, three of the principal 'martial races'. In 1874, this enterprise was made official: Napier, the Commander-in-Chief, ordered the preparation of short ethnographic surveys of the principal races from which the army was recruited, explaining that the papers were designed 'to place at the disposal of British officers, the means of informing themselves of the class characteristics of their men'.<sup>19</sup> In large part, this was simply a reflection of the reactive 'make do and mend' attitude which had necessarily prevailed after 1857; in due course, these writings were to play an important part in the codification of new hierarchies of martial aptitude.

By 1879, when a second Royal Commission was established to consider the organisation of the imperial military, the tentative recommendations of the previous Commission were swept aside with the bold declaration that 'India can have a simpler, cheaper and more scientifically constructed military organization, with far greater security than the present system actually gives'.<sup>20</sup> This confidence was fed in part by the range of knowledge assembled by the Commission and in part by the faith then invested in the power of modern arms, communications and infrastructure.<sup>21</sup> Ethnographic returns from the Presidencies provided a means of calculating the relative strategic pressures across India: thus, it was said that, in Bengal, only the lower stratum of the Muslim population and recently dispossessed landholders 'really dislike[d] British rule', while in the Northwest provinces, a 'more or less enlightened self-interest' bound the landholders and trading classes to the Raj. In Madras the population was said to be passively loyal, while the population of Bombay presidency – deemed more 'martial' than that of Madras – was said to be generally 'well disposed'. From Punjab, described as 'home of the most martial races of India, and the nursery of our best soldiers' the Governor reported that the state of feeling towards the government is 'excellent... the people of the Punjab remain well-disposed and loyal'.<sup>22 23</sup> Where the previous Royal Commission had balked at making concrete suggestions on the distribution of forces, the latter Commission declared that its recommendations were 'based upon sound geographical, political and military reasons... the internal security of the country [will be] enhanced, and our military power increased by this readjustment'.<sup>24</sup>

The apparent concentration of technical and scientific expertise (and power) in the hands of the British helped not only to restore imperial confidence but also to cement the sense of difference which 1857 was taken as a marker of.<sup>25</sup> Ironically, the meaning of 1857 became clearer as new narratives about colonial rule emerged in this period. It was in part a reflection of this wider context, as well as in response to the impacts of regimental organisation, that the new ideas about race and martial aptitude came to obtain such coherence.

### *Marshalling the martial races*

An officially-sponsored military ethnology developed significantly during the 1880s and 1890s, and it is in this period that much of the literature identifies the emergence of the martial race theory. From the mid-1880s, specially selected officers were appointed to administer the recruiting of the various martial communities. The first officer to take on the newly-styled post of specialist Recruiting Officer was Eden Vansittart (an officer in the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Gurkhas).<sup>26 27</sup> In 1888 Vansittart was despatched to the colonial station at Gorakhpur, adjacent to the Nepalese border, where he was tasked with overseeing recruiting operations for the army's Gurkha regiments.<sup>28</sup> Vansittart was responsible for co-ordinating the operations of recruiting parties in Nepal and for monitoring the quality of the recruits enlisted.<sup>29</sup> He is best known as the author of the first of the Indian Army's influential 'recruiting handbooks' – a series of short, practical guides designed to aid recruiting and officering – which are rightly seen as a measure of both the growing influence of the martial race theory and the increasingly central administrative functions of ethnography.<sup>30 31</sup> Vansittart's 1890 volume mirrored the format of the earlier papers solicited by Napier and drew directly from the contents the 1871 paper, as well as from the earlier 'ethnographic' research of Kirkpatrick, Hamilton and (especially) B.H. Hodgson.<sup>32</sup> To aid recruitment, Vansittart provided taxonomies of 'Gurkha' ethnology: classificatory lists of social divisions compiled from and checked against the information received from Nepalese soldiers and would-be recruits.<sup>33</sup> These taxonomies were intended to aid recruitment by identifying Nepal's most 'martial' tribes and clans and by equipping British officers to discern 'genuine' Gurkhas from impostors – a sign that Nepalese peasants were adept at recognising the direction of colonial recruiting strategies.<sup>34</sup>

Vansittart's appointment was judged a pronounced success and his organisation of Gurkha recruiting provided a blueprint for the reorganisation of recruiting operations throughout Northern

India. Lord Roberts, the Commander in Chief in India informed the Duke of Cambridge (the Commander in Chief of the British Army) that the 'really astonishing' numbers of Gurkhas 'of excellent stamp' obtained from Nepal was directly attributable to Vansittart's work at Gorakhpur.<sup>35</sup> Similar depots were then established for Sikhs, Pathans, Dogras, as well as for the other 'races' from which the Bengal Army drew its recruits. As at Gorakhpur, the depots were placed under the command of a District Recruiting Officer, each especially selected for their knowledge of the 'classes' with which they would deal and each responsible for compiling handbooks of the sort pioneered by Vansittart.<sup>36</sup> By the end of the 1894-5 recruiting season, the Military Department had received volumes on Sikhs, Pathans, Rajputs, Jats, Brahmans, Garhwalis as well as on 'Hindustani and Punjabi Mohademans'.<sup>37</sup> The papers were distributed to civil and military authorities throughout India, as well as to British Residents in various 'Princely' states.<sup>38</sup> In 1897, a general compendium on Class/Caste Handbooks for the Indian Army was published.<sup>39 40 41</sup>

While the recruiting handbooks are often cited as exemplars of Victorian Orientalism, much less is known about the labours of the men who produced them.<sup>42</sup> Vansittart's *Notes on Goorkhas* has been widely examined as a manifestation of colonial knowledge but little attention has been paid to the mechanics of the recruiting operations which Vansittart directed.<sup>43</sup> While Roberts and others frequently attributed the success of Vansittart's operations to the inherent 'martiality' of Nepalese recruits, and some scholars have identified the hardening of Victorian attitudes to race as key to the emergence of the theory, a more attentive reading of Gurkha recruiting points to the more complex economic, political and strategic factors which conditioned recruiting operations in Nepal (and elsewhere)<sup>44</sup> and (more importantly in this context) also demonstrates the bureaucratic and institutional networks through which the martial army was constructed, and the martial Gurkha properly invented.

Prior to 1885, when the Nepalese durbar was overthrown, British attempts to recruit from within the kingdom had been hampered by the opposition of the authorities there. After recognising the new Nepalese administration (and sanctioning the export of modern arms to the kingdom), the imperial authorities requested assistance in the raising of additional Gurkha regiments.<sup>45 46</sup> Despite securing the putative support of the Nepalese durbar, the new arrangements proved a disappointment: not only were fewer recruits forthcoming than was anticipated but many of those who presented were either unsatisfactory or unwilling, fuelling suspicions that the Nepalese authorities were compelling men to enlist against their will.<sup>47</sup> It was against this background that it was proposed that a permanent depot be established at Gorakhpur from where recruiting operations could be directed by a British officer.<sup>48</sup> The depot served a largely administrative function

and, indicatively, the only additional expense anticipated at its establishment was a supplementary allowance for stationery to enable the officer posted at Gorkakhpur to carry on the 'great deal of correspondence' that co-ordinating recruiting operations would necessitate.<sup>49</sup> The utility of the recruiting officer was thus to derive from his ability to coordinate the wider networks which facilitated recruiting. These networks – which linked the newly-constituted Gurkha regiments and the various 'classes' from which Nepalese recruits were to be sought, as well as the Nepalese authorities and their agents – involved complex and sometimes contradictory imperatives, which the recruiting officer was tasked to oversee, negotiate and direct.<sup>50 51</sup> The emergence of the martial race discourse in the latter part of the century needs to be understood in the context of these forces as much as it does the hardening of an Orientalist colonial worldview. The synoptic view of Nepal's subjects and potential recruits obtained by the recruiting officer was an administrative response to the imperatives of recruiting more than it was an exercise in ethnographic research. By emphasising the ethnographic outputs and marginalising the former aspects of the recruiting officers' work, much of the existing literature has skewed understandings of how race informed colonial rule in the late nineteenth century.

When Vansittart took up the post of District Recruiting Officer for Gurkhas he was fulsome in his praise for the operations established by his predecessor, [C. Chevenix-Trench<sup>52</sup>], but emphasised the necessity of further investments to secure the flow of recruits.<sup>53 54</sup> Having secured the support of the Commander in Chief [Roberts] and the British Resident at Nepal, Vansittart was allocated Rs 5000 to aid his operations and a deputy and medical officer were appointed to assist him at Gorakhpur. Vansittart's account of his first year as Recruiting Officer reported significant returns on these investments. As well as noting that all of the vacancies in Gurkha regiments had been filled, Vansittart reported that, 'as compared with the two former seasons... every regiment has this season gained in physique'.<sup>55</sup> Vansittart's cohort were younger (by, on average, around three months), taller (by more than an inch) and with a larger chest girth (by an inch and a quarter). So successful had the operations proved that Vansittart elected to close the frontier stations to prevent the depot being 'flooded' with recruits. In comparison with the travails of previous seasons, the new arrangements seemed entirely satisfactory.<sup>56</sup> Vansittart attributed the success of the operations in part to his introduction of a 'rewards system' in which Nepalese recruiters were offered financial incentives according to the stature and quality of the 'specimens' that they produced.<sup>57</sup> Of the 872 recruits enlisted during operations in 1888-9, 471 were deemed worthy of reward, with the highest award for a single recruit – Rs 7 – being paid just once and with an average of just under Rs 3 per recruit and 401 recruits carrying no reward. Despite establishing metrics for the payment of rewards to recruiters, Vansittart (no doubt keen to emphasise his own role in assessing the value of

recruits) was at pains to stress that physique alone did not determine martiality: 'It is not the height and chest measurement which alone constitute the value of any particular recruit. Many other points have to be considered; the recruit's tribe, his clan, his limbs, his age, intelligence, general appearance, all have to be taken into consideration'.<sup>58</sup>

Rather paradoxically, despite rejecting physical metrics as insufficient, Vansittart codified detailed frameworks regarding stature, caste and physique according to which rewards could be paid.<sup>59</sup> A so-called "recruiters' return", was compiled in order to tabulate the activities of the various agents who were despatched into Nepal to bring recruits back to Gorakhpur. Recruits were 'ranked' according to their stature and general quality, and an 'abstract of averages' was composed, enabling Vansittart, as well as the native officers in charge of recruiting operations in Nepal, to monitor the quality of the 'specimens' produced by the various recruiting parties. According to Vansittart, the return and abstracts entailed some extra labour but, he explained,

I feel convinced that it is work well spent, for when the recruiting agent sees that the recruiting officer knows all about the work done by him, and takes an interest in the matter, he is much more likely to exert himself... The "abstract of averages" enables each native officer to see how his last squad compares with his former ones, and thereby a healthy spirit of emulation is created which leads to good results.<sup>60</sup>

Such records not only helped to identify and reward successful agents, as well as to manage and direct aggregate operations<sup>61</sup>, they also provided the data from which Vansittart constituted the annual overview of recruiting activities. By providing a readily calculable metric against which recruiting operations could be measured, such information enabled Vansittart to better direct his network of recruiting agents *and*, crucially, to quantify the improvements made in recruiting operations as a whole.<sup>62</sup> Satisfied by the despatch of the 872 recruits requested in the 1888 season, and by the apparent improvements in the 'quality' of the recruits, the Government of India warmly praised Vansittart's labours at Gorakhpur and sanctioned his appointment for the forthcoming year, appointing two additional assistants to oversee two further depots for Gurkha recruiting.<sup>63 64</sup> While the martial pedigree of the 'Goorkhas' had long been mooted, it was largely through the activities of men like Vansittart that recruiting operations were coordinated and, crucially, that the efficacy of such operations was rendered legible. As Vansittart's reports and publications clearly reflect, the centralisation of recruiting operations allowed their success or failure to be reckoned in much more immediate, and readily comparable, terms. Hence Roberts' comments about the 'excellent stamp' of Vansittart's recruits likely rested on the data which Vansittart had provided. The success of the operations at Gorakhpur was demonstrated by the marked improvements in the physique of recruits

enlisted at the depot.<sup>65</sup> Ethnography and enumeration thus fell-in together to lend a veneer of scientific and statistical coherence to martial race recruiting. Though the ‘improvements’ in Gurkha recruiting was attributed to the inherent martiality of the Nepalese, the apparent success owed much to the readily quantifiable terms in which recruiting operations were formatted and to the economic incentives provided for recruiters who could satisfy these metrics.

Behind these metrics, of course, were a whole series of economic, political and other interests. Recruiting officers played an important role in this relationship: as well as cultivating relations with local groups, they were responsible for coordinating the distribution of pensions, for overseeing a series of labour exchanges for ‘loyal’ pensioners, and in the case of some Gurkha regiments, for facilitating the transit of Nepalese women to establish what were, in effect, government-subsidised Gurkha colonies.<sup>66</sup> Significantly, at the same time that the Military authorities acted to prohibit recruiting from ‘the lines’ in of the Bombay and Madras Armies, special provision was made to allow the sons of serving Gurkhas, as well as the orphans of those killed in colonial service, to be taken on to regimental payrolls, providing effectively, a rudimentary welfare system for military communities and tapping a source of cheap military labour. Though the rhetoric of martiality has largely obscured these material interests in the historiography, they are, of course, the key to explaining the readiness of particular communities to enlist, just as they are in shaping recruitment to Britain’s surviving Gurkha regiments today (and this is precisely the point rather overlooked in much of the recent debate about the rights of Gurkhas to settle).

A similar story is apparent in Punjab, from where the British recruited most of the Sikhs enlisted in imperial service. As Rajit Mazumder has shown, the close relationship between the imperial military and the Sikh communities of Punjab was key to the economic growth and relative prosperity of certain of the region’s communities from the latter nineteenth century.<sup>67</sup> As with the Gurkhas, economic and political factors were central to determining the readiness of Punjab’s martial races to enlist.

Ironically, by the time that the notion of the martial races had become popularised in Britain – through the writings of men like MacMunn – the demands of the First World War had undermined much of the recruiting praxis established in the wake of Vansittart’s labours at Gorakhpur. Whilst large numbers of ‘Gurkhas’ were recruited from Nepal (with the aid of the Nepalese authorities), and significant numbers of Sikhs from Punjab (nearly 100,000)<sup>68</sup>, the sheer scale of the mobilisation transformed the more restrictive recruiting practices which had prevailed before 1914. Moreover, in the aftermath of WWI, and in the face of an increasingly strident nationalist critique, the loyalty of even the martial races was, on occasion, called into question. Violence following demobilisation in

1919 foreshadowed the prospect of Sikh soldiers turning their martial pedigree and military training against the colonial state, prompting many military officials, in the interwar period, to reconsider the presumed loyalty of their Sikh recruits. In this period, the 'high spirit' and 'adventurousness' of the Sikhs – key markers of their martiality – were reconstituted as a clear and present danger for the colonial state. The very qualities which had distinguished Sikh martiality, and which had been nourished and rewarded by colonial recruiting strategies, came to be regarded with trepidation. These anxieties became all the more pressing during the Second World War, as many traditionally 'martial' communities appeared reluctant to enlist in the British war effort, whilst Sikh soldiers played prominent roles in Bose's Indian National Army. In 1943, Churchill even considered reducing the Indian Army 'by some 400,000 or 500,000 men' – nearly a quarter of its strength – in order to counter 'subversive attempts' against British rule emanating from the military.<sup>69</sup> Largely because they were, to some extent, insulated from the Indian nationalist movement, the Gurkhas avoided this suspicion and, at the Partition in 1947, British officers skilfully mobilised the loyalty and good service of the Gurkhas to lobby for their transfer and continued recruitment in the British Army, much as the Gurkha Justice Campaign has done in recent years.

In fact, as Indivar Kamtekar has shown, Punjab's peasantry was reluctant to leave the land and enlist (as their fathers had done) because the onset of war and related demand had significantly increased the returns available from agricultural labour. (In part, as Mazumder has shown, Punjab's agricultural infrastructure had been built upon the wages of colonial military service). Ironically, then, it was the legacy of previous recruiting strategies which helps to explain the reluctance of Punjab's 'martial races' to enlist. Those who were more willing to enlist – from communities in Bengal and from the South – did not volunteer because of their communities' martial heritage but because military service offered the prospect of steady employment and regular food: in north-west India, for example, where neither employment or food was easily obtained, it was found that, within four months of enlistment and '[i]rrespective of age or initial weight, every recruit gained 5 to 10lbs of weight on basic army rations'.<sup>70</sup> It was poverty and hunger, rather than martial pedigree, which shaped recruitment during WWII.

In this sense, the metrics deployed by medical officers at the recruiting centres during WWII tell us much more about the motivations which underlay patterns of enlistment than do those which Eden Vansittart established in the latter nineteenth century. In fact, as a key figure in the genesis of the martial race theory, Vansittart's work undoubtedly helped to disguise the material interests which shaped patterns of enlistment and recruiting. However, what Vansittart's metrics do help us to grasp is the process by which a variety of contingent ideas about race, heredity and ecology were made

central to the administration of recruiting and by which the material interests of the colonial state and its subjects were often obscured.

The ongoing debates about the relationships between race and colonial rule, and the apparent hardening of such concepts in the latter nineteenth century, have only infrequently engaged the literature and sources on the colonial military. This is a shame as the military records of the period provide many rich veins of archival material. To properly understand the history of the Indian military in the latter nineteenth century, we need to understand the wider shifts in colonial rule which occurred in this period: the elaboration of new taxonomies of martiality in the 1880s needs to be understood in the context of the parallel and similar developments which codified the ethnographic basis of other forms of labour in India, especially notable, for example, on the railways or in colonial understandings of indentured labour. While we need to understand the reorganisation of the imperial military in the context of the wider history of the period, we need also, conversely, to understand the wider history of the period in the light of the evidence suggested by the imperial military. If the emergence of a notion of difference after 1857 was key to shaping aspects of colonialism in India (as well as of a new sense of empire and national identity in the metropole), the history of the military after 1857 also tells us something about the way in which this notion of difference was elaborated, the purposes it served and the issues that it seemed to illuminate as well as those which it manifestly obscured.

*Finally...*

Many of the images of Gurkha martiality which I think were 'invented' during the nineteenth century are still with us: both the conspicuous gallantry (noted, last week, in the commendation for bravery of Dipprasad Pun who single-handedly fought off 'up to 30 Taliban insurgents) and the brutality (in 2010 a Gurkha recruit was reprimanded for using his 'traditional' kukri knife to behead a Taliban insurgent, an act which prompted the Daily Mail to exclaim 'Thank god they're on our side!').

For all that these images continue to circulate, I think the most interesting aspect the recent debates about settlement rights is the way in which the martial history of the Gurkhas, which once served as a means of justifying and rationalising the imperatives of nineteenth century recruiting, and which in fact disguised the much more complex process by which recruiting was made effective, has been appropriated as a means of laying claim to the benefits of British citizenship.<sup>71</sup> If the invention of the Gurkhas served – and still serves – British ends, the reinvention of the Gurkhas as British citizens shows that, for some Nepalese, advantage accrues in both directions.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2008/sep/30/military.immigration> [Accessed 22 November 2008].

<sup>2</sup> 'Letter from Rt. Hon. Keith Vaz MP, Committee Chairman, to Rt. Hon. Jacqui Smith MP, Home Secretary', excerpted at <http://www.gurkhas.com/ShowArticle.aspx?ID=484> [Accessed 22 November 2008]

<sup>3</sup> Conversely, the British were attacked for their reliance on so-called 'foreign' troops, both by those groups who sought to make claims on the patronage of the colonial military and, especially, by nationalist critics of colonial rule, for whom the Gurkhas were hated, foreign mercenaries. Though clearly very different, these alternative visions of 'the Gurkhas' rest on broadly similar historical narratives: for the British, the 'loyalty' of the Gurkhas in 1857 played much the same role in securing their reputation as did their deployment at Amritsar in 1919 for nationalists. Herbert, in fact, notes that the 'brutality' of the Gurkhas drew some metropolitan criticism even during the campaigns in 1857-58.

<sup>4</sup> Whilst most within the Indian Army were confident about the loyalty of Indian recruits, analysts at the India Office in London, and Churchill himself, considered massive reductions in the Indian Army, in part because of their concern that the 'martial races' might be 'seduced' by nationalism. *This point should really be made in the context of the discussion of Partition etc...*

<sup>5</sup> On Hodgson see Arnold.

<sup>6</sup> MacMunn

<sup>7</sup> And there's an elderly Sikh gentleman I occasionally meet in the British Library who I think is convinced that my interest in the martial races comes from the same place as my accent...

<sup>8</sup> H. Streets, *Martial Races: the military, race and masculinity in British imperial culture, 1857-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004). P. Robb makes a similar point...

<sup>9</sup> Though the sense that particular Indian communities had 'proven' their loyalty during the rebellion became a key trope of latter discourses of martiality, this was a retrospective rather than a contemporary interpretation. In the immediate aftermath of 1857, there was little support for an ethnically homogenous army – even one composed of those ethnic groups which had remained 'loyal'.

The Commander-in-Chief, for example, objected to a proposal to keep Gurkha regiments ethnically distinct, describing the proposals as 'full of risk'. See Mayhew to the Government of India, 5 October 1861, BL, IOR L/MIL/7/7241, p. 100. The Secretary of State agreed, noting that 'we beat the Purbeahs by the Sikhs and we may have to reverse the operation'. Cited in A.H. Shibly 'The Reorganisation of the Indian Armies, 1858-1879', University of London: Ph.D. (1969). Even Roberts, who would become the most vocal advocate of the martial races, initially dismissed the idea of an army drawn from only a few communities, writing to his mother from the camp before Delhi that if 'our army is composed of Sikhs and Punjabees, the opposite extreme, we shall have the same work again some day'. See F.S. Roberts, *Letters Written During the Indian Mutiny by Fred. Roberts* (London: MacMillan, 1924), p. 56. Additionally, even before 1857, some of the core tenets of what would become the martial race theory had been elaborated: the martial heritage of the Sikhs and the Gurkhas, for example, had been identified well before the rebellion. The genesis of the martial race discourse thus had both a longer and rather more complex genealogy than is reflected in an account which focuses exclusively on the legacies and memories of the counter-insurgency campaigns of 1857-58. See B.H. Hodgson, 'Origin and Classification of the military tribes of Nepal', *Journal of the Asiatic Society* 11, (1833), pp. 17-24; *Parliamentary Papers* (1857-58) XLIII, p. 138.

<sup>10</sup> 'Report from the Political and Military Committee of the Council of India, 30<sup>th</sup> June 1859' BL, IOR L/MIL/17/5/1625.

<sup>11</sup> This rationale drew, of course, on a particular reading of the rebellion which fixed the blame for the uprising on the preponderance of high castes in the Bengal army, as well as (in some cases) on the Army's Muslim recruits. Whether the rebellion was thought to have originated in 'Brahminical conspiracy' or in 'fanatical Mahomedanism', it was widely agreed that ethnically homogenous corps, as had prevailed in Bengal before 1857, had contributed to the rebellion and were therefore to be avoided in the future. Roberts, for example, in a letter to his Mother on 24 July 1857 suggested that 'the Musalmans are at the bottom of it'. See F.S. Roberts, *Letters Written During the Indian Mutiny* (London: Macmillan, 1924), p. 30. According to John Fitchett, a drummer of the late 6<sup>th</sup> Native Infantry at Cawnpore, 'two Muhammedans... came into the lines of the regiment to incite the men to mutiny', see 'Depositions Taken at Cawnpore under the Direction of Lieut. Colonel G.W. Williams', BL, IOR L/MIL/17/2/498. Rose fixed the blame for the rebellion on India's Muslims: 'It is quite useless, again to go over ground so thoroughly beaten as that of Mahomedanism being the great

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anti-British element in India; before the mutinies this was only an apprehension but the history of those events has proved it to be an axiom'. BL, IOR L/MIL/7/7241.

<sup>12</sup> BL, IOR L/MIL/7/7241.

<sup>13</sup> 'The Secretary of State was of opinion that in such corps a discretion should be left to commanding officers to enlist the fittest men, but that they should be required to submit periodical castes returns, so that any deviation from the authorised proportion of classes might be checked'. Despite this injunction, subsequent orders indicate that these aspirations were never fully realised: by the end of the 1860s Government published confidential orders urging the importance of communicating accurate information to the centre and reminding Commanding Officers that they were obliged to seek sanction before modifying recruiting. Further, similar orders were issued again in 1871. See BL, IOR L/MIL/7/7241.

<sup>14</sup> Anon, 'Our New Bengal Native Army', *Colborn's United Service Magazine*, Part I, (1859), p. 459. The interest in Indian issues represented something of a shift: as in metropolitan political circles, before 1857 imperial issues had long been marginalised within the metropolitan military journals. As the author complained, the 'Indian Army... [has] so long been regarded as one of those tabooed subjects which no man unconnected directly with the late Company's service could possibly master, that the recognized organs of the profession rarely contain any allusion to them'. For more, see T.R. Moreman, 'The Army in India and the Military-Periodical Press, 1830-1898' in D. Finkelstein and D. Peers, eds, *Negotiating India in the Nineteenth-Century Media*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000).

<sup>15</sup> This is an important point but it should not be overstated. There is much evidence to show that, along with this sense of racial difference, there was also, always, a corollary recognition of similarity. Moreover, class often undercut simplistic racial binaries: it was widely feared, for example, that frequent contact between European and Indian troops would undermine the 'prestige of the race', by exposing the latter to the former's drunkenness.

<sup>16</sup> This was at least partly reflected, for example, in the circulation of the 'greased cartridge' explanation, which brought together several of these key tropes: the dangers of too radical a programme of reform, the religiosity and apparent irrationality of the natives, and at once the dangers and promises that technology made manifest for colonialism in India. See also the 'fighting machine' and 'iron steamer' metaphors... For a useful discussion of the impacts of notions of science and technology on post-mutiny colonial rule, see G. Prakash, *Another Reason: science and the imagination of modern India*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

<sup>17</sup> The gathering and centralisation of knowledge of this kind is evident in fields of economy and geography, as well as in those of population, society and culture. In the immediate aftermath of the rebellion, this process involved devolving much of the detail of military administration to 'experts' in India, despite there being, in fact, no real consensus on the mechanics of reconstruction. M. Goswami, *Producing India: from Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004);

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, the collected papers on reorganisation at BL, IOR L/MIL/7/7241.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, "Goorkha", 'Notes on the Goorkhas', *Proceedings of the United Service Institution of India* 1, (1871); N.C.P. Price, 'Notes on the Sikhs as Soldiers for our Army', *Proceedings of United Service Institution of India* 2, (1872); J.J.H. Gordon, 'The Dogras', *Proceedings of United Service Institution of India* 3, (1873). Many of these papers found their way into the subsequent 'official' recruiting handbooks.

<sup>20</sup> 'Report of the Special Commission appointed by His Excellency the Governor General in Council to enquire into the Organization and Expenditure of the Army in India', BL, IOR L/MIL/7/5445, p. 30 (my emphasis).

<sup>21</sup> In fact, the findings of the Commission were heavily influenced by the views of the Viceroy, Lytton, who pressed for reductions in military expenditure – principally by effecting reductions in the less 'efficient' Madras army – as a way of easing the financial crisis of the 1870s and as part of his wider campaign to abolish the Presidency system. See B. Robson, 'The Eden Commission and the Reform of the Indian Army – 1879-1895', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 60, Spring (1982), p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> Eden Commission, p. 24.

<sup>23</sup> For the Commissioners, this was a broadly satisfactory situation, and they were thus able to ratify a series of reductions and redistributions on grounds of ethnographic, as well as economic expediency. While in one sense the Eden Commission reaffirmed the post-1857 settlement (by seeking to maintain the policy of ethnographic balance which evolved after the rebellion), the evolution of new understandings of 'martiality' (as evidenced by the taxonomies of martial aptitude referred to by the Commissioners) foreshadows some of the significant shifts which occurred in the latter part of the century. As the Commissioners reported, 'our main object has been to define the territorial formation of the army with due regard to the great principle of divide et impera... Sikh and Punjabi generally not only have no love for, but a profound dislike to, the Hindustani Brahman or Rajput; and this feeling was, it is needless to say, a powerful factor in the suppression of

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the mutiny. These latter in turn, look on the Mahrahttas of Western India, and the inhabitants of the Southern peninsula, as foreigners dwelling far away from Hindustan, and with manners, customs speech and dress altogether different from their own. See 'Report of the Special Commission appointed by His Excellency the Governor General in Council to enquire into the Organization and Expenditure of the Army in India', IOR, L/MIL/7/5445, p. 34.

Importantly, this also demonstrates how science came to play an important in framing the administration of the military, and importantly, the way in which the most pervasive discourse of science was that which explained the conspicuously non-scientific nature of the Indian population: ethnography. In this regard, as elsewhere, the apparent coherence of the colonial modern was an effect of its own opposite. Nevertheless, in forming their recommendations for the reductions and redistribution of the imperial military, the Commissioners were able to invoke the coherence effected in such discourse.

<sup>24</sup> The Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab – described as 'home of the most martial races of India, and the nursery of our best soldiers' – reported that 'the state of feeling towards the government is excellent... the people of the Punjab will remain well disposed and loyal'. See 'Report of the Special Commission appointed by His Excellency the Governor General in Council to enquire into the Organization and Expenditure of the Army in India', BL, IOR L/MIL/7/5445, p. 39.

<sup>25</sup> The perceived military and strategic significance of the railways and telegraph in 1857, as much as the wider sense that the rebellion was a product of Indian ethnographic alterity, helped to develop this sense of difference and to invest colonial administration with a technocratic and scientific veneer.

<sup>26</sup> At the same time as other elements of colonial administration were constituted as matters of 'techno-politics' – to be organised and controlled by experts – so the military was to be organised according to the ethnographic expertise of particular officers. Mitchell; This shift was most evident in the growth of martial race recruiting and in the reorganisations which accompanied the expansion of martial regiments. Reorganising recruitment in these terms required a series of administrative shifts that are characteristic of colonial governance at this time: the enumeration of the Indian population was encoded in reports and gazetteers to be circulated amongst British officers in the service of the colonial state. The systematisation of knowledge in the military periodicals and then later in officially published recruiting handbooks, thus accords with analogous organisations of expertise described by Smith and Dirks, among others. See Smith, *Rule by Records*; Dirks, *Castes of Mind*

<sup>27</sup> It is important to recognise that the descriptions offered by the Indian Army officers were central to the wider process that concerns us here. The narratives reflected their experiences, and made these experiences knowable to others. In turn, the materiality of such narratives constituted a wider network of ethnographic expertise...

<sup>28</sup> Check rank here in army list,

<sup>29</sup> Explain how recruiting operations worked...

<sup>30</sup> Confirm publication details here – provide reference to first handbook. (The first edition of the handbook was dedicated to Roberts).

<sup>31</sup> Details on the subsequent volumes...

<sup>32</sup> The genealogy of this form of colonial knowledge indicates the way in which ethnographic expertise became increasingly central to military administration. The intellectual and epistemological genealogy of the handbooks suggests the process by which this form of colonial knowledge was mobilised and integrated in imperial administration.

*Notes on Goorkhas* established the martial heritage of the Nepalese by detailing the bravery and good spirit with which the Nepalese troops resisted British and Indian forces during the Nepalese war (1823-5?) and identified the ecological and climatological factors to explain the robust physique and cheerful demeanour of the 'Goorkha'. Examples here... Reference Des Chene, and Arnold on the background here re: Nepal and the handbooks. Hodgson had been British Resident at Nepal for some 25 years from 1820.

<sup>33</sup> The information was thus, in some senses, inescapably self-referencing and largely shaped by Vansittart's own experience.

<sup>34</sup> Ethnological information of this type became increasingly central to the recruiting process and though it was through such information that recruiting operations could be fine-tuned, it was also principally through recruiting operations that such information was collated and compiled. If the rationale here is not entirely tautological it is clearly somewhat circular...

<sup>35</sup> The Duke of Cambridge was the Commander in Chief of the British Army. Confirm source here? 'Seeing how well this depot has answered', Roberts wrote later, 'I have got the Government to agree to form similar depots for the various other races from which the Bengal Army is recruited; viz Sikhs, Dogras, Pathans, Punjabi

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Mohamedans, Jats and Hindustanis'. L/MIL/7/5/1614, Vol. IX, p. 263. The Adjutant-General, in a letter to the Government of India, had emphasised the shortcomings of the system then in force and contrasted such to the success of the operations at Gorakhpur. 'Suggested by the remarkable success which has attended the employment of Captain Vansittart, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Gurkha Rifles, to superintend recruiting operations at Gorakhpur, these proposals are submitted in consequence of the insufficiency of existing arrangements to procure the best type of recruit in other districts, a failure which is daily becoming more pronounced, and which, in His Excellency's opinion, is largely due to a want of intimate knowledge of the races of India on the part of regimental officers, and to the tendency of recruiting parties, if not under European supervision, to save themselves trouble by taking the first presentable men they can find, or their own personal friends'. L/MIL/7/7065. See also P/3944 (Nov 1891), on this: 'It would appear that the success which has attended the appointment of a special recruiting officer for Gurkhas contains the key to the solution of the problem'.

<sup>36</sup> The District Recruiting Officers were quickly restyled Recruiting Staff Office for Sikhs, Dogras etc, a title which was felt to be more prestigious and to better reflect the particular forms of expertise deemed necessary to successfully fulfil the role. The issue of nomenclature is significant – as demonstrated by the constant tinkering with the names of the regiments in later years... Recruiting grounds were clearly defined, and all operations within particular territorial limits were ceded to the control of the recruiting officer.

<sup>37</sup> Capt F.G.R. Ostrehan, Recruiting Officer at Delhi, submitted 'Notes on Hindustani Mohamedans' and 'Notes on Jats'; Capt. J.T. Evatt, Memorandum on Garhwalis'; Capt. W.J. Newell, 'Notes on Brahmans', 'Notes on Rajputs', as well as 'Notes on the Hindu Religion'; Capt. K.P. Burne, 'Notes on Dogras'; Capt. A Hamilton, 'Notes on Punjabi Muhammadans', Capt. W. Prior, 'Notes on Rajputana Rajputs'; Capt. Crowther, 'Memorandum on Sikhs'; Capt. G.P. Rankin, 'Notes on Pathans'. See P/4795 June 1895, Nos 1130-1158B.

<sup>38</sup> This circulation of knowledge was important. The Recruiting Officers acted as important nodal points in this exercise... See, for example, Vansittart's correspondence, via Foreign Department, with Resident in Nepal seeking clarification of the tehsils etc in Eastern Nepal. As I have argued elsewhere, the transmission of such knowledge eventually permeated popular metropolitan narratives: Bonarjee etc.

<sup>39</sup> Check titles here...

<sup>40</sup> In a letter to Cross, the Secretary of State, requesting sanction for the establishment of recruiting depots and the appointment of ROs, the Government of India explained that: 'The condition most essential to the efficiency of native regiments of all classes is that the material should be good. The highest degree of discipline and the most perfect training will not make a really efficient regiment out of inferior men. Under the present system the majority of recruits for all regiments, except Gurkha corps, are examined and passed into the service by the medical officer and the commandant of the regiment that happens to be nearest to the place that the men are enlisted. These officers are fully engaged in their own duties and are without special interest in the enlistment of recruits for other regiments, more particularly when the latter are composed of men of a different class to those of their own corps, as must frequently be the case. It therefore sometimes happens, that a commanding officer is compelled to accept inferior recruits because they have been duly passed into the service by another commandant'. See L/MIL/7/7065. In explaining the advantages of the system established by EV, Roberts presented statistical returns compiled by Vansittart to demonstrate the improved stature of recruits obtained since the opening of the Gorakhpur depot. Roberts also advocated almost all of the measures proposed by Vansittart – ie. lengthy appointments for ROs etc, annual appointments for AROs. *Character of calculability etc* The six additional appointments were notified with effect from 1 April 1892 and most of the officers selected took up their posts in the summer of 1892. Check and confirm this, and appointees, in the Indian Army list for 1892 – see Bengal, p. 4...

<sup>41</sup> By 1899, after a series of delays incurred during the collation of materials for the handbooks, handbooks on Rajputs, Sikhs, Dogras had been published at the Government's Simla Press, while further volumes on Marathas, Mappilas, Pathans, Hindustani Muslims, Jats and Gujars emerged before the outbreak of war in 1914. Certainly by this stage the Brahmans handbook had become the 'Caste Handbook on Brahmans'... Does this indicate it was part of the series. NB: Check draft GO (general order) on the publication of caste handbooks for the native army: *Recruiting/Native Army – details the correspondence etc connected with the publication of various handbooks, including those on Brahmans, Rajputs etc... This needs pursuing! Pursue esp No 62 – dated 4 Dec 1897– which mentions a draft GO sanctioning the publication of handbooks etc – Check this GO?*

Check also No 2783-A, 23 Nov 1897, to Supt Gov Press, Simla, conveying instructions for printing and distribution of 500 copies of Brahmans etc, copy to Home Dept...

<sup>42</sup> Footnote to hammer this point home here... In seeking (and having found) manifestations of Orientalism, much of the literature on the martial races has been concerned with the representations of India, and Indians,

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offered in colonial writings and has overlooked the process by which such representations were given substance and meaning for the colonial military. See Caplan?

<sup>43</sup> While Vansittart's role in the growth of the martial race theory is well established, the details of his operations at Gorakhpur are much less familiar than the published outputs of that work. Given that *Notes on Goorkhas* was devised, as we have seen, as a means of aiding the recruiting and officering of Gurkha regiments, the historiographical focus on Vansittart's seminal recruiting handbook marginalizes the rather more complex history in which the author played a crucial part. The result has been a rather circular debate over the 'truth' or otherwise represented by the theory which has been conducted with little regard to the circumstances in which the theory of martiality developed. Ironically, this debate has left unexplored the context in which notions of martiality evolved...

<sup>44</sup> factors which are sometimes overlooked in other accounts... and certainly in the imperial narratives... which fundamentally misrepresents the growth of recruiting as an expression of the inherent martiality of particular communities.

<sup>45</sup> Check the export here... Thesis? The export of arms and political support suggests the way in which more concrete forms of exchange underlay the relationships between the British, the Nepalese authorities and potential Gurkha recruits. Check here general history of Nepal.

<sup>46</sup> The Viceroy wrote to the Secretary of State in London to seek his approval for increasing recruitment, the latter immediately sanctioned the raising of three additional Gurkha regiments, replying that 'additional Gurkhas seem to me very desirable'. 'If you can bear expense, additional Gurkhas seem to me very desirable. If the three regiments are to be additional to the 200 men for the eight regiments, would it not be better to add second battalions to present strength of Goorkha regiments'. See IOR, P/2556, No.1260 (Proceedings: Quetta, 1885).

<sup>47</sup> Sir Donald Martin Stewart, then Commander-in-Chief, proposed that a British recruiting depot be established at Katmandu and that British officers be permitted to enter Nepalese territory to procure recruits. IOR, P/2556, No.1264; these proposals were rejected, and even as late as 1891, the Nepalese authorities were resisting British applications to enter the country in pursuit of recruits. While these measures were rejected, it soon became apparent that a mechanism for regularising the process of recruitment would be necessary. The initial round of recruiting was a collaborative exercise: Nepalese agents would gather potential recruits within the kingdom and then submit them for inspection either by the British resident at Katmandu or at one of the recruiting depots established near the border with British India. Satisfactory recruits would then be transferred to their new regiments. However, such arrangements quickly proved unsatisfactory: not only did the military authorities struggle to raise as many recruits as had been anticipated, they also encountered a series of problems with those who did present themselves for enlistment. In addition to those would-be recruits rejected on grounds of health and physique, some of those who were accepted promptly abandoned the service after discovering that their pay was less than half that which they had expected. IOR P/2556, No. 1307, April 1886. The officer commanding the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion

<sup>48</sup> IOR P/2556 (Military Department). No. 1355 (November 1886). 'I am directed to state that, in consideration of the great importance of Gorakhpur as a recruiting station for Goorkhas, the Commander-in-Chief wishes to detail an officer from one of the Goorkha regiments to be there during the cold season to superintend operations'. NEED TO CLARIFY SEASONAL NATURE HERE... It was then proposed that, instead of periodically despatching officers on recruiting duty to temporary border stations (as Chevenix-Trench had been), a more permanent recruiting depot be established at Gorakhpur, under the command of an officer charged with co-ordinating and overseeing recruiting. Between October and April, the selected officer would proceed to Gorakhpur, from where he would liaise with the Nepalese authorities and the commanders of the various Gurkha regiments in order to direct recruitment.

<sup>49</sup> As the Adjutant-General made clear, the officer at Gorakhpur was intended to provide a more efficient means of co-ordinating recruitment and would not, therefore, entail an additional cost to the imperial exchequer: 'no extra expense will be caused to the state except the Rs 25 allowance for stationery, previously asked for, and for which early sanction is solicited, as the officer will have a great deal of correspondence with all the Commanding Officers of Goorkha regiments'. IOR P/2556 (Military Department). No. 1355 (November 1886). In fact, the depot and recruiting officer in command quickly accrued a series of additional costs.

<sup>50</sup> The Nepalese durbar resisted British requests that the families of recruits be permitted to join their menfolk in British territory, citing the inevitable outflow of foreign (ie. British) currency from Nepal as being detrimental to their interests. Like the exports of arms which were central to securing the increases in recruitment in 1885, the home remittances from serving soldiers were an important element in conditioning Nepalese acquiescence to British recruiting practices.

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<sup>51</sup> As we have already seen, the previous arrangements had proved unsatisfactory: many of the recruits were unwilling, unfit or otherwise unsuitable for imperial service. It is indicative that the response to the initial problems premised an administrative and organisational resolution and that the additional cost envisaged in the appointment of the recruiting officer was to be spent on stationery. Rather than increasing funding for recruits, or seeking alternative means of encouraging the Nepalese authorities to facilitate recruiting (though both of these were attempted at other points), the military and colonial authorities sought to establish a means of developing and extending their influence over the networks through which they mobilised their recruits. This is not to suggest that economic and political factors were incidental to recruiting strategies – for the British, the Nepalese and the recruits themselves, they clearly were not – but rather to emphasise that it was the coordination and administration of expertise that was central to colonial recruiting strategies at this moment.

<sup>52</sup> The first officer to serve in the new depot was Captain C. Chevenix-Trench, who oversaw recruiting operations at Gorakhpur from 1886-8. Trench had previously been on special recruiting duty in earlier years [confirm dates] Chevenix-Trench [Confirm dates here]. Vansittart was actually the first officer styled DRO for Gurkhas...

<sup>53</sup> See P/3253 (October 1888), No. 2504, From Vansittart, 'I would also wish to say that I have had the advantage of seeing the excellent system which Captain C. Chenevix Trench, 5<sup>th</sup> Goorkhas, established in Gorakhpur and of working under him for several months, and I would beg most respectfully to suggest that if Government do establish a recruiting depot at Katmandu, that the system which Captain C. Chenevix Trench established at Gorkhapur, after much thought and hard work, be carried out in every detail, as far as is possible in Katmandu'. Vansittart recommended centring recruiting operations around the British Residency at Katmandu, citing the central location of the residency, as well as highlighting the effective transport links and other benefits to be derived from relocating operations at Katmandu. The economic imperatives cited by EV are important here, as indeed are the points relating to the 'material' advantages of the station at Gorakhpur... ie. the good buildings are a material instantiation of the colonial state... See P/3253 (October 1888), No. 2504, from EV. However, as it then transpired that a relatively limited number of recruits were to be sought during the 1888-89 recruiting season and the Nepalese durbar reported that they were content to facilitate/encourage recruiting (but still opposed to the British locating their recruiting depot at Katmandu), it was decided that no special inducements were necessary.

<sup>54</sup> In the spring of 1888, for example, the Government of India instructed the British Resident in Nepal (after Jan 1888: Durand; before Jan 1888: Girdlestone) to inform the Nepalese authorities that the Government of India was prepared to 'give a Snider rifle for every recruit produced' in the forthcoming season. P/3253 (October 1888), No. 2506. As the attentive Commander-in-Chief retorted, this was a generous offer, as many 'recruits' were presented each year who were rejected by the British... See P/3253 (October 1888), No. 2508. The Commander-in-Chief had advocated allocating an additional sum of Rs 5000 to the Recruiting Officer at Gorakhpur 'to assist in obtaining eligible recruits'. According to both the C-in-C and the Resident at Nepal, such an arrangement would be much more efficacious than one in which funds were dispersed through the Resident and Nepalese minister, much of which 'would find its way into the pockets of unscrupulous middlemen'. *The offer of Sniders was withdrawn but Vansittart was allocated Rs 5000.* See P/3253 (October 1888), No. 2514. NB: This is also interesting as it reports some of the ways in which recruiting impacted the wider economy and influenced the relationship between the British and Nepalese etc – inflated prices, contest over recruits etc... See in P/3253 (October 1888), No. 2515, and *check here what position EV holds at this point...* Check also how the 'capitation' grant system worked previously...

<sup>55</sup> P/3477, June 1889. From EV, 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 1889

<sup>56</sup> 'In fact', Vansittart reported, 'to prevent the Depot being flooded with recruits, for whom no vacancies were left.... I had to send orders to the frontier ghats, sometime before completing requirement, to turn back all recruits for enlistment, and not to allow them to proceed to Gorakhpur'. P/3477, June 1889. From EV, 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 1889. Evidently, the swift turn around was not simply a reflection of Nepalese martiality...

<sup>57</sup> Remember to make the point here that this was supported by a statistical point – see Appadurai...; Vansittart identified four causes to explain the success of the recruiting operations: the support of the Nepalese durbar, the active support of the resident, the introduction of rewards, and the better working of the recruiting system. According to Vansittart, the British resident at Nepal brought a good deal of pressure to bear upon the durbar, and it was this pressure, he believed, which caused the Nepalese authorities to be more accommodating of British recruiting strategy.

<sup>58</sup> P/3477, June 1889. From EV, 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 1889. Again, the important point here is abstracting and simplification.

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<sup>59</sup> Make the connection with the personal experience point above here...

<sup>60</sup> P/3477, June 1889. From EV, 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 1889

<sup>61</sup> Centralisation allowed, for example, for the easy transfer of recruits between regiments preventing 'bottlenecks' in which one regiment remained understrength while another turned away would-be recruits away and made possible more substantial forms of planning, as Vansittart's requests to be furnished with ethnographic information on the tehsils of Nepal made clear. Of course, it would be possible to object that this point only makes true sense if you take the martial race theory at face value. However, I want to suggest that it is a valid point because the British *did take the theory at face value*, and that such an ability seemed to suggest a new kind of power...

<sup>62</sup> Point here about Smith's stuff on records and rule etc... Perhaps at this stage say something about the importance of native officers – as set out by EV in his report.

<sup>63</sup> Praise in June, sanctioned next year's in September... Vansittart himself had recommended that the Senior RO be maintained in position, and that assistants be drawn on an annual basis from the various Gurkha regiments. Perhaps shift to this point some of the praise for Vansittart in footnotes in the previous section? I.e. Condense to summary in II and elaborate in more detail here?

<sup>64</sup> While various colonials had identified the martial pedigree of the Nepalese, and urged more extensive recruiting of the so-called Gurkhas for much of the nineteenth century, it is clear that the expansion of Gurkha recruiting in the 1880s and 1890s represented more than the martial proclivities of the Nepalese. Indeed, despite the claims of some British officers (particularly those retrospective ones which began to emerge after this period), the additional Gurkha regiments were not simply expressions of pre-existing martial tendencies but were, in fact, the product of a determined and calculated strategy to extend and deepen the links between the imperial military and sections of the Nepalese population. This strategy was addressed in different ways to the Nepalese authorities – in the form of political patronage and military support – and, through financial inducements to the Nepalese population (or at least to sections of that population) from amongst whom recruits were sought. Moreover, the reorganisation of recruiting activities also stimulated wider reorganisations in the imperial military. The martial race ideology shaped regimental reorganisation and was the principal factor in the introduction of the so-called class regiment and class company systems. With regiments increasingly defined in terms of their ethnography, the military authorities undertook an increasingly active part in shaping, supporting and encouraging the distinctiveness of regimental ethnicity and culture. As Bernard Cohn first noted and as Richard Fox has since argued, service in the imperial military was central in shaping the cultural identity of Sikhs. Fox, perhaps, pushes this point too far in *Lions of the Punjab*; the claim, reported by George MacMunn, 'that it is the British officer who has kept Sikhism up to its old standard', certainly does...

<sup>65</sup> In 1889, Vansittart reported that 'as compared with the two former seasons... every regiment has this season gained in physique'. The 1889 cohort were, on average, younger (by around three months), taller (by more than an inch) and with a greater chest girth (by an inch and a quarter) than those enlisted just two years previously. See BL, IOR P/3477, June 1889.

<sup>66</sup> In 1875, C.H. Brownlow bemoaned the failure of government to maintain better relations with retired native soldiers, recounting a story of an elderly native officer who, having been retired some years before the rebellion, presented himself to the British on hearing of the rebellion. Wounded in the early stages of the siege of Delhi, he recovered to lead his men in the final assault in which he was killed 'fighting among the foremost'. Such men, Brownlow complained, were 'lost to us both as citizens and soldiers'. C.H. Brownlow, 'Notes on the Native Army of Bengal; its Present Material and Organization, as compared with the Past', reproduced in IOR L/MIL/7/7241, pp. 155- 9. On Gurkha recruiting, see BL, IOR P/3172, July 1890; BL, IOR L/MIL/7/7054.

<sup>67</sup> R.K. Mazumder, *The Indian Army and the Making of Punjab*, (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003).

<sup>68</sup> R.J. Mazumder, *The Indian Army and the Making of Punjab*, p. 262

<sup>69</sup> G. Singh, 'Finding those men with 'guts': the ascription and re-ascription of martial identities in Colonial India after the Uprisings of 1857' in G. Rand and C. Bates, eds., *1857: Military Dimensions*, (forthcoming, 2009) *Class Composition of the Army in India*; War Staff Papers, Asia and Africa Collections, British Library, (L/WS/1/456), p.23.

<sup>70</sup> Kamtekar, 'State and Class in India, 1939-1945', *Past and Present*, 176, p.191

<sup>71</sup> Several, important issues remain to be unpicked here: most importantly, perhaps, concerning the role played by the so-called 'martial races' during the Partition violence in 1947. Much of this violence, we now know, was perpetrated by groups of men trained by the colonial state and funded, indirectly at least, by the wealth accrued as a result of the long-standing and mutually beneficial relationship between the colonial state and the peasantry of the Punjab. If this relationship helped to constrain and retard nationalism for much of

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the late colonial period, it seems also to have played an important role in the violence which marked the collapse of that rule in 1947. In 1930, the Simon Commission suggested that, without the British officer and the Indian Army to keep order, the 'martial races' would eat up the more pacific peoples of the South. The Commission, of course, offered this argument as a means of justifying the continuation of colonial rule. In fact, most of the violence in Punjab was perpetrated by, and against, Punjabis. Far from legitimising the arguments of the Simon Commission, the violence of 1947 should prompt us to ask more questions about the relationships between martial identities, economic power and communal violence. If the process of martial-ing the Raj began in response to various economic, administrative and intellectual developments of the nineteenth century, I would argue that its consequences can be traced through much of the twentieth century and, as my introductory examples suggested, they are perhaps still with us.