

ARMIES OF INDIA (7) ARMIES OF NEPAL AND TIBET
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1. Army of Nepal, 1780-1815

AHQ: Ran Bahadur (1794-1799)

Prime Minister Bim Sen Thapa (1800+)

Western Senior, Northern, Southern, Eastern Commanders (DHQ equivalent)

From 1760s trained Ghurka Sepoy Companies were raised, each of about 120 men, 100 men with musket and bayonet, officers and supernumeraries with sword and shield.

60 Regular Sepoy Companies@ 120-288 men, muskets, bayonets (1790s+)

30 Regular Sepoy Companies@ 100-120 men, muskets, bayonets (1804+)

From 1804 some companies group in battalions. They were called Kampu Regiments if in Katmandu, Paltaan Regiments if in the provinces. All had names rather than being numbered.

By 1815 there were 16,000 troops, in regular drilled companies of 150 men including 10 man band and a pioneer.

12x Kampu Regiments (Katmandu)@ 6 Companies, 600-800 men

7x Palteen Regiments (in provinces)@ 6 Companies, 600-800 men

Known named units are:

Shri Nath Infantry Regiment

Kali Baksh Infantry Regiment

Barda Bahadur Infantry Regiment

Sabuj Infantry Regiment

Puranu Gorakh Infantry Regiment

Ram Dal Artillery Regiment:

4 Companies@ 4-6x 4pdr or 6pdr field guns, 140 gunners, no limbers

Static fortress batteries with 6pdr, 9pdr, 12pdr guns, 10" mortars

Numerous Elephants with jingals

Jingal Batteries

20,000 Militia in civilian dress, swords, bows, shields, spears, 1pdr leather cannons

2. Army of Tibet, 1780-1815

AHQ: Dalai Lama, Chinese Manchu governor called Ambon

6 Dahpon (DHQ equivalents; Lhasa x2, Shigatse, Gyantse, Tingri, Tengri lake)@

1-2 Lama battalions of warrior monks@ c300 men

Chinese garrison from 1791:

5 Brigades sharing 26 Mongol Banners@ 200 cavalry, bow in Kokonor province

1000 Mongol infantry with spear or bow, 1000 Chinese Matchlockmen with rests

Tibetan regular paid Army:

6 Brigades@ 2 Battalions@ 2 companies@ 5 platoons, 125 men

(50% matchlocks, 30% archers, 20% spear/sword armed)

6 reserve Brigades@ 2 Battalions@ 2 companies@ 5 platoons, 125 men

(50% matchlocks, 30% archers, 20% spear/sword armed)

Tibetan *Yul-mag* militia on mobilisation:

60,000 foot in battalions of 250 men, 30% archers, 70% spear/sword

~6 heavy cavalry battalions@ 250 men, spear, matchlock, armour, barding

~50 light cavalry battalions@ 250 men, spears

1pdr jingals, few leather guns.

Yaks were used for moving infantry battalions and carrying officers.

3. Notes

- a) Ghurka Sepoys can form square, column, 3-deep line, or irregular order.
Ghurka Militia are melee armed irregulars in native dress, some with bows.
- b) Nepalese militia wore white civilian dress, with white sash, red or grey or brown or blue turban or cap. Weapons included bows, spear, matchlock, kukri, khora sword with a polished black round shield with steel or copper gilt bosses.
Soldiers were usually barefoot, or had sandals or leather pointed shoes.
- c) Ghurka Sepoys wore a mix of red, green and blue coats early in the 1780s-1790s, with each company having different colour cuff edging, and white pants, and black leather boots if not barefoot; white cross belts, black cartridge box and scabbards for bayonet and kukri.
By 1804 the vast majority wore red coats. Head-dress was a turban in red, white & blue, sky blue, black, dark blue, and probably other colours. The turban had a silver badge on the front, usually depicting a crescent moon.
Officers carried a bow or sword and shield, with fancier dress copying EIC uniforms, including even bicornes adorned with gold braid and feathers.
- d) Ghurka artillery wore blue coats, and possibly black baggy pants and boots.
- e) Leather guns were hand carried barrels that were placed in position and could fire about 3-6 shots before collapsing.
- f) both Tibet and Nepal were nominally under Chinese control, but this was ineffectual. Although when the EIC invaded Nepal in 1814 the Chinese massed an army to join in the Ghurka defence, but the war ended before they set off.
- g) Tibetan troops are all loose order irregulars, the Regular component being a paid standing force, the reserve force being on half-pay at home.
- h) Tibetan dress was a *chuba* baggy thick woolen robe in grey or stone colour, knee length yak/camel hair boots, leather waist sash, and a huge variety of hats in yellow, crimson, red, blue, black. Wealthier men had chubas in dark blue, violet, dark red, or dun, and in towns, striped red, green and yellow. Some officers were armoured and on barded horses.
- i) Yaks are mostly black, with a few all white or all light brown, and about 5% with white tail and face. Horse and yak harnesses were rope, saddle cloths were brightly coloured and patterned.
- j) For more details see *Armies of the 19th Century, Asia 1: Central Asia and the Himalayan Kingdoms*, Ian Heath, Foundry Books (1998).