

~~The~~
Military Campaigns of
Maharaja Ranjit Singh and
Under His Successors

Thesis
submitted to Panjab University Chandigarh
for the award of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
History



by
~~Brigadier~~ Ajmer Singh ~~Ph.D. in~~

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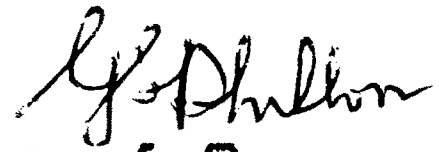
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Certified that Brigadier Ajmer Singh Dhaliwal has completed the thesis entitled 'Military Campaigns of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Under His Successors' under my supervision. It is entirely his own work and is fit to be evaluated for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History.

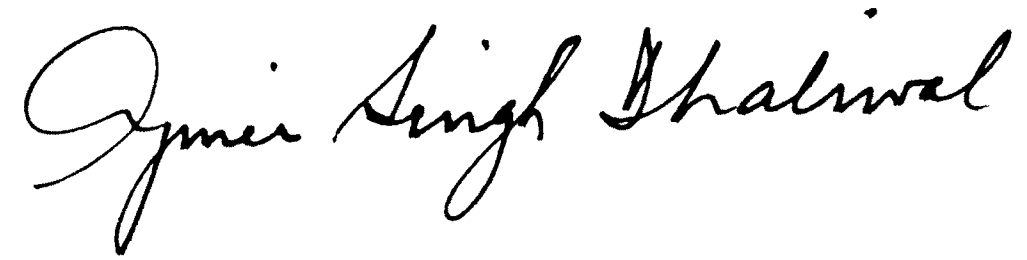

(Dr GS Dhillon)

CERTIFICATE

This is certified that the thesis is entirely my own work and all ideas and references have been duly acknowledged.



Signature of Supervisor



Signature of Candidate

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PREFACE

Ours is a family of soldiers. While serving the 'Khalsa Fauj' my forefathers fought against the British at Mudki and Pherushehr. On the other hand, my grandfather fought for the British while serving in the then Indian army in France and Middle East. My father, too, served in the army and took part in all military operations which the Indian army undertook in post-independence period, including the 1971 Indo-Pak war. As a serving officer with military familial background I was fortunate to be in uniform and in the field during the 1971 Indo-Pak War, and as recently as 1990-92 part of the ongoing counter-Insurgency operations in Kashmir. I obviously tend to have deep interest in military history.

Despite making history in the Indian sub-continent, the people of Panjab have shown scant interest in recording their military accomplishments. As a student of history, I have been fascinated by the meteoric rise of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who for the first time in a millennium, stopped invasions into India from across the Khyber. At the same time, he also halted the march of the British - the mightiest imperial power of the nineteenth century - into Panjab. I have wondered, how his powerful kingdom disintegrated within a decade of his death. My interest in the subject made me select the topic Military Campaigns of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and under his Successors for my

doctoral thesis. This research has, indeed, been rewarding as it has given me an insight into my roots and a better understanding of both the weaknesses and strengths of the people of Punjab.

It would not have been possible for me to write this thesis without the able guidance, active help and constant encouragement from my supervisor Dr G.S. Dhillon, Professor, Department of Evening Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh.

I am deeply indebted to Dr Indu Banga, Professor of History, Panjab University, Chandigarh, for her keen interest and help in my research work. She gave me valuable suggestions and much needed inspiration to undertake this study.

I am also thankful to Dr Kiran Pawar, former Chairman of the Department of History at the Panjab University for her constant encouragement. My thanks are also due to Dr J.K. Sharma, the present Chairman, Department of History, Panjab University, Chandigarh, for his useful suggestions and unstinting cooperation.

I further take the opportunity to thank all those who offered their help generously for the completion of this study, whom I am unable to record here individually for constraints of space.

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Maharaja Ranjit Singh has been a subject of abiding interest to scholars, both Indian and foreign, who wrote about him continuously not only during his life time, but also thereafter. The earliest accounts on Sikhs are available from reports of British Intelligence gatherers of the 18th century such as Polier, Browne and Forster followed by reporting on Sikhs and the Kingdom of Ranjit Singh by British officials who were interacting with his Kingdom in their official capacity in the 19th century, such as Malcolm, Metcalfe, Wade, Murray and Prinsep. Of particular significance is the tenth chapter of Prinsep's work entitled 'Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab', which contains an account of Bentick's meeting with Ranjit Singh, based on his own observations. Besides, there are reports of travellers and visitors to the Kingdom of Lahore- such as Moorcroft, Jacquemont, Honigberger, Hugel, Murray, Henry Fane and Osborne. Apart from these, there are the 'Diaries' of Mohan Lal and Shahamat Ali recording their first hand observations of the Sikh Kingdom. The court diarist Sohan Lal Suri's Umdat-Ut-Tawarikh in five 'Daftars' (Volumes) is a contemporary record for the period 1771-1849 of which 1771-1812 was recorded by his father Lala Ganpat Rai and events during 1812-1849 were recorded by Sohan Lal himself. These are useful source documents and contain a continuous eye-witness record of nearly eighty years. The original narrative of the first Anglo-Sikh campaign, of October 1845 to February 1846 was borrowed by Sir Herbert Edwards at the time when he met Lala Sohan Lal after the Campaign. It was not returned and was not available.

Jangnama Shah Mohammad (Punjabi) (1846) is an account in verse of the 1845-46 War between the British and the Sikh armies. It is believed to have been written in the second half of 1846, so it is a near contemporary chronicle of the conflict. The poet admirably condenses the momentous events into 105 bunds. Shah Mohammad eulogises the valour and patriotism of the Sikh soldiers but exposes the treachery of their Generals and Wazirs and Rani Jindan. In bund 92, he laments that victory was turned into defeat by the doings of the traitors. He remarks; 'Shah Mohammda ik sarkar bajhon, faujan jitke ant noon haryian ne' (Shah Mohammad, for want of a Leader such as Ranjit Singh, the victorious Khalsa army had to taste defeat).

Joseph Davey Cunningham, a Lieutenant from the Engineers, was towards the end of 1837, appointed assistant to the Political Agent at Ludhiana. His 'History of the Sikhs' (1849) is a contemporary account of the period '1837-1846'. He holds the view that War with the Sikhs resulted from provocation by the British Officials and was won in collaboration with the self seeking Sikh chiefs. Cunningham's work is a general history of the Sikhs, where he sees them as an emerging nationality, congenial to social change. His work advocated forbearance towards the Sikhs, not their annexation and elimination as a nation.

The Works of relevance to the present study written in the 20th century include among others; Sita Ram Kohli's 'Catalogue of Khalsa Darbar Records' (1919) giving in detail the strength, composition and the working of the army administration of Ranjit Singh. Gulshan Lall Chopra's 'The Punjab as a Sovereign State : (1928) was a doctoral thesis, for which the author was awarded Ph.D degree by the London

University. It is divided into six chapters. The first chapter traces the unification of Punjab by Ranjit Singh according to a definite policy of consolidation. The second chapter deals with Ranjit Singh's relations with Afghans and the British. The third chapter gives an account of Ranjit Singh's army and the fourth deals with his administration. The fifth chapter is about his Court and Camp. The sixth chapter attempts an assessment of Ranjit Singh.

N K Sinha in Ranjit Singh (1933) has elucidated with great care Ranjit Singh's rule and relationships with other Powers of the region without delving in greater detail into the military strategy of the British in their incursion into Punjab in 1846-49.

Sita Ram Kohli in Maharaja Ranjit Singh (Punjabi) (1953) has written a biography of Ranjit Singh. It traces the origin of Ranjit Singh's Kingdom from the Misl era. In twenty brief chapters, it gives an account of the Maharaja's rule. The last two chapters sum up his personality and achievements. The author attributed the end of the Sikh rule within a decade of Ranjit Singh's death to the concentration of all power in the hands of the Maharaja himself and the lack of a setup that could sustain the rule after he disappeared from the scene. He also hints that the British all along had an eye on the Maharaja's dominions and after his death, they grabbed them and annexed Punjab.

History of the Punjab (From the Remotest antiquity to the present time) (1889) by Syad Muhammad Latif; Life and Times of Ranjit Singh (A Saga of Benevolent Despotism) (1977) By Bikrama Jit Hasrat, and History of the Sikhs in five volumes by Hari Ram Gupta are general histories which also deal with the battles fought by Ranjit Singh. These however leave enough scope to do a separate study on the

campaigns of Ranjit Singh and his successors.

The crucial chapters in the book The Khalsa Raj (1985) by AC Banerjee are : Ranjit Singh : War and Diplomacy : and Ranjit Singh : Government and Army. The author rightly remarks that but for Ranjit Singh's political foresight and military enterprise Kashmir would not have been an Indian territory today, and the North-West frontier areas would have remained a part of Afghanistan. The author commends Ranjit Singh's diplomatic skills, realistic approach, and statesmanship. He concludes "Single men sometimes personify in themselves the process of historical change. Ranjit Singh belonged to this exceptional category. No Sikh inherited even a small fraction of his talent," (p 249). Hence Ranjit Singh's Kingdom perished within a decade of his death.

George Bruce writes in Six Battles for India, The Anglo Sikh Wars (1969) a straight forward battle account of Mudki, Ferozshah, Sohraon of 1845-46 period; and Multan Chillianwalla and Gujarat of 1848-49 period. He has discussed the battles, the number of army units involved, their tactics and British strategy all are discussed in detail. The contribution of the smaller British contingent Vis a Vis much larger British native army compliment was understandably exaggerated.

In The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars, General Sir Charles Gough and Arthur D Innes have written a campaign military history giving full credit to Lord Gough's leadership of the British forces and justification to his direction of both the Anglo-Sikh campaigns. Their one sided Pro-British views on history may well be gauged from a sample of their writing on Sind. "The British had no idea of conquering Scinde, of attacking the Punjab, or of actively interfering with

Afghanistan. But their minds were bent on commercial development... "if only the Indus could be guaranteed like the Ganges as an open waterway." (p 38). Gough, because of casualties to the British Officers and men during the Anglo Sikh campaigns had received a good amount of bad press. Infact after Chillianwala, his replacement too was despatched from England. As the authors put it, "Lord Gough made a point, not only of refusing to answer his critics in the Press, but of forbidding his friends to do it for him (Preface). The book is an answer to that criticism.

Fauja Singh in the Military System of the Sikhs (1964) has based his observations on Sita Ram Kohli's extensively collected data and other works of the time to give an analytical insight into the organisation and composition of the Sikh army. He has gone into the academic merits of tactics and strategy. There is a need to link the national objectives of Ranjit Singh Vis a Vis the objectives of the British, because strategy flows from national objective and the linkage between these is indispensable. Fauja Singh obviously could not have the benefit of later Works such as 'Civil and Military Affairs of Maharaja Ranjit Singh' (1987) written by JS Grewal and Indu Banga; and French Administrators of Maharaja Ranjit Singh' (1988) by Jean Marie Lafont.

The Civil and Military Affairs of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1987) by JS Grewal and Indu Banga is a collection of Royal orders (Parwanas) that give an insight into the working of Ranjit Singh's day-to-day military administration. They highlight the great military qualities of Ranjit Singh and his meticulous attention to details in each and every aspect 'military'. These orders also indicate how he kept

himself in touch with the army's administration by appointing 'Akhbar nawis' and how he placed 'harkaras' between Peshawar and Lahore, thus getting information within a day, and also we learn about his countermanding orders given by Prince Nau Nihal Singh in command of the army at Peshawar to 'Kampu-a-Mualla' under Tej Singh at Rohtas. This collection of orders helps us to know how Ranjit Singh functioned. These orders confirm the view that Ranjit Singh had a systematic bent of mind, who went into minutest details, which are hallmarks of a military genius.

Jean Marie Lafont in French Administrators of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1988) has described the military, business, administrative and political cum diplomatic activities of the French officers employed by Ranjit Singh from 1822 onwards. The first chapter: 'military activities of French officers of Maharaja Ranjit Singh', throws light, on how meticulous care and personal indulgence of Ranjit Singh, alone, permitted the training of 'Fauj-i-khas' to a standard of discipline, otherwise absent in the people of Punjab, at large. The business activities of the French officers and their 'Jagirs' South of river Satluj bring out, how well these officers were compromised from fighting against the British. For one reason or the other these officers departed from the Punjab well before the Anglo-Sikh campaigns. The chapter on political cum diplomatic activities shows how jealously the British guarded their interests by discouraging any interaction between Lahore and any other country, except the British in India.

The biographies, general histories of Ranjit Singh and those of the Sikhs, the books on Anglo Sikh wars all have touched upon the campaigns, but they leave enough scope to

do a study for Ph.D. thesis. Accordingly, the present study entitled Military Campaigns of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Under his Successors has therefore, been undertaken to examine the diplomatic and military strategies employed by Ranjit Singh and his Successors, in consolidating their power and defending their rule against the designs of the Afghans and the British.

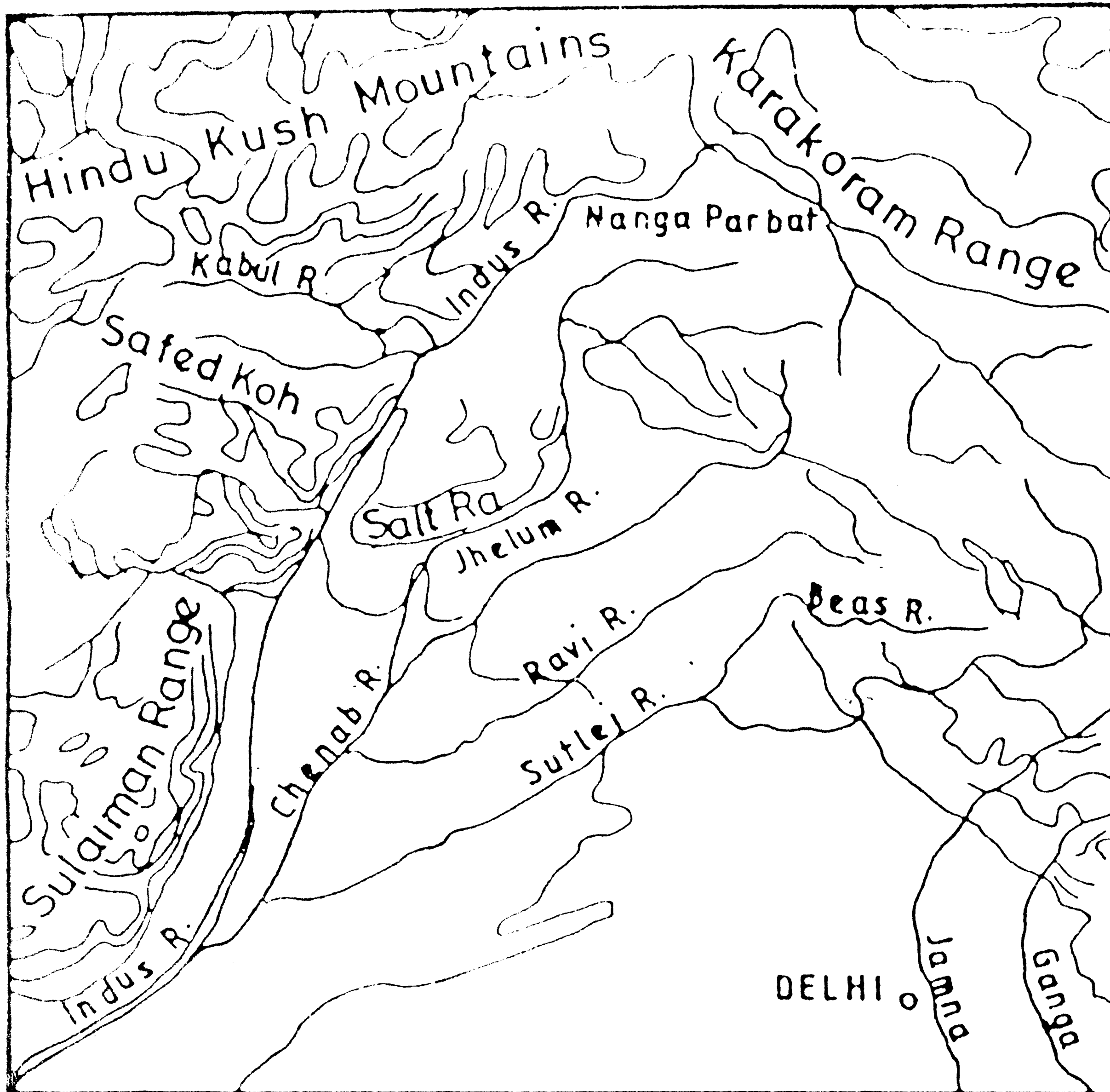
Chambers dictionary defines campaign as 'an organised series of operations in the advocacy of some cause or object'; Collins dictionary defines campaign as 'a planned set of activities that people deliberately carry out over a period of time in order to produce a particular result'. The Oxford English dictionary defines it as 'a group of military operations with a set purpose usually in one area' as also 'series of planned activities to gain a special object'. From all this it emerges that an object, a cause and a result are ingredients of a campaign. These have therefore been included in analysis of each campaign. A nation may fight one campaign or a number of campaigns to win or lose a war. War means fighting between two nations and since campaigns are one facet of it, similarly diplomacy is another. Thus war and diplomacy are the two means available to any nation to achieve its objective and aims. When diplomacy fails, a nation either modifies its objectives or goes to war. Collins has defined diplomacy as 'the management of relations between countries'. Thus it will not be wrong to say that management of relations between two nations demands that each achieve its objective by diplomacy, failing which it should be prepared for war. Thus any study of military campaigns of Ranjit Singh and under his successors will not be complete, if not preceded by a study of the diplomacy which either avoided war or

caused it. Campaigns as already mentioned are only an outcome of a decision to go to war. The battle is the actual fighting involved in a campaign. There can be more than one battle in a campaign which may lead to victory or defeat.

The present topic has been treated as a subject of 'History' and not limited in its enquiry by the scope of a 'Military History' which Michael Howard defines as the history of armed forces and the conduct of war.¹ Though the campaigns by virtue of the topic, remain the centre of focus, but what happened beyond the campaigns, has been included for a balanced examination of the subject in its fuller historical context. The study broadly tackles the topic in the following sequence :-

One, Introduction; Two, Land and People; Three, Historical Background and Early Career of Ranjit Singh; Four, Unification of Punjab; Five, Expansion of Punjab Frontiers; Six, Organisation and Training of the Army; Seven, Ranjit Singh - A Military Assessment; Eight, Post Ranjit Singh Environment in Punjab; Nine, Campaigns Under Successors and Ten, Conclusion.

1. Juliet Gardiner (Editor), What is History Today ?. 1988 p - 4, quoting Michael Howard; "What is Military History ?"



The land of the Five Rivers

CHAPTER - II

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

The land where Ranjit Singh came to reign supreme, the kingdom of Lahore as it came to be called, extended from Longitude 71 degree to 77 degree and Latitude 28 degree to 36 degree.¹ The Hindu Kush mountains and the Sulaiman range from the west to the high Himalayas in the North running North West to South East, all together formed a mighty natural horse shoe around the plains of Punjab.² Lahore was almost at the centre of this region. To the North of Lahore, in the high Himalayas is the Karakoram range. South of the Karakoram range flows the 3168 kilometers long Indus river in the shape of a left handed sickle. It flows through Attock, a point midway between the towns of Peshawar and Rawalpindi. Attock is also the place where river Kabul meets the Indus. Other major rivers such as Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas and Satluj originating in high Himalayas follow a more direct North East to South West flow along the natural gradient³ of the land. Their seasonal floods brought in

1. JD Cunningham, History of the Sikhs, p 1

2. The land derives its name Punjab from two Persian words, Punj or Panj (five) and a'b (water), after the five rivers, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas and Satluj by keeping Indus out of the count, for Indus until then was forming the western boundary of this land. In the present day this area is part of Pakistan except Sind, Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and parts of Haryana.

3. Syed Muhammed Latif, in History of the Punjab, (p.12) writes,

" The gradient is regular and gradual, the cities of Lahore and Amritsar are each 900 feet ASL and Mithan Kot to the South-West is 220 feet ASL. The unbroken flatness of the surface causes frequent and extensive changes in the courses of the great rivers. Thus one of the nalas in the low, sandy country between the Satluj and Ludhiana was the bed of the river Sutluj in the early nineteenth century. It now flows 11 kilometers North of Ludhiana. The Satluj is specially apt to change its course, but the tendency to desert their channels is characteristic of most of the rivers of the Punjab".

fresh alluvial soil making the land fertile. It is a well known historical legacy of Punjab that the very rich crops and resultant prosperity were the cause of many an invasion from the North West over the Khyber and Bolan Passes.

The kingdom of Lahore consisted of either broad plains of Punjab or mountain ranges; it possesses every variety of climate and every kind of natural produce. Ladakh in the North had a long hard winter with snow cover for many months. In this area Leh was an important town. Skardu as the crow flies was 200 kilometers North-West of Leh, that is a good 30 kilometers down stream from the junction of Shyok and Indus. This region was also called Baltistan. Gilgit was further 150 kilometers from Skardu in the same North-Westerly direction. The region was mostly rocky, with sparse vegetation along the river valleys. The locals grew wheat and barley for food.¹ The mountain goat provided the famous wool for shawls. It was worth about one lakh rupees in the then market of Ludhiana.² Cunningham, in 'History of the Sikhs' mentions that the locals and Chinese carried on a brisk business of exchange of opium from India with superior quality charrus from Yarkand. Eggs of silk worms in Kashmir were imported from Gilgit.³ While Ladakhis were Buddhist, the people of Baltistan were mostly Muslim. In the South-West of this region was the Kashmir Valley, which has the river Kishanganga flowing East to West in the North and the Pir Panjal range in the South.

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1. Indu Banga, Agrarian System of the Sikhs, 1978, p 3.
 2. Journal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1844, p 210.
 3. Abu-l-Fazl Ain-i-Akbari, pp 562-563.

The Kashmir valley proper is 80 kilometers in length and 8 to 10 kilometers in breadth. It is watered by the tributaries of Jhelum which originate from Wular lake.¹ The stretch of Jhelum upto Baramulla is navigable and thereafter the river becomes a mountain stream. On the bank of Jhelum and lower part of Kishanganga Valley, lived the tribal people known as Khakha and the Bamba. Further down the Jhelum, the Gakhars formed the dominant tribe. The majority of population in Kashmir was Muslim. Amongst the non-Muslims were the Kashmiri Pandits, their chief occupation then was service in civil administration. Much of the population of Kashmir was concentrated in towns. Some of the important towns besides Srinagar, Gilgit, Skardu and Leh were, Anantnag, Baramulla, Sopor, Uri, Garhi and Muzaffarabad on the Jhelum, Derband, Tarbela and Ghazi on the Indus while Mansera, Dhantaur, Nara and Haripur were² located in the area between these rivers.

The Indus before meeting the plains at Amb gave sustenance to the people of Pakli and Hazara. Pakli was the only area, in the times of Akbar, where mules were bred in³ India. The trans-Indus territories consisted of the valleys of Peshawar and Kohat, the lowland of Bannu and the flood plains of the Indus between Kalabagh and the Panjnad.

1. According to Emperor Jahangir in his memmoires, as told by Syad Muhammed Latif, in History of the Punjab, (p 5), the source of the river Bebat (Jhelum) is a fountain in Kashmir called Virnag. The nmae signifies, in the Hindu language, a snake and it appears that, at one time, a very large snake haunted the spot. It is about 20 kos (80 km) from Srinagar. The river expands much when it reaches near the village Pampur which is 10 kos (40 km) from the city. Jahangir after his accession odered the source of Jhelum (Virnag) to be paved with stones and a garden to be made around it.

2. Indu Banga, Agrarian System of the Sikhs, 1978 p 3.

3. Irfan Habib, An Atlas of the Mughal Empire, 1982, p 7.

Pathan tribes were dominant in Peshawar, Kohat and Bannu including Dera Ismail Khan. Several Jat clans formed nearly half of the population in Derajat and the Baloochees,¹ similarly formed half the population in Dera Ghazi Khan.

The core dominions of the Sikhs extended from the foothills of the Himalayas to the Rajputana desert in the South and from the river Jamuna in the East to the Indus in the West. The entire region presented one uniform level plain with a number of Doabs (Doab means the area between two waters). Sind Sagar Doab lay between river Indus and Jhelum, and Cis-Satluj Doab between Jhelum and Satluj. Todar Mal a minister of Akbar, combined the names of rivers and coined the name for area between Chenab and Jhelum as Chaj Doab, the area between Ravi and the Chenab as Rachna Doab, Beas and Ravi as Bari Doab, between Beas and Satluj as Bist Jullunder Doab.² Of the five Doabs, Bist Jullunder Doab was the smallest. In this area there were thousands of wells³ which augmented the rainfall for cultivation. It was then the granary of Punjab.

Further to the east, the submontane zone parallel to the Shivaliks, where the hills meet the plains the region was traversed by innumerable 'chos'. The Ghaggar almost midway between the Satluj-Jamuna divide ran itself out in the sands near Sirsa. The uplands between the river valleys known as 'bar' were comparatively dry and unproductive. This was a feature- common to all the Doabs.

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1. Syad Muhammed Latif, History of the Punjab, p 14
 2. Khushwant Singh, History of the Sikhs, Vol 1, pp 3-4, footnote 1.
 3. Indu Banga, Agrarian System of the Sikhs, 1978, p 5.

The province of Multan consisted of the lower portion of the Bari Rachna and the Sindh Sagar Doabs, it included the areas of Dipalpur, Multan proper Jhang and Muzaffarabad. It was mainly populated by semi-nomadic tribes. Other than Baloochees, the dominant tribes were Dandpotras, Khattars, Khokhars and the Karals.

To the North East of Lahore there were a large number of hill principalities which were Vassals of Ranjit Singh. The large number was due to the Himalayan ranges being cut by rivers and their tributaries, into a large number of valleys separated by high mountain ranges. The important towns in this region were Bilaspur, Suret, Mandi, Kulu, Siba, Guler, Kangra, Nurpur Chamba, Bhadarwah, Bandralta (Ramnagar), Mankot (Ramkot), Patankot, Basoli, Jammu, Bhimber, Rajouri, Chenini, Jasrota and Manawar. Close to the town of Mandi the lower ranges of the Himalayas contained inexhaustible beds of fossil salt, limestone, sandstone, gypsum, and occasionally veins of quartz. Mandi¹ also produced iron besides antimony, alum and sulphur.

These hill principalities were inhabited by Rajput ruling houses where in some cases their lineage could be traced back to a couple of centuries. The land owning families were the Thakurs, but the tillers of the land were Ghiraths and Kanets. The Gaddis and Gujjars were the pastoral people. Traders such as the Khatris, Bantias and the Brahmins as also several categories of artisans and craftsmen formed the remainder part of the people living in the hills.

1. Syed Muhammad Latif, History of the Punjab, p 16

There were not many canals in the kingdom of Lahore but one of note was the Shah Nahr in the upper Bari Doab which was excavated in the time of Shah Jahan; it was renovated in part through Ranjit Singh's orders. It passed through Dina Nagar, Dharmkot and Majitha, and then branched off to Lahore while some of its water was brought to Amritsar by a fresh channel. It was capable of irrigating 70,000 bighas of land. This area also had a large number of wells. It was probably the best irrigated tract in the Sikh dominions.¹

The climate of the Kingdom of Lahore represented extremes of cold and heat, that is biting cold of snow capped mountains of Ladakh region in the North to the scorching heat of Multan. In the core dominions too the mercury touched pretty low in winter and very high in summer.

The Himalayan tract enjoyed an annual rainfall ranging from 70 to 120 inches. The plains of the kingdom received rainfall from the monsoons both from the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. Places farther from the hills such as Patiala, Nabha, Bhatinda, Faridkot, Ferozepur and Shahpur received much less rainfall which varied from place and year to year.

The monsoon season, upon which depended the autumn crops and spring sowings, lasted from the middle of June to the end of September. The spring harvest was dependent largely on the winter rains of January. The hot weather

1. Foreign/Secret consultations, 28 April 184, No 62 R Napier's report on the Shah Nahar or Husli Canal.

proper began with April. The heat in the summer was intense and the blowing hot winds called 'loo' by locals dried up the vegetation. The Europeans found the heat unbearable, the natives were however acclimatised over the years. By mid-September the extreme heat of summer became tolerable and by October nights became cool. Then followed winter which lasted till end of March. In January the weather was decidedly cold, sharp frosts were common and water in the open froze at night.

It was possible for cultivators in the kingdom of Lahore, to gather at least two sets of harvest in a year. The main rabi¹ crops were wheat, barley and gram. The main kharif² crops were maize, rice, millets and cotton. Sugarcane was included in kharif crops, though it took a year to ripen. Several areas were well known for good varieties of rice, Kashmir having as many as seventy five.³ Fruit bearing variety of trees, orchards and herbs were common in the hills of the submontane region and Peshawar valley. Indigo was grown in Muzaffargarh and Jalandhar and saffron in Anantnag and Kishtwar. The fauna of the province had the reputation of being richer and more varied than its flora.⁴ Tigers were found in the forest, and the line was once not uncommon in the jungle. Camels thrived in the hot southern plains, and herds of buffaloes on the grazing lands adjoining the rivers. Horses of excellent quality were reared in the north east part of the country,

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1. The rabi or spring crops were grown in October-November. They were reaped in April-May.
 2. The kharif or autumn crops were sown in July and reaped in October.
 3. Indu Banga, Agrarian System of the Sikhs, 1978, p 8.
 4. Syad Muhammad Latif, History of the Punjab, P

and the chiefs who used to breed them took great pride in their equestrian capabilities.¹

The forests and preserves of the Punjab were rich in trees. Deodar grew in the higher Himalayan ranges of Hazara, Chamba, and Kulu, Cheel was found in the Shiwaliks and other hill tracts of Kangra, Hoshiarpur, Gurdaspur, and Rawalpindi. Kikar, Shisham, Ber and Dakh grew in the plain rakhs of the bar tracts of the Province.²

The total number of towns in the Sikh dominion were nearly one hundred and twenty.³ The number of large villages ran into thousands.

The chief markets were Amritsar, Lahore, Peshawar and Multan. The indigenous manufactured products were chiefly silk, carpets and wool. Carpentry, ironmongery and the manufacture of arms too made good progress. The manufactures of the Province were all carried on by hand.

Excellent wood work was made at Amritsar, Sialkot, Jhang and Hoshiarpur, these places were also noted for carving and inlaid work on wood. Leather work, embroidered with silk or gold thread was made at Peshawar, Derajat and Hoshiarpur. Paper was made at Sialkot. The imports from countries to the westward consisted of gold, turquoise, silver, silk, assafoetida, fresh and dried fruit, wool and horses.

The Sikh were known by the territories they inhabited. Those living in the Cis-Satluj region that is between the

1. Syad Muhammad Latif, History of the Punjab, p 17
 2. Punjab Census of 1855
 3. Ibid.

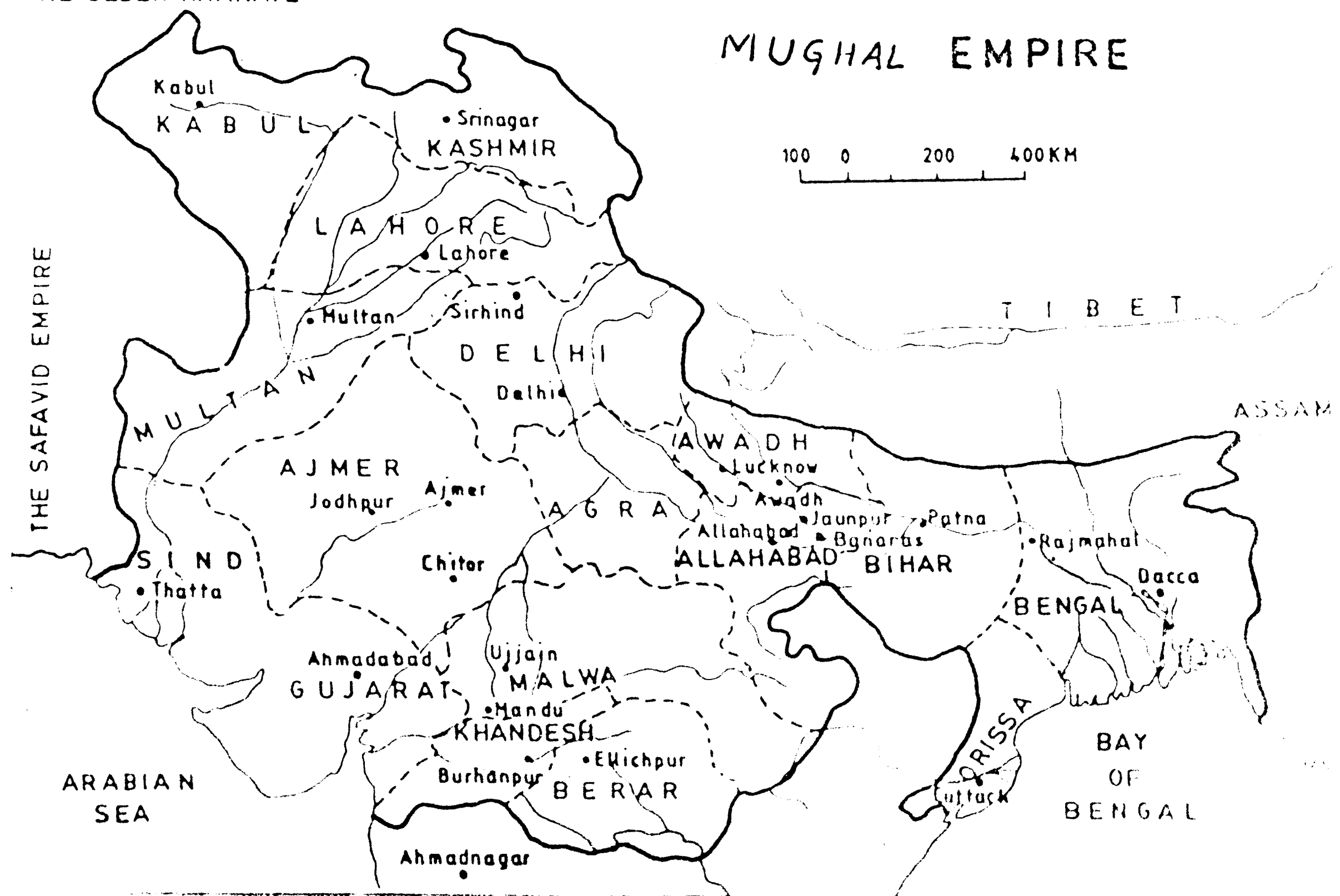
Satluj and the Ghaggar were called Malwais; in the Jalandhar Doab, the Doabias, of Majha the region between Ravi and the Beas as Majhails; south of Lahore as Nakais, between Ravi and Jhelum the Dharapi Sikhs; and between the Jhelum and the Indus, Pothohar Sikhs.¹

1. HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Volume IV, 1982, pp 15-16.

THE UZBEK KHANATE

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CHAPTER - III

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND EARLY
CAREER OF RANJIT SINGH

I

Historical Background

It will be pertinent to examine the overall environment of the Indian subcontinent to understand the various pulls and pushes which may have influenced Ranjit Singh, his successors and their opponents, in their relations and dealings with each other.

In the eighteenth century, Northern India had become the stage for the clash of two great historic forces. The Mughal ¹ dynasty established by Turkish adventurer Babar in 1526 and Khalsa ² (established by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699). In 1707 when Aurangzeb breathed his last, the Mughal Empire had extended from Kabul to Dhaka and from Deccan to Kashmir. The Empire under Aurangzeb had reached its zenith, so also had set in its decline with him.

Over a period of time a precedent had set in, for the sons of the emperor to occupy the Delhi throne after defeating other claimants. On the death of Aurangzeb, followed a number of Mughal rulers in quick succession, taking their crown after bloody wars, in which nobles took sides and extracted their own pound of flesh from the losers and winners alike. These wars divided the nobility and destroyed the fabric of central authority. Busy lining their nests, the nobles who were also the central

1. Jadunath Sarkar in fall of The Mughal Empire Volume 1, 1988, page 12, says that Iranian Turks were popularly called Mughals in India.

2. Hari Ram Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Vol 1, pp.272-277 and pp.281-282.

bureaucracy, neglected the actual tedious task of governance. The central treasury received no regular revenues. There was no money to pay the soldiers or petty officials. Once the rulers became dependent on outside support to win the crown, they then lacked the moral strength to select good and capable Wazirs. What was happening at Delhi was also being repeated in smaller states.

The Wazirs of Mughal Emperors took no action to strengthen the central authority, they acted only when their own seat was in danger. Consequently, the subas broke away one by one. The earliest was Nizam Ul Mulk, Governor of Deccan, a Turrani who completely broke away from Delhi. He had resigned Wazirship in 1724 and dexterously manoeuvred himself clear from Delhi politics to carve out an independent kingdom, though he continued to call himself a representative of the Mughal ruler but in practice his acts were all independent.

In the East, Murshid Quli Jafar Khan (1713-1727) ruled Bengal and Orissa with efficiency and Farrukhsiyar the emperor (1712-1719) permitted East India Company to trade through Calcutta, and enforce all duties on payment of nominal fees.

In Bengal, to put an end to the rampant corruption in trade by East India Company and to overcome disloyalty of his Commander-in-Chief Mir Jaffar, the ruler of Bengal Mir Qasim fought the British but lost the battle of Plassey in 1757. The British then appointed Mir Jaffar as the Governor of Bengal. With this act the break away of Bengal from Delhi was in practice complete. Also this marked the

beginning of British method of acquiring power in India through bribe and proxy. It is a different matter that to legitimise their presence in India, the British requested for and received the Diwani rights of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa from Shah Alam II, (1759-1806) who was then himself a pensioner of the British.

Closer to Delhi with the ouster of Safdar Jang, Nawab of Oudh from Wazirship in November 1753, Oudh had become independent and it no longer contributed to the strength of the Central authority. Shah Alam (who was subsequently installed Emperor at Delhi), Shiraj-Ud-Daula and Mir Qasim were defeated by the British in 1764 at the Battle of Buxar. The treaty with British that followed, sealed the fate of Oudh as a separate and independent entity free of Mughal Central authority. It also brought the British in closer proximity to Delhi and Marathas.

The internal party politics and weakness of the Mughal Emperor had become public with Nadir Shah's invasion and sack of Delhi in 1739. Ahmad Shah Abdali was then a trusted General of Nadir Shah and had accompanied him to Delhi. Nadir Shah was murdered in 1747. Ahmad Shah took over his master's mantle and launched on a career of invasions into North India from 1748 to 1764. Nadir Shah had already annexed Suba of Kabul and all the portions of the Punjab and Sind lying West of the Indus river down to the sea. Abdali who followed Nadir Shah went a step further and appointed his own Governors of Lahore and Sarhind.

The North-West was the traditional route of aggression. But with the loss of Bengal and Bihar to the British and

after the battle of Buxar, with the establishment of British influence over Oudh, a new direction of threat had developed unobtrusively and surefootedly, from across the seas. Unperceived by the local rulers it was the beginning of the colonisation of India by the British East India Company.

Against this background, the rise of Sikhs as a new power in Northern India was not sudden, rather it was a gradual process stretching well over the entire eighteenth century. Guru Gobind Singh, before his death in 1708, had directed Banda Bahadur to take the offensive against the Mughal rule. In a couple of years Samana, Sarhind, Jullunder and the surrounding areas came under the Khalsa rule. Rebellion so close to Delhi had shaken the Mughal Government to action and brought in its wake, full fury of imperial retribution. Such that Banda Bahadur and many of his followers were captured and put to death in 1716.

The brutal killing of Banda Bahadur and his followers had sowed the seed of armed rebellion. It also marked the beginning of a struggle for independence of the Khalsa from the Mughal rulers. By mid-eighteenth century as the Afghans replaced the Mughals in the seats of authority, only the opponents changed and the Khalsa struggle continued, till an enterprising Sikh Chief, Ranjit Singh grandson of Charat Singh put together a Kingdom and raised a strong army for its protection. Naturally a freedom obtained with such effort inculcated a greater spirit of sacrifice amongst the Sikh soldiers verging on fanaticism. How else could these

1. Surman Embassy, to the Court of Mughal Emperor Farrukh siyar at Delhi in 1716, saw the followers of Banda Bahadur being paraded and executed at Delhi. He reported this execution to Robert Hedges, President and Governor at Fort William, Bengal.

soldiers of the Punjab fight and win in battles such as Chuch and Pir Sabak, which were fought by Ranjit Singh in the beginning of nineteenth century to remove the remaining Afghan supremacy in India, once for all.

Charat Singh, grand father of Ranjit Singh died in 1774 AD due to a mortal wound sustained because of the bursting of a matchlock. Charat Singh throughout his life actively participated in the Dal Khalsa's struggle to harass and break the will of the Afghans to march to Delhi.¹ The territory left by him on his death yielded about three lakhs of rupees annually,² and was inherited by his eldest son, Maha Singh.

When Charat Singh died, his son Maha Singh was only ten years old, so Mai Desan widow of Charat Singh took control of the misl administration.³ She was a worldly-wise lady who improved her misl's circumstances by appropriate matrimonial alliances.⁴ Mai Desan married her daughter, Raj Kaur to Sahib Singh, son of Gujar Singh of Gujarat and her son Maha Singh to the daughter of Gajpat Singh ruler of Jind in 1774. The support and patronage extended to Sukarchakia Misl by a

1. Muhammad Latif, History of the Punjab, reprint 1994, p.340. Mohammad Latif writes, "Charat Singh was a man of high aims, and with far more advanced ideas than his contemporaries of the misl. He laid the foundation of the greatness of the family. By his industry, economy and perseverance, he extended his estates and threw upon the disorder which followed on the overthrow of the Lahore Governor, Khwaja Obed. Charat Singh appeared early in the field as an enterprising leader and soon rose from a common Dharwi, or highway robber, to the sardari of a confederacy and contributed materially to the strength of the Sikhs as a nation".

2. Hari Ram Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Vol IV, 1982, p.304

3. John JH Gordon, The Sikhs, Reprint 1988, p 82. Gordon writes, "Sikh ladies played an important part in the history of these warlike times.. and Mai Desan ruled with vigour and diplomacy."

4. Bhagat Singh, A History of Sikh Misls, 1993, pp. 183-184.

friend of Charat Singh, Jai Singh Kanaihya,¹ allowed Maha Singh time to consolidate his position and within a few years he felt strong enough to occupy Kotli Ahangaran,² near Sialkot. Maha Singh then demanded Zamzama gun from Ahmad Khan who in Charat Singh's absence had carried it off from Gujranwala to Rasulnagar. On Ahmad Khan's refusal Maha Singh alongwith Jai Singh Kanaihya, successfully besieged³ Resulnagar and renamed it Ramnagar. The relics of Prophet Muhammad were removed by Maha Singh from Ramnagar to Gujranwala and were kept there in safe custody.⁴ He appointed his subordinate, Dal Singh Governor of the newly acquired territory. The victory enhanced Maha Singh's prestige and many a Sardar now joined his banners.

It was at the fall of Ramnagar on 13 November 1780⁵ that Maha Singh received the news of the birth of Ranjit Singh.

Maha Singh captured the forts of Kot Pir Muhammad, Sayyidnagar, and Manchar. He attacked and made Sahiwal a tributary to him. The infighting amongst the Bhangis gave impetus to their own downfall and Maha Singh Sukarchakia immediately stepped in to enlarge his domain and rakhi

1. Dr Kirpal Singh in The Historical Study of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Times, 1974, p.15 informs that Jaimal Singh Kaniaha was brother of Jai Singh Kanihya and Jaimal Singh's daughter Chand Kaur was wife of Maharaja Kharak Singh.

2. Bhagat Singh in History of Sikh Misls, 1993, p.184 states that the artisans of this place were very adapt in manufacturing rifles. Maha Singh on occupying Kotli Ahangaran armed his soldiers with new rifles.

3. Hari Ram Gupta in History of the Sikhs, Vol IV, 1982, pp.306-307. Rasulnagar was situated on the southern bank of river Chenab 45 kms North-West of Wazirabad.

4. Muhammad Latif in History of the Punjab, reprint 1994, p.341

5. Hari Ram Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Vol IV, 1982, p.307. Maha Singh was then 16 years old and Raj Kaur mother of Ranjit Singh may be one year younger.

Lands. He seized Bhangi territories of Pindi Bhattian, Isa Khel and Musa Khel. While Maha Singh gained in strength and stature, his neighbours, the large and strong Bhangi Misl faced some serious reverses. Timur Shah, son of Ahmad Shah, expelled them from Multan and secured his dependencies of Bahawalpur, Mankera and Sind from Sikh encroachment.

Captain Murray in his, 'Memoir on Historical' and 'Political Transaction in the Punjab'¹ informs that Maha Singh instead of marching west-wards to confront the Kabul monarch chose instead to improve his financial circumstances by enforcing tribute from the Raja of Jammu. On his approach Brij Raj the ruler of Jammu evacuated his capital and fled to the Trikota Devi mountains North of Jammu.² The lawlessness and disturbed conditions which were long prevalent in Punjab had forced many merchants and traders to move to the safety of Jammu hills. Maha Singh was therefore reputed to have carried off valuables to an incredible amount which he did not share with anyone. This gave rise to much jealousy and resentment amongst the Bhangi Sardars and in the mind of Jai Singh Kanaihya, once the guardian and ally of Maha Singh.

Maha Singh consequently found himself unable to contend with the joint power of the Bhangi and Kanaihya Misls. He resolved to strengthen himself and so he aligned with Jassa Singh Ramgarhia³ and the hill Raja Sansar Chand

1. HS Bhatia, Rare Documents on Sikhs and their Rule in the Punjab, 1992, p.63

2. Muhammad Latif, History of the Punjab, reprint 1994, p.343.

3. Bhagat Singh in A History of Sikh Misls, 1993, p.152, writes, Jai Singh Kanaihya and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia were very friendly to each other and had jointly undertaken armed operation against the Afghans, but after the sack of Kasur a dispute arose between the two Sardars, over the division of booty.

Katoch.¹ Jassa Singh Ramgarhia was then in the Hansi district subsisting on plunder of the country east of the Ganges and Jamuna. He immediately returned to join hands with Maha Singh. Sansar Chand of Kangra who had to settle his own score with Kanaihya's too joined hands with Maha Singh. In February 1785 in a battle which took place between the two parties, at Achal close to Batala, Gurbaksh Singh son of Jai Singh Kanaihya died fighting while his troops took to flight. Defeated, Jai Singh Kanaihya withdrew from the field and sued for peace.

The Ramgarhia lands were returned to Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. Sansar Chand received the fort of Kangra, earlier gained by the Kanaihya Sardar through stratagem. Jai Singh Kanaihya having lost his able son Gurbaksh Singh and being of old age, sought and received the consent of Maha Singh to the marriage² of his grand daughter Mehtab Kaur to Ranjit Singh. This step secured the friendship of Maha Singh and held out to Jai Singh the prospect of his daughter-in-law Sada Kaur being permitted to enjoy the family domain after his demise. Thus at the young age of 22 years Maha Singh achieved for the Sukarchakia Misl a position of predominance

1. Muhammad Latif in History of the Punjab, reprint 1994, pp.309- 311 informs, Sansar Chand had invited Jai Singh Kanaihya to help him capture the fort of Kangra. Instead, Jai Singh had occupied it for himself leaving Sansar Chand out in the cold.

2. Very early at the age of six years in 1786 Ranjit Singh was afflicted with small pox of a very virulent type, by which his life was endangered. The child recovered after a great deal of prayer, distribution of alms and medication. However, because of the disease he lost one eye and was left with quite a few pock marks on the face. Sada Kaur, widow of Gurbaksh Singh, the late son of Jai Singh Kanaihya met Ranjit Singh's mother Raj Kaur at Jawalamukhi temple, where she had gone to pray for the recovery of her son. There, at Jawalamukhi it is believed, the betrothal of Sada Kaur's daughter Mehtab Kaur to Ranjit Singh was decided. Same year after Ranjit Singh recovered, the marriage was solemnised.

and an arbitrating influence in the affairs of Punjab. The Bhangi influence was already on the decline, the Kanaihya pride was humbled and the friendship of Ramgarhia's and Katoch Raja was secured.

Maha Singh next decided to achieve public recognition for his ascendancy over the Bhangi confederacy and so after Gujar Singh Bhangi died in 1788 and when the claims and counter claims for the inheritance of Bhangi possessions were being traded between his sons Sahib Singh and Fateh Singh, he took sides with the younger son Fateh Singh and simultaneously extended a demand for tribute from Sahib Singh.¹ The claim for tribute from Maha Singh was turned down by Sahib Singh on the ground that Gujar Singh Bhangi had never fought under the standard of the Sukarchakia Misl. Maha Singh next besieged Sahib Singh in the Sodhra fort. The siege lasted three months and was called off only when Maha Singh was suddenly taken ill. Deciding his end had come, Hari Ram Gupta writes, "at a brief ceremony Maha Singh tied a turban on Ranjit Singh's head with his own hands as a mark of his succession. He left ten year old Ranjit Singh to conduct the siege. He appointed his most trusted companion, Dal Singh Kalianwala his guardian."² Maha Singh was evacuated from the field of battle to his fort at Gujranwala where he expired after a few days in April 1790.³

1. To Maha Singh the ascendancy over Bhangi confederacy was so paramount that he disregarded the fact that his sister was married to Sahib Singh.

2. Hari Ram Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Vol IV, 1982, p.313

3. Ibid, foot note quoting Persian Akhbarat and Marathi records Hari Ram Gupta confirms Maha Singh's death in 1790.

Muhammad Latif commenting on the period when Maha Singh consolidated his Misl, has observed that, "So distracted was the state of the country, so small the influence of the Gurumatta or national assembly, and so rife was intrigue among the ambitious chiefs, that everything favoured the adventurous spirit and ambitious design of the young Maha Singh.¹ He could have if he (Mahan Singh) had lived ten years longer, possibly become the strongest Sikh chief of the whole of northern India²

James Browne in 1787 estimated the military strength of Mahan Singh at 15,000 horse and 5000 foot in the Rachna Doab, and about 5000 horse and foot in the Chaj and Sind Sagar Doabs. Imam-ud-din Husaini wrote in 1796 that Mahan Singh commanded about 22,000 horse and foot.³

Mahan Singh's marriage into the Jind family had given him an opportunity to see the way the Phulkian Chiefs were governing. These Phulkia Sardars had given up the feudalistic confederated system of the Sikh Misls of the Majha area. Maha Singh in his life time organised his Misl on the Phulkia pattern. All the chiefs serving under him

1. Muhammad Latif, History of the Punjab reprint 1994, pp. 344-345

2. Hari Ram Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Vol IV, 1982, pp.313-314. Hari Ram Gupta has listed the territories under Sukachakia Misl at the time of death of Maha Singh, in 1970.

Rachna Doab : Akalgarh, Daska, Goidke, Gujranwala, Hafizabad, Jamke, Karyal, Mandiala, Muraliwala, Naushahra, Pasrur, Rangpur, Sandhanwala, Shaikhupura, Sodhra, Tegha Mandiala.

Chaj Doab : Bhera, Jalalpur, Kunjah, Miani, Salt Range.

Sind Sagar Doab : Chakwal, Dhanni, Fatahang, Jehlam, Kot Raja, Kot Sahib Khan, Makhad, Pind Dadan Khan, Pindi Gheb, Pothohar, Sayyidpur.

3. Ibid.

were treated by him not as his equals as was the rule in the Misls, but as his subordinates, they were given fixed salaries with occasional rewards by way of appreciation for some deeds of extraordinary nature. The entire booty, tributes, revenues, rakhis and fines, went into the state treasury and they were not distributed among his officers. "In this way he had set up a petty Kingdom of his own." ¹ He had sown the seed of monarchy. Ranjit Singh inherited this patrimony.

After the death of Maha Singh, the process of unification of Punjab was delayed by crucial ten years and during this period the British advanced from Allahabad to Delhi and so the geopolitical scene in Northern India changed, such that, once the British were at Delhi, they were in a position to interfere with the affairs of Sikh Sardars of the Malwa and influence the young Sukarchakia Sardar Ranjit Singh, to limit his southward domains to the Satluj.

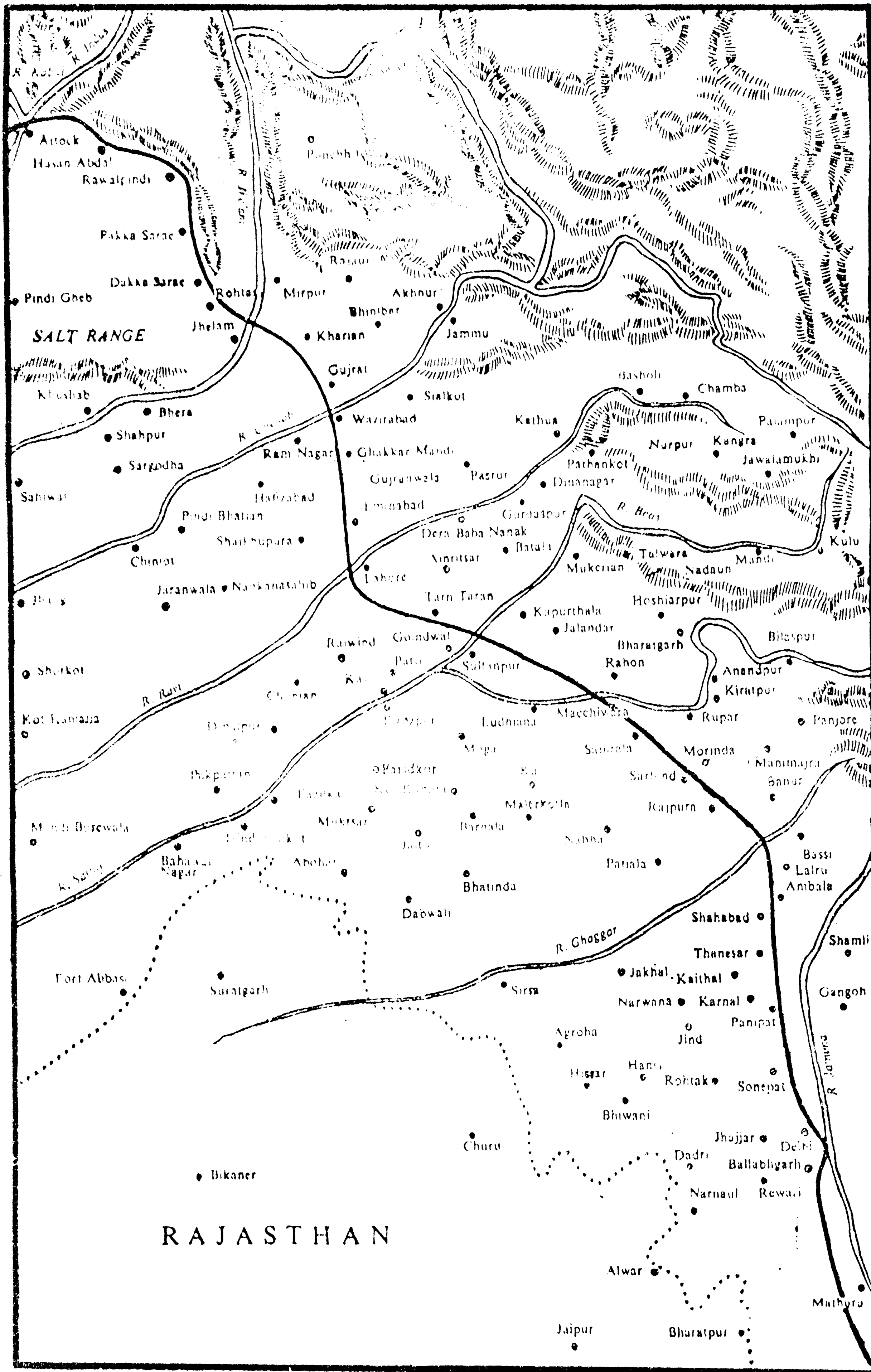
Many scholars have investigated the life and times of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and have also analysed the performance of the Khalsa Army under Ranjit Singh's successors in the Anglo-Sikh wars. But, hardly any work goes deep into the notable campaigns of the Maharaja before 1822, when he had not yet taken any Europeans in his service. It was during this early period of his reign that Ranjit Singh had to fight and subdue a number of chiefs to consolidate his kingdom. He decisively defeated the Afghans, pushing them once for all beyond the Khyber which is now the western

1. HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Vol V, 1991, p.25

frontier of Pakistan. The successes of the Army under Ranjit Singh may be attributed to its motivation and rich inheritance. There were no formal schools of military instructions.

Ranjit Singh continuously reorganised and trained his army for the day when his kingdom might measure swords with the British. Ranjit Singh died in 1839 and the rule of his successors did not last long. However, the Khalsa Army in its many battles with the British stood steadfast and fought valiantly, earning the acclaim even of their adversaries.

INVASION ROUTE FROM THE NORTH WEST



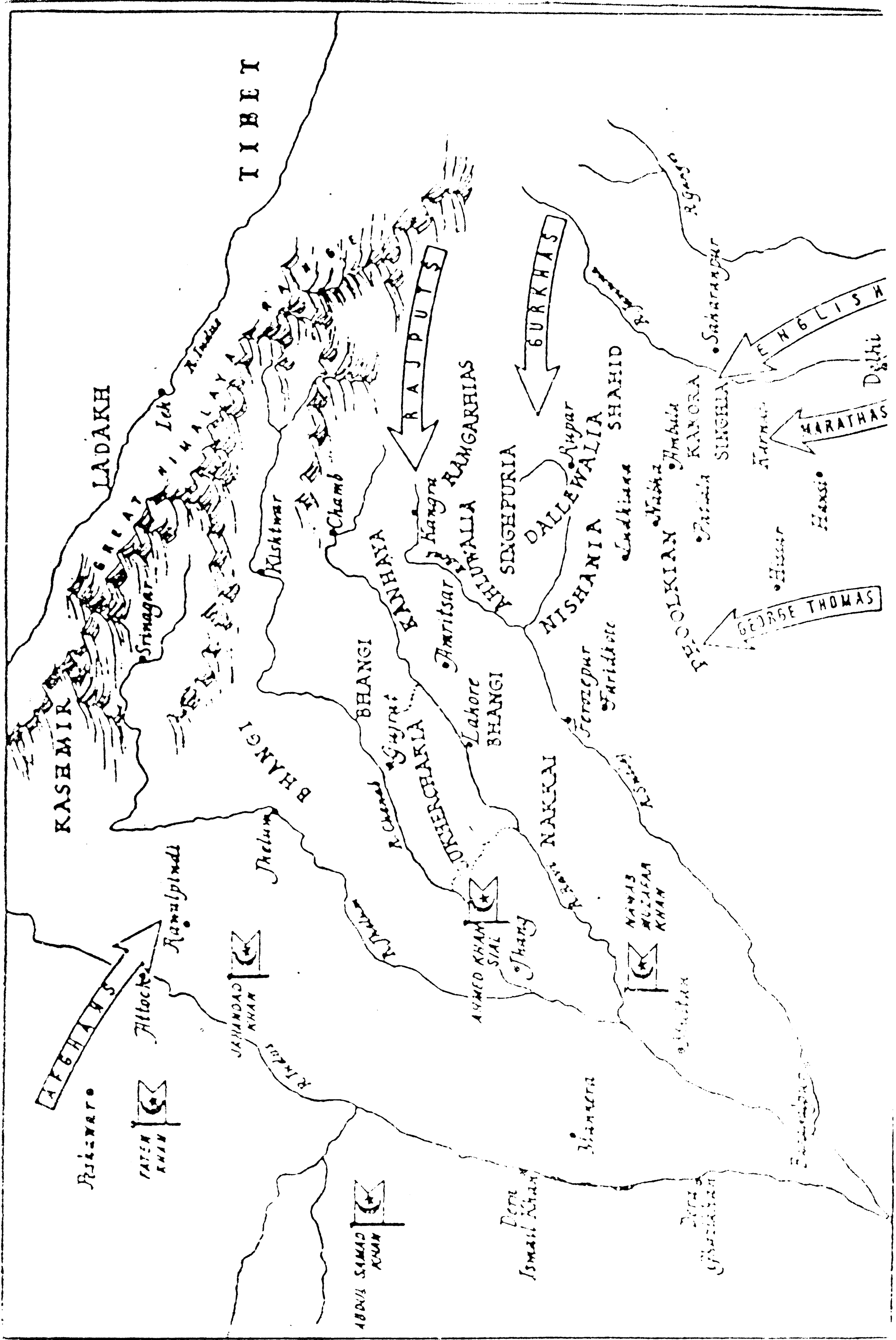
Early Career

1

Punjab at the turn of the century because of invasions from the North-West lasting more than half a century presented a desolate scene. The Sikhs with their spirit of never-say-die, had emerged as the dominant class. There were twelve Sikh Chiefships which had their territories in the plains of the central Punjab and along the foot of the hills extending from environs of Karnal to Jammu. There were a number of hill states such as Mandi, Suket, Basohli, Nurpur, Jaswan etc ruled by the Rajput princes with their strongholds located on the inner range of the Himalayas between Jammu and Lahaul-Spiti. There were a few independent principalities belonging to the Punjabi Mussalmans, who had organised themselves under their tribal leaders. There were the Pathans of Kasur, Chhathas of Rasulnagar, Sials of Jhang, Tiwanas of Shahpur and Bilochs and Awans of Khushab and Sahiwal. Lastly, there were principalities ruled by the Pathan Nawabs on behalf of the ruler of Kabul. These were Multan, Bahawalpur, Dera Ghazi Khan, Mankera and Peshawar, Bannu, Tonk and the uplands of Hazara. These principalities

1. Here Punjab in general encompasses territory from Indus to Jamuna and as regards invasions there is no doubt that the Punjab, had been the victim of foreign invasions. Nadir Shah in 1739 sacked Delhi. In the fourth invasion Ahmad Shah Durrani in 1756 - 57 went beyond Punjab to Delhi, Mathura and Agra and in his fifth invasion 1759 - 61 he went upto Aligarh and Anupshahar on the Ganga. Timur Shah, the son and successor of Ahmad Shah led five expeditions in 1774-75, 1779-80, 1780-81, 1785-86, 1788-89. His activities remained confined to the banks of river Indus, Kashmir, Multan, Bahawalpur and Sind. The last Durrani who invaded, before Ranjit Singh put a stop to it, was Shah Zaman, the son and successor of Timur Shah, he entered India four times, in 1793-94, he toured along the river Indus. The second time in 1795-96, the Shah halted at Hasan Abdal, while his troops captured Rohtas. In the third invasion in 1796-97 he sieged Lahore and advanced to Amritsar where he was defeated by the Sikhs. In the last in 1798-99, he returned to Kabul from Lahore.

PUNJAB IN THE LAST DECADE OF EIGHTEENTH CENTURY



formed a powerful group which for all practical purposes had over a period of time become independent of any external control.

To bring together and form a united political union of all the above parochial chiefs or at least get them to form a defensive military alliance against outside invasions into Punjab was then inconceivable. Strife amongst neighbours was the order of the day. Even the Sikh Sardars were freely indulging in internecine warfare.

Each of the Sikh Chiefship was an independent political entity. "It owed no allegiance to any superior authority. Nor was there any central organisation which exercised any effective control over these chieftains. The only body to which they owed allegiance (as every other Sikh did) was the Sarbat Khalsa or the Panthic whole."¹ The Afghan danger was apparently the only reason which gave the Sikh chiefs a common cause to co-operate. On the death of Abdali, the external danger no longer remained so pressing, and the Sikh chiefs became concerned with increasing their individual resources and influence. This increase perforce had to be at the cost of their neighbour.²

1. Sita Ram Kohli, Foreword to Umdat-Ut-Twarikh Daftar III, translation from Persian to English by VS SURI, 1961, pp IX-X.

2. George Forster, A Journey from Bengal to England, Vol I, reprint 1970, p.340. He observes that about this period, in Punjab : the unwritten theocratic commonwealth of the Khalsa changed into feudal chiefships. It was then only a matter of time for the stronger amongst them to establish a monarchy.

In 1790, after death of his father Maha Singh¹, when the leadership of the Shukarchakia Misl devolved on the young shoulders of Ranjit Singh, he was not yet 10 years old. Ranjit Singh liked equestrian sport, sword and spear, wrestling and shooting², and showed no interest in reading or writing. The affairs of the Misl were perforce managed by Raj Kanwar, mother of Ranjit Singh. The 24 year old mother was assisted by two trusted officers of her late husband, Diwan Lakhat Rai Khatri of Naushehra was responsible for administrative duties, revenue collection and realisation of tribute; Missar Laiq Ram looked after the household affairs. The overall authority was exercised by Dal Singh, Chief of Akalgarh, who was maternal uncle of late Maha Singh.³ In 1786, Ranjit Singh was married to Mehtab Kaur of Kanaihya Misl. His mother-in-law Sada Kaur, wife of late Gurbaksh Singh Kanaihya, was an ambitious lady. She conspired with Dal Singh and the two got Ranjit Singh to take over the reins of Shukarchakia Misl at an early age.

Afghans after Abdali had not given up their desire for the riches of Delhi. Following the death of Timur Shah, his son and successor Shah Zaman marched into Punjab. The first time, in December 1793 he returned to Kabul after travelling along the Western bank of river Indus. In the second incur-

1. HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Vol V, 1991, p.9. However, JD Cunningham in History of the Sikhs, reprint 1990, p.107 has given date of death of Maha Singh as early 1792.

2. Ibid, p.8, Captain Wade, the British political agent at Ludhiana recorded on 31 May 1831, Ranjit Singh's statement that he had fired 20,000 bullets left by his father in store at Gujranwala, for practice on targets at the age of 10 or 11.

3. Ibid.

sion, Shah Zaman crossed Indus at Attock by a bridge of boats and set up his headquarters at Hasan Abdal, 127 Kms from Peshawar. Another 117 kms farther down the road on the west of Jhelum was the fort of Rohtas held by Ranjit Singh's men. Ranjit Singh avoiding an open conflict, and in keeping with his plans vacated Rohtas. Here, the Afghan General Ahmad Khan Shahanchibashi was soon joined by Ghakkars, the Jats and other Punjab Mussalman tribes.¹ In the meantime Shah Zaman received information of an insurrection raised by his step brother Mahmud at Herat and the invasion of west Afghanistan by the king of Iran. Faced with such news Shah Zaman gave up his invasion plans and returned to Peshawar.

Before returning home Shah Zaman appointed Shahanchibashi Governor of Rohtas fort and despatched Bahadur Khan at the head of a force 12,000 strong, to conquer Gujrat. This was Sahib Singh's territory and he opposed him. In the course of fighting a ball struck Bahadur Khan and he was killed. The Afghans were defeated and many of them were slain. Ranjit Singh in the meantime had reached Gujrat, the two Sardars then advanced to recover Rohtas. On their approach Shahanchibashi withdrew to Peshawar. Ranjit Singh then occupied Rohtas, Pothohar and Gheba country.²

1. Muhammad Latif, History of Punjab, reprint 1994, p.301

2. HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Vol IV, 1982, p.463

In the middle of 1796, Shah Zaman commenced serious preparations for his third invasion; to him the possible loot riches of Delhi was irresistible.¹ By September troops were collecting in Kabul from all parts of Afghan dominions. The total strength of the Durrani army was about 80,000 horse and foot, sixty three pieces of cannon and 700 pieces of camel artillery.² No difficulty was experienced in collecting troops, Shaikh Rahim Ali, the British intelligencer, sent to Kabul, wrote that "the sepoy of this country are ready to march towards Hind without pay merely on the chance of plunder. But the Afghans were afraid of the Sikhs; and they required assurance for their proper protection while passing across the Punjab."³

At the news of Durrani invasion in the offing, the Marathas and the British grew apprehensive. However, the

1. HR Gupta History of the Sikhs, Vol IV, 1982, p 465. HR Gupta has ascribed several objectives to invasions of Shah Zaman, such as, "He wanted to win the glory of rescuing the Mughal Empire from the domination of the Marathas. He wished to retain his overlordship of the Punjab. He was prepared to leave the province with the Sikhs if they could agree to pay him tribute. He desired to replenish his exhausted treasury. Lastly, he intended to marry the daughter of Prince Akbar Shah whom he wanted to be acknowledged the successor to Shah Alam II."

2. The camel artillery called Zamburks were long swivels of one or two pounds ball. Two of them were carried on the back of a camel. When they were to be brought into play, the camel was made to kneel on the ground, and to prevent his rising, each leg was fastened, bent as it was, with a cord. (HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Volume IV, 1982. p 465 and same page foot note 1).

3. Ibid.

1

Governor General expressed confidence in Sikh-arms, but he feared that Shah might negotiate with the Sikh chiefs and pass unmolested through their country. To meet such an eventuality he issued instructions to the Resident at Lucknow to request the Nawab of Oudh to assemble an effective body of troops to join the British army, and to keep a careful watch over the conduct of the Rohilla chief of Rampur who might help the invader, since they were originally his countrymen. The Bengal armies were ordered to assemble near Kanauj and native cavalry and infantry units commanded by British officers were mobilised with orders to assemble at Lucknow. The large force so assembled only over-awed the Nawab of Oudh and forced him to accept a treaty

2

with the East India Company.

1. The Governor General at Calcutta recorded his opinion thus, "The Sikhs though divided are numerous, and if unequal from disunion to oppose a large army of the Abdali, are warlike. A sense of common danger ought naturally to produce a union amongst them, and consequently a formidable opposition to the progress of Zaman Shah, which it was highly probable, would occupy his arms for at least a season, and obviate all apprehension that he would be able to advance beyond the Punjab. (HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Volume IV, 1982, p.466).

2. Bikramajit Hasrat writes, "The vast Mass of Wellesley papers in the British Museum contains a few volumes (MS 37274-75, 37282-84) of the Marquis private correspondence with Henry Dundas, the President of Board of Control, dealing with the early British policy towards the Cis-Satluj region and the Sikhs... (Wellesley to Dundas, 23 Feb, 6 July and 4 December 1798). ...These papers, which include Marquis of Wellesley's despatches to the Board of Control and the court of Director's mostly deal with the so called Afghan threat to India... It is however, clear that Wellesley unduly magnified the threat to assemble the army of Bengal on the frontier of Oudh to force the Nawab Vazier to accept the treaty of 1801 (-to court of Directors WD, i. (No C XXX IV)" (Bikramajit Hasrat, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977, pp-16-17).

The Marathas though strong were disunited and were incapable of fighting against the invader. In January 1797, 'Jagga Baba' a Maratha chief wrote to Palmer (Lieutenant Colonel Palmer Resident with Sindhia) suggesting that, "the English should take their position on the Jamuna beyond Delhi, and thus bar the path of the invader."¹

The Muhammadan Princes of upper India were in regular communication with Shah Zaman and unlike the Sikhs or the English they were urging upon Shah Zaman the necessity of an invasion, assuring him that the Muhammadan world viewed his coming as the deliverer of its people.²

In the face of Shah Zaman's invasion all the Sikhs were not united. Sahib Singh, Raja of Patiala, was favourably disposed to unite his interests with those of the Shah. It was known that he maintained friendly correspondence with the ministers of Shah Zaman. So, the Phulkian Sikhs, headed by Raja of Patiala were indifferent to the call for united efforts made by Majha Sikh Sardars.

Among the Majha Sikhs, Ranjit Singh was definitely opposed to the invader, and it was known that other Trans-Satluj Sikh chiefs would join him in their efforts to defeat Shah Zaman. "The farthest outpost on the north-west was held by Ram Singh at Sarae Kali, Milkha Singh was at Rawalpindi, Mohar Singh at Rohtas, Sahib Singh at Gujrat, Dal Singh at Ahamadabad, Ranjit Singh at Rasulnagar, Lahna

1. HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Volume IV, 1982, p.467.
2. Muhammad Latif, History of the Punjab, reprint 1994, p.301.

Singh in Lahore and Gulab Singh at Amritsar." ¹ Anticipating the invasion the people had started sending their families and valuables to the hills of Jammu, Nurpur, Basohli, Haripur and Kangra.

Shah left Peshawar in November 1796. While the bridge over Indus was under preparation, he sent light raiding parties across the river. The advance guard numbered 12,000 and it was placed under Sher Muhammad Khan. When half of it under Sher Muhammad's son advanced towards Hasan Abdal, it was engaged by Milkha Singh. The engagement lasted a few hours and each side lost about fifty men. The Durrani returned to his camp, and Milkha Singh retired to Rohtas. Ranjit Singh then 16 years old was holding the advance defence line on the Jhelum with 10,000 horse. ² He ordered Rohtas to be vacated. A division of Afghan army clashed with Ranjit Singh and he was forced to withdraw. He took up fresh defences at Miani, where he was soon joined by Milkha Singh and Sahib Singh of Gujrat. Ranjit Singh then crossed the Jhelum and launched a surprise attack on the Durrani contingent at Pind Dadan Khan and immediately recrossed the river. ³ When the Durranni advance-guard crossed the Jhelum and encamped at Kharian, the Sikh chiefs crossed the Chenab and collected their troops on its southern bank. ⁴ After establishing strong posts at Rohtas, and Gujrat as also military posts enroute to protect his lines of communica-

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1. HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Volue IV, 1982, p 468.
 2. Ibid, p.469.
 3. Ibid, p.470.
 4. Ibid.

tion, Shah Zaman reached Eminabad at the end of December 1796 and Lahore in the beginning of January 1797. The Sikhs throughout remained active in his rear, they were expelling his thanedars from various military posts established by him particularly in the area lying between the Jhelum and the Chenab.

At Lahore, Shah Zaman received regular reports of Sikh chiefs rallying at Amritsar and also at Shaikupura 25 kms West of Lahore. On 11 January 1797, a light cavalry detachment was sent to raid Amritsar by the Afghans. It was repulsed by a body of Sikhs in a hand to hand fight with sword and spear. Then Shah himself led a major portion of his Army to Amritsar. "The Sikhs also gathered in a large body numbering about fifty thousand. A desperate battle was the result. It commenced at 8 O'clock in the morning on 12 January. Shah Zaman opened intense fire from the camel artillery while the Sikhs used their matchlocks only. The fight continued unabated till 2 O'clock. About this time the Sikhs realized that they had made no impression on the enemy. They gave a signal for a general charge." ¹ The two armies continued in close combat for nearly four hours, The Afghans finally gave way and were pursued by the Sikhs to the very gates of Lahore. The losses on both sides were heavy. Shah Zaman returned to Lahore at night and next morning passed orders for the repair of the fort and manufacture of arms, ammunition and guns. He summoned chiefs of Kasur and Mir Fatah Ali Khan, the Governor of

1. HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Volume IV, 1982, pp 474 - 475.

Sind. He sent for reinforcements from Muzaffar Khan, Governor of Multan, to come forward with 10,000 horse, 2000 camels and some money. On the following day a contingent of the Afghans sent towards Amritsar to scout for intelligence was attacked by the Sikhs. In the action about 300 men were killed and wounded on either side. The Sikhs continued harassing Shah Zaman by cutting off supplies and waylaying his messengers.

The Sikh chiefs remained in close vicinity of Amritsar. The reports indicated that 7000 well mounted (Khush aspah) Sikh horsemen and 10,000 (Akal Bungia) infantry were in the fort at Amritsar. Ranjit Singh at the head of 9000 troops was stationed a few kilometers north of Amritsar. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia was at Sri Hargobindpur, Gulab Singh Bhangi was at a distance of 30 kilometers. Lahna Singh was on the other side of the Beas. A news letter from Patiala of 17 January 1797 stated that the Sikh horsemen had infested the roads leading from Lahore to Patiala, and they seized and carried off all the 'dak harkaras' bringing news from
1
Lahore.

Regular reports were reaching Shah of Sikhs assembling towards Churian and Pakpattan, as also that 3000 Sikhs were lying encamped near Shaikupura. Shah then directed his forces under local Muslim chiefs, to neutralise these Sikh forces, but these local chiefs were clever enough to misguide the Afghan columns or give early warning to the Sikh Sardars, as the local chiefs though vociferous in claiming loyalty to the Shah, were in fact, afraid of

1. HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Volume IV, 1982, pp 474-475.

retribution of Sikh chiefs as and when the Afghan king retired to Kabul.

Under such continuous pressure from the Sikhs, the Shah's army was getting restless. In addition there was the new attitude of the monarch which they were not too happy to accept; it was his decree that they would not commit loot and plunder. Shah Zaman was wise to realise that he could not reach Delhi with a hostile population in his rear, and because of his orders no outrage was permitted on any individual during the Shah's progress from Peshawar to Lahore. But this policy did not make any impact on the local people as most had already left their homes for the hills and secondly, the local Muslims held Sikhs in some esteem for they did not misbehave the way Afghans or Marathas could.¹ In such an environment, Shah Zaman, when opposed by Sikhs, obviously could not make his own circumstances even more difficult by allowing plunder and ill treatment of the local population. He forbade his Governor of Lahore from demanding tribute and gave orders to put to death only those² Sikhs who appear in arms against them, but spare the rest.

The Sikhs were successfully implementing a coordinated Guerilla plan of battle. Ranjit Singh, the young Sukarchakia chief was most conspicuous for his bold

1. The Sikhs were popular with the local population so much so that whenever there was an invasion, Lahna Singh Sikh chief in Lahore was always recommended by its Muslim population to the Durrani king for good treatment. Shah Zaman on this occasion had sent messengers to Lahna Singh assuring him of the royal favour and retention in the governorship of Lahore. Lahna Singh declined submission on account of hostile attitude of his comrades. (HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Volume IV, 1982, p 471).

2. Ibid.

manoeuvres. The Sikhs were cutting off all the Durrani supplies. Any large or small body of troops venturing out was immediately pounced upon and Durrani's isolated military outposts were relentlessly attacked. Shahs troops were soon discontented and demoralised. They were most unhappy that plunder which was their hereditary activity was also denied to them.

Shah Zaman was still finding ways to tackle the Sikhs, when he received the news of disturbances in Herat. Finding his throne under threat, and hardpressed as he was, he decided to retreat.¹ Thus ended Shah Zaman's third invasion.

On his return journey early in February 1797 at Jhelum, Shah Zaman appointed Ahmad Khan Shahanchibashi his Governor of Rohtas and of the country lying between rivers Jhelum and the Indus. He had with him 7000 troops 100 pieces of camel artillery, four guns and two lakh rupees.² No Governor was appointed or troops left to the east of river Jhelum. Once Shah Zaman departed, the Sikh chiefs immediately began as was their modus operandi, to recover their possessions. Ranjit Singh advanced to capture Rohtas, while Milkha Singh

1. HR Gupta in History of Sikhs, Vol IV, 1982, p.478 is of the view that, "There is no doubt that if Shah Zaman had advanced from Lahore he would have reached the imperial capital. The Trans-Satluj Sikhs would not have gone far in pursuit of the Shah away from their homes. Sahib Singh of Patiala and several others would have submitted and assisted him in his advance. The Marathas were not prepared to impede his progress. They might have molested his retreat, but they should not have checked his entrance into Delhi. The English were ready to oppose him (only) if he had tried to march beyond the imperial capital towards Oudh."

2. HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Volume IV, 1982, p 479.

came to Gujrat and Sahib Singh reached Rawalpindi. Soon, these chiefs in a well coordinated plan engaged Shahanchi-¹ bashi in battle and killed him.

Ranjit Singh during this invasion took the field boldly and withdrew only when the opposition was superior to his means. On reaching Amritsar he joined hands with other chiefs, to fight, to harass, and to cut off the Afghan supplies. The Sikhs were definitely successful for Shah Zaman was forced to give up his plans to reach Delhi. Infact Durrani took council of his nobles and withdrew.

Unlike the Dharwis (highwaymen) of yore, by the close of eighteenth century the soldiers of the Sikh Sardars were more and more to be found amongst those of the village youth, who had learnt riding, wrestling and the use of arms. Since match-locks were only kept by the rich, the youth first learnt the use of swords, spears, bows and arrows as these simple arms were found in everybody's possession. One may notice here that the change in recruitment from Dharwis to village youth, was an indication of a little more settled conditions, under the Sikh Sardars towards the end of the eighteenth century.

1. Shahanchibashi forcibly took a brahmin girl into his harem which raised the anger of the local population. When he was encamped at some distance from Gujrat on the Western bank of river Chenab a large body of Sikh youth roused to battle one Bedi Ram Singh of village Kotli Faqir Chand Bedian in Sialkot district, attacked him. Thus engaged Shahanchibashi was encircled from the west by Ranjit Singh, Sahib Singh and other Sikh Sardars. In the engagement Bedi Ram Singh and Shahanchibashi were killed. The Durrani troops took to flight and crossed Indus. In the pursuit son of Faiz Talab governor of Peshawar and his three principal officers too were killed alongwith nearly 3000 Afghans and about half that number of Sikhs. (HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Volume IV, 1982, p 484).

When Afghans came invading, the people generally vacated their villages, lock, stock and barrel, loading their meagre possessions of cooking utensils on camels and ponies. The old and infirm too were sometime carried on bullock carts. Nearby dense jungles or hills offered them refuge. Thus shedding their families and valuables, the young and the bold then took the field. Each village or a few villages put together made a unit of men, and they chose their Sardar. They knew the local terrain like the back of their hands. They were the Guerilla bands, who according to the enterprise of their leader acted like the fox, nibbling at the vitals of the Afghan invading columns, giving them no rest. Often under more bold and daring leaders they attacked like a pack of lions, assaulting with elan. When their prowess was proved and their confidence had taken roots they dared to reach Amritsar and join big Sardars like Ranjit Singh, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Tara Singh Ghaiba or Sahib Singh Bedi, to take a stand and fight, like they did when they defeated Shah Zaman at Amritsar in a pitched battle on 12 January 1797. Thus Sikhs from protecting their hearth and home graduated to fight pitched battles. These men had a will, a pride and in one hundred years from the creation of the Khalsa (1699), the tables were turned on the invaders from the North-West.

In the winter of 1798 the Sikhs learnt through their Intelligence outposts that Shah Zaman would again invade; and so their chiefs got together at Amritsar on the Diwali day. They invited Sahib Singh of Patiala but he remained loyal to the Afghan monarch and declined the invitation " On the pretence that their plans this year would prove equally

unefficacious like those of last season."¹

Shah Zaman left Kabul early in September 1798 on his fourth invasion and, before October end, his advance guard crossed the Indus at Attock. In the face of the enemy onslaught, the Sikh outpost at Sarae Kali held by Milkha Singh's wife was evacuated.² Milkha Singh himself after two determined engagements with the Mullukia Zamindars at Sarae Kali and Rawalpindi had fallen back 50 kilometers.

The Sikhs continuously harassed the Shah's army on its march to Lahore. Ranjit Singh alongwith other Sikh Sardars attacked Wazir Wafadar Khan somewhere between Gujrat and Wazirabad; in the action Wafadar Khan lost a good number of his troops. There were more attacks launched into the rear of Shah Zaman's army, and his merchant caravans with considerable property were plundered. These attacks forced great caution on the Shah. "He hesitated to march to Delhi leaving the Sikhs behind unsubdued. In his opinion the Sikhs were unequal to a conflict in the open field; but their guerilla attacks could greatly harass and distress his army."³

From Jhelum to Amritsar the country lay deserted. Shah Zaman entered Lahore on 30 November 1798. The Sikhs were successfully repeating their performance of harassment of Shah's army as they had done during his invasion a year earlier. The Shah found himself in a fix for he had no

1. HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Volume IV, 1982, pp. 489-490.

2. Ibid, pp 484

3. Ibid, p 496.

solution to the Sikh problem.

Wazir Wafadar Khan sent a fresh agent Neki Singh to Amritsar. The previous agent, Diwan Atma Ram had returned disappointed, because the Sikh Sardars were averse to placing any confidence in the promises made to them on the part of the Shah.²

Neki Singh on behalf of the Shah presented two pairs of shawls to Ranjit Singh. Neki Singh was given seven bows and seven quivers full of fine arrows for the Shah. The Sikh Sardars advised Neki Singh to prevail upon the Shah to return home. Ghasi Singh on behalf of Sahib Singh and Mohan Singh on behalf of Ranjit Singh were deputed to accompany Neki Singh. While these diplomatic parleys were on, the Sikhs did not lower their guard. It was known that the Sikhs were alert, they kept the saddles on their horses and remained under arms day and night.

Shah Zaman was still at Lahore gathering courage to march to Delhi when the news of trouble in his homeland obliged him to return. The Sikh vakils who had accompanied Neki Singh to Lahore were made convenient hostages by the Shah to protect his rear. They were allowed to go only when the returning Afghans had crossed the Jhelum.³ A force left

1. HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Volume IV, 1982, p.506 writes: "The Sikhs reboulded their efforts to harass the Shah. They organised several foraging parties and despatched them in all directions to cutoff the supplies coming to Lahore. The Shah's camp at the capital was always kept in a state of alarm, as the Sikhs attacked it every night with musketry fire. So terrified were the Durranis that none dared go out against them. A guard of 500 horses was stationed day and night to protect the Ravi bridge."

2. Ibid. pp.505-506.

3. Ibid., p 511.

behind by the Shah to wind up the rear was attacked and made to withdraw even before Shah Zaman had crossed the Khyaber Pass. Some of the guns of Shah which were swept away due to sudden flood in the Jhelum, were subsequently recovered by Ranjit Singh and then to prove his growing credentials these guns were returned to Shah Zaman, on a specific request made by him to Ranjit Singh.¹ This act shows a sign of developing self-confidence in Ranjit Singh. It made him establish a personal rapport with the king of Kabul. Unknown to the world at large, this was also the last Afghan adventure into India for Ranjit Singh had come of age.

As Ranjit Singh was consolidating his position in Punjab and setting his sight on Lahore, momentous changes were taking place in the rest of India. The weak central authority of the Peshwa which was a cause for internecine warfare amongst the Maratha nobility had placed on a platter for the ever vigilant British, a chance to expand into the Western and Central India. Already the British forces had annihilated Tipu Sultan (4 May, 1799). Enslavement of Nizam Ali of Hyderabad had preceded eight months earlier.² And when the rebel Jaswant Rao Holkar claimed the headship of the house of Holkars under the garb of Regent of infant Khande Rao II, he wanted the Peshwa to give public recognition to his claim. But the deceitful Baji Rao

1. HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Volume V, p 19 and same page footnote 1. Hari Ram Gupta writes, that Ranjit Singh could drag out eight guns in the beginning of March, 1799 and he sent them to the Shah at Peshawar. The remaining four guns, one of iron and three of brass, were recovered in 1823, and kept in his own personal arsenal.

2. Jadhunath Sarkar quoting pune residency correspondence (VIII, 159, 163) in Fall of the Mughal Empire, Vol IV, 1992, p.129

followed the oriental policy of procrastination, so that, time may decide in his favour. The result was disastrous. "The last fruit of civil war is the loss of national liberty, and Holkar's triumph made the Peshwa an English Vassal... In one day Sindhia's paramount power and prestige were destroyed beyond repair by Holkar and the Maratha capital and its master Baji Rao the Peshwa lay prostrate before the victor"¹. The Peshwa fled to Konkan, wandered about for some weeks to avoid Holkar's pursuing bands, at last took refuge in an English ship, which landed him at their port of Bassein on 6th December, 1802. Where on 31 December he signed the Treaty of Bassein, by which he acknowledged British over-lordship and the British forces, under the leadership of the future duke of Wellington entered Puna on 20th April 1803. "Thereafter Baji Rao was restored to the throne with British support on 13th May, 1803, exactly like Mir Jafar who had been seated on the 'masnad' of Bengal by Clive on 29th June, 1757."²

The scene at Delhi was no better. Shah Alam II, the Mughal Emperor, on return to Delhi after leaving British protection at Allahabad in 1771, was a prisoner in his own fort under the protection of the Marathas. He was a blind pauper incapable of managing his own affairs, leave alone play any role in the affairs of Hindustan. "The sons and nephews of Shah Alam, being driven to despair by their very niggardly allowances and the utter blankness of their future, one after another broke out of their prison palace in Delhi and escaped to Oudh, the Deccan or Afghanistan. These escapades created at the time some alarm and confusion

1. Jadunath Sarkar, Fall of the Mughal Empire, Vol IV, p 179.

2. Ibid.

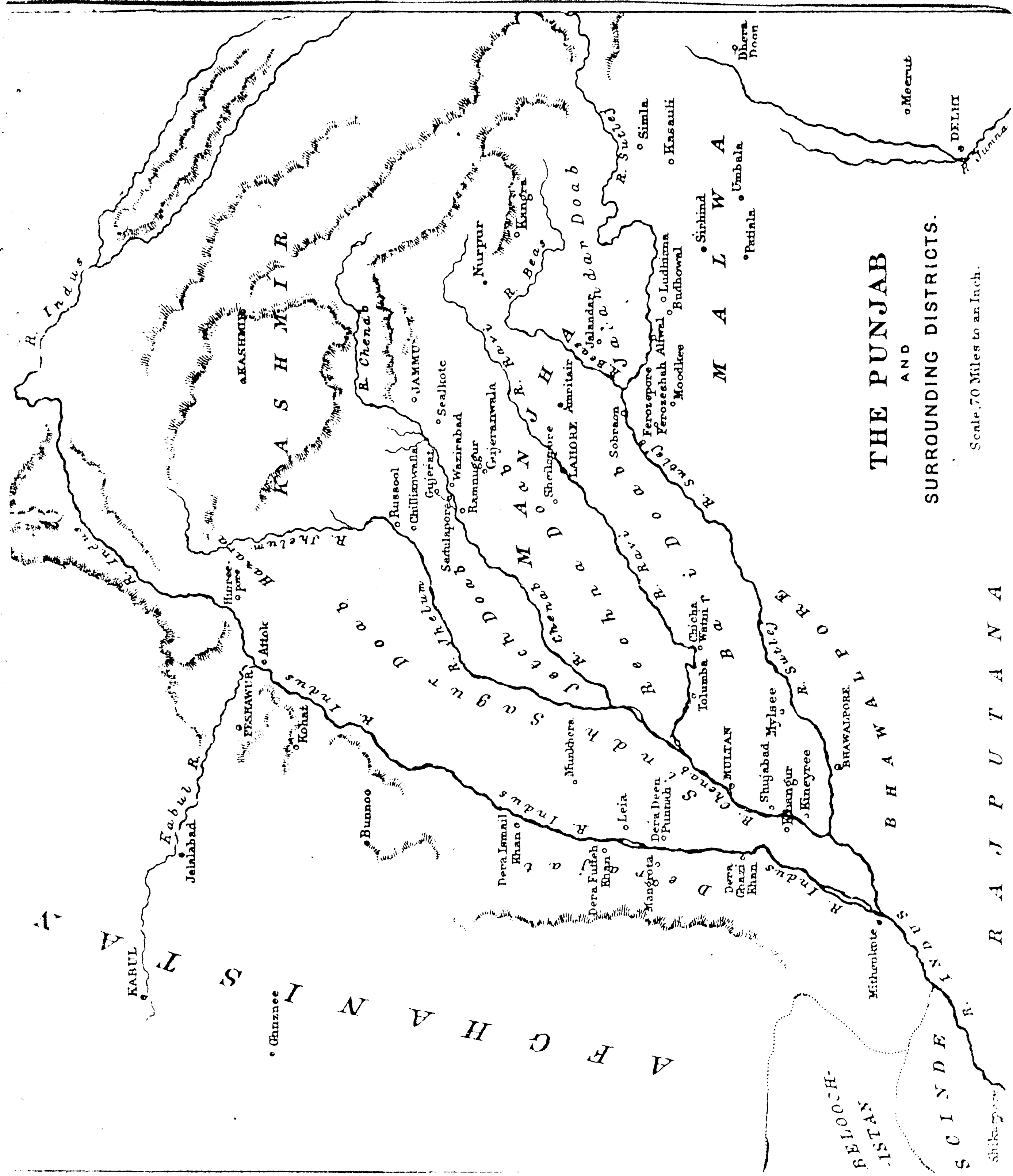
but no real harm came out of them." ¹ The Subehdari of Delhi was entrusted to the Maratha, who placed Perron, a French officer, in command of Sindhia's forces in the North. He discharged the duties of this office through his deputy ² Drugeon, till the time the British defeated Perron and occupied Delhi in 1803. Shah Alam thereafter had become a figurhead living under the protection of British East India Company. Thus in the beginning of nineteenth century, after the British reached Delhi, there was no strong native force which could oppose them except the Sikh Chiefs in Punjab.

During the Shah Zaman's invasion (1796-97) Ranjit Singh had written to Sahib Singh of Patiala to join him against the invader, but Sahib Singh did not even care to reply to this letter. ³ Earlier (in 1795) when Shah Zaman was at Peshawar and preparing to march to Delhi, Ranjit Singh wrote to Shah Nizam-ud-din of Delhi, a staunch friend of the Maratha chief Daulat Rao Sindhia. Nothing had come out of these negotiations either. ⁴

From such unhelpful attitude, the geopolitics of the region must not have escaped the attention of young Shukarchakia chief. From Rohtas to Eminabad which was mostly his domain and his Rakhi Lands it was his people, who everytime suffered the invaders onslaught as he marched to Lahore. He himself must be strong, thought Ranjit Singh, in order to put a stop to all this. It must not have escaped his great mind that since Lahore was the centre of all activity, if he occupied it, it would give him the prestige

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1. Jadhunath Sarkar, Fall of the Mughal Empire, Vol IV, p 88.
 2. Ibid, p.183
 3. HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Volume IV, 1982, p 484.
 4. Ibid, p 462.

and recognition to prevail on other Sardars and thus muster enough strength to defend his domain. Alternatively he could negotiate with the Durrani king and may altogether avoid the march of the Afghans through his lands. Many such considerations must have been debated by the young Sukarchakia Sardar. The next time when Zaman Shah left Lahore Ranjit Singh was ready to occupy it.



**THE PUNJAB
AND
SURROUNDING DISTRICTS.**

Scale, 70 Miles to an Inch.

R A J P U T A N A

BELOOCH-
ISTAN

S C I N D E

CHAPTER IV

UNIFICATION OF PUNJAB

1

Ranjit Singh's resources¹ as recorded between 1793 and 1795 by Ghulam Sarwar, an intelligence agent who travelled through Punjab on orders of the British resident at Lucknow, were verified through Imam-ud-din Hussain, another spy of the British Government who stayed in Punjab between 1796-98. These reports confirmed that though 13 years of age in 1793, Ranjit Singh was the most powerful chief in the Punjab. He dominated large parts of Sind Sagar Doab, Chaj Doab and Rachna Doab, the country lying between the rivers Indus and Ravi. It yielded him an annual revenue of 30 lakhs of rupees.

Amongst many petty forts, Ranjit Singh possessed eighteen large strongholds of note. Some of these were:

Dadan (Pind Dadan Khan), it was mud-built, large, strong and had two guns mounted. Dulloor (Dinpur), located on the borders of Jammu and Sialkot district, it was built of stone, stood on an eminence and was large in size, it had four small guns mounted. Gujranwala, 69 kms North of Lahore, it was made of mud, it mounted eight guns. Its circumference was 3 kms. A few members of Ranjit Singh's family resided in this fort. Kunjah, 12 kms West of Gujrat. It was made of bricks and mounted two guns. Rasulnagar, renamed Ramnagar on the Chenab, it had a strong fort capable of resisting a siege, though it was made of mud, eight guns were mounted on its walls. Its circumference was 3 km. It had four large and three small gateways. Some of the members of Ranjit Singh's family resided there. Sayyidnagar or Sayyid Kasran,

1. HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Vol V, pp.11-13 and 23-24

28 kms from Chakwal in Jhelum district. It was mud-built but strong enough to sustain a siege, four guns were mounted on it, its circumference was about 3 kms. It had two large and two small gateways.

Ranjit Singh at about this time had a force of 1,200 horse and 2000 foot in permanent employment. When on a campaign or involved in a siege, he could raise 11,000 horse and 6000 foot. Ghaus Khan was the Darogha of Topkhana. He commanded 1000 Afghan infantry with six guns. As Ranjit Singh progressed with the unification of Punjab, so did the strength of his army keep on increasing. His ingenuity in building up an army to support his military objectives is the subject of a subsequent chapter.

Ranjit Singh, had realised the damage and destruction which was regularly being caused to Punjab between Jhelum and Lahore. He knew that single handedly he did not have the resources, and a combined effort from all Sikh Sardars to oust Durrani was not forthcoming. He had seen for himself that his request to other chiefs to come forward and join him had fallen on deaf ears. Sardars such as Sahib Singh Bhangi, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Tara Singh Gheba and even Sahib Singh Bedi of Una had failed to respond to his call for a joint attack on the invader. Sada Kaur, mother-in-law of Ranjit Singh had to reproach them for not joining Ranjit Singh.¹

The mutual jealousies and parochialism of the chiefs were such that, though everyone's aim was the same, there

1. HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Volume IV, 1982, p 496.

was no unity for a single concentrated application of force to oust the Afghans. Protection of Amritsar and harassment (Guerilla War) was all they were prepared to do. Under the circumstances, the seed of 'unification by force' must have taken root in Ranjit Singh's young mind. With this clear cut objective, he must have decided there and then to combine all Misls and chiefs under his banner. As a first step, he set his mind to make Lahore the centre of all his activities. In Ranjit Singh's career this was his first military objective of great political significance.

Lahore

Lahore was the centre of geo-politics of Northern India from time immemorial.¹ It was the capital of Lahore Suba of the Mughal rule. In 1757, Emperor of Delhi had ceded the two Subas of Lahore and Sind to Ahmad Shah Abdali. He in turn had appointed his son young Timur Shah as its Governor with his Commander-in-Chief Jahan Khan as actual administrator. The Sikh confederate under Jassa Singh Kalal (Ahluwalia) put in a combined attack and occupied it in 1758. Thereafter, Sikhs vacated or occupied it in accordance with the arrival or departure of the Durrani invasions. After the invasion of 1767 of Ahmad Shah, Sardar Lahna Singh and Sobha Singh reoccupied it until the third invasion of Shah Zaman in 1796-97. Once again, on Shah Zaman's departure Lahna Singh and Sobha Singh re-occupied Lahore in 1799.

1. "Muhammadans point to an eleventh century tomb, near the Purani Taksal or old Mint, as that of the founder of the city. The tomb is sacred to Malak Ayaz, appointed Governor of Lahore after its conquest by Mahmud of Ghazni. The walls of the ancient town are pierced by thirteen gates". [Lt Col HA Newell, I.A.FRGS, Lahore (Capital of the Punjab), Second edition, p.61, (Dr. Ganda Singh collection library, Punjabi University, Patiala)].

Lahore in 1799 was partitioned and ruled by three Bhangi Sardars - Chet Singh, Sahib Singh and Mohar Singh. Their rule was inept and people were groaning under oppressive taxes and extortions. The rulers robbed the people, carousing themselves. The town looked a deserted place, its suburbs were desolate and depopulated. As a result of a quarrel between the Muhammadan Chowdharis and khatriis of the town, the son-in-law of a Chowdhari was framed on charges of conspiracy and sedition. The Bhangi Sardar Chet Singh ordered the accused to be thrown into prison and did not accept any appeal to change his decision. The Chowdharis swore vengeance on Chet Singh and so decided to invite Ranjit Singh and replace the Bhangi misrule.¹

There was one more reason to invite Ranjit Singh. After the return of Zaman Shah news had gained currency that Nizam-ud-Din, the Pathan chief of Kasur was preparing to occupy Lahore. To the people of Lahore he was as much unwelcome as the Bhangi Sardars. Whatever may be their motivation, all the leading citizens of Lahore; Hindu, Muslim and Sikh addressed a petition to Ranjit Singh to

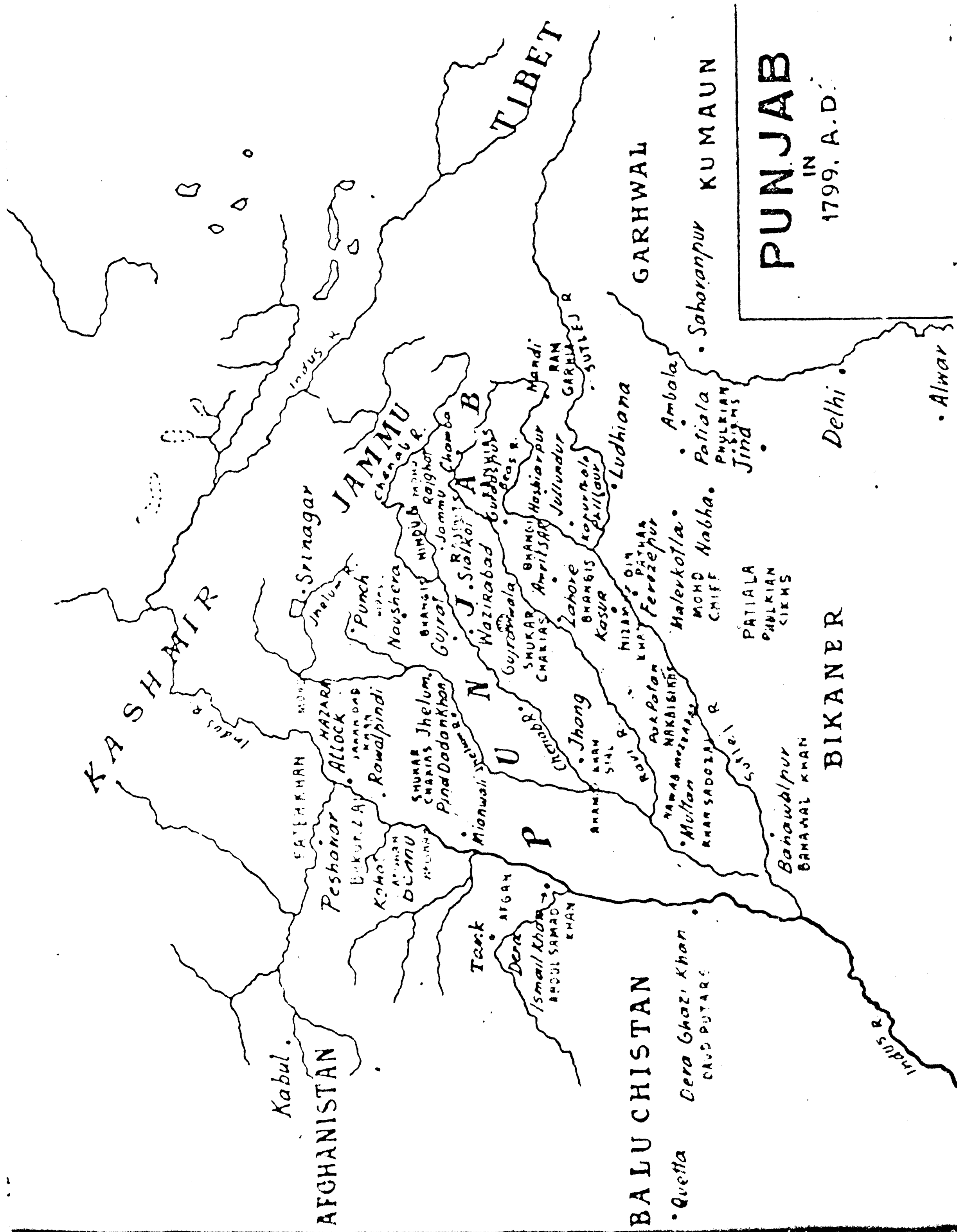
1. Both Ganda Singh and Bikramjit Hasrat are of the view that the story that Ranjit Singh occupied Lahore on the authority of a grant (Nizamat) for services rendered in the recovery and return of a few guns of the Shah is absolutely false. "There is no mention of this incident in the contemporary works of Sohan Lal, Ahmad Shah Batalia, Amarnath and Bute Shah. Even Sultan Mohd, Khan Durrani and Imam-ud-din Hussaini make no mention of it in their Tarikh-i-Sultani and tarikh-i-Ahmed Shah." (Ganda Singh, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, A Life Sketch, 1939, footnote, p.7 and Bikramjit Hasrat, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977, p.38,)

occupy Lahore.¹

A deputation which subsequently met Ranjit Singh promised to open the city gates to him; they only wanted his presence. Ranjit Singh despatched his own agent Kazi Abdul Rahman to Lahore to keep the negotiations going and himself with the combined Kanaihya, Nakai² and Sukarchakia forces marched to Amritsar. To maintain surprise, it was given out that Ranjit Singh was proceeding on his usual visit to Harmandir Sahib. It was usual in those days for a chief to move with a large body of troops. Thereafter, from Amritsar to Lahore Ranjit Singh proceeded in one rapid march, and halted in the 'Baradari' of Nawab Wazir Khan near the tomb of Anarkali.

The Bhangi Sardars who were by then alerted to the imminent attack, decided to oppose the invader. During the Bhangi rule except three gates, the Delhi, Lahori and Roshmai, all the rest were closed with brick walls. Two hundred men who came out to face the attacking troops were easily repulsed. In the meantime, Ranjit Singh received information that conspiring nobles had made a large breach between the Khizri and Yakki gates, for him to enter the city. Ranjit Singh however, suspected treachery and was unwilling to act on the information. He let it be known that his entry would be through a gate. A time was fixed and at the appointed hour with 1000 troops he approached the Lahori gate, while Sada Kaur with larger force made a diversionary attack on the Delhi gate. Chet Singh who was

1. Muhammad Latif, History of the Punjab, reprint 1994, p.349. 2. GL Chopra, The Punjab as a Sovereign State, 1760, p.8



PUNJAB
IN
1799, A.D.

till then personally present at the Lahori gate now fed with the information of the large attack underway at Delhi gate, relocated himself and his troops to checkmate the enemies major attack. The conspirators in his absence opened the Lahori gate to the waiting Ranjit Singh. While Sahib Singh and Mohar Singh escaped, Chet Singh shut himself inside the fort (Hazuri Bagh). Ranjit Singh ordered his troops surrounding the fort to fire a few cannon shells. Finding his situation hopeless, the following day 7 July 1799 Chet Singh¹ surrendered. He was allowed to leave in safety with his family and was granted a respectable Jagir for his maintenance.² Troops were strictly ordered not to plunder or molest the citizens. Ranjit Singh established a Thana and a strong police force for the security of his new possession. He personally assured the people that their rights and property were secure as long as they remained faithful to him. The Lahore campaign was short but the result was a landmark in the history of the Sikhs. "It wiped out the remnant of the once powerful Bhangi Misl, created awe and respect in the minds of the Majha Sardars and provided to Ranjit Singh a historic capital, the possession of which was necessary for prestige and power to any Master of the Punjab. It thus laid the foundation of a sovereign Sikh monarchy in the Punjab".³

1. Muhammad Latif, History of the Punjab, reprint 1994, pp 349-351.

2. Ganda Singh, Maharaja Ranjit Singh A Life Sketch, 1939, p 7.

3. Bikrama Jit Hasrat, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977, p 41.

Shah Zaman who so anxiously wanted to emulate his grandfather, Ahmed Shah Abdali, on learning of the capture of Lahore by Ranjit Singh, realized the futility of his attempts to subdue the Sikhs. By then his own rule in Kabul was threatened by Civil War. Therefore, to have at least the semblance of his authority, he sent a 'Khilat' to Ranjit Singh in August 1799 declaring him as his Governor of Lahore!¹ Ranjit Singh had the grace to return his Ambassador of good will with a 'Khilat' and suitable presents. By the end of the same year, Mir Yusaf Ali Khan, an agent of the East India Company arrived at Lahore with presents for Ranjit Singh, the presents were reciprocated in a befitting manner.² Apparently the British wanted to keep their doors open to the Sikhs, in case a need arose for any future cooperation.

The Nawab of Kasur, Nizam-ud-Din, was disappointed to see Lahore gone out of his hands. He contacted other Sikh chiefs who too were jealous of Ranjit Singh's occupation of Lahore. Together, they entered into a coalition to cut Ranjit Singh to size. Early in 1800, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Gulab Singh Bhangi of Amritsar, Sahib Singh Bhangi

1. This was corroborated by John Collins, British Resident at the Court of Daulat Rao Sindhia (1795-1803) from Fatahgarh on the Ganga. He informed the Governor General, "Zaman Shah is endeavouring to attach to his interests Ranjit Singh, the usurper of Lahore, who has lately received a rich 'Khilat' from the Durrani prince." (HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Volume V, 1991, p 30).

2. Ganda Singh, Maharaja Ranjit Singh A Life Sketch, 1939, p 8.

of Gujrat, Jodh Singh of Wazirabad and Nizam-ud-Din collected a large force at the village of Bhasin, 16 kms from Lahore (almost half way between Lahore and Amritsar). Ranjit Singh immediately marched forward to meet the challenge. The opposing forces were still waiting even after two months, when the sudden death of Gulab Singh broke up the coalition and the clouds of war dispersed without a clash of arms. It, however, forewarned Ranjit Singh on the necessity of pulverising his opponents at the earliest. Same year a son, Kharak Singh was born to Raj Kaur of the Nakai Misl¹ whom Ranjit Singh had married in 1797.

On 12 April 1801, on the day of the Baisakhi, Ranjit² Singh was crowned as the Maharaja of Lahore. The Coronation proclaimed the investiture of sovereignty in the 'Sarkar Khalsa', a servant of the commonwealth of Guru Gobind Singh. He did not wear a crown or adopt any ostentations in

1. Ibid, p 50. However, HR Gupta has recorded the date of birth of Kharak Singh in 1802 (HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Vol V, p 53 refers)

2. While Bikrama Jit Hasrat, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977, p 42 and Ganda Singh, Maharaja Ranjit Singh A Life Sketch, 1939, p.8, state the fact of coronation of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. HR Gupta, in History of the Sikhs, Vol v, 1991, pp.31-32 disagrees and he writes, "We have not found any mention of Ranjit Singh's coronation in any contemporary Persian work or in the records of the Punjab State Archives, Lahore and Patiala or the National Archives of India, New Delhi. In the first Anglo Sikh Treaty of 01 January, 1806 Ranjit Singh is called "Sardar". In the treaty of Amritsar, 1809, Ranjit Singh is called "Raja" of Lahore." In the Indus navigation treaty of 1832 Ranjit Singh is called "His Highness The Maharaja Ranjit Singh the ruler of the Punjab." Continuing further HR Gupta states "Ranjit Singh held a Darbar in 1801, attended by all his feudatories, Munshis and Maulvis. At this formal gathering Ranjit Singh proclaimed the assumption of the title of "Sarkar." There is therefore no doubt that Ranjit Singh held a Durbar and was proclaimed the chief of the chiefs, call it "Sarkar Khalsaji" as he popularly liked to be called or coronation and the title of "Maharaja" is only a play of words.

personal dress. The new coins which the mint at Lahore produced did not have his effigy or his name. They were in silver and were called Nanak Shahi Rupee.¹

He then organised the administration. He nominated people, and assigned them the offices of government. Charities were established. Orders for the repair of the Lahore fort were given. He did not interfere with the Muslim public and private law. Courts presided over by the Qazi and the Mufti were allowed to continue. Prominent citizens of the localities were designated 'Chaudhris', responsible for the maintenance of law and peace in their areas.

He instituted measures for the collection of revenue and taxation. "The old system of the taluka or village incharge of a Qanungo, a Chaudhari, a Muqqadm, so well established in the Punjab for centuries, was continued."² "No uniform method of land assessment was enforced; rather rules for collection based on prevalent customs and practices of the region were adopted. These measures, however, were neither reforms nor innovations, but customary adoptions of a benevolent ruler to save their subjects from the extortionate demands of the petty revenue officials."³

1. The rupee and paisa were called Nanak-Shahi. They bore the old inscription of earlier Sikh rupee
 Deg-o-Teg-o-Fateh nusrat be darang
 Yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh
 Kettle (Symbol of the means to feed the poor),
 Sword (symbol of the power to protect the weak and helpless),

Victory and unhesitating patronage have been obtained from Nanak - Guru Gobind Singh.

2. For detailed analysis of Revenue administration : Units and Functionaries please see Indu Banga, Agrarian System of the Sikhs, 1978, pp 63-87.

3. Bikrama Jit Hasrat, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977, p 43.

Ranjit Singh thus got the system going thereby bringing a sense of well being and security amongst the people. Ranjit Singh was conscious of the fact that he must unite and consolidate the Sikh chiefs with him, to enhance his military strength,¹ before he could wage the battles for the supremacy over the numerous Muslim and Rajput principalities in the hills and plains of Punjab. It is in the consolidation of the Misls that the practical genius and great military acumen of Ranjit Singh stand out, for he continuously increased his military strength and simultaneously attempted only the possible.²

1. The vanquished chiefs and their trained troops had joined Ranjit Singh's army en bloc. Sita Ram Kohli observes, "It was with the aid of these soldiers of the old Dal Khalsa that he (Ranjit Singh) eventually succeeded in subduing the Muhammadan chiefships of the Central and Western Punjab". (Sita Ram Kohli, Foreword to *Umdat-ul-Tawarikh*, Daftar III, translation from Persian into English by VS Suri, 1961, p.xii).

2. "Ambitious - highly ambitious - as the Maharaja Ranjit Singh was, he was a realist as well. His ability to accurately judge the means he possessed, to encompass an end so never to lose sight of his limitations, made it possible for him to keep a tight rein upon his ambition. Without that corrective his vision splendid might easily have betrayed him into adventures that may have hurtled him from the crest of conquest into the abyss of defeat." [Nihal Singh in foreword to *Maharaja Ranjit Singh (Souvenir on the first century of his death)*, reprint 1970, pp.ix-x.

Misls

The campaign for consolidation of Misls was long and it was generally won through diplomacy and show of force. There were no battles of military significance. There were a few sieges of forts, the headquarters of Misl chiefs. They too invariably capitulated in the face of Ranjit Singh's superior force and his policy of allocation of suitable Jagirs to the displaced heads of the Misls, with the prospects of absorption of their troops in his army. Thus by the time Ranjit Singh finished with the Misls, they had lost their identity without loss of respect.

The invasions of Shah Zaman had made Ranjit Singh understand the strength and weakness of other Misldars and the precarious position in which their commonwealth had sunk. He was quick to realise the importance of uniting in order to defeat any external enemy, in the East, the British were advancing and as subsequent events show they reached Delhi in 1803. In the North the Rajput Chiefs were well entrenched in the hill states all along the lower Himalayas from Jammu to Kangra; they were not a serious threat but they were no friends either. In the West and South the Sikhs were cordoned by two rows of Muslim principalities who had no sympathy for the Khalsa; infact, they were holding onto the apron strings of the Kabul regime. The inner row formed a curve beginning from Jhelum and passing through Shahpur, Sahiwal, Jhang and Pakpattan, it ended at Kasur, close to Lahore itself. The outer row comprised Kashmir, Hazara, Peshawar, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, Mankera, Dera Gazi Khan, Multan and Bahawalpur. The 'Khalsa' of the Misls under Ranjit Singh's ancestors and other Misl chiefs, all had together wrested the political power in the region from

the Mughals and Afghans through considerable sacrifice. But would they be able to maintain this power equation for long was the question, particularly when each was fighting with the other. "It was the political sagacity of the young chief of the Sukarchakia Misl which had fully perceived the delicacy of the situation,"¹ and his answer was that all 'Misls' must unite. Ranjit Singh like all men of destiny took the initiative in his own hands. For young Ranjit Singh, it was a mighty task. However, Sita Ram Kohli says, "Ranjit Singh was proceeding according to a systematic plan."²

Unification of Misls had to precede the unification of Punjab and with Ranjit Singh it began by early matrimonial alliances. He was betrothed to Mahtab Kaur in 1786, which soon united the two powerful Sukarchakia and Kanaihya Misls.³ His mother-in-law Sada Kaur was already a widow. Her husband Gurbakhsh Singh was the son of Jai Singh, founder of the Kanaihya Misl. She lost her husband in 1785, and father-in-law in 1793. She became the head of the Misl. Her territory included Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur, Atalgarh, Dasuya, Mukerian and Batala. Her only child, Mahtab Kaur was married to Ranjit Singh. After the death of her father-in-law Jai Singh Kanaihya, she had gained the headship of

1. Sitaram Kohli, Foreword to Umdat-Ut-Tawarikh, Daftar III, translation from Persian to English by VS SURI a chronicle of the daily diary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's reign, 1961, p.XII. Here-in Sitaram Kohli has raised the same question, He writes, "how long could the Khalsa maintain the political power which their ancestors had wrested from the feeble hands of the Mughals and had later saved it, at considerable sacrifice, from going into the clutches of the Afghans of Kabul ?

2. Ibid.

3. With Kanaihya Misl there was one more important matrimonial alliance made in 1812 when Chand Kaur, daughter of Jaimal Singh Kanaihya, and princess Sahib Kaur of Patiala was married to Prince Kharak Singh, son of Ranjit Singh. That, notwithstanding when in the same year Jaimal Singh died, his property and possessions were annexed to Lahore. The Kanaihya fort of Pathankot was seized earlier in 1809.

the Kanaihya Misl¹. Her guidance to Sukarchakia and Kanaihya Misls at the crucial stage of Ranjit Singh's growing up and particularly when Punjab was going through Shah Zaman's invasions is indeed commendable. In 1797 Ranjit Singh married Raj Kaur daughter of Khazan Singh the Nakai chief. Thereafter, troops of Nakai Misl too formed part of Ranjit Singh's forces. Their support was material in Ranjit Singh's capture of Lahore and subsequent march against the coalition assembled at Bhasin.

In the process of consolidation of other Sikh chiefs Ranjit Singh did not hesitate to use force. But, where ever possible, he preferred their subordination by stratagem and even false oath.

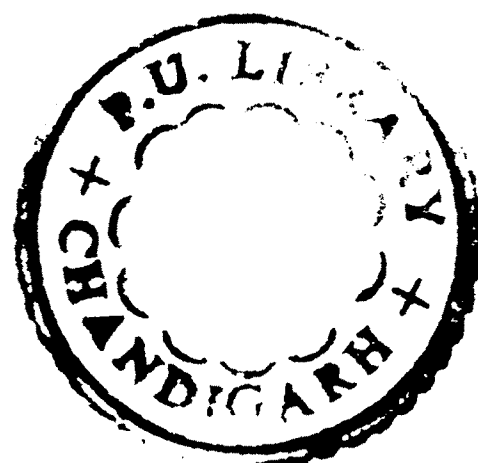
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Nakai Misl

The possessions of Nakai Misl were South-West of Lahore. In 1803 Ranjit Singh seized all the territories of Bhagwan Singh, brother of Raj Kaur, and the remainder territories of the Nakai Misl were taken possession of in 1810-11, with it the Nakai Misl was liquidated, irrespective of the fact that Ranjit Singh had married Raj Kaur, daughter of Sardar Khazan Singh of the Nakai family in 1797.

1. When Jai Singh Kanaihya, head of the Misl, died in 1793, the territories of the Misl were first divided into two parts, one half went to Sada Kaur his daughter-in-law, and the other half to two sons of Jai Singh by another wife, Nidhan Singh and Bhag Singh. The two brothers further subdivided their estates. (HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, volume V, 1991, p 49 refers).

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Ahluwalia Misl

The territories of the Ahluwalia Misl lay in the lower Jalandhar Doab, and in the Cis-Satluj districts of Ambala, Ludhiana, Ferozepur and in a small tract of the Bari Doab. Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, a relative of legendary Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, succeeded to the headship of the Ahluwalia Misl at Kapurthala in 1801. Territorially, militarily and financially he was in no way inferior to Ranjit Singh.

Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh met at Tarn Taran. There in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib they exchanged turbans and swore to become 'brothers'. Then they formed an alliance, offensive and defensive which included three conditions. Firstly, that the enemy of the one would be considered as enemy of the other. Secondly, in the course of their meetings in each other's territory they will not claim any expenses from each other. Thirdly, if they jointly conquered any territory, suitable jagir from the same would be given to Fateh Singh¹.

Soon after Fateh Singh attacked and secured estates and property from a few of his refractory misldars including Mehar Singh son-in-law of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia who had consolidated their power and become independent of Ahluwalia chief.² Fateh Singh's interest in joining Ranjit Singh was

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1. Bhagat Singh A History of Sikh Misls, 1993, p 75.
 2. Bhagat Singh in A History of Sikh Misls, 1993, pp 70-71, writes Jassa Singh Ahluwalia had no male child. He had two daughters one married to Mehar Singh and the other to Mohar Singh. His wife had recommended that he nominate one of his sons-in-law to succeed him but he did not agree as he did not find the necessary qualities of a ruler in any of them. Bhag Singh was a close relative of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia he had been shouldering most of the burden of the administrative affairs of the state. After Jassa Singh's death in 1783 the Sikhs assembled at Kapurthala on condolence of Jassa Singh and desired that late Sardar's elder son-in-law be appointed the Chief. But Jai Singh Kanaihya who was friendly to Jassa Singh's cousin Bhag Singh (born in 1747), managed to get the latter appointed as the next ruler of the Ahluwalia Misl. Fateh Singh was son of Bhag Singh.

to elevate himself equal to the Chief of Lahore, to subdue his enemies with combined forces, to recover some of his lost territories and perhaps to gain some new ones out of those won by his brother by exchange of turbans¹. In this endeavour Fateh Singh succeeded no doubt but Ranjit Singh's gain was much more. With their combined forces Ranjit Singh captured Pindi Bhattian and Dhani across the Jhelum and Chiniot close to the East bank of river Chenab.

Bhangi Misl

Having secured his power in Lahore Ranjit Singh was keen to occupy Amritsar, a possession of the Bhangi Misl. If Lahore was the political capital, Amritsar was the religious capital and it had religious sanctity amongst the Sikhs. It was the chief trading centre of Northern India where caravans brought goods from Central Asia and exchanged them for the products of Hindustan. In its narrow, winding streets were business houses trading in all conceivable kind of goods; silks, muslins, spices, tea, hides, matchlocks and other armaments. Because of the wealthy merchants, subsidiary trades such as those of gold and silver smiths too were flourishing. There were a number of localities belonging to families of note of different Sardars and Chiefs. Each had his own fortified area and a retinue of armed tax collectors.

Gulab Singh Bhangi of Amritsar had at one time brought Kasur under submission and had levied tribute. He possessed the famous Zamzama gun. He died in 1800, leaving behind his widow Mai Sukhan and a 10 year old son Gurdit Singh. Ranjit Singh demanded from Mai Sukhan the Zamzama gun, laying claim that it belonged to him. His claim was rejected and so in

1. HR Gupta in History of the Sikhs, vol IV, 1982, p 46.

December 1802 Ranjit Singh alongwith Kanaihya and Ahluwalia¹ troops laid siege to the Bhangi fort in Amritsar. Sukhan and her son escaped and took refuge in Jassa Singh Ramgarhia's fort. Her territories and entire property were seized by Ranjit Singh. Gurdit Singh was given a jagir of five wells. Bhangi Fort at Amritsar called Quila Bhangian, was a valuable acquisition from which Ranjit Singh acquired five big cannons including the Zamzama gun. Also Akali (Nihang) Phula Singh whose headquarters were at Amritsar (Akal Bunga)² joined Ranjit Singh's force. "Akalis were a military brotherhood who are considered as the peculiar defenders of the Temple and the Faith."³ Phula Singh had helped Ranjit

1. NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975, p 16. He writes, "There is some difference of opinion about the date of the conquest, of the great Bhangi stronghold, Amritsar. Sohan Lal's date is February 1805. The sequence of events which led to the conquest of the Bhangian fort is, however, clear".

2. Nihangs were suicide squads of the Mughal army and wore blue uniforms. The Sikhs took the name and the uniform from the Mughals. The order is said to have been founded by one of the elder sons of Guru Gobind Singh. The Nihangs were also known as Akalis (servants of Timeless God). Phula Singh was born in 1761. He joined an order of Nihangs at early age and became the leader of a fanatic band of fighters who formed the suicide squads of the Sikh armies. Ranjit Singh owed many of his victories to the desperate valour of the Nihangs of whom two, Phula Singh and Sadhu Singh are most frequently mentioned. They were well known for their devil may care attitude and their freedom in speaking their minds even to Ranjit Singh. Akali Phula Singh was killed in the battle of Naushera (Pir Sabak) in March 1822. (Khushwant Singh, A History of the Sikhs, Vol I, reprint 1981, p 207, footnote 11 and p 215 footnote 9 refers).

3. Kiernan writes, "Any person is admitted into this Brotherhood, who feels an inclination to join it. No qualification is necessary, but a sanguinary disposition, and any reinforcement to the body, from any religion, or any caste, is equally acceptable." (Victor G Kiernan, MA, Metcalfes Mission to Lahore (1808-1809) Punjab Government Record Office, Monograph No 21, reprint 1988, p 101).

Singh in getting possession of the Bhangi Fort. The fort was rebuilt by 1808-09 and became the treasury of cash and valuable articles. About 2000 soldiers always guarded it. Imam-ud-din brother of Faqir Aziz-uddin was appointed its first Commandant. Ranjit Singh subsequently made a grant for the Harimandir Gurudwara for it to be rebuilt in marble and covered with gold leaf.¹

The occupation of Amriitsar after Lahore virtually eliminated the Bhangi Misl. However, Sahib Singh Bhangi of Gujrat was still active. His territory yielded 13 lakhs annually. He owned 12 forts. He was married to the sister of Ranjit Singh's father. He had made an alliance with Dal Singh of Akalgarh, and Jodh Singh Bhangi of Wazirabad. Ranjit Singh had previously confronted these chiefs in 1799-1800 and warned them not to interfere with him.

Jodh Singh Bhangi was Sahib Singh's son-in-law. He possessed Wazirabad and 500 villages around it. He was married to the daughter of Sahib Singh Bhangi of Gujrat. In 1802 he was called to Lahore on a friendly visit. But he was alert to Ranjit Singh's designs on Wazirabad and hence the safety of his person. On arrival he was received with great affection. He had 25 attendants with him. He attended the durbar daily in the Saman Burj while his men waited outside. Ranjit Singh one day gave a secret signal

1. The Gurudwara was re-built during the period of the Sikh Misls. It was destroyed by the Afghans more than once, and was finally built in its present form in marble and gold by Ranjit Singh. The entrance to the central shrine bears an inscription to this effect. The inscription states: "The great Guru in His wisdom looked upon Maharaja Ranjit Singh as his chief servitor and Sikh, and in His benevolence, bestowed on him the privilege of serving."

to his men kept in hiding to make Jodh Singh a prisoner. Jodh Singh was quick to realise the danger and with his back to the wall, he got his sword out and challenged the men closing on him with a full throated voice: "Come on, you will never be able to capture me alive. I have not learnt to turn my back on an enemy". Such courage in full durbar deeply impressed Ranjit Singh. He rebuked his men and sent Jodh Singh back with rich presents and additional jagirs ¹.

In 1809 when Jodh Singh passed away Ranjit Singh immediately reached Wazirabad to confiscate his lands and property. Sahib Singh Bhangi opposed Ranjit Singh, but he was defeated. Ranjit Singh then confiscated all of Sahib Singh's property and territory granting in lieu a Jagir of four villages ². Sahib Singh died in a couple of months.

Sahib Singh's son was already granted a jagir and he was with Ranjit Singh. Jodh Singh's son Ganda Singh too was given a few villages for subsistence ³.

The chief of Rawalpindi ⁴, Milkha Singh Thepurie (Pindiwala) was another Bhangi Sardar. He was prominent in the region between the Indus and the Jhelum. His wife supervised the area between Attock and Hasan Abdal. He maintained cordial relation with Ranjit Singh. Rawalpindi served as a centre for trade between Afghanistan, Central

1. HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, vol V, 1991, p 46.

2. HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, vol V, 1991, p 47. Sahib Singh's two wives, Daya Kaur and Ratan Kaur, known for their charm and beauty, were added into Ranjit Singh's harem. Daya Kaur became the mother of Kashmira Singh and Peshaura Singh. While Ratan Kaur of Multana Singh.

3. *ibid.*

4. Rawalpindi is 290 kms from Lahore on the road to Peshawar.

Asia, Kashmir and Punjab. On Milkha Singh's death in 1804, his son Jiwan Singh along with his troops joined Ranjit Singh. He took part in the Kashmir campaign. When Jiwan Singh died in 1815, Ranjit Singh annexed his territory and incorporated his troops in the Lahore army and they were called Dera Pindiwala. Some of the other Bhangi Sardars absorbed by Ranjit Singh were Jassa Singh Bhangi of Chiniot, whose territory lay along River Chenab, Budh Singh Bhangi of Doda in Shakargarh taluka of Sialkot district and Karam Singh Bhangi of Jassarwal in Sialkot district.

Dallewalia Misl

The Dallewalia chief, Tara Singh Gheiba (1710-1807) held considerable territory on both sides of river Satluj. In the Jalandhar Doab he owned Nakodar, Dakhni, Nawanshahar Doaba, Phillaur and Rahon. Ranjit Singh captured the parganahs of Ghungrana and Baddowal from one of his sons in 1806. Subsequently, the Dallewalia chief in spite of being 97 years of age joined Ranjit Singh and fought in the battle for Naraingarh in 1807. He was wounded in the battle and died on his way back home. Ranjit Singh sent his troops to seize the late chief's Fort of Rahon and property but the widow put up a good resistance. Ranjit Singh ultimately prevailed and annexed all Dallewalia property and territory. It is said that the cash alone was over a crore rupees¹.

Singpuria Misl

The Singpuria sometimes called Faizullah-puria Misl, had its territories on both sides of river Beas including

1. HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, vol V, 1991, p 48.

1

the town of Patti¹, all were captured and Budh Singh who had succeeded to the headship of this misl in 1794, served under Ranjit Singh in the campaign for Kasur, Jhang and Multan. However, Jalandhar the headquarters of Singhpuria Misl was finally annexed in 1811 and Budh Singh was given a small jagir.

Karorasinghia Misl

The territories of Baghel Singh Karorasinghia were on both sides of river Beas, Satluj and Jamuna. On his death in 1805, his parganahs of Sirhalli, Sabraon and Tarn Taran were annexed. Next year the possessions of the three wives of Baghel Singh : Haryana near Hoshiarpur of first wife, Chhalondi in Karnal district of the second wife, and Kalaur in the same district of his third wife were annexed. Ranjit Singh left just one village as jagir for subsistence with each of the ladies.

Ramgarhia Misl

Jassa Singh Ramgarhia (1813-1903) had his territories between the Beas and Sutlej. He had once been the active member of the coalition called by Maha Singh to defeat Jai Singh Kanaihya. He had lately partitioned his territories amongst his son and nephews. He died because of old age in April 1803. His son Jodh Singh found it convenient to enter Ranjit Singh's service. In 1808 Ranjit Singh occupied all the possessions of the two nephews Bir Singh and Diwan Singh². Jodh Singh died in Aug 1815, all his estates and

1. Patti is 64 kms South-East of Lahore, on the road Lahore to Harike-patan. It was a walled town with brick built houses. This parganah contained 1360 villages. the fort was close to the town, it was a square enclosure of bricks with bastions at angles, and surrounded with a mud wall. It had a stud farm and yielded more than 400 mares. After its capture Ranjit Singh entrusted it to Fateh Singh Ahluwalia for administration.

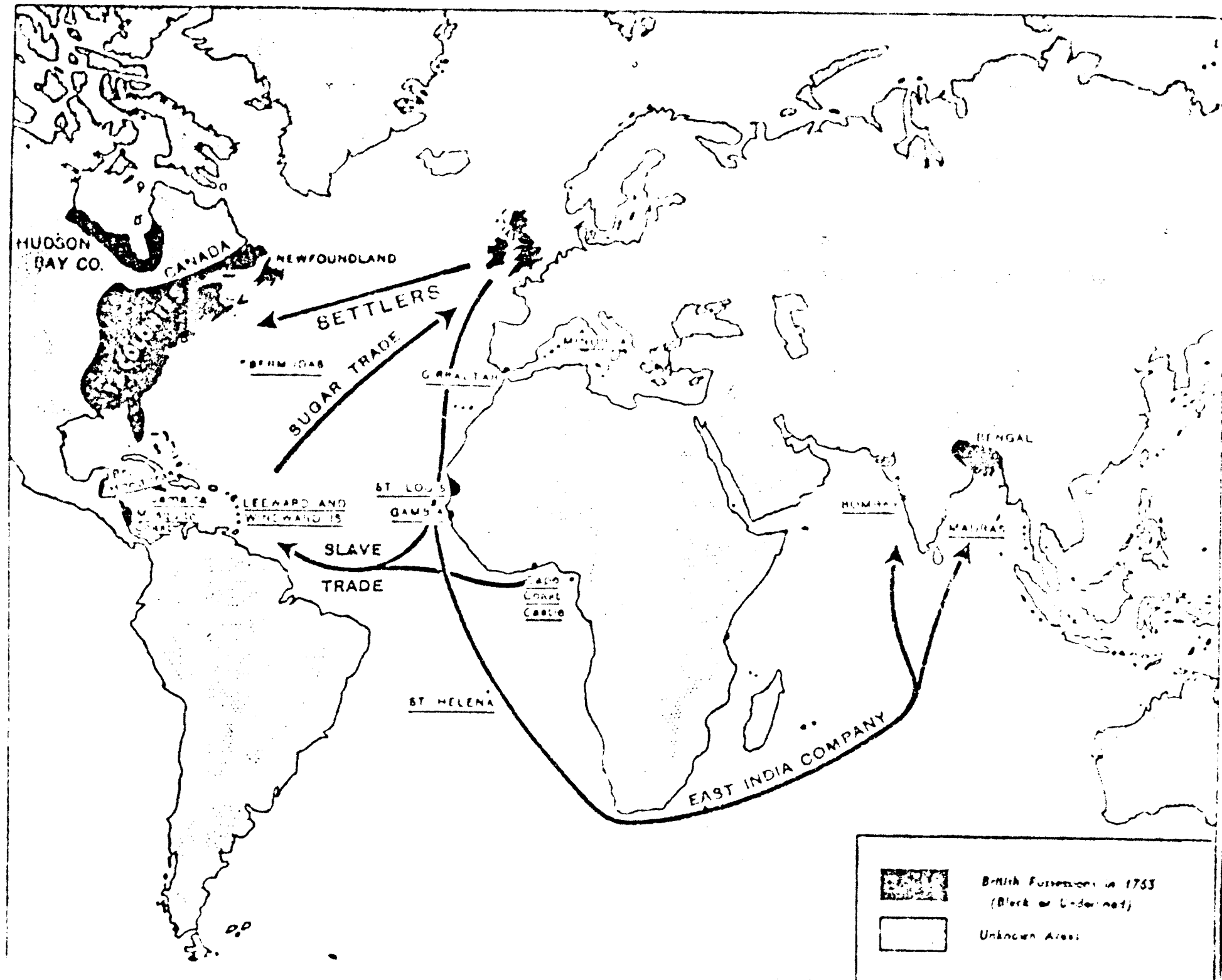
2. Bikrama Jit Hasrat, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977, p 48.

property were then seized and about 150 forts of the Ramgarhias were razed to the ground.¹ Thus ended the powerful Ramgarhia Misl.

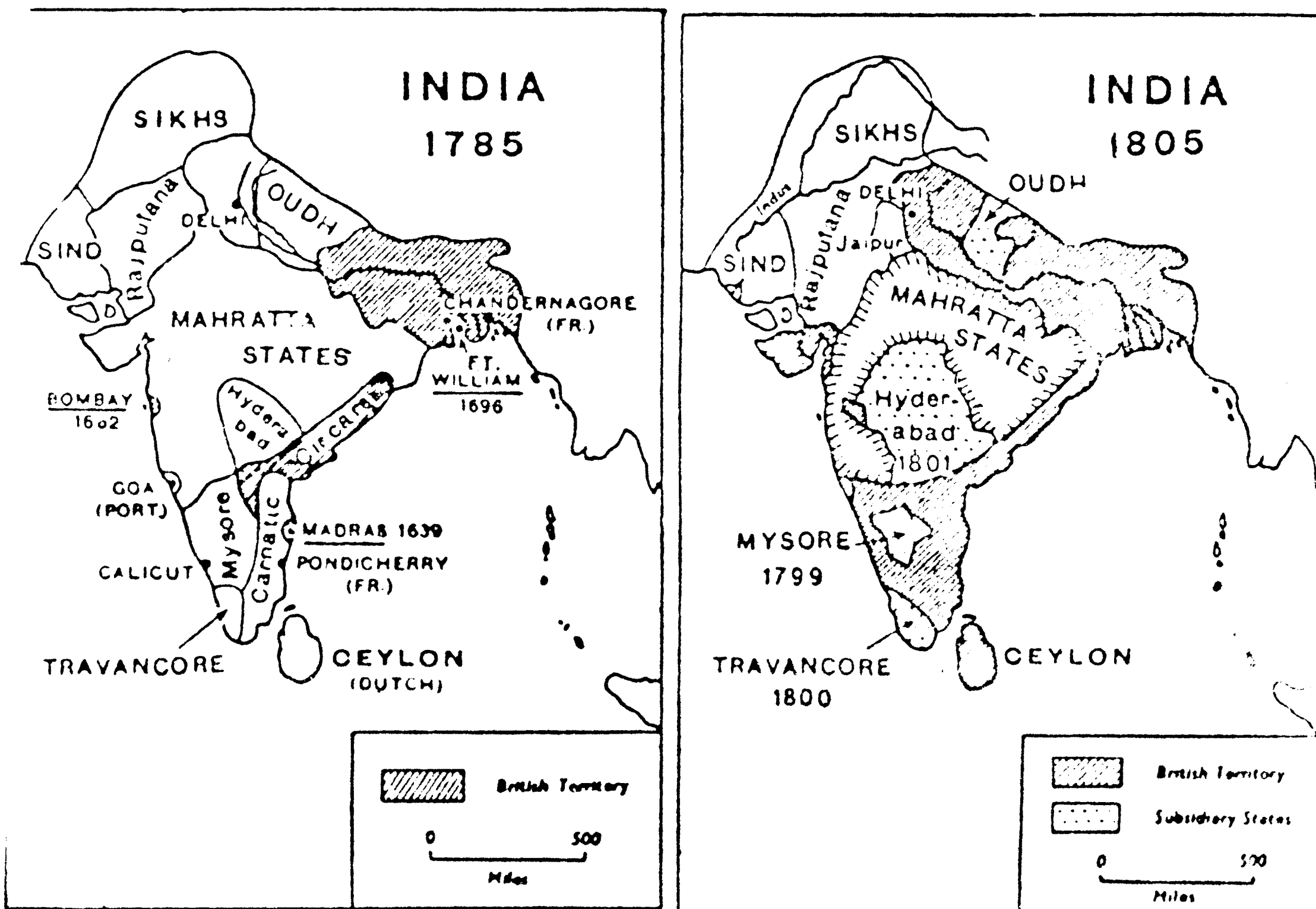
Ranjit Singh was successful in consolidating the Misls. His policy of giving suitable jagirs for the maintenance of the chiefs, the absorption of their troops in the army, the employment of erstwhile Sardars of the Misl according to their inclination, in the army or on administrative jobs, were measures which reduced discontent after consolidation, at the same time it built an infrastructure which supported his rule.

1. HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs volume V, 1991, pp 54-54.

BRITISH ROUTE TO INDIA



BRITISH ADVANCE IN INDIA



Ranjit Singh Arbitrates between Maratha's and British.

In 1805 Ranjit Singh was on his way to Multan. Enroute he had stopped to subdue the Jhang chief when he received information that Jaswant Rao Holkar was near Amritsar closely pursued by Lord Lake. This was an unexpected development. He immediately set course for Amritsar and simultaneously asked other Sikh chiefs to meet him there.

Lord Lake was incharge of establishing British supremacy over Marathas in Northern India. He had under him Lieutenant Colonels Ochterlony, Brick and Burne. Ochterlony was at Delhi, Brick at Panipat and Burne in the Saharanpur -
1
Muzaffarnagar area in the Ganga Doab .

General Lake had two years earlier in 1803, in less than twenty days routed the Maratha General Perron's army at Koil near Aligarh on 29 August. He had then defeated Bourquien at Patparganj (Delhi) on 11 September and brought
2
Shah Alam II under British protection on 16 September 1803 .
3
Agra followed on 18 October. Then the battle of Laswari ended in the annihilation of the whole of the regular forces
4
in Sindhia's service commanded by French officers .

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1. HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, volume V, 1991, p 204.
 2. General Lake paid his first visit to the Emperor in the afternoon of 16 September 1803, marching in state amidst the jubiliation of the populace of the capital. In the palace the scene of his audience with the 'King of Kings' was pathetic beyond words. As an officer of Lake's army writes: "The descendant of the great Akbar and Aurangjeb was found...blind and aged, stripped of authority and reduced to poverty, seated under a small tattered canopy, the fragment of regal state and the mockery of human pride". (Jadunath Sarkar, Fall of the Mughal Empire, Volume 4, Reprint 1992, p 246,).
 3. Laswari (Correctly called Naswari) is on the northern bank of a rivulet named Baraki nala, 32 Kms East of Alwar City.
 4. As Lake claimed after his victory (Jadunath Sarkar, Fall of the Mughal Empire, volume 4, reprint 1992, p 256).

As the British found a better footing in the areas North of Delhi, Ochterlony in January 1805 suggested, the whole region be annexed. But Lord Wellesley in his reply on 13 January, 1805 informed Ochterlony that he should not plan annexation of the whole Cis-Satluj region at that stage.¹ However, finding strategic importance of Karnal² and if need be, for it to serve as an advance military post of the British in the North, it was captured by Burne on 16 April 1805.³

In February, 1804 Lord Lake had warned Bhag Singh of Jind and Bhanga Singh of Thanesar against joining the other Sikh Sardars who were indulging in anti-British activities in the Ganga-Doab.⁴ In the course of more than one year, by June 1805 seeing for themselves the progress of British arms, almost all the Sikh Sardars of the Cis-Satluj region had tacitly agreed to remain on friendly terms with the British Government.

Same year Jaswant Rao Holkar after his defeat in the second Anglo-Maratha war had fled to Rajasthan to seek help from Rajput princes. Having failed in this attempt, he turned towards the Cis-Satluj Sikh chiefs. Holkar had with him about 12,000 cavalry, 3000 infantry and 30 guns. He was accompanied by Amir Khan, Pathan adventurer and well known Pindari leader.⁵

1. HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Volume V, 1991, p 204.

2. Karnal occupied a central place among Sikh cis-Satluj states. It lay 60 kms from Kaithal, 100 kms from Jind, 80 kms from Ambala, 90 kms from Patiala, 35 kms from Thanesar, 55 kms from Shahbad, 125 kms from Delhi and 75 kms from Meerut. A military force placed here could easily check the crossing of river Jamuna by the Sikhs into Ganga-Doab, as also, keep a check on Sikh chiefs and restrain Ranjit Singh.

3. HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Volume V, 1991, p 205.

4. Ibid, p 204.

5. Ibid, p 205.

Lake was in Delhi in October 1805 with five regiments of cavalry and four battalions of infantry. He had set out in pursuit of Holkar. Enroute he stopped to meet Sahib Singh at Patiala. Thereafter, Bhag Singh of Jind guided Lake and together they crossed Satluj at Ludhiana.

The information which made Ranjit Singh abandon his march on Multan, was none other than Holkar's effort to reach to him and solicit his support, for an alliance against the British. An alliance for which the Rajputs and the Cis-Satluj chiefs had already turned down his overtures.¹

Ranjit Singh sent his emissaries to both the parties with his good wishes and usual presents. While he occupied himself in assessing his own situation with Sada Kaur, Fateh Singh, his Generals and court officials. His western frontier with Afghans was not secure; Peshawar, Multan and Kashmir were not yet conquered. Close by Kasur was subdued but not yet annexed and Sansar Chand chief of Kangra was a constant irritant.² His own army though a cohesive force had a lot more to learn, equip and organise. Holkar too in his discussions with Ranjit Singh had conveyed this

1. HR Gupta writes, "Major General Dodwell serving under Lord Lake sent a letter drafted by his political assistant, 20 year old Charles Metcalfe, warning Raja Sahib Singh of Patiala against supporting Holkar. Sahib Singh was already fed-up with excessive demands for money by Holkar. He persuaded Holkar to seek help from Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Knowing that British forces were advancing in pursuit of him, Holkar raised his camp and crossed river Satluj on 13 November, 1805." (HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, volume V, 1991, p 207, refers).

2. Kasur was annexed by Ranjit Singh in 1807 and Kangra fort was occupied in 1809.

impression thus re-inforcing Ranjit Singh's own
¹
 apprehensions on this score. Therefore Ranjit Singh could
 ill afford to take sides and make Punjab a theatre of war
 for the British and the Marathas, to settle their score.
 While Ranjit Singh was independently making up his own mind,
 Lord Lake in a despatch to his superiors was writing, "I
 resolved to occupy a position on the south bank of the Beas
 at a distance of about 35 Miles from Amritsar, and 45 Miles
 from Ludhiana, which while it secured my supplies, was
 likely to give Ranjit Singh confidence to oppose Jaswant Rao
 Holkar or at all events to deter him from embracing the
 cause of that chief".
²
 Ranjit Singh held a council of
 the Sikh confederacies that still depended upon him for
 advice or support. It was unanimously resolved in this
 council, that the Chief of Lahore and the Sikh nation should
 interpose as mediator between the fugitive Maratha Chief and
 the British Government.
³
 Holkar then sued for peace. Ranjit
 Singh deputed Fateh Singh Ahluwalia to negotiate and a
 treaty was concluded between Holkar and the East India
 Company by which Holkar renounced all his possessions in
⁴
 Northern India.

1. Ranjit Singh in disguise had seen for himself the
 British Army in their camp near Beas. (Khushwant Singh, A
 History of the Sikhs, Volume I, reprint 1981, p 212 footnote
 5, and p 211 footnote 3 refers). About British military
 camp, Latif writes, "Thousand of people assembled on the
 banks of the Beas, to gaze upon the British troops with
 wonder. Their eyes were unfamiliar with the sight of a
 British military camp, its white soldiers (goras) dressed in
 their military costume. Their warlike music, in the
 strictest discipline was observed. Not a grain of wheat was
 taken without payment; no man, however small or insignifi-
 cant, was molested; no work, however trifling, was forced
 upon the people without the payment of liberal wages... The
 most scrupulous regard was paid to the property of the
 inhabitants, and as all supplies were punctually paid for,
 the British troops wanted for nothing that the country could
 produce. (Muhammad Latif, History of the Punjab, reprint
 1994, p 363).

2. Secret Consultations 19 of 9.1.1806.

3. Muhammad Latif, History of the Punjab, reprint 1994, p 363.

4. Ibid.

On January 1, 1806, Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh Ahluwalia signed a treaty of friendship and amity with the East India Company, undertaking to "cause Jaswant Rao Holkar to remove with his army to the distance of thirty 'Koss' from Amritsar immediately." In return, the company undertook to remove its encampment on the Beas. The Company further expressed lasting friendship towards Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh as long as they abstained from holding any friendly connection with the enemies of that (ie., the British) government.

Bikrama Jit Hasrat is of the opinion that, "Maharaja took the wisest course and saved his infant kingdom from certain destruction by declining to assist Holkar."¹ However, Sohan Lal Suri in his court diary, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* has recorded that "the Maharaja's decision was disagreeable to the Sardars and Generals, who murmured amongst themselves that their royal master had broken faith, and had allied himself with the hated firangis, who were the enemies of the Faith."²

All said and done Ranjit Singh must have been pleased to get rid of the two foreign armies from his soil, for after their departure he had time to pay attention to the environs of Lahore. He ordered the repair of Shalamar gardens and the canal of Ali Mardan Khan, which watered them. This restored the long neglected gardens and improved³ the adjoining lands, yielding an increased revenue.

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1. Bikrama Jit Hasrat, *Life and Times of Ranjit Singh*, 1977, p 70.
 2. Sohan Lal Suri *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* Daftar II, pp 57-60.
 3. Muhammad Latif, *History of the Punjab*, reprint 1994, p 364.

Kasur

It was Ranjit Singh's objective that this Pathan stronghold so close to Lahore must be kept under a check until its final capture. Being so close it provided intelligence to Afghan's on the goings on in Lahore and at the time of war it could become a firm base for the aggressor.

Kasur was situated 68 kms South of Lahore, it was an aggregate of twelve fortified villages, each forming a separate Kot or fort and having a different name. Following Ranjit Singh's occupation of Lahore the Pathan chief Nizam-ud-din of Kasur in 1800 had joined the coalition formed at Bhasin to oust Ranjit Singh from Lahore. Ever since it became a seat of intrigue against Ranjit Singh's rule. After sometime in 1801 the Pathan chief had joined hands with Sahib Singh Bhangi of Gujrat and both had openly revolted. Ranjit Singh had then marched to Gujrat and forced Sahib Singh to submit, while he sent another force under Fateh Singh Kalianwala against Kasur. The Pathan Chief's forces opposed the Sikhs a few kilometers outside Kasur, but were forced to retreat and take shelter in a fort inside the town. The Sikhs besieged the town. One gate of the fort was blown off. Nizam-ud-din sued for peace. He accepted Ranjit Singh's suzerainty and agreed to pay tribute.

In 1802 Ranjit Singh was occupied in reducing Chiniot when the Pathan chief of Kasur raided a few villages of the Lahore Darbar. On receiving information, Ranjit Singh despatched Fateh Singh Ahluwalia to punish the Pathans.

1. In April 1763, a complaint was made to Hari Singh Bhangi of Taruna Dal, against Usman Khan of Kasur who had seized the beautiful wife of one of the Hindus and converted her to Islam, the city was sacked and burnt by the Khalsa. A large quantity of gold and silver etc fell into the hands of the Sikhs and all became rich. (HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Volume II, 1992, p 196).

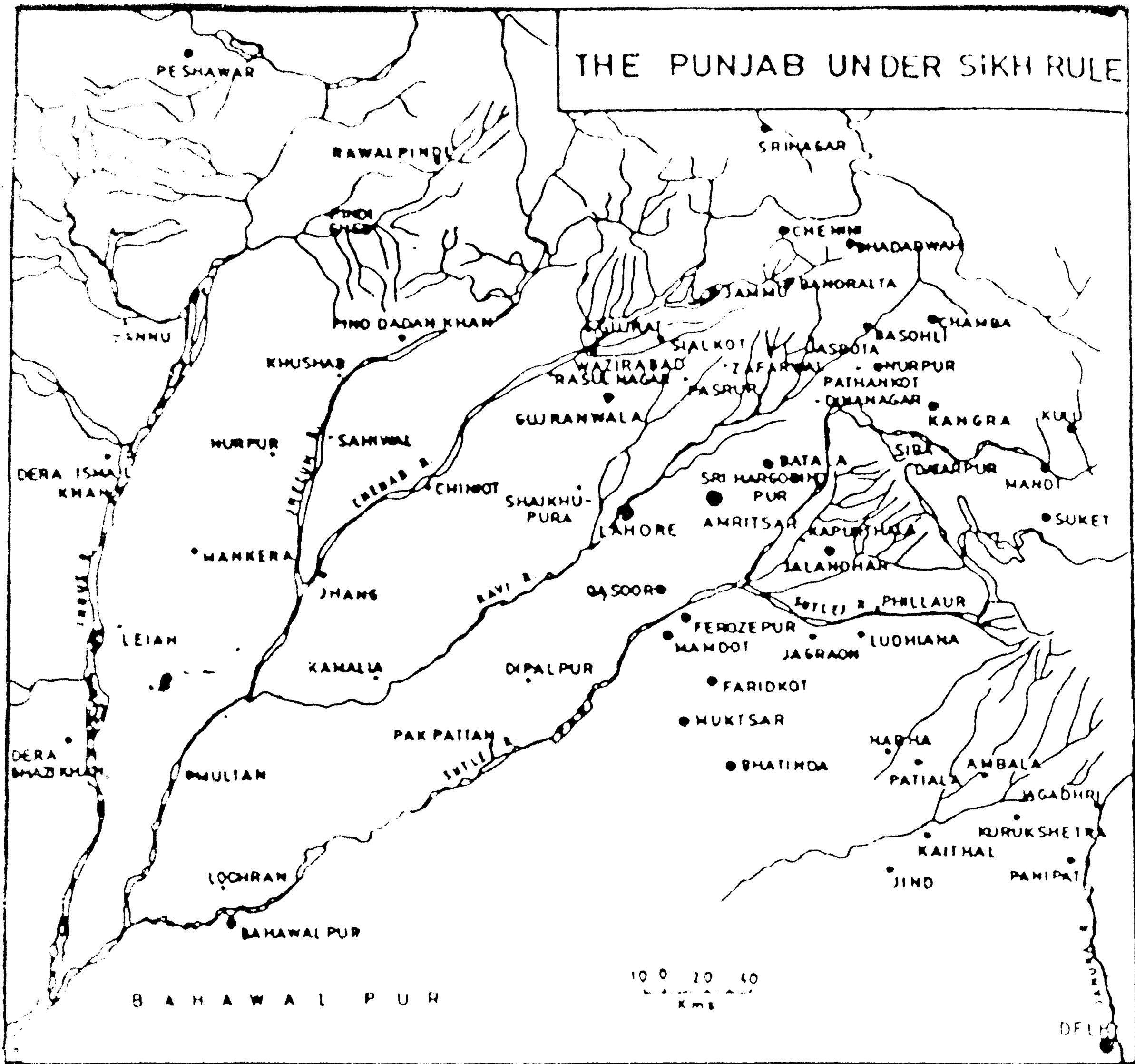
Ranjit Singh soon joined him and in a pitched battle the chief of Kasur was repulsed. He submitted and paid a heavy fine. Same year Nizam-ud-din was assassinated and was succeeded by his brother Qutb-ud-din Khan.¹

Qutb-ud-din began to recruit fresh troops and collect arms and ammunition. He believed that the joint forces of Muslim rulers of Bahawalpur and Multan when combined with the support of Kabul regime were sufficient to overthrow Ranjit Singh. The Lahore Durbar on learning of such designs despatched Faqir Aziz-ud-din to warn Qutb-ud-din against such measures but he continued with his activities.²

Ranjit Singh then decided that an independent principality so close to Lahore was no longer acceptable. He led an expedition against Kasur in 1807. Some notable commanders with Ranjit Singh were Jodh Singh Ramgarhia and Akali Phula Singh. The Pathans took shelter in their forts. Qutb-ud-din was besieged. For one month bombardment and skirmishes continued, then a breach was made in the fort wall and Phula Singh and his Nihangs charged inside. Qutb-ud-din was captured. Kasur was annexed in March 1807 and given to Nihal Singh Attariwala on a fixed annual amount.³ Qutb-ud-din was given Mamdot an area of about 640 square kms, South of Satluj on payment of a fixed tribute. He was also to serve at the head of 100 horsemen whenever called upon to do so.

Once the Sikh Misls were consolidated and his immediate neighbourhood of Kasur secured, Ranjit Singh felt safe to attempt and bring the Cis-Satluj chiefs under his rule.

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1. HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Volume V, 1991, pp 71-72.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Ibid, p 72.



The Punjab under Sikh rule

Cis-Satluj

In his objective of unification of Punjab Ranjit Singh had included the Cis-Satluj region. As he advanced southwards, some Cis-Satluj chiefs surrendered, over-awed by his army. Others, as at Naraingarh closed the gates of the fort only to be reduced after a siege. Ranjit Singh crossed the Satluj three times. He had then not reckoned with the ever increasing interest of the British in the region and so in late 1808 the two nations came to a head, culminating in the Treaty of Amritsar of 1809 and exclusion of Cis-Satluj region from the soon to be unified Punjab.

Ranjit Singh's actual march into Cis-Satluj region began in 1806 when Bhag Singh of Jind called his nephew Ranjit Singh to settle a dispute between Nabha and Patiala over the village of Duladhi, situated 3 Kms from Nabha. Ranjit Singh readily accepted the invitation and crossed the Satluj accompanied by his principal Sardars and a strong army contingent. This was the beginning of Ranjit Singh's Cis-Satluj campaign. He restored the disputed village Duladhi to Jaswant Singh of Nabha and levied an indemnity on Sahib Singh of Patiala. He then marched to Raikot and ousted the Muhammadan Rajput family, the widows of Rai Ilyas, two ladies Nur-un-nisa and Lachmi, whose family had held it for about two hundred years. They were given

1. Mamdot earlier belonged to Rae Kalha of Raekot. In 1800 Nazim-ud-din and his brother Qutb-ud-din of Kasur had conquered it, with the assistance of the 'Dogars', a turbulent Muhammadan tribe inhabiting the district. Mamdot remained with Maharaja Ranjit Singh, even after the treaty of Amritsar in 1809. (Lepel H Griffin, The Punjab Chiefs, 1865, p 54.)

small jagirs for their maintenance¹. Their possessions of Ludhiana, Jandiala, Jagraon, Talwandi and the neighbouring areas were distributed by Ranjit Singh amongst his chiefs² and allies.

This was a swift campaign which forced the Cis-Satluj Sardars—Jaswant Singh of Nabha, Bhag Singh of Jind, Gurdit Singh of Ladwa, Basawa Singh and Bhagel Singh of Thanesar,³ Garbha Singh and others to follow in his train. Ranjit Singh remained in the Cis-Satluj region from July to November 1806 and was flattered by the subservience of the Cis-Satluj chiefs.

Griffin says, "the British took no chances, they strengthened the Karnal garrison in case Ranjit Singh should enter the district in force. But Ranjit Singh had no wish to offend the British, and there was abundant territory which he could seize without rousing their jealousy. He proceeded no further south than Ambala and Thanesar. He retired northwards"⁴.

The following year (1807) another invitation followed, this time from Rani Aus Kaur of Patiala. She wanted Ranjit Singh to intercede on her behalf and that of her infant son Karan Singh with her husband, Raja Sahib Singh. Ranjit Singh readily agreed and crossed the Satluj with his army.

1. Bikrama Jit Hasrat, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977, pp 71-72.

2. Lepel H Griffin, The Rajas of the Punjab, reprint 1970, p88. Also see p 72, foot note 3 and 4 of Bikrama Jit Hasrat, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977. For actual distribution of territories to chiefs please see HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, volume V, p 84.

3. Lepel H Griffin, The Rajas of the Punjab, reprint 1970, pp 86-88.

4. Lepel H Griffin, The Rajas of the Punjab, reprint 1970 p 876, quoting Resident Delhi to Officer Commanding at Karnal, dated 10 November 1806. Officers Commanding at Meerut, Karnal, Rewari and Saharanpur to Resident Delhi, dated 3rd, 4th, 5th, 10th of November 1806.

He settled the dispute and collected a large sum of money and jewels and a brass gun named 'Kara Khan' as his reward from Rani Aus Kaur¹.

Ranjit Singh then marched towards Naraingarh and laid a siege to the fort. It surrendered only after a deliberate assault, in which Fateh Singh Kalianwala was mortally wounded. This territory was made over to Fateh Singh Ahluwalia. Ranjit Singh then encamped at Shahabad, where the family of late Karam Singh, a relative of Raja of Patiala² was dispossessed. Ranjit Singh seized the territories of the Dallewalia chief in the Doab and almost all the territories of the Nishanwalia Misl. Ghumrana, Morinda in Sirhind, Zira, Kot Kapura and finally Dharam kot were also seized. The Maharaja, however, retained very little of these conquered territories. The spoils were distributed among his own followers and the Cis-Satluj Sikh Chiefs³. Amongst others, Raja Bhag Singh of Jind, Raja Jaswant Singh of Nabha and Sardar Gurdit Singh of Ladwa received a share of the spoils; on the other hand Raja of Patiala, received no share. Subsequently in March 1808, Diwan Mohkam Chand, Ranjit Singh's General, captured Patoki and part of Wadhni, these were assigned to Rani Sada Kaur, mother-in-law of the Maharaja for an annual payment of 15,000 rupees.⁴

1. Bikrama Jit Hasrat, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977, p 73.

2. In a letter written by Raja Sahib Singh to Mr Seton, the East India Company's Resident at Delhi; as a sequel to his meeting with Ranjit Singh at Lakhnaur (situated between Ambala and Patiala). This Particular incident finds mention as the basis of Raja Sahib Singh's apprehensions (Lepel H Griffin, The Rajas of the Punjab, reprint 1970, p94).

3. For actual distribution of territories to Chiefs during the Second expedition in 1807, please see HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Volume V, 1991, pp 84-85.

4. Bikrama Jit Hasrat, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977, pp 73-74.

The two visits to Cis-Satluj in the long campaign and the submission of Cis-Satluj chiefs to Ranjit Singh was deceptive. May be Ranjit Singh failed to appreciate in time, that the great grandfather of Sahib Singh of Patiala in 1761 by submitting to Ahmad Shah Durrani had already set the policy, to gain money and territory by remaining loyal first to Delhi and later to Kandhar, while all the time keeping the Dal Khalsa on his side. At the cost of all the three powers, the Mughals, the Durrani and the Dal Khalsa, he had built his power step by step¹.

Almost half a century later, the cause of Dal Khalsa to create a Sikh nation from Jamuna to Kabul, taken up by Ranjit Singh was thwarted in the Cis-Satluj region by the designs of the Phulkian Sardars. These Chiefs, did not take long to perceive that the military strength of Ranjit Singh would ultimately lead to his virtual dominance of the region and their extinction or subservience to the new and aggressive commonwealth of Sarkar Khalsaji². So they held a secret meeting at Samana, 28 Kms from Patiala, and decided to send a deputation to Delhi in March 1808 to solicit British aid and protection against the ruler of Lahore³.

A delegation of chiefs and vakils : Raja Bhag Singh of Jind, Bhai Lal Singh of Kaithal, Diwan Chain Singh of Patiala, Maulvi Ghulam Hasan of Nabha, Bhagwan Singh of Jagadhri held a meeting with Seton the British resident at Delhi and presented a detailed memorandum stating that since the British had replaced the Mughals, they looked upon them as the sovereign power and expected to be protected against Ranjit Singh. The resident forwarded the memorandum to the

1. Gian Singh, Iwarikh Guru Khalsa, (Punjabi), pp 559-560.
 2. Bikrama Jit Hasrat, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977, p 75.
 3. Ibid.

Governor General without making any commitment. In keeping with the company's policy, after the recent Maratha wars was of no move Northwards beyond the Jamuna, the Governor General gave directions to officially ignore the representation of the Cis-Satluj chiefs.

The weak point in Lahore Durbar's claim to the sovereignty over Cis-Satluj chiefs was a slip made by the Lahore Sarkar three years earlier. When Lord Lake and Holkar had crossed the Beas in 1805, Ranjit Singh fearing British designs over his domain, had then, suggested the river Satluj as the boundary between the two states. "Neither Lake nor the Governor General had taken any notice of this suggestion. Their sole object then was the annihilation of the Marathas; once that was achieved, the Board of Directors of the East India Company (which had been brought to the verge of bankruptcy by the Maratha campaigns) issued instructions to its officers not to involve the company in any more wars and to consider the river Jamuna as the western limit of British possessions in India.¹

A lot of water had flowed down the Satluj since then. When Ranjit Singh learnt of the Samana conference, he set about to placate the Cis-Satluj chiefs. He called them to Amritsar. The delegation of Cis-Satluj Sardars being given non committal answer by the Resident at Delhi, considered it more prudent not to offend the Maharaja and so when called

1. While the idea of sending a British delegation to Lahore was being mooted early in 1808, when intelligence was received that Ranjit Singh might come to Hardwar to bathe in the Ganges." ...the instructions given to Metcalfe on this occasion also show clearly the British conception of their northern frontier. He was ordered "to proceed to the banks of the Jamuna and wait for the arrival of Ranjit Singh."... On the return journey he was to accompany the ruler "up to the British frontier" which was again the banks of the Jamuna. (Secret consultations 24 of 11.4.1808 refers).

by him they readily obliged. Ranjit Singh on their arrival honoured them with many presents and promises. He left no stone unturned to assure them of his goodwill. In such an environment the Cis-Satluj territory between Satluj and Jamuna became the 'no-mans land', for the British at Fort William and Sarkar Khalsaji at Lahore.

Unlike Ranjit Singh whose interests and apprehensions, in 1808 in all probability did not extend beyond Calcutta or Kabul, the British on the other hand were a world power with territories extending over Europe, America, Africa and Asia. They were also then at war with France. Though the British were confident of their superiority at sea, yet on land, Napoleon was a distinct threat. The treaty of Tilsit in July 1807 between Napoleon and Czar Alexander I, created a chance possibility of a French march to India and hence could be "regarded as the precipitating factor in Ranjit's relations with the English. Though it led to Metcalfe's mission to Lahore, it also created a situation that brought about the discomfiture of Ranjit Singh."¹

Even though the Court of Directors and the President of the Board of Control of the East India Company in London had been asked by the Home Government to direct its Governor General in India to maintain a non-expansionist posture, still, Lord Minto who succeeded Cornwallis and Barlow found a good excuse in the Napoleon phobia of his countrymen to reverse this policy. Particularly, after he received a warning issued by the Home Government, to take immediate steps to a likely French march overland through the Asia

1. NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975, pp 24-25.

Minor and Persia into India.¹ Consequently, diplomatic missions were despatched to Lahore, Kabul and Persia, seeking treaties of friendship and joint defence.

Lord Minto despatched Metcalfe's Mission to the court of Ranjit Singh.² Enroute on 22 August 1808, Raja Sahib Singh offered the keys of Patiala fort to Metcalfe and asked him to give them back as a gift of the British government.³ Ranjit Singh as per oriental courtesy sent his trusted court officer Mian Imam-ud-din to Patiala to accompany Metcalfe to Lahore.⁴

Metcalfe presented his letter of credentials to Ranjit Singh on 12 September 1808, near Kasur. He informed the Lahore Sarkar that the French were trying to establish themselves in Persia and had designs on Kabul and the Punjab.⁵ He proposed that in the interests of all the states in this quarter, they should unite in defence.⁶

1. Since Lord Minto's arrival in India in July 1807, reports of French intrigues in Persia sent by Sir John Malcolm, the British Ambassador in Persia had alarmed the Indian Government. Malcolm reported to the Home Government the shady dealings of the French embassy in Tehran; and the proposed march of the French armies through the Asia Minor and Persia. The Home Government believed these reports and the French menace as a positive threat to the safety of British possessions in India. In September 1807, the Secret Committee directed the Indian Government to take immediate steps to counteract the supposed menace. (Bikrama Jit Hasrat, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977, pp 80-81).

2. CT Metcalfe was the first Assistant to the British Resident at Delhi. He was fully acquainted with the local problems of the government, and had received practical training in the Wellesley School of diplomacy and politics. Though young (23 years of age) he was considered capable to conduct negotiations with Ranjit Singh leading to a treaty of friendship on British terms (HR Gupta, History of the Sikhs, volume V, 1991, p 229).

3. Ibid, p 230.

4. Ibid.

5. Victor G Kiernan, Metcalfe's Mission to Lahore, Monograph No 21, Language Department Punjab, reprint 1988, pp 12-14.

6. Ibid.

The Lahore Sarkar agreed to the British proposals and in turn asked specifically that the British Government should recognize Lahore's sovereignty over the Cis-Satluj region. But "Metcalfe prevaricated till the Maharaja's patience was exhausted. He ordered the breaking up of camp¹ and asked the envoy to follow him if he cared to do so". Ranjit Singh then crossed the Satluj and launched his troops in the campaign of subjugation and collection of tribute from remaining principalities left out earlier in the Cis-Satluj region. Ranjit Singh was obviously exercising his right as sovereign of all Sikhs, and he wanted to leave no doubt about Lahore Sarkar's authority in the mind of the British envoy following in his train.²

It appears, the British at Fort William were debating in their own council the advantages of friendship of Lahore Sarkar vis-a-vis the military occupation of Cis-Satluj territory. Ever since their occupation of Delhi, they needed a buffer zone to defend it. A border with Lahore Sarkar along Satluj three hundred kms in the North, permitted enough ground for manoeuvre to give them early warning and space for movement of armies, to oppose any invader along

1. Victor G Kiernan, Metcalfe's Mission to Lahore, Monograph No 21, Language Department Punjab, reprint 1988, p 18.

2. It is clear from what Metcalfe wrote that Ranjit Singh's suzerainty over the Cis-Satluj states was an accomplished fact and, if his government really desired Ranjit's friendship, they should recognise that sovereignty. The only thing that bothered him was the position of the few chiefs of the region who had not yet submitted to Ranjit's overlordship. If his government gave Ranjit unconditional recognition it would be forcing some unwilling people into his arms. If it made recognition conditional on his ability to bring them into his fold, it would be encouraging him to commit aggression. Metcalfe's mind was obsessed with the exact wording of the recognition, not with its substance. (Victor G Kiernan, Metcalfe's Mission to Lahore, Monograph No 21, Language Department Punjab, reprint 1988, p 20).

the traditional route of ingress from the North-West. Three hundred kms between Delhi and Satluj permitted first, a line of defence along the river Satluj itself, next in the region of Patiala-Ambala and lastly between Kurukshetra and Panipat. Thus three successive battle lines were possible to marshal and oppose a determined opponent.

There was then an unexpected development, the treachery of humans who fail to see bigger causes. The Cis-Satluj chiefs to the detriment of a larger Punjab in the making, had sent a mission in early 1808 to Seton, the British Resident at Delhi, as has already been mentioned, and thus gave the British an opportunity to split the powerful Khalsa confederacy, which inspite of apparent disunity, had successfully opposed and forced Zaman Shah, the inheritor of the legacy of Ahmad Shah Abdali to retrace his steps back to Afghanistan in 1797 and 1799. From the East India Company's view a united Khalsa in due course would have blocked their colonial expansion to the North and simultaneously threaten their possessions East of Jamuna.

It appears that Lord Minto was sure on the advisability of establishing the British frontier on the Satluj. The French threat gave him an opportunity to highlight the importance of this region to the Home government and thereby overrule their directions to restrict the frontier at the Jamuna. But what, "if the French menace proved to be real and Ranjit refused to enter into an alliance unless his Cis-Satluj claims were conceded, the British would perhaps have to yield."¹ Metcalfe like Seton before him, could not therefore, give any assurance to the Cis-Satluj Sikh chiefs on his way to Lahore, as also it explains the reasons for

1. NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975, pp 26-27.

his prevarication in the face of Ranjit Singh's demand to recognise his sovereignty over the Cis-Satluj region.

Ranjit Singh for once forgot the earthy common sense of his Jat ancestors. That, if he is the sovereign of Cis-Satluj Sikhs, then he doesn't have to refer to any one for its confirmation. He assumes it. (Till someone dares to tell him otherwise.) Ranjit Singh should not have referred the Cis-Satluj question to the British. Infact, he should have at the first instance raised a protest on occupation of Karnal by the British. He should have posted his General Mohkam Chand at Ambala with a strong force. Brought Sahib Singh under his wings and made all parleys with the British from Patiala itself. He did not, and the British put their foot into the breach.¹

Alastair Lamb in the introduction to Francis Younghusband's 'India and Tibet' says, "There was a powerful frontier lobby in India which could all too often obtain the ear of the Viceroy (Governor General) and which generally saw issues directly affecting any one frontier sector in a light significantly different from that obtaining in Whitehall.., to determine the shape of policy by means of the local manipulation of events."² The aim of British Resident posted at Delhi and of Metcalfe sent to Ranjit

1. "The British government cannot acknowledge any right in the Maharaja, to any territories that he may have taken possession of, situated between the Satluj and the Jamuna, since the first reference, of this question to the British Government... The Governor General expects that the Maharaja will restore all the places that he has taken possession of since that period to the former possessors." (Secret Consultations 92 of 2.1.1809).

2. Alistair Lamb writing in the Introduction, 1985, p xix, to Francis Younghusband's India and Tibet, a book giving an account of British relations with North India and Tibet, first published 1910 and re-published with the addition of an Introduction by Oxford University Press in 1985.

Singh, was the local manipulation of events, to suit their continued colonial expansion northwards : Calcutta, Oudh, Delhi and next, to Satluj. The Governor-General, representative of the British Government in India was a party to this local manipulation and colonial expansion.

Apparently Lord Minto wanted to win glory by adding more territories to the British dominions. He, therefore, did not want to let the opportunity go by; the French threat was an alibi he could give to Board of Directors and the Home government, should things go wrong.¹ He was still undecided when he gave his approval, for move of Metcalfe's mission to the court of Ranjit Singh, in August 1808.

Ranjit Singh with Metcalfe following him, after crossing Satluj into the Cis-Satluj area, had occupied Faridkot and levied a heavy tribute over Malerkotla. He then proceeded to garrison Ambala and Shahbad before returning to Amritsar. He thus, once again gave a clear proof, if proof were needed, that most of the land between the Jamuna and Satluj was under his control and all the chieftains of the area acknowledged him as suzerain. Metcalfe himself records "The Cis-Satluj Rajas and chiefs in the Maharaja's camp were as submissive as if they had long been used to his authority"².

1. Sohan Lal, who devotes many pages of his Umdat-ut-Tawarikh to Metcalfe's mission, does not once mention France in his narrative. Secondly, VG Kiernan in his monograph Metcalfe's mission to Lahore writes : "The negotiations with Ranjit Singh were in fact so little on French affairs, that it might be permissible to suspect Napoleon of being in this case a mere red herring, and the mission being sent solely to initiate a penetration of the Punjab.

2. Victor G Kiernan; Metcalfe's Mission to Lahore, Monograph No 21, reprint 1988, p 20.

The rough winds which were blowing from near and middle East changed for the better by January 1809. Because, circumstances favoured an Anglo-Persian and an Anglo-Turkish understanding. The treaty of Dardanelles was concluded between Britain and Turkey in January 1809, and an Anglo-Persian alliance followed in March of the same year. Risings in Spain had begun in the middle of 1808. Thus the position in the Middle East had eased sufficiently enough to make the Governor General feel that it was no longer necessary to coax the Lahore King into an alliance¹ and on the chess board extending from Europe to India, the Cis-Satluj pawn was after all not required to be sacrificed.²

1. NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975, p 25.

2. Metcalfe's earlier reports about Ranjit Singh's third incursion across the Satluj had created a sharp reaction at Calcutta, and a claim to British paramountcy over the Cis-Satluj region had been examined by the Governor-General-in-Council and a policy of active intervention in the affairs of Cis-Satluj states had been resolved upon. It was realised that British interests could be best promoted by the reduction, if not the entire subversion of Ranjit Singh's power. This momentous decision was taken by the Government of India early in October 1808. Lord Minto in his despatches had convinced the Home Government that even without reference to the French menace the approximation of Ranjit Singh's aggressive militarism and his domination of the region between the Satluj and the Jamuna would disturb the security of British possessions. Ranjit Singh, he pointed out, was a formidable military despot, whose ambitions knew no bounds, and yet he was aware of the power of the British Government, and he would not afford a rupture with it. It would, therefore, be full of advantage to depart from the principle of the limitation of the Company's frontier at the Jamuna and prevent Ranjit Singh from extending his dominations. Consequently, it was decided to extend British protection to the states south of the Satluj and demand from the Maharaja the immediate withdrawal of Lahore armies to the other side of the river. The Home Government readily approved the Governor-General's course of action. (Bikrama Jit Hasrat, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977, pp 83-84).

The Maharaja was blissfully unaware of the stab in the back that the Governor General Lord Minto had planned for him.¹

Thus his mind made up, the Governor-General ordered the army forward. Agents were sent to contact the Cis-Satluj chiefs; and Metcalfe handed over to Lahore Sarkar the new terms and conditions. Ranjit Singh took the demands in a composed manner and immediately left Amritsar for Lahore to take council with his ministers. Simultaneously counter measures to stop the British advance to the Satluj were set in motion. Lahore forces started concentrating at Phillour to reinforce the Ambala garrison. Cis-Satluj chiefs were frantically summoned to Amritsar where at the newly constructed fortress of Govindgarh, troops were assembled from all quarters, and guns were mounted on the ramparts. Metcalfe reported on 18 January that the Maharaja of Lahore

1. Further on the same subject Kiernan has this to say on the British decision, "The wisdom of the British decision is hard to find—apart from its fairness to Ranjit. If he had been allowed to absorb the defeated area, he might well have joined resolutely in an anti-French alliance, and he would then have been a stronger friend. On the other hand, if the French had actually appeared on the scene and found him smarting under his disappointment he would certainly have joined them. The Cis-Satluj chiefs would then have been a broken reed for the company to lean on. Even if they did not join the enemy, the confusion in their country would have deepened into anarchy, and the British troops at Ludhiana would have been in an uncomfortable position. "The truth of this was confirmed by experience after many years of 'protection'. In the first Sikh war, the British troops had to move through the territories of the Cis-Satluj chiefs... "Their sympathies were all with the Sikhs". We may well see, then, in the decision taken a confusion of thought: the expansionist school, under specious pretexts, gaining its way over the conservatives." (Victor G Kiernan, M.A., Metcalfe's Mission to Lahore (1808-1809), Language Department, Punjab, reprint, pp 107-108, quoting Kay, Life of Metcalfe, 169 and travels in, Land of the Five Rivers, p 297).

was making every preparation for war and that he would cross the Satluj to oppose Ochterlony's force. All seemed ready for war. The negotiations were held in abeyance. Diwan Mohkam Chand, the Maharaja's General stationed in Kangra closely watching the Gurkha siege of Kangra fort was recalled and with large reinforcements placed in command at Phillour.

But clash of arms did not take place on account of two reasons. First, the Cis-Satluj chiefs welcomed the arrival of Ochterlony's force in Malwa and Sirhind with enthusiastic joy, and it was obvious that these recipients of numerous grants of recently conquered territories from the Maharaja would desert him in his hour of need. Secondly, Raja Bhag Singh of Jind, the maternal uncle of Ranjit Singh mediated and endeavoured to effect a rapprochement between Ranjit Singh and the British. One possible reason for Ranjit Singh not to countermand Raja Bhag Singh's efforts towards a settlement with the British was still 'unsettled conquest of Kangra', a territory contiguous to both the warring parties and for Ranjit Singh it would have been a vulnerable flank in the eventuality of a war with the British. Already he had recalled Mohkam Chand and the troops from Kangra to garrison Phillour.

Then followed the Ittalahnama (Proclamation) ¹ by the British which was the last straw that broke the camel's

1. On 9 February, 1809 an Ittalahnama (Proclamation) was announced to the Cis-Satluj Chiefs of the arrival of a British force on the frontiers of Ranjit Singh to confirm friendship with the state of Lahore and amongst other demands it included withdrawal of all Sikh forces at Phillour to the other side of the river Satluj. Non-compliance with these stipulations by the Maharaja would be regarded as an unfriendly act and the British army shall commence every mode of defence. For more details refer Ittalahnama, of 9 February 1809 placed at Appendix A.

back. The advance of a British force under General St. Legar and an advance guard under Colonel Ochterlony had considerable effect on the still wavering Cis-Satluj chiefs,² who then withdrew their loyalty and professions of friendship with the Maharaja one by one. Thus, the desertion of Cis-Satluj chiefs of Patiala, Nabha, Jind, Kaithal, Kalsia, Ladwa, Thanesar and Buria, greatly disheartened Ranjit Singh. He prudently agreed to withdraw his troops to the North bank of the Satluj, abandon all claims of sovereignty over the Cis-Satluj Sikh chiefs, and restore all conquests made by him during the third across the Satluj³ expedition.

After further negotiations between the British and Lahore Sarkar, 'The Treaty of Amritsar'⁴ was signed on 25 April, 1809.

Given a check in the South, Ranjit Singh launched his energies for the unification and expansion of Punjab 'North of Satluj'. The focus of his attention was henceforth relentlessly directed towards the Hindu, Muslim and remaining few Sikh principalities. Multan, Kashmir, Peshawar and Trans Indus plains soon followed and in due course all formed the Punjab of Sarkar Khalsa Ji Ranjit Singh.

2. To enforce this decision a detachment of British troops (2,986) under Lieutenant Colonel Ochterlony, the Garrison Commander of Allahabad was ordered to advance immediately and occupy a fort on the river Satluj. At the same time, another force (5,740 men) under General St. Legar advanced to support him. (Bikrama Jit Hasrat, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977, p 84).

3. Bikrama Jit Hasrat, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977, pp 84-85.

4. For the Treaty of Amritsar as signed on 25 April 1809 see the Appendix B.

When one sees the Army which Ranjit Singh left to posterity at the end of it all in 1839 and its performance in Anglo-Sikh wars which followed, the greatness of Ranjit Singh stands out. He cannot be faulted for accepting the Treaty of Amritsar in 1809 to buy time to prepare for the ultimate war with the British. That he was a soldier to the core with a sense of strategic thought and planning, there is no doubt for he understood how long it takes to raise equip, train and position an efficient army. That he did it, simultaneously maintaining friendship with the British is again a lesson in tact and diplomacy. Those who found fault with his friendship with the British may reconsider their views. For the same reasons he held no rancour against his Sikh bretheren of trans Satluj. Ranjit Singh invited them: Nabha, Patiala, Kaithal et al to his son's wedding in 1812. He would need them when the time will come to measure swords with the British.

Impressions of Ranjit Singh and his Army (1808-1809)

Metcalfe's despatches though written in a hostile tone, still give us a great deal of first hand information as gathered by him during his stay in Punjab. Metcalfe was impressed by Ranjit Singh's domineering character and he wrote, "His orders in his Army are peremptory and are universally and instantly obeyed; the greatest Sardar and the lowest soldier seem to pay the same deference to him. At the same time his manners are affable and familiar". A

1. Victor G Kiernan, MA, Metcalfe's Mission to Lahore (1808-1809), Punjab Government Record Office, Monograph No 21, Langaug Department, Punjab, Second reprint 1988, p 98, quoting Metcalfe, No 16, 15 September 1808.

Marginal note (remark) on one despatch says that he used the term 'Sarkar Khalsaji' of his government, "to convey that his power and Sikh power were identical"¹.

In a despatch of October 1808 Metcalfe wrote, "Ranjit Singh has succeeded in establishing through out the territories subject to him, a species of Government which never existed before amongst the Sikhs. He is absolute". To introduce his authority Ranjit Singh at times removed the petty chiefs from the lands which they long had, to new possessions, and placed some of his own favourite servants in possession of these newly conquered lands. As far as the troops of these chiefs were concerned, he did not disband their forces but absorbed them into his own. In this way, in the course of time, he raised a regularly paid standing cavalry which he allowed to continue in their traditional way of the old Khalsa cavalry, (Ghorcharah Fauj). Sita Ram Kohli writes, "He did not abolish the custom of granting military fiefs all at once. This he did so gradually that it was hardly perceptible at first, and in its place kept substituting the principle of assignments"².

"The army was still largely made up of the levies brought by vassals. But the rank and file of the Sikhs soldiery were men with an ideology of their own, men who bore some resemblance to the troopers of Cromwell's new army; And if Ranjit set himself to 'destroy all distinctions', he was following in the footsteps of those

1. Ibid, quoting marginal note on Metcalfe, No 30 enclosure II. Victor G Kiernan says, that this is a more likely explanation than that of Cunningham who thinks it indicated a modesty on Ranjit's part, a subordination of himself to the Sikh nation (Cunningham, History of the Sikhs, p 180 refers).

2. Sita Ram Kohli, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, First death Centenary memorial, reprint 1970, p 72.

monarchs who, in alliance with their peoples, broke the power of feudalism under the shadow of an absolute Throne before which all men must bow. Democracy has perhaps seldom, in the East risen above this level, and seldom fallen so low as at times in Europe"¹.

Metcalfe observed that Ranjit Singh was devoted to military pursuits and spent a good deal of his time in reviewing and exercising his troops. He showed keen interest to obtain knowledge of the European system of discipline and introduce as much of it as possible into his army. "His command in his army is as implicitly obeyed as perhaps it could be among the best disciplined troops. Every private horseman or footman is compelled to look up to him, as his master, whatever Chief he may immediately be attached to, and the Chiefs are as much subject to receive orders as the private soldiers."² Kiernan says, "Ranjit was, it seems overcoming the great weakness of the Indian armies of the previous century, that the soldiers obeyed the Colonel and cared nothing for the General."³

Metcalfe during his stay noted a few 'Sepoy model units'⁴ which had already come into being in Ranjit Singh's army. He found these to be his favourite and that the greatest care was extended towards them. Ranjit Singh had made a beginning by the professional improvements through

1. Victor G Kiernan, MA, Metcalfe's Mission to Lahore (1808-1809) Punjab Government Record Office Monograph No 21. Language Department, Punjab, Second reprint 1988, p 99.

2. Ibid, p 102 quoting Metcalfe No 25, 1 October, 1808.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid, p 103, Kiernan writes, "of his six battalions of regulars, each numbering two or four hundred men, five were made up of Telingas and Purbias, the other of Hindostanis or Rohillas. All had swords and most had matchlocks probably with bayonets. Not all had uniforms. These alone, apart from some artillery men, were paid in cash, privates drawing Rs 9 per Mensem with twelve annas deducted for the paymaster, or slightly less than the British sepoy."

Europeanisation of the army in 1803. This is stated in detail by Amar Nath in the Zafar Nama-i-Ranjit Singh. Further, of the period 1809 Captain William Murray has written, " Poorbeas from the company's Provinces and Sikhs from the Malwa and Manjha were formed into bodies of 300 to 400 men each instructed and drilled by deserters from the Bengal army and promoted to the rank of commandant with superior pay. The Artillery was formed into a park under a Durogah or Superintendent and the Horse were divided into Gorcharah and Ghorcharah-khas the first receiving pay and the latter enjoying lands in Jageer and both mounted on horses the property of the state"¹ Metcalfe goes on to remark that all the Indian rulers were then forming similar corps, and Ranjit's was about as good as any other; it would not stand against a well-trained army, but was Ranjit's best weapon for subjugating petty chiefs.

Of his irregular infantry, some were on a permanent footing and were supported by jagirs; others were hired at need. He enrolled more men than he could afford and in 1808² had to dismiss 4000 of them at Faridkot.

He had also a permanent cavalry, competent and well equipped, accustomed to gallop forward pell-mell, fire, and withdraw, in a way that might be galling to unsupported infantry. Lands were assigned for the support of the cavalry; and the principal portion of the country was occupied by them. Ranjit Singh at the time had thirty or forty artillery guns which he paraded round the country to

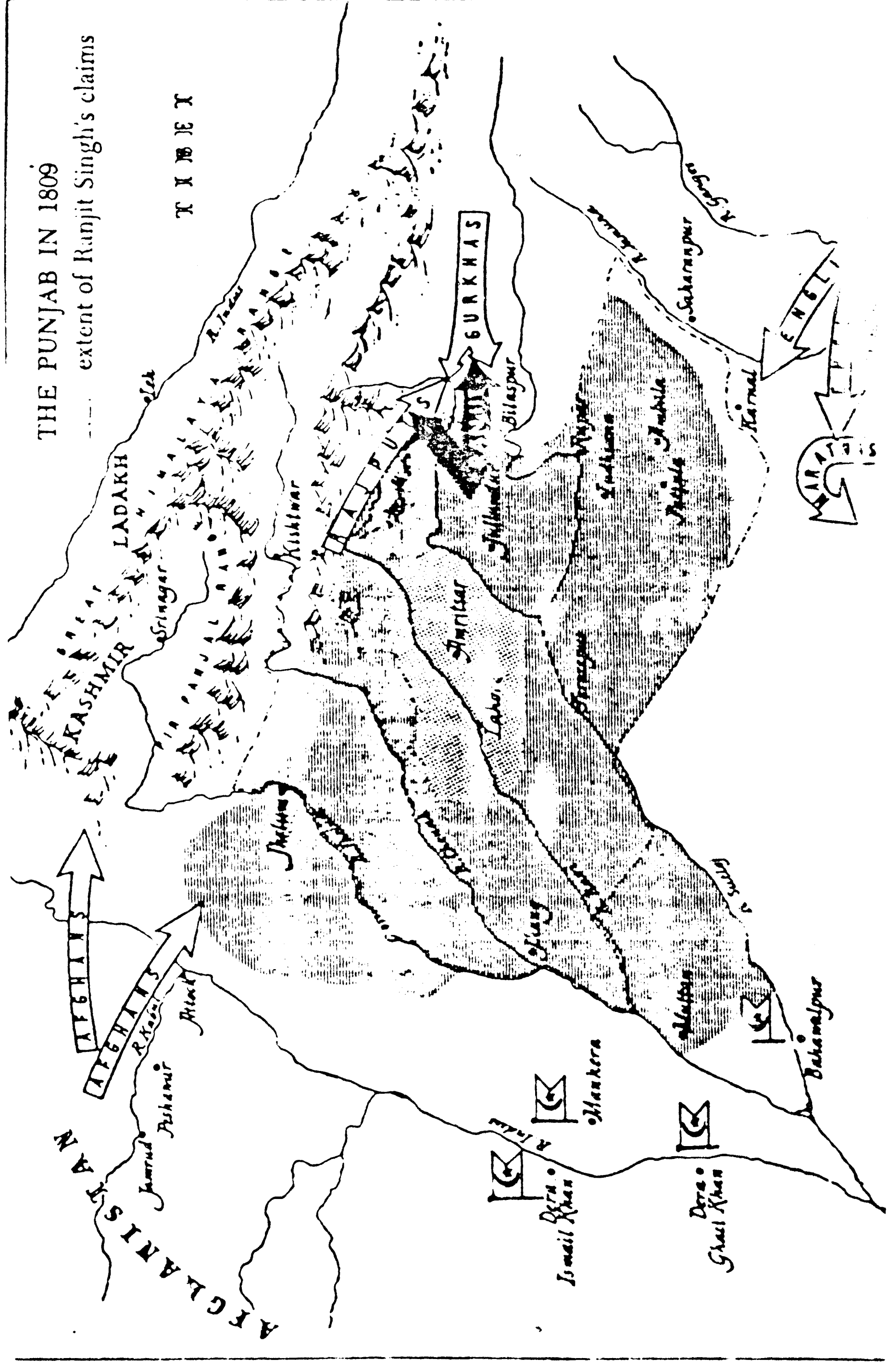
1. HS Bhatia, Rare Documents on Sikhs and their Rule in the Punjab, 1992, p 85; quoting Captain William Murray's "Memoir on Historical and Political Transactions in the Punjab", 1830.

2. Victor G Kiernan, MA, Metcalfe's Mission to Lahore (1808-1809) Monograph No 21, Language Department, Punjab, Second reprint 1988, p 103.

strike terror into the disaffected. He was insatiable for guns, and would attack a fort simply to acquire a new one. He saw to it that the Guns were handled efficiently. Metcalfe saw four big iron guns, each drawn on a three wheeled carriage by forty or fifty buffaloes. Camel-swivels were also in use. The vassal chiefs whose forces served with Ranjit were allowed no artillery. As to his total strength rumour gave him 15,000 men and his chiefs the same; Metcalfe put the total at no more than 25,000;¹ Another estimate made at the time was 50,000.

Every advance necessitated for him a further advance-as it did, Metcalfe noted for "the present ruler of France" (Napoleon). Most of Ranjit Singh's successes were bloodless; his prestige and his army carried all before them. When there was a prospect of resistance, he temporised² until his opportunity was ripe .

1. Ibid , p 104 quoting Metcalfe No 36, 8 November 1808.
2. Ibid, pp 104-105.



Kangra

The region of Kangra was contiguous to the newly formed border with the British. Kangra town was situated in the lower ranges of the Shivalik hills, 2345 feet above sea level. The town commands a good view of the Kangra valley which is 125 kms long and 60 kms broad. When its last Mughal Governor Saif Ali Khan died in 1774, the fort fell into the hands of Jai Singh Kanaihya. Raja Sansar Chand Katoch was the head of the Rajput dynasty in Kangra hills. He took possession of the Kangra fort in 1785 as a result of his joining a coalition formed by Ranjit Singh's father, Maha Singh alongwith Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. They defeated Jai Singh Kanaihya in a battle near Batala and Sansar Chand received the fort.

It was not long before the ripe opportunity to bring Kangra under his rule came in Ranjit Singh's way Sansar Chand the Rajput ruler of Kangra was restoring his authority in the Shivalik hills. The British were establishing their supremacy over the Cis-Satluj and the Gurkha General Amar Singh Thapa was setting up the Nepalese rule over the Himalayan states. The Gurkhas extended their frontiers to the Mechi river in the east and in their march to the West, Doti, Kumaon and Almora, Garhwal and Srinagar (in Kumaon hills) all had fallen to their arms. By 1804, Amar Singh Thapa, son of Bhim Singh Thapa, Prime Minister of Nepal and one of the ablest Generals, swept the Himalayan foothills and established Nepalese supremacy over Chamba, Nurpur, Kotla, Jasrota, Basohli, Jaswan, Mandi, Suket and Kulu.

The Raja of Bilaspur joined Amar Singh Thapa and together they crossed river Satluj in December 1805 forcing Sansar Chand to fall back. Though Sansar Chand fought a hard

1. Bikrama Jit Hasrat, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977, p 52.

battle against the Gurkhas at Mahalmarian in May 1806, yet he had to retreat¹ and Amar Singh got the opportunity to lay siege to the fort of Kangra²

Sansar Chand approached Ranjit Singh and sought help against the Gurkhas. Ranjit Singh demanded the fort of Kangra in return. The fort was Sansar Chand's family pride and his most precious possession. He did not agree and so the Gurkha siege of Kangra fort continued for three years and the Kangra valley became a scene of destruction and desolation.³

Following the treaty of Amritsar in 1809, in the same year in May, Ranjit Singh visited Jawalamukhi ostensibly to pay respects at the Temple but his real purpose was to study the Kangra situation. Sansar Chand's resources by then had been exhausted and he had opened negotiations with Ranjit Singh. When the demand for the fort was once again put forward, Sansar Chand agreed and sent his son Anirodh Chand as surety. Amar Singh too tried to win Ranjit Singh over to his cause by proposing to conquer Kashmir jointly. But Ranjit Singh thought it best to keep the Gurkhas out of the Punjab.⁴

In the meantime Sansar Chand entered into negotiations with Amar Singh Thapa, promising him the surrender of the fort. Hoping against hope that the Sikhs and Gurkhas may clash and destroy each other and he will ultimately keep the fort. Thereafter, he shut himself up in the well provisioned

1. Sansar Chand later wrote to Minto : "Even imagination itself could scarcely have found a path through these difficult passes." The Gurkhas however did so. (Khushwant Singh, A History of the Sikhs, Volume I, reprint 1981, p 232, footnote 1).

2. Hari Ram Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Volume V, 1991, p 68.

3. Ibid.

4. JD Cunningham, History of the Sikhs, reprint 1990, p 133, footnote 1, quoting Murray, Ranjit Singh, pp 76-77.

fort, ready for a long siege. Ranjit Singh came to know of the duplicity of Sansar Chand. He surrounded the Gurkha army besieging the fort and cut off their supplies. After a fierce engagement, Amar Singh was forced to raise the siege, and on payment of one lakh of rupees to the Sikh army, the Gurkhas were allowed to depart with all their property and arms.²

Ranjit Singh occupied the Kangra fort on 24 August 1809 and the Gurkhas were completely cleared out of Kangra hills West of the Satluj. Sansar Chand was allowed to continue in his territory on payment of a fixed tribute. To keep an eye on the hill country Ranjit Singh left one thousand troops at the Nadaun fort and Fateh Singh with troops at Bajwara as a further precautionary measure.³ Desa Singh Majithia was appointed the governor of the region and on his death his son Lehna Singh Majithia succeeded him as the governor.

Amar Singh Thapa not happy with his failure in Kangra proposed to Sir David Ochterlony a joint march to the Indus, and a separate appropriation of the plains and the hills. On the other hand Ranjit Singh made it known that he was desirous of meeting Amar Singh Thapa on his own ground. The reply of the Governor General that he might not only himself cross the Satluj to chastise the invading Gurkhas in the hills, but that, if they descended into the plains of Sirhind he would receive British assistance, in a way confirmed to Ranjit Singh the good intentions of the British

1. Bikram Jit Hasrat, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977, pp 52-53.

2. Sita Ram Kohli says, "Due to severe heat, disease had spread in the Gurkha army and they retreated." (Sita Ram Kohli, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, (in Punjabi), 1953, p 73).

3. Ibid.

inspite of the recently concluded treaty of Amritsar; and so he talked no more of reducing the Gurkhas further in size. Then followed the Nepal war of 1814 in which Gurkhas were pushed back by the British and they became the neighbours of Ranjit Singh in the hills as they were in the plains.¹

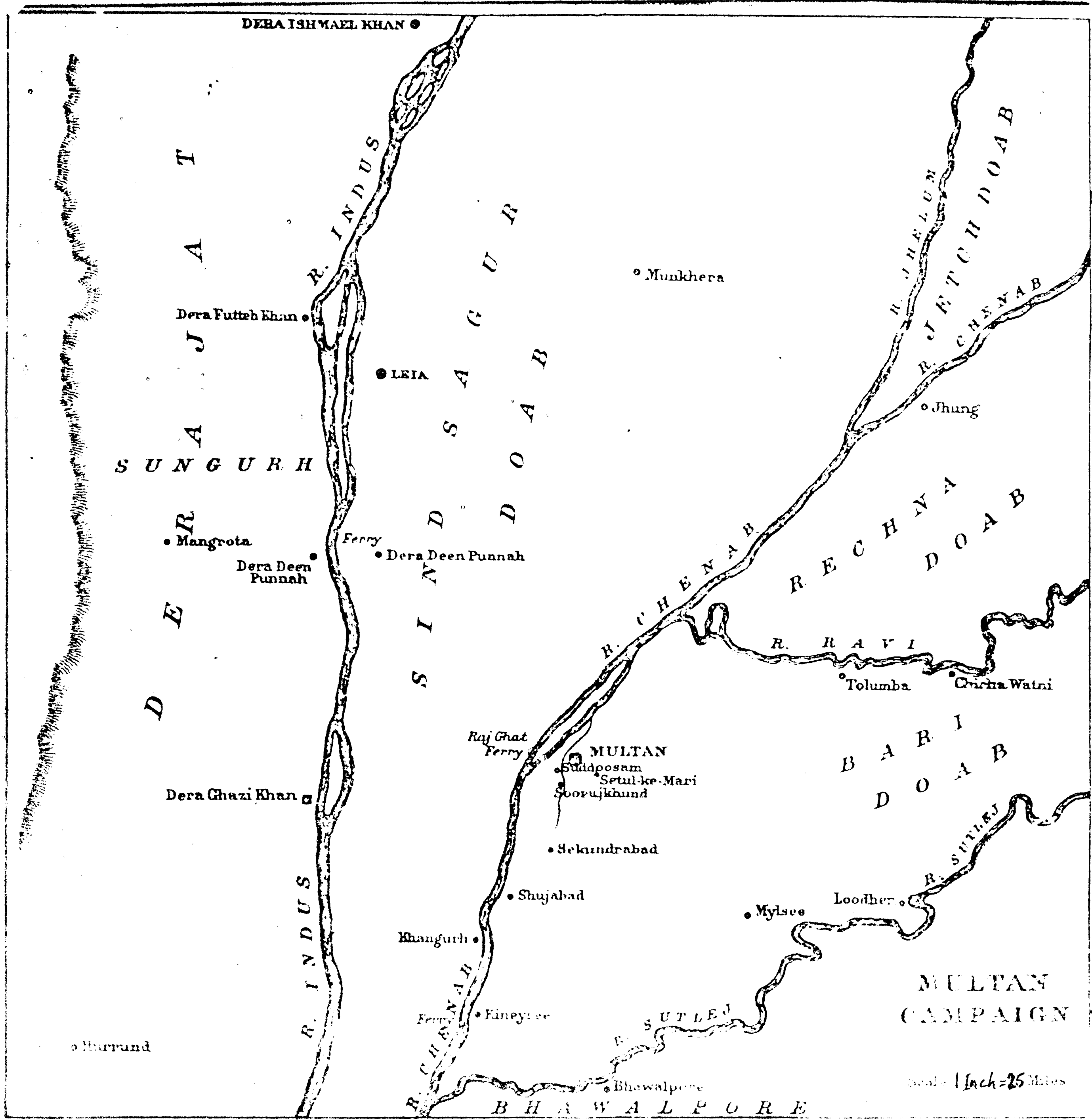
The fall of Kangra was the beginning of the end of Katoch domination in the hills. In 1811, fort of Kotilla was siezed. In 1813 Gharipur followed. In 1815, for failing to attend Ranjit Singh's court at Sialkot, both the Rajas of Nurpur and Jaswan were ousted from their territories. Then Datarpur, Kotlehar too were seized. Soon almost all hill states of the region such as Chamba, Nurpur, Kotla, Shahpur, Jasrota, Mankot, Jaswan, Siba Kulhor, Mandi, Suket and Kulu² were paying tribute to the Lahore Sarkar.

Bikrama Jit Hasrat goes on to say, " The Sikh administration in the hills an outcome of their strong hold over the region was a mild one; at least, it could not be termed as oppressive. The customary laws of the people were not interfered with and the mode of assessment and collection of revenue remained unchanged."³

1. JD Cunningham, History of the Sikh, reprint 1990, p 133.

2. Bikrama Jit Hasrat, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977, pp 53-54.

3. The Kangra valley, from times in antiquity by usage, had a system of government share of produce fixed permanently and the Sikhs found it convenient not to change it. The state share was 1/2 the produce on good land, and 2/5th, 1/3rd or 1/4th on inferior lands. Crown land was farmed out and usually the 'banwaris' or the extra cesses prevalent in the past were also leased out. These extra cesses, relics of the past, were prevalent in all the 'Subas' during the Sikh rule under different names. In the Kangra hills, they were called the 'banwaris' or cesses on professions and callings. A Shepherd, as for instance, paid 2 rupees per 100 head of sheep, a herdsman 1 rupee per buffalo, a weaver 12 annas per loom, a barber, a washerman, a potter, a blacksmith, a tailor, a carpenter 12 annas per house. Shopkeepers paid one and a half rupees per shop; water mills on rivers paid 3 maunds of flour, and those on irrigation canals 6 maunds of flour. (Bikrama Jit Hasrat, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977, p 55 and footnote 1).



CHAPTER V

EXPANSION OF THE PUNJAB FRONTIERS

Immediately after occupation of Lahore, Ranjit Singh had not only confronted the other Misl chiefs but also the Nawab of Kasur in close vicinity of Lahore. Then maintaining surprise and not letting out when he would march Ranjit Singh had launched his campaigns of expansion, taking in his gambit territories away from Lahore in ever increasing concentric circles. Rarely did Ranjit Singh deduce an objective the first time. He took his time and thus his campaigns stretched over a number of years. He went back and returned going back and returning to his objective without adhering to any fixed time pattern. While Kasur, Cis-Satluj and Kangra have already been discussed. In the expansion of Punjab Frontiers Multan, Kashmir and territories along river Indus such as Mankera and Peshawar are included.

Multan

The province of Multan at its broadest was 175 kms long and 120 kms wide. Four major rivers; Indus, Chenab, Ravi and Satluj flowed through it. Some towns of note were Multan, Leiah, Khangarh, Dera Ghazi Khan and Jhang.

Multan was an old and prosperous city situated on the East bank of river Chenab in the middle of vast desert. It was the most important trading centre for caravans which came from Central Asia through the Bolan Pass on their way to Delhi. Many conquerors including Tamberlane took the
1
Multan route to reach the heart of Hindustan. It was 90 Kms

1. Khushwant Singh, A History of the Sikhs, Volume I, 1943, p 249.

North of the point of confluence of rivers Satluj and Chenab. The town itself stood on a ridge and was surrounded by a wall about 5 km in circumference. The outside of this wall was 16 meters high. The height of the wall from inside varied from 3.5 to 6.5 meters. The wall had numerous towers and six gates. The mammoth mud and brick fort was situated on another high mound inside the city wall.

In 1808 Mountstuart Elphinstone who visited the city, observed that it was 6.5 km from the river banks and was surrounded by a wall between 40 and 50 feet high. the country was fertile, flat and had good soil. Even though it had canals for irrigation; but Mountstuart recorded, it was a well cultivated country going to decay.¹ He found government exacting heavy taxes and rapacious ungovernable troops indulging in every other kind of abuse. "The army of the Nawab at that time was estimated 2000 strong with 20 guns but 10,000 militia could in time of emergency be called out."²

The Multan province, before the Afghans or Sikhs came on the scene, was part of Mughal Empire. In 1757 alongwith Sind it was ceded to Ahmad Shah Abdali. In 1767 the Sikhs of Bhangi Misl made their first unsuccessful attempt on Multan. However, in 1772 they were invited to intercede in a feud for governorship of Multan between Shuja Khan Sadozai and Haji Sharif Beg. In the battle which followed the Sikhs defeated the combined forces of Shuja Khan Sadozai and his ally the

1. Bikramajit Hasrat, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977, pp 91-92, quoting Elphinstone, Mountstuart's; an account of the Kingdom of Kabul 1839, Volume I, p 23, 27-28.

2. Ibid.

Nawab of Bhawalpur. The Bhangis instead of handing over the territory to the host, seized the fortress and claimed Multan as a Khalsa territory.¹

Their rule¹ lasted only for seven years. For, in 1779 Timur Shah, son of Abdali, marched to Multan with a large force and after a siege of 40 days forced the Sikh garrison to evacuate Multan.² He appointed Mujaffar Khan, son of Shuja Khan, Governor of Multan. This chief thereafter until his death in 1818, was engaged in constant clash of arms with the Sikhs in their endeavour to re-assert their authority over Multan.

At the turn of the century the once powerful ruling dynasty of Ahmad Shah in the neighbouring Afghanistan was on its way to ruin because of the civil war amongst the four sons of Timur Shah Humayun, Mahamud, Shah Zaman and Shah Shuja for supremacy. Consequently, the east of the Indus, particularly the province of the Multan, became the target of Ranjit Singh's expansion West-wards.

While Ranjit Singh's military strength was on the increase, he did not get carried away in the grandiose expeditions for glory like Napoleon in Russia. He understood the potential of his army so well that he preferred to exercise economy of effort and not incur unnecessary loss of army's combat potential. He never hesitated to call off a military enterprise to fight on another day. In this, he was essentially following the

1. Bikramjit Masrat, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977 pp 90-91.
2. Lepel H Griffin, The Punjab Chiefs, Lahore, 1865, p 482.

Guerilla strategy of applying and reapplying the force, always waiting for the chance when his own force was sure of victory; a principle already practiced by young Ranjit Singh against Shah Zaman's invading army in the last decade of eighteenth century. Ranjit Singh took the same approach with Multan province. To reduce it, he did not apply full force in one attempt,¹ he made a number of them. In 1802 he under-took a reconaissance in force upto Multan by passing Jhang.² then in 1805 he reduced Jhang and threatened Multan. This was repeated in 1807, 1810, 1816, 1817. Finally in 1818, he occupied the fort of Multan and appointed his own Governor to administer the province. A long campaign indeed, but it shows the planning and preparation which must have been gone into for an enterprise of such a magnitude. On the East bank of river Chenab was Jhang. It was 150 km North-East of Multan and as much South-West of Lahore. By virtue of its geographical location, it dominated the 'Doab' between Chenab and Ravi. Further, the Sial Chief of Jhang's

1. Gupta says, "Ranjit Singh invaded Multan seven times. His policy was not to kill his powerful enemy at one stroke but to go on striking at him until he grew so weak as to submit voluntrily or to be defeated easily without much loss in men, money and material" (Hari Ram Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Vol V 1991, p 106 refers). On the same subject Kiernan writes, "When there was a prospect of resistance, he temporised until his opportunity was ripe" (Victor Gkiernan, MA, Metcalfes Mission to Lahore (1800-1809) Punjab Government Record Office, Monograph No 21, 1988, p 105 refers).

2. There is no corroborative evidence supporting local histories of Kanahaya Lal, Ranjitnama (Lahore, 1870) and of Dewan Amarnath, Zafarnama Ranjit Singh (Lahore, 1928) that a battle was fought between the troops of Nawab Muzaffar Khan and Ranjit Singh (In 1802) and that the town was ransacked by the Sikhs" (Bikrama Jit Hasrat Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977, p 92, refers). Further Griffin too writes "In winter of 1802 Ranjit Singh marched towards Multan to spy out the land (Lepel H Griffin, The Punjab Chiefs, Lahore, 1865, p 482, refers).

popularity in the region gave him the ability to collect a large body of irregular tribals and effectively interfere with the lines of supply of an army despatched to reduce and hold Multan. Realising the military significance of Jhang, Ranjit Singh in 1803, sent his agents to Ahmad Khan, the Sial chief of Jhang, demanding tribute and a promise of regular payment in future. When the agents returned with vague promise, it was an excuse which Ranjit Singh was looking forward to; he gave the orders for the reduction of Jhang to his infantry battalions (raised recently) in conjunction with artillery and Ghorcharas.

The Sial Chief had collected a large number of the Mohamedan tribes, consisting of Sials, Kharals, Bharwanas and others. The battle lasted from afternoon to the evening¹ "The casualties on both sides were very great." Ranjit Singh besieged the city by night and cut off the communications. The siege lasted three days. When the Sial Chief found himself deserted by the country cousins and his own servants he fled with his family to Multan. Immense wealth of the Sial Chief accumulated over many years was removed to Lahore, the rest plundered by the troops. Ranjit Singh then proceeded to attack the towns of Uch, Sahiwal and Garh Maharaja. Their Muslim Chiefs were forced to part with money and horses. By then Ahmad Khan Sial came forward to pay a tribute of Rs 60,000 a year to the Lahore Darbar. His offer was accepted and Ranjit Singh permitted him to return to Jhang.

Two years later in 1805 Ranjit Singh was once again on his way to Multan when Muzaffar Khan met him at Mahtan 30 km North of Multan. He offered rich presents and Rs 70,000 in cash, Ranjit Singh accepted the gifts and returned.

1. Ibid.

On his way, at Jhang the news of Holkar crossing Satluj with Lake in pursuit was received by Ranjit Singh. " Leaving his principal commandant Futtih Singh Alowaleeuh to collect the tribute and bring up the guns and heavy baggage Ranjit hastened with his light troops to Umrutsur." ¹ This event subsequently saw Ranjit Singh for the first time come face to face with the Marathas and the English. ²

Kutb-ud-din Khan of Kasur, a Pathan colony very close to Lahore, was an ally of the Nawab of Multan. In 1807 Ranjit Singh had reduced this stronghold and forced its Nawab to retire to Mamdot. The same year he had invested and reduced Dipalpur, 130 kms South-West of Lahore. He gave it as a jagir to his son Kharak Singh and himself continued with his army to Multan. Muzaffar Khan once again to save his province was forced to pay a huge indemnity. During this expedition when Ranjit Singh reached in the vicinity of Bahawalpur he sent his wakil to Ranjit Singh and, after an amicable settlement, the 'Khalsa' Army retired.

In the meantime, the rivalry between Ranjit Singh and the British over the Cis-Satluj region was gathering into war clouds. The problem was resolved in 1809 by the Treaty of Amritsar. After the treaty, freed from his apprehensions in the South, Ranjit Singh first completed the conquest of Kangra and then in the following year on 03 Feb 1810, the Maharaja met Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk, the ex king of Kabul near

1. HS Bhatia, Rare Documents on Sikhs and their Rule in the Punjab, 1992, p 47, quoting Captain William Murray's "Memoir on Historical and Political Transactions in the Punjab."

2. The Holkar Lake episode referred to here has been mentioned earlier in the text.

Khushab on the West bank of Jhelum 250 kms North of Multan and 200 Kms North-West of Lahore. There they discussed the possibility of latter's making an attempt to recover the provinces of Kashmir and Multan with the cooperation of the Sikh troops.¹ But Shah Shuja was suspicious of the Sikh designs and did not come to any understanding with Ranjit Singh.² In spite of that Ranjit Singh used the meeting as the pretext, for giving an ultimatum to Muzaffar Khan, in the name of Shah Shuja who had hereditary right over Multan, to handover the province of Multan to him. Because going back in time it was Taimur Shah, grand father of Shah Shuja who had appointed Muzaffar Khan his Governor. Ranjit Singh had a double motive. Firstly, it was an attempt that if Nawab of Multan hands over the province, he would be able to avoid a long campaign for Multan. Secondly, as subsequent events will show he wanted to achieve surprise by keeping his designs over Khusab and Sahiwal hidden, while in public letting out that his army was on its way to Multan.

Ranjit Singh marched quickly and silently to Sahiwal 35 km South of Khushab. However, the Baluch chief Fatteh Khan was not deceived and the Sikh army found him ready for a fight. 'Vakils' then were sent to allay Fateh Khan's fears and summon him to the Sikh court, but fearful of treachery he instead sent his minor son Lal Khan with rich presents. Ranjit Singh received the presents as per custom and withdrew with apparent satisfaction back towards Khushab.

1. Syad Muhammad Latif, History of the Punjab, reprint 1994, p 385.

2. Bikrama Jit hasrat, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977, p 92; quoting 'Secton to Swinston 15 Mar 1810. Manuscript Records in the Punjab Government Records Office Lahore; 74.

The Baluch chief and his subjects were taken in; he thought that Ranjit Singh had departed for good. But, he returned by night. The defenders were totally surprised and an immediate assault on the fort followed. The fort was captured and Fattah Khan with his family sent to Lahore.¹ The march of Ranjit Singh towards Sahiwal in the first instance after a long halt in the environs of Khushab created an impression on Zaffar Khan, the chief of Khushab, that Ranjit Singh with his army was unlikely to return. But when Ranjit Singh² the astute General, had retraced his steps from Sahiwal, he first reduced Khushab and then returned to Sahiwal by night as already mentioned. He had thus achieved a double surprise for firstly, Zafan Khan did not expect him back at Khushab. Apparently the Baluch chief too must not have expected him after he had taken the presents and gone.

The Sikh Army next exacted tribute from Uch and Bokhara two sacred places. Ranjit Singh had due regard to the sanctity of sacred places and wanted to cause minimum³ bloodshed which saved them from destruction.

Notwithstanding Ranjit Singh's demand, Muzaffar Khan had refused to surrender the province and he made detailed preparations for the defence of the Multan fort. The fort

1. Syad Muhammad Latif, History of the Punjab, reprint 1994, pp 385-386.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

was reputed to be impregnable.¹ He stocked it with water and rations for a long seige. The Sikh Army, reached Multan on the 24th of Febraury and took possession of the city on the following day.² Their arrival alarmed the neighbouring Chiefs so much that Muhammad Khan chief of Leia and Bhakkar districts North of Multan, paid Rs 1,20,000/- as security for the safety of his territory when the chief of Bhawalpur, Sadiq Muhammad Khan offered a lakh, his tribute was not accepted and he was forced to give a 500 strong cavalry unit to join the Sikh army for the impending assault on the Multan fort. Ranjit Singh had paid full attention to planning and preparation of logistic support. "Extensive transport arrangements were made both by land and water from Lahore and Amritsar, and the whole resources of the country were unreservedly placed at the disposal of the military authorities."³

The fort was invested, the positions for deployment of artillery guns were reconnoitered carefully to accomplish

1. Bikrama Jit Hasrat, in the Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977, pp 93-94, footnotes, quoting (Elphinstone, Kabul, Volume I, pp 27-28 Masson Travels, Volume I, p 394 ff: Burnes, Travels in Bokhara, p 94) informs that, the modern structure of the fort was raised in 1640 AD by prince Murad Bakshah the original fort having been constructed in 7th or 8th century BC. It was conquered by Alexander the Great in 326 BC and by an Arab invader Muhammad bin Quasim in 702 AD. Its outer perimeter was 2 km. It is constructed irregularly on a mound of earth, its walls were 2 meters thick, rising upto 12 meters in height. It had 30 towers, and was well secured by a deep trench and a gateway, approached by a draw-bridge. There were two flanking towers and four gates all protected by projecting spikes to prevent their being battered by elephants. In the interior of the fort there were a number of houses and mosques with coupolas.

2. Syad Muhammad Latif, History of the Punjab, reprint 1994, p 386.

3. Syad Muhammad Latif, History of the Punjab, reprint 1994, p 386.

effective fire. "All the buildings within musket shot of the Fort were levelled. Guns were planted on the bastions, small mines were run out and occasional and successful rallies retarded the operations of the beseigers".¹ The lines of assault by various units were selected and high rewards to those chiefs who would distinguish in the action were promised. However, the Bhangi Gun 'Zamzama' brought from Lahore to batter down the walls of the fort arrived without its auxiliary equipment.² Recourse to mining was undertaken but the besieged were successfully countermined. A heavy artillery bombardment was kept up for a few days. Some little impression that was made on the ramparts of the citadel by the Sikh artillery had the effect only of redoubling the zeal of the besieged.³ "The guns from its high walls could hit the farthest suburb."⁴ The enemy counter fire on Sikh artillery close to the fort killed Sardar Atar Singh Dhari and twelve Gunners. Among the many

1. HS Bhatia, Rare Documents on Sikhs and their rule in the Punjab, 1992, p 87 quoting Captain William Murraray's "Memoir on Historical and Political Transactions in the Punjab".

2. Syad Muhammad Latif, History of the Punjab, reprint 1994, p 386.

3. Ibid.

4. Khushwant Singh, A History of the Sikhs, Volume 1, 1963, p 249.

Harassed by perennial Sikh pressure, "Nawab Muzaffar Khan complained of the Sikh designs to the British Government and sought their assistance to save his Kingdom".¹ Hasrat writes that, "To counteract the Saddozai Nawab's move, Ranjit Singh made a ludicrous proposal to the British Agent at Ludhiana for a joint conquest of Multan. The move for cooperation in the Sikh ambitions towards Multan was, however, rejected by Fort William".²

Between 1810 and 1811, the Army marched from Lahore not only West-wards as already mentioned but also advanced to the North to Bhimbar and Rajouri. The following year "In February (1811), the Maharaja marched in the direction of the salt mines between the Jhelum and the Indus, and, in the vicinity of Pind Dadan Khan, captured three forts".³ It is safe to conjecture that these activities of Ranjit Singh must have created alarm in Kabul, because the Sikh court received the information that Shah Muhammad at the head of 12000 Afghans had crossed the Indus.⁴ "Ranjit Singh

1. Bikrama Jit Hasrat, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977, p 94, quoting Edmonstone to Ochterlony, 25 September and 28 December 1810, Manuscript Records in the Punjab Government Records Office, Lahore 6 : 54 and 6 : 67.

2. Ibid.

3. Syad Muhammad Latif, History of th Punjab, reprint 1994, p 389.

4. Syad Muhammad Latif, History of the Punjab, reprint 1994, p 389.

forthwith proceeded to Rawalpindi and took up a position there." ¹ He also despatched Fakir Aziz-ud-din to the Shah's camp to find the real intentions of the Afghans. Apparently the prompt and 'in strength' response of Ranjit Singh forced Shah Muhammad to adopt the reconciliatory attitude and on his instructions, Fakir Aziz-ud-din was informed that the Shah had advanced to overawe the Afghan Governors of Attock and Kashmir, who had lately supported Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk. Re-assured with the reply and a confirmation from "Sardar Jeewan Singh the chief of that place (who had) stated that the Shah was at the fort of Attock and that his troops had not insulated the Lahore Frontier or molested the inhabitants ² a ceremonial meeting between the two Monarchs then followed and Ranjit Singh returned to Lahore. A part of Sikh army was then despatched under Mokham Chand to reduce the country between Multan and the Majha. To the North-East Desa Singh Majithia with the aid of Artillery under the command of Ghous Khan was directed to reduce the fort of Kotle, in 'Ilake Tilok Nath' half way between Kangra ³ and Nurpur.

During this period Ranjit Singh employed his Generals in reducing the remaining independent chiefs and their

1. Ibid. Murray writes, "Mahmood's march on Peshawar rendered it necessary for the Sikh ruler, to adopt immediate measures to save his own country from the curse of a foreign invasion". (HS Bhatia, Rare Documents on Sikhs and their Rule in the Punjab, 1992, p 167; quoting Captain William Murray's "Memoir on Historical and Political Transactions in the Punjab", 1830.

2. HS Bhatia, Rare Documents on Sikhs and their Rule in the Punjab, 1992, p 90; quoting Captain William Murray's, "Memoir on Historical and Political Transactions in the Punjab", 1830.

3. Latif says, Ranjit Singh promised to Majiha half of the Tilok Nath estate as a Jagir, if he succeeded in reducing the fort within a week. Majitha accomplished the feat and the Maharaja gave him half the Jagir worth Rs 7000/-. Syad Muhammad Latif, History of the Punjab, reprint 1994, pp 389-390, refers).

forts, thus slowly and steadily moving towards the unification of Punjab.

In September 1811 Mokham Chand seized the possession of the Fyzulpuria Misl of Jalandhar, Phillour, Patti and Hetpur. "For his conspicuous services, Mokham Chand was created a Dewan, and a rich Khillat was granted to him, together with a sword set in diamonds and an elephant with a golden howdah."¹

In 1812 Kharak Singh, was married to Chand Kaur, the only daughter of Sardar Jaimal Singh Kanhia. Sir David Ochterlony was invited as a guest. He came from Ludhiana with a small escort including a galloper gun² which Ranjit Singh had desired to see.

The same year Ranjit Singh found reason to despatch Dewan Mokham Chand to carry out reconnaissance of Kashmir in preparation for a campaign in that direction. The reason was an offer from Fateh Khan, the minister of Shah Mahmud of kabul to join forces with him to invade Kashmir. In 1813 at Haidaru, a few miles from Attock, followed the battle for Attock and the following year in 1814, Ranjit Singh made the first attempt on Kashmir.³

1. Syad Muhammad Latif, History of the Punjab, reprint 1994, p 390.

2. Galloper Guns or horse drawn artillery were first introduced by De Boigne about 1790. (De Boigne was employed by Mahadji Sindhia in 1789 to raise a brigade). The East India Company took up the idea later (1802-1803) their efficiency was proved in the Maratha war by the terror they produced on the maratha horse. Two of these guns, six-pounders, were attached to each regiment of horse, and nothing could exceed the speed and exactness of the manoeuvres made with them at full speed by this large body of cavalry (Jadunath Sarkar Fall of the Mughal Empire, volume 4, reprint 1992, p 225 refers).

3. Hari Ram Gupta, History of the Sikhs, volume V, 1991, p 108.

The Sikhs collected tribute from Multan in 1812 and 1815. In 1816 the efforts for the conquest of Multan were renewed. Phula Singh Akali was sent against Multan, alongwith Dewan Bhawani Das, who, however, consented to withdraw on payment of Rs 80,000/-¹. In 1817 the force was once again sent under Bhawani Dass and Ram Dayal which had also to retire with a nazar of Rs 61,000/-². When Dewan Bhawani Dass returned with the paltry tribute Ranjit Singh removed him from command of troops and levied a fine, on him.³ Simultaneously much greater preparations were set in motion. "Troops were collected in strength, the transport system reorganised, the line of communication studded with depots of military stores and provisions."⁴ While all these attempts to reduce Multan were continuing, Ranjit Singh it appears was apprehensive of the Afghans to collectively rise and aid Muzaffar Khan. Therefore, he sent out his troops to bring under subjugation the chiefs of numerous districts some of them as far west as the Indus. "After a victory or the capture of a fortress he treated the vanquished with leniency and kindness, however stout their resistance might have been, and there were at his court many chiefs despoiled

1. Monograph No 17, 23rd April 1816, Ludhiana volume of imperial Records, 1808-816. On this Sikh expedition to Multan Griffin writes, "In February 1816 an irregular attack was made upon Multan by the Sikhs. A stronger force had been sent to Bahawalpur and Multan to collect the tribute and there being some delay in Muzaffar Khan's payment Phula Singh Akali, mad and drunk with 'Bhang' led a storming party of fanatics like himself against the town and with such impetuosity did they make the attack, that they gained possession of some of the out-works of the citadel. But Fakir Azizuddin made due apologies, the Nawab paid his tribute quicker than he would otherwise have done and the Sikh Army proceeded towards Mankera" (Lepel Griffin, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1967, p 185 refers).

2. NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, p 57.

3. Bikrama Jit Hasrat, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977, p 94.

4. Ibid.

of their estates but to whom he had given suitable employ... The Sardars who had been the leaders of the several confederacies which he over-threw, were all in this fashion reduced from equality and rivalry to honourable subjection; and in addition there was a large group of Muhammadan Khans and nobles... whom Ranjit Singh wisely attached to his fortunes, thereby materially strengthening his position in the Western districts. The heads of the Mussalman tribes of Sials, Ghebas, Tiwanas and Kharrals... were included in this group".¹ Thus by end 1817, "The Punjabies had already severed the chain of small states around Multan which were linked together in their allegiance to the Afghans. All that remained was Multan itself".²

In January 1818, an army of 20,000 men with a large number of Guns (12 batteries)³ under General Elahi Baksh and a contingent of Akalis, all, under the nominal leadership of 16 years old Prince Kharak Singh,⁴ but in reality commanded by Mir Dewan Chand,⁵ marched from Lahore for a

1. Lepel Griffin, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1967, pp 98-99.

2. Khushwant Singh, A History of the Sikhs, Volume I 1963, p 249.

3. Hari Ram Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Volume V, 1991, p 110.

4. In 1760, in events leading to the third battle of Panipat, "It was decided that the Bhau (Sadashiv Rao Bhau the son of Baji Rao I's younger brother Chimnaji Appa) should lead the northern expedition. But lest he should set up an independent principality of his own in Hindustan when enjoying supreme command there, without a partner, a brake on him was devised by sending the Peshawa's son Vishwas Rao (a lad of seventeen) with this army as its nominal commander-in-chief, while the Bhau was to act as his guardian and the executive manager of all his affairs, like the experienced nobles joined under the name of 'ataliqs' to the young princes of Delhi in their first campaigns. (Jadunath Sarkar, Fall of the Mughal Empire, Volume 2 (1754-1771) reprint 1991, pp 140-141 refers). However, in the case of Mir Diwan Chand, the reasons were different "Several Sikh Sardars had refused to serve under an upstart Brahmin a man of yesterday". (Hari Ram Gupta, History of the Sikh, volume V 1991, p 110 refers).

5. Sir Lepel Griffin, Ranjit Singh, Second Indian reprint 1967, p 185

final and decisive battle to bring the Multan campaign to a successful end. "The time chosen was most suitable because the Kabul government was in a state of disorganisation and turmoil. Wazir Fateh Khan, the strongman was involved in the siege of Herat"¹. No succour could therefore be expected by Muzaffar Khan from Kabul. Great attention was paid to logistics. Raj Kaur, mother of Kharak Singh, set up her camp at Kot Kamalia, to supervise, the movement of supplies.² "All the boats on the Ravi, the Chenab and the Jhelum were requisitioned to carry supplies and stores for the troops. Arrangements for postal stations at short intervals between Lahore and Multan were made for speedy communication of news"³. on the way the Sikh army captured the forts of Khangarh and Muzaffargarh.

Nawab Muzaffar Khan was not unaware of these large scale preparations and guessed that this time he would not be able to buy off the Darbar, Once again he tried to rouse the Muslim peasants with the cry of a holy war against the infidel and he prepared the city and fort for a long siege. He planned to defend himself in three stages; in the country-side, in the city, and in the fort. The first engagement was in the open, where he let his ghaziz, armed only with swords and spears, gain the martyrdom they sought at the hands of well-disciplined troops equipped with cannon and musket. This battle lasted only one day and Muzaffar Khan withdrew the remnant of his forces behind the city walls. The second round began with the Lahore troops surrounding the city and bombarding its walls. The defenders held them at bay for a few weeks. When the city walls crumbled, the defenders retreated in to the fort to fight the third and last round.

The fort was surrounded by a large, deep moat. Although at that time of the year (March) there was no water in the moat, it was broad enough to keep cannon at a safe distance from the battlements; it was also deep enough to make the task of miners very hazardous. For a whole month Elahi Baksh's batteries pounded the massive walls without making any impression. March turned to

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1. Hari Ram Gupta, History of the Sikhs volume V 1991, pp 109-110.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Ibid.

April and the heat became unbearable. The monsoon was not far off. If the fort was not carried before the moat was filled with water, it would
 1
 never capitulate.

The city was occupied but the fort held on for about four months "The beleaguered Afghan garrison 2000 strong resisted with redoubtable courage and endurance; the Sikh cannon made breaches in the thick mud and brick walls of the fortress across the wide moat which surrounded it, but the Ghazis soon filled them up. The bombardment proved
 2
 ineffective". For the reduction of the fort (in April) the Zamzama a 80 pounder gun was moved from Lahore to Multan in
 3
 12 days, alongwith reinforcements under Jamadar Khushal
 4
 Singh. Till the second of June the bombardment went on all told the Zamzama gun was fired four times and two large
 5
 breaches were made in the walls. "While the defenders' energies were concentrated in blocking the damage a party of Nihangs stole down the moat under cover of darkness and laid a mine under another portion of the wall. The next morning a
 6
 huge segment of the battlement was blown sky high."

1. Khushwant Singh A History of Sikhs volume I 1963, pp 250-251.

2. Bikram Jit Hasrat Ranjit Singh 1977, p 95.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Lepel H Griffin, The Punjab Chiefs, 1865, p 486. A stirring account of the battle is given by Ghulam Jillani in his Jang-i-Multan. "Jillani was a spy who mingled with the Durbar troops. He states that a cannon lost one of its wheels and could not be properly fired without support. The Durbar soldiers wrangled among each other to have the honour of supporting the cannon on their shoulders. Many were killed with the recoil of the gun". (Khushwant Singh, A History of the Sikhs, Volume I 1963, p 251 footnote 5 refers).

6. Khushwant Singh, A History of the Sikhs, Volume I 1963, p 251.

More than one assault was made by the Sikhs, at they were repulsed, on one occasion with the loss of 1,800 men. The gates were blown in, but the garrison raised behind them mounds of earth on which they fought hand to hand with Sikhs. The defenders of the fort were at length reduced to two or three hundred fighting men, most of them of the tribe or family of Muzaffar Khan. The rest had either been killed or had gone over to the enemy, for they had been heavily bribed to desert their master and many of them were unable to resist the temptation. At length, on the 2nd June, an Akali by name Sadhu Singh determined to surpass what Phula Singh had done in 1816, rushed with a few desperate followers into an out work of the fort, and taking the Afghans by surprise captured it. The Sikh forces seeing this success, advanced to the assault, and mounted the breach at the Khizri gate. Here the old Nawab, with his eight sons and all that remained of the garrison, stood sword in hand resolved to fight to the death. So many fell beneath the keen Afghan swords, that the Sikhs drew back and opened fire on the little party with their match locks "come on like men" shouted the Afghans, "and let us fall in fair fight", but this was an invitation the Sikhs did not care to accept. There died the white bearded Muzaffar Khan, scorning to accept quarters and there died his five sons, Shah Nawaz Khan, Mumtax Khan, Azam Khan, Hak Nawaz Khan and Shah Baz Khan. Zu-l-fakar Khan, his second son, was also wounded severely in the face, and the two others Sarafraz Khan an Amir Beg Khan accepted quarter and were saved, Diwan Ram Dayal took Sarafraz Khan up on his elephant and conducted him with all honour to his own tent. Few of the garrison escaped with their lives, and the whole city was given upto plunder. The fort of Shajaabad was also reduced and five guns taken from it. After this the walls of Multan were repaired, and a garrison of six hundred men under command of Sardars Jodh Singh Kalsia and Dal Singh Nahrana being left in the fort. The Sikh army

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returned to Lahore.

Ranjit Singh's conquest of Multan ended Afghan influence in the Punjab and broke the solid phalanx of the Muslim states in the South. It subdued the chiefs of Bahawalpur, Dera Ghazi Khan, Dera Ismail Khan and Mankera. And it opened up the road to Sindh. In addition to all these military and political advantages, Multan was a valuable acquisition. It yielded an annual revenue of nearly Rs 7 lakhs.

1. Lepel H Griffin, The Panjab Chiefs, 1865, pp 486-487.

Kashmir

When the news of the storming and fall of Multan reached Lahore, "Ranjit dispatched an express to his son conveying a peremptory order to march the army back to the capital immediately",¹ without disclosing his intent. The loss of Multan was liable to bring retribution and possible move of re-inforcements into Kashmir, the remaining Afghan province, via the traditional route of Peshawar across Indus, Attock, Hasan Abdal to Srinagar. To nip in the bud any such endeavour by the Afghans, Ranjit Singh immediately took the initiative. No sooner he was ready, (in Oct 1818) than he set course for Peshawar.

Obviously Ranjit Singh's strategy was to forestall any reaction by Afghans over loss of Multan; by showing his presence in Peshawar and so overawe them that they were not easily swayed to form a coalition, declare a holy war, and embark on an invasion of Lahore.

The notable generals with Ranjit Singh who knew the North-West territory well were Hari Singh Nalwa and Nihang Phula Singh. When the force arrived in the plains of Hazara Khattak tribesmen ambushed a reconnaissance party sent across the river Indus at Attock. The party was killed to a man. Ranjit Singh was furious, because Khattaks were paying tribute to Lahore Sarkar. He drew his sword and hurled a trayful of gold coins into the Attock (river Indus) as an offering and rode his elephant into the swirling waters. The troops followed and the tribal territory along the west bank

1. HS Bhatia, Rare Documents on Sikhs and their Rule in the Punjab, 1992, p 116, quoting Captain William Murray's "Memoir on Historical and Political Transactions in the Punjab", 1830.

of river Indus including the strong holds of Khairabad and Jehan-giria were occupied. The soldiers were given permission to plunder Khattak villages. However, when Khattak chief Firoz Khan submitted, he was forgiven and reinstated.

The news of the success of Lahore forces against the Khattak's disheartened Yar Muhammad Khan, the Afghan governor of Peshawar, so much that on the approach of the Sikh Army, he fled the city, leaving behind fourteen big guns and other war equipment. On 20 November 1818 when Ranjit Singh's forces entered Peshawar, he contrary to the practice of most Afghans and Pathans who had usually plundered the towns and cities of Northern India, Ranjit Singh forbade his soldiers from laying their hands on any person or property. (Maharaja's military motive was clear, he had come to secure a flank by winning the people over and not alienate them). The next morning 21 November 1818 he rode on his elephant through the bazars. For the first time in 800 years the city saw an Indian conqueror ride through its streets. Thus having executed a strategic check, Ranjit Singh turned his whole hearted attention to Kashmir.

Kashmir is a land of successively rising mountain ranges with beautiful valleys starting from low hills of Jammu, they go on rising until one sees the high ranges with perennial snow-capped mountain peaks, some double the height of the Alps. The Kashmir valley proper surrounded by high mountains, is about 150 km long and from North to South 80 km wide. The lofty Pir Panjal range extended from Muzaffarbad to Kishtwar on the Chenab. River Jhelum rises in the mountains which or the North-Eastern boundary of the

valley of Kashmir. Its start point being the Liddur in the remotest hill range Latitude $34^{\circ} 8'$; Longitude $75^{\circ} 48'$. Flowing in the South Westerly direction it receives in its course the Brang from the South-East and several other tributary streams which have origin in the Pir Panjal range. Just before entering the wular lake it receives the Sind originating in the lofty mountains in the North. When it emerges from the narrow Baramulla pass, it turns into a mountain stream taking a U turn at Uri it flows to Muzaffarbad and beyond. The Baramulla pass forms an outlet for the entire basin of Kashmir. Here the river is 420 feet broad. An old bridge of seven arches crosses it at Baramulla. In 1835 there were 13 bridges for crossing Jhelum in the valley. The whole course of the river from its mouth to the lower end of Baramulla was about 208 km, for 112 of which it was navigable. About 5 km below Muzaffarbad it received from the North the Kishanganga, a stream of equal volume which rises in Baltistan of little Tibet.

The Governor of Kashmir normally resided in Shergarh, a fortress occupying the South-East corner of Srinagar. There were seven main passes leading into Kashmir four from the South, one from the West and two from the North. Subsequently their number increased to 12. Some of these passes were, Toshamadan (10,500 feet), Bahramgala (11,400 feet), Budel (14,120 feet) and the Benihal (9,200 feet). The route from Lahore to Srinagar was, Lahore to Gujranwala, Wazirabad, Gujrat, Bhimbar, Naushera, Rajouri (3080 feet). Alternatively, from Gujrat one took the Jhelum (812 feet)

route along punch Toi river to Kotli and then Punch (3300 feet). Even from Rajouri one could reach Punch. Thereafter followed Punch, Toshemaidan - Srinagar route. Kashmir valley was a centre of trade for goods coming from Gilgit and Tibet. It produced good quality wood work, pashmine shawls, silk and saffron.

The direct route from Peshawar to Srinagar was, Peshawar to Attock, Hasan Abdal, Haripur, Abbottabad (4166 feet), Muzaffarabad (2470 feet) along river Jhelum to Baramulla and the Srinagar. Or via Tangdhar, Nashta Chun Pass, Kupwara and then Srinagar.

The people of Kashmir until about thirteenth century AD were followers of Buddhist and Hind religion. Then a Muhammadan dynasty succeeded for two hundred and fifty years. In 1588 AD Akbar established the Mughal rule, which lasted for a century and a half. Aurangzeb, Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan, visited its pleasant valleys, carrying with them their entire court. In Kashmir they built palaces and pleasure grounds, ruins of some of which, a visitor can still see. Afghans under Ahmad Shah conquered Kashmir in 1752, until finally Ranjit Singh expelled the Afghans and brought it under his rule.

As in Multan campaign so in Kashmir Ranjit Singh closed onto his objective slowly and steadily. His efforts spread over a number of years. Gupta writes, " On the withdrawal of Shah Zaman from the Punjab in 1799 Ranjit Singh thought of capturing Kashmir. First, he recovered his old fort of Rohtas, left Milkha Singh undisturbed in the possession of

Rawalpindi but deprived him of Hasan Abdal, and planted his own thana or military post there."¹ The importance of Hasan Abdal was due to its geographical location, the direct road from Kabul to Kashmir passed through that place.

Ranjit Singh's serious interest in Kashmir was apparent from his nibbling actions all along the borders of Kashmir province right from the beginning of his reign. In 1801 Ranjit Singh had exacted tribute from the Raja of Jammu and defeated a revolt by the Bhangi Sardars of Gujrat. In 1804, he captured Akalgarh from the Bhangi's of Gujrat. In 1806 he captured the fort of Pathankot and enforced his sovereignty over the chiefs of Jasrota, Chamba and Basohli. In 1807 Sialkot was captured. In 1808 it was infomed by Captain A Mathews, a British Officer, outwardly on a holiday but otherwise sent to spy on the Sikh nation, that, "Ranjit Singh had sent spies to Kashmir to report about the condition of the road from Bhimbhar to Srinagar and the poltical situation in the valley."²

In 1809 Ranjit Singh moved closer and captured the important town of Gujrat on the route to Kashmir. In 1812 a task force consisting of four battalions of infantry, 500 horse and a train of siege artillery, was despatched under the command of Bhai Ram Singh, the tutor of Kharak Singh, to reduce Bhimbar. The expedition was ostensibly sent to punish Sultan Khan, the chief of Bhimbar for murdering his relation Ismail Khan, to whom during one of earlier

1. Hari Ram Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Volume V, 1991, p 121.

2. Ibid.

expeditions, the Lahore Sarkar had allotted a portion of Bhimbar territory. "The Bhimbar chief offered battle from an elevated position which he had chosen with great judgement. The action began with a brisk fire of musketry from both sides, which the Sikhs supplemented with their artillery, but the ground chosen by the Bhimbar chief, gave him the advantage throughout, and the Sikhs, not withstanding the prodigious efforts they made to overcome the natural difficulties in their way and their stubborn valour, were utterly routed, on the third day." ¹ In the meantime Sikh reinforcements were ordered forward from Gujrat, Sultan Khan too strengthened his defences. However further battle was avoided when Sardha Ram envoy of Dewan Mokham Chand, negotiated a surrender agreement. The Bhimbar chief was sent to Lahore. Ranjit Singh ignored the understanding reached by his Generals and put Sultan Khan in captivity and all his possessions and property in Bhimbar were seized. ² Dewan Mokham Chand next collected tribute ³ from the chief of Rajouri and returned to Lahore. Bhai Ram ¹ Singh proceeded to reduce Akhnur and Jammu.

1. Syad Muhammad Latif, History of the Punjab, Reprint 1994, pp 392-393.

2. Ibid.

3. Rajouri, an ancient principality, had come under the supremacy of Kabul in 1752, alongwith rest of the Punjab, and was immediately subject to the Durrani Governor of Kashmir... The main road to Kashmir lay through Bhimbar and Rajouri, and when Ranjit Singh thought of conquering Kashmir, it became a necessary preliminary to subdue this states first. He therefore sent expeditions against these in 1810 and 1812. Bhimbar was subdued but Agar Khan continued to resist, though he agreed to pay tribute. (Diwan Kirpa Ram, Gulabnama, English translation by Prof Sukhdev Singh Charak, 1977, p 112, footnote 4 quoting Hutchison and Vogel op, at, pp 690-929,; Shahamat ali; the Sikhs and Afghans pp 98-100, refers).

4. Ibid.

The same year Ranjit Singh received an offer from Kabul¹ for a joint expedition to conquer Kashmir.

It will be worthwhile to briefly explain here the contemporary political situation in Afghanistan which gave rise to such an offer; After Taimur Shah's reign came to an end in 1793. The three sons of Taimur (grandsons of Ahmad Shah Abdali) Shah Zaman, Shah Shuja and Shah Mahmud were contesting for the throne. In this power struggle, the real power had shifted from their Saddozai clan into the hands of the chief Minister Wazir Fateh Khan, who was a Barakazai.

The successor of Taimur Shah, Shah Zaman the veteran of four attempts to invade India was over-thrown by the Barakazais. They installed Mahmud in his place and Mahmud put out Zaman's eyes. Zamans place was taken by Shuja... who ousted Mahmud from Kabul... (inturn) Barakazis expelled² Shuja and put back their nominee, Mahmud, in power." Shuja then crossed the Indus and met Ranjit Singh at Khushab, what exactly transpired between the two Monarchs is not known, however, one of his likely purposes was to so manœuvre Sikh aid, that he regained his throne. "The Maharaja, on the other hand, was equally anxious to get the Afghans to relinquish their title to their early conquests in the Punjab before he would commit the Durbar to an adventure in Afghanistan".

1. Murray says that Ranjit Singh made the first overtures, but in the Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, corroborated by the Zafarnama, we find that even before the marriage of Kharak Singh (February, 1812) Godar Mal, the wakil of Fateh Khan approached Ranjit Singh, proposing a coalition against Kashmir (NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh reprint 1975, p 45; quoting Murray refers).

2. Syad Muhammad Latif, History of the Punjab reprint 1994, p 394.

While Shah Shuja and Shah Zaman's families in seeking asylum reached Lahore safely alongwith the blind Zaman; Shah Shuja himself was made a captive by Jahanadad Khan, the governor of Attock. He then sent the royal prisoner to his brother Ata Muhammad Khan; in Kashmir ! Maybe in the ongoing civil war the governor of Kashmir and his brother at Attock were making an attempt to play the Shah Shuja card in their fight against the Wazir.

Then came Fateh Khan's offer to Ranjit Singh, for a joint action in Kashmir. It appears the Wazir was out to oust Ata Muhammad Khan, the Governor of Kashmir at any cost, since the latter had disowned his allegiance to the Kabul government and paid no tribute. He had defied his authority and helped Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk in capturing Peshawar in 1810. Most important objective of the Wazir (it appears) was to seize the accumulated treasure of the Governor of Kashmir, since his was the richest province of Kabul.¹ 'The Wazir was afraid that when he would be in Kashmir as the head of his army, Ranjit Singh might capture Attock and Peshawar and cut him off from Kabul.'² So he thought it better to make the Sikhs share the booty and march with him to Kashmir.

These proposals from Kabul were mooted in 1812, Gupta tells us that at the same time "The Maharaja was also anxious to send an expedition to Kashmir. He wished to possess knowledge of the mountain passes and the nature of the valley. He desired that his soldiers should have experience of fighting in snowfall or even in blizzard...(and) to secure the release of Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk from captivity in Kashmir. (Afterall) Shah's wife Wafa

1. Hari Ram Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Volume V, 1991, p 122.

2. Ibid, pp 121-122.

Begum had promised Koh-e-Nur diamond,¹ in return for her
 husbands safe arrival at Lahore".²

The Kabul Wazir and Ranjit Singh met at Rohtas to
 discuss Kashmir on 1 December 1812.³ Broadly, the two
 parties agreed that in return for a Sikh contingent of
 12,000 troops, to help in the conquest of Kashmir, Fateh
 Khan was to assist the Sikhs in conquest of Multan and give
 a share of the spoils of Kashmir and also hand over a part
 of the Kashmir territory to Ranjit Singh.⁴ Griffin writes,
 "The alliance was made only to be broken, both Maharaja and
 Fateh Khan determining to trick each other at the first

1. This diamond (then renowned for its magnitude and its migrations) is said to be an inch and a half in length and an inch wide and about 1/2 inch thick, it adorned the peacock throne at Delhi it was carried off by Nadir Shah, after whose death, it was seized in the plunder of Nadir's tents by Ahmad Shah, from whom it descended to his son, Shah Shuja. Finally, after annexation of Punjab, the British took it from Maharaja Dalip Singh, and cut it in three parts before fixing the pieces on the British crown.

2. Hari Ram Gupta, History of the Sikhs, volume V, 1991, p 122. The families of Shuja and the blinded Zaman were first granted asylum in Rawalpindi and thereafter they were shifted to Lahore. Kushwant Singh writes, in November 1811, "The one time conqueror of Lahore (Shah Zaman) returned to the city as a beggar. He was treated with great honour... the Maharaja personally welcomed him." However, "The only thing that disturbed the peace of the royal refugee was the arrival of an agent of Wazir Fateh Khan and Shah Mahmud, to solicit the help of the Durbar in the conquest of Kashmir where Shah Shuja was imprisoned... Wazir Fateh Khans agent offered half the loot and nine lakhs every year if the Panjabis marched alongside the Barakzai Afghans. The refugee family particularly Shah Shuja's senior wife Wafa Begam, and her sons, were terrified at the prospect of the Wazir and Mahmud (who had already blinded Zaman) capturing Shuja. They made a counter offer with the only object of real value which they possessed, the priceless diamond, Koh-i-Nur" NK Sinha Ranjit Singh reprint 1975, p 45 refers).

3. Henry T Prinsep, Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab, reprint 1970, p 75.

4. NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975, pp 45-47. On the same subject Griffin says "General Mokham Chand was placed in charge of the Sikh force, which was to receive a third part of the Kashmir plunder and he marched with Fateh Khan from Jhelum" (Lepel Griffin, Ranjit Singh reprint 1967, pp 190-191, refers).

opportunity; but it was necessary for the moment, as neither dared to march through the hills leaving a hostile
¹
 army behind him.

The invasion force under Diwan Mokham Chand and Fateh Khan marched together from Jhelum. But on nearing Fir Panjal Fateh Khan pressed on at a double pace his hardy mountain troops, quickly out distancing themselves from the Sikhs. He had achieved the neutrality of the Sikhs and was not interested in sharing the spoils. The Sikhs, were unable to move owing to a heavy fall of snow. "The Diwan saw the design of Fateh Khan but he was not disconcerted. He promised the Rajouri chief a Jagir of Rs 25,000 if he would show him a pass by which he might reach the valley at the same time as Fateh Khan, which he contrived to do with a handful of troops under Jodh Singh Kalsia and Nihal Singh Attari. The Diwan was thus present at the capture of Sher Ghar and Hari Parbat and the reduction of the valley which was work of no difficulty, for Atta Muhammad the Governor had fled and little resistance was offered".
²
 Fateh Khan seeing the weak Sikh force declined to hand over a third share of the plunder as had been agreed upon; Shah Shuja the ex Prince of Kabul was however handed over to the Diwan whom the Sikhs brought with them to Lahore. From him Ranjit
³
 Singh acquired the Koh-i-noor.

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1. Lepel Griffin, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1967, p 190.
 2. Lepel Griffin, The Punjab Chiefs, 1865, p 554.
 3. Diwan Amar Nath in memoirs of the Reign of Ranjit Singh writes, "Shah Shuja despite the demonstrations of joy with which his advent was greeted, was placed under the immediate surveillance of Sadi Khan, Kutwal of Lahore, and was asked to yield up diamond which his Begums had pledged for his safety. Shujah-ul-Mulk refused to satisfy a contract entered into by the ladies of his seraglio, but the reasons of the strongest proved the strongest reason, and the historical Koh-i-noor became the property of the Sikh ruler. (HS Batia, Rare Documents on Sikhs and Their Rule in the Punjab, 1992, p 172, quoting Dwan Ummer Nath, Memoirs of the Reign of Ranjit Singh, refers).

Fateh Khan seeing the weak Sikh force declined to hand over a third share of the plunder as had been agreed upon; Shah Shuja, the ex prince of Kabul, was however handed over to the Diwan whom the Sikhs brought with them to Lahore. From him Ranjit Singh acquired the Koh-i-Noor.

Ranjit Singh on being informed of rescinding of the agreement by Fateh Khan lost no time to get even with his adversary. In fact he was preparing for such an eventuality. Prinsep writes, 'Jahan Dad Khan, the Governor of Attock, despairing after his brother's defeat in Kashmir, of his own ability to resist the Wazir single handed, and knowing he had little favour to expect from him, had previously placed himself in correspondence with Ranjit Singh, to whom he promised the fort of Attock for a Jagir, in case he should be reduced to extremity¹'. To Ranjit Singh the importance² of Attock needed no emphasis. The forts situation was such that both from commercial and military point of view, it had been on the route of almost all the invaders of India from the North and was the point where the armies of Alexander, and Nadir Shah crossed the river in different periods of time and Taxila, the modern Attock was the only place where

1. Henry T Prinsep, Origin of the Sikh Power in Punjab, reprint 1970, p 76.

2. The fort of Attock is situated on a commanding height on the left or East bank of the Indus and overhanging the river. The fort of Khairabad is situated on the right bank of the river opposite Attock. The fort of Attock was built by the Emperor Akbar in 1583, to command the passage of the river. Facing the North, a white marble slab is fixed on the Lahori Gate with the inscription; Akbar the great is king of the kings of the earth. Great is God and magnificent is his glory. The inscription is dated 991H=1583 AD. The fort is in the form of a parallelogram having the shortest faces about 400 yards long, and the other sides about double that extent. The walls are of polished stone. During the time of the Mughal Emperors royal troops cantoned in the fort.

the stream was so calm that a bridge could be thrown over it. Should Ranjit Singh attack Kashmir, Attock will have to be reinforced in order to stop any Afghan reinforcements moving along this route into Kashmir or heading towards Lahore. Significance of Attock to Kashmir was well realised by Ranjit Singh and at the first opportunity he had secured it in 1813.

Ranjit Singh on Return, after the meeting at Jhelum, had as a consequence to the overtures from Jahan Dad Khan, left a detachment under Daya Singh, in the close vicinity to be ready to occupy that important fortress whenever it should be given up. Soon after in March 1813, Ranjit Singh received the important news that his officer had been admitted, and that the place was held and administered in his name.¹

Inside the fort, when it was handed over, the Sikh troops received 3510 mds of grain and 235 mds of rock salt, 439 mds of ammunition for Guns, Mortars and Swivels etc totalling 70 pieces.² Taking immediate stock of things, Ranjit Singh lost no time in reinforcing the detachment, with a strong convoy, containing everything necessary to place the fort in a complete state of defence, and Devi Das and Hakim Aziz-ud-Din were despatched as commissioners to settle the country surrounding, which formed the dependency of Attock.³

When Fateh Khan learnt of the loss of Attock it was his turn to get upset because he realised what Ranjit Singh already knew that, with the control of Attock going to

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1. Henry T Prinsep, Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab, reprint 1970, p 76.
 2. Catalogue of Khalsa Durbar Records, volume I, p 30.
 3. Henry T Prinsep, Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab, reprint 1970, p 76.

Sikhs, the Afghan rule over Kashmir would be untenable. Sinha quoting Umdat-Ut-Tawarikh corroborated by a statement in the British records writes, "When Fateh Khan heard of the affairs at Attock, he sent a detachment to attack the Sikh army under Mokham Chand at that time retiring from Kashmir but the latter marched too rapidly to be overtaken. Mokham Chand retreated by the Baramgola-Rajouri-Bhimbar route."¹ Fateh Khan demanded the fort's return, Ranjit Singh wanted to buy time, it was then March/April and a delay of a couple of months would lead to the hot weather and with it make Afghan soldiers more susceptible to fatigue unlike his own troops who were accustomed to such extremes of temperatures. So Ranjit Singh demanded a share in Kashmir spoils before the return of the fort could be considered.

While the negotiations were being stretched Dost Muhammad Khan Duni Beg Khan and Samad Khan Lieutenants of Fateh Khan marched from Kashmir and encamped at a distance of 24 Kos from Attock. They were however unable to advance further² Fateh Khan himself set out from Kashmir in April 1813 for Attock.

In the meantime Mahmud Shah's troops led by Shahzada Ajub and Abbas reached on the other side of the river Indus. But Ranjit's people at Attock were in possession of the boats, denying an immediate crossing. Put together, the Afghans were not strong enough to lay siege to the fort. By May Dost Muhammad a brother of the Kabul Wazir at the head of 4000 cavalry, managed to cut-off Communications of the fort. Grain, gunpowder and ammunition convoys sent from Lahore to Attock had to be brought back. Also the vanguards of the Sikh troops sent to establish communications with the

1. NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975, p 48.
2. Ibid, pp 48-49.

fort had to return after skirmishing with Afghan detachments.¹

Ranjit Singh then despatched Dewan Mokham Chand with a balanced all arms, artillery, infantry and cavalry force. He reached Rawalpindi in the beginning of June.² Sinha writes, "His arrival in that region dominated by the mobile Afghan cavalry was urgently required. Fateh Khan's men had already raided Hasan Abdal and defeated a Sikh detachment there under Ram Singh. But Mokham Chand with his personality his circumspection and energy, was very soon responsible for a complete change in this aspect of affairs. The army led by him advanced from Saraikala to Hasan Abdal and was about the middle of June at a distance of 5/6 Kos from the troops of Fateh Khan".³ The Sikh detachments sent out to dominate the no man's land became bolder and their victories in the Skirmishes soon followed into the main battle ultimately leading to a brilliant triumph on the 26 June 1813.⁴

1. NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975, p 49.

2. Ibid.

3. NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975, pp 49-50.

4. Sinha gives his reasons as to why 26 June 1813 is the date of the battle and not 13 July 1813. He writes, "13 July, 1813 is the generally accepted date of the battle, But contemporary news-letters must have preference over chronicles and foreigner's accounts. Extracts from poona letters give us an idea of the actual date of the battle;

Lahore 23rd June - "Sardar Fateh Khan at a distance of 7 kos from the troops of the Noble Sarkar. 30th June - The Noble Sarkar made an "Erdas" upon the "Karah" and distributed it to everyone a letter from his master presented by the Vakil of Multan containing congratulatory on his victory. Those who were present expressed the hope that Kashmir too would likewise be shortly conquered and talked with the Vakil of Hyderabad (Sind) regarding control of the country on the other side of the river Attock. The Noble Sarkar said that Mokham Chand was a very brave man for he plunged into battle immediately on the arrival of the enemy and gained a victory". There is also no news-letter after the 13th July that mentioned any big victory over the Afghans, whereas in all the letters between the 30th June and 13th July references to a victory already won are many. Lahore 8th July - Details of the battle were described by Ram Singh. (NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975, p 50 refers).

Sinha, quoting Hugle's description of the battle writes, "The plain of chuch is intersected by some small streams one of which has been better known since the battle between Ranjit Singh's General and Fateh Khan. By following its course the Sikhs were able to refresh themselves constantly

throughout the day ... (going by the prevailing heat) it was a great advantage (and) the contest was decided in their favour".¹ The stream referred to, could be Chel, Originating in the Hatti marsh near Hazro it joins the Indus after a course of 32 km above (that is South of) Attock. "The base of Fateh Khan's army was most probably Hazro and Mokham Chand's was certainly Hasan Abdal".² The actual battle took place about Saidan Hattian region.

By 1813 Ranjit Singh had raised a few fresh infantry battalions and artillery batteries trained in the Western method of fighting. The shock tactics of the cavalry were greatly complemented by the fire tactics of infantry and artillery. Together, it imported greater steadiness to the troops on the battlefield. When arrayed, the newly developed arms of infantry and artillery were placed in the centre to initiate to the fight, to hold the enemy, to meet his counter attacks and to give covering fire, while the cavalry located on the flanks could advance and put the enemy to flight.³ These new tactics were being developed without losing sight of the fact that cavalry continued to perform its multi purpose role. All skirmishing was done by it, and most of the battle manoeuvres, such as envelopment, attacks on flanks, frontal attacks, counter attacks and pursuit were carried out by it and, further, its role in the

1. NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975, p 51.

2. Ibid.

3. Fauja Singh, Military System of the Sikhs, 1964, p 262.

hand-to-hand fighting was almost monopolistic in character.¹ Formerly the battles were mostly cavalry melees. Matchlocks were no doubt used, but sword rather than the matchlock was the decisive weapon of war. Lately with the introduction of new tactics battles began to take a more organised shape.

After lying in wait with occasional skirmishing, Dewan Mokham Chand decided to move from a flank and threaten the Afghan rear.²

The movement was made along a stream affording continuous supply of drinking water to the army in the oppressing heat, at the same time the river banks provided some cover concealing the actual strength of the Sikh force on the march. For the most part of the Afghan detachment was taken in, by the concealed Sikh movement, if it all it was discerned it was thought to be another attempt by the Sikhs to supply rations of grain to the fort of Attock and not the movement of the whole army for the final offensive. It appears that by the time the confusion in the enemy information was sorted out, the Sikhs had effected their plans. By ten in morning they were on the ground of their own choosing, close to the Indus, about 8 km from the fort.³ With a threat to their rear the Afghans were forced to abandon their pre-prepared positions. The Kabul army was forced to reposition itself facing the Sikhs with its van guard composed of a body of Mulkia Mussalmans, supported by cavalry under Dost Muhammad Khan.⁴ About the battle proper Fauja Singh writes;

1. Fauja Singh, Military System of the Sikhs, 1963, pp 262-263.

2. Ibid.

3. Henry T Prinsep, Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab, reprint 1970, p 79.

4. Ibid.

The Sikh army was divided into four parts; right, centre, left and reserve. Infantry and artillery were posted in the centre and a little ahead of the rest of the army. Some artillery was also put in the reserve. The cavalry was distributed over all the parts, but its main positions were on the right and left wings. The advance of the Sikhs upset the Afghans who left their position and made an attack upon the Sikhs at the latter's selected site. This was met by (fire from) artillery and swivels. The infantry gave musket firing in volleys, but when the Afghans still moved on, they formed squares for their own defence, as also the defence of the guns. The Afghan attack under Dost Muhammad Khan, however, was so impetuous that these squares were broken, the infantry gave way and some of the guns were captured. At this point, Dewan Mokham Chand who was immediately behind the centre and had been anxiously watching the battle scene, ordered the artillery of Darogha Gause Khan to advance to the help of the troops being driven back, but the Darogha stood inactive. This was the most critical moment in the battle. The Dewan then promptly exchanged the elephant for a horse and personally led up the whole reserve force of artillery, cavalry and infantry against the advancing Afghans. There was now a terrible hand-to-hand fighting in which both the parties displayed feats of courage and gallantry. The cavalry resorted to 'utara' (dismounting) and fought with the sword. The Sikh guns at this time proved most useful, because their incessant firing checked the Afghans and killed off large numbers of them. After some

1. Fauja Singh Bajwa, Military System of the Sikhs, 1964, pp 263-264 quoting Kanahya Lal, Tarikh-i-Punjab, p 230.

time, the Afghans were demoralised. Wazir Fateh Khan and not sent any help from behind and the scorching sun was becoming unbearable for them. They therefore turned back and took to flight. Seeing this, the Sikh cavalry followed up and pursued the Afghans up to a distance of 8 Kos, thereby rendering the victory complete.

In pursuit the Sikhs reached Hazro¹ and plundered the Afghan Camp finding only 18 maunds of grain. It was an indication of the difficult supply situation prevailing in the Afghan Camp. 2000 Afghans were killed, and the rest crossed the Indus.² Attock was strongly garrisoned and Gurumukh Singh, Dewan Singh and Sarbuland Khan were appointed to organise its defence.

Mokham Chand on return to Lahore was rewarded handsomely for his services. He made a complaint to Ranjit Singh, of Ghouse Khan's conduct during battle, which could have been fatal. Ghouse Khan had served Ranjit Singh well commanding his artillery all along and was one of the

1. At Hazro in AD 1008, the great battle was fought in which Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni defeated the united forces of the Hindu Rajas of North-Western India.

2. In discussing the question, what would have happened if Fateh Khan had been victorious? Sinha writes, "Attock would have fallen at once into his hands and the Muhammadan chieftains of Jhang and Sindsagar Doab would certainly have once again acknowledged the supremacy of Kabul and the moral effect of a defeat would have been incalculably injurious to Ranjit's sway over the Punjab... The result of an Afghan victory in the battle of Chuch would have been as important an episode in the history of the Sikhs as the third battle of Panipat was in the history of the Marathas in the North. Ranjit's hold over the Punjab was not yet consolidated and a defeat might have disastrous... Fortunately for the Sikh ruler, as also for the even tenor of Anglo-Sikh relations, the power of the Afghans collapsed altogether on the eastern side of the Indus and Ranjit Singh was left to consolidate his hold over it. (NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint, p 52 refers).

earliest officers in his service. He decided to ignore the subject and with it Ranjit Singh made an exception for this officer for he never punished any one with a death sentence.

The Sikh victory on the plains of Chuch not only removed the Afghan moral superiority East of Indus once for all but it also sent signal to Azim Khan - The newly appointed Governor of Kashmir, to be extra vigilant. He did not sit idle. He immediately strengthened his religious ties with the neighbouring hill chiefs and reconaiterated the routes leading over, the passes into the valley to select ground which could be of tactical advantage to him as defender. He knew any aggressor would be exhausted after the climb over the Pir Panjal range, whereas the troops of the defender will be fresh and on higher ground. The defending Afghan forces were only required to march over the gentle undulating ground of the valley, and were on the internal lines of defence and hence their ability to quickly switch troops to influence the battle was better. Azim Khan therefore, decided to stay and fight.

The ailing Dewan Mokham Chand (he died few months later) tried to impress upon Ranjit Singh that the commissariat (supplies) and transport were insufficient.¹ But Maharaja Ranjit Singh was not dissuaded. May be his recent successes in Multan and Chuch gave him the impetus to march to Kashmir to evict the Afhans. He summoned all his Jagirdars and all the tributary hill chiefs to be in attendance with their respective troops for review "Strict muster was taken of each party as it arrived and fines were imposed if the number was short or the equipment in any

1. Lepel Griffin, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1967, p 193.

respect deficient".¹ Great care was also taken to ensure serviceability of guns, mortars and Swivels. All preparations were completed by the beginning of November at Jhelum.² But then intelligence was received that passes over Fir Panjal were under deep snow, forcing the invasion plans to be temporarily suspended until the spring of the following year. Ranjit Singh returned to Lahore on 26 December 1813.³ He however sent detachments of troops forward to select places for grain and other essential store depots.

It appears the Rajput Chiefs of Rajouri and Punch promised much to these advance detachments but when the Sikh army arrived the following year, they secretly, unknown to Ranjit Singh took sides with the Afghans ruler in Kashmir.⁴ Raja Agar Khan of Rajauri, where the army first halted advised a plan of movement, possibly necessiated due to the problems of transport over hilly roads and tracks. As per the plan the force was divided, one half under the Maharaja, marching by way of Punch, and the remainder under Ram Dayal marching via Bahramgalla.⁵

1. Henry T Prinsep, Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab, reprint 1970, p 80.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Shahamat Ali writes, "In the expedition to Kashmir in 1814 also Agar Khan's support was won over. But the crafty Raja secretly did all in his power to retard the advance and harass the Sikhs by sending out his men dressed as peasants to cut off stragglers and supplies". (Shahamat Ali; The Sikhs and Afghans, pp 98-100).

5. Griffin writes, "The plan which may have been necessary from the difficulties of transport on hill roads, had the unfortunate result that one division could not render any assistance to the other, and that an active enemy could destroy both in detail. (It appears the chief of Rajauri and the Governor of Kashmir were in league and so the Rajauri chief advised Ranjit Singh to march in two parts. Thus making it essier for the Afghan Governor to tackle nearly half of the Sikh force at a time). (Lepel Griffin Ranjit Singh, reprint 1967, p 193 refers).

Before Ranjit Singh's troops reached the town of PUNCH its chief had halted to Kashmir and they continued on their advance to Toshemaidan.

In the meantime Ram Dayal had successfully crossed Pir Panjal Pass but in an unsuspecting place, his van guard consisting of Ghorcharas under the command of Jewan Khan had, on meeting a body of Afghan troops, without informing their General in command Ram Dayal launched a full fledged attack. Jewan Khan and his force, unknown to Ram Dayal, was thrown back in disorder.¹ Thus an exposed flank was created and Ram Dayal was taken unawares. Placed in a difficult situation Ram Dayal behaved courageously and stood his ground. Simultaneously he asked for reinforcements, which were despatched under Bhai Ram Singh. The Afghans until then checked by Ram Dayal, fell upon Bhai Ram Singh's force, which being poorly led fled in all haste to Rajauri. Murray writes, "The Bhiyah was a man of a very different stamp from the energetic Ram Dayal; careless and indifferent to the interests at stake, and anxious to save a life that was not worth saving, he fled in all haste to Rajauri; after in vain² trying to persuade Ramdyal to follow his example."

The Afghans had taken up a blocking position in the Toshemaidan area. After meeting with success in halting Ram Dayal's advancing column, they took the offensive against Ranjit Singh's force. The Sikh army had to simultaneously face "heavy rains(which) turned the streams into torrents³ and made the roads impassable". Taking advantage of the difficult situation the Sikhs were in, the hill chiefs signalled to their men to attack the Sikh Army.

1. HS Bhatia, Rare Documents on Sikhs and Their rule in the Punjab, 1992, p 175.

2. Ibid.

3. Lepel Griffin, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1967, p 194.

Prinsep writes, "On the 29th July, Ruhullah Khan, the Punch chief, approached, and commenced a desultory fire in the Sikh position. On the following morning he renewed his attack with more vigour, and Ranjit Singh (faced with bad weather and attack from unsuspecting places) was compelled to fall back, on Mandi.¹ Ranjit Singh ordered his disciplined battalions to cover the retreat and set the Punch town on fire before himself leaving for Lahore, where he reached on 12th August. "Ram Dayal left to his own resources behaved so gallantly that Azim Khan was compelled to come to terms with the enemy, he could not annihilate; and gave him (Ram Dayal) a safe conduct of the Punjab".²

Ranjit Singh decided to wait for a favourable opportunity to reduce Kashmir. But he sent a force to avenge the treachery of the Raja of Rajauri. The troops burnt the Raja's palace and the town. After waiting the opportunity to attack and capture Kashmir valley came in 1819. The Afghan Governor of Kashmir was absent, as he had gone to aid his brother, the Wazir, in the internecine war in Afghanistan.³

1. Hentry T Prinsep, Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab, reprint 1970, p 85.

2. Lepel Griffin, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1967, p 194.

3. Muray writes, "The dictatorial tone and lofty carriage which had been assumed by the Vizier Futtin Khan in the Government of Kabool under the weak and pliant disposition of the Prince Shah Mahamood had rendered him abnoxious to the generality of the leading families in the Kingdom and particularly so to Shazaduh Kamran, the son of Mahamood... Vizier was siezed in Kandahar blinded and cruelly murdered by Kamran... Futtih Khan had numerous brothers, all men of authority and possessed of wealth. Vengeance was sought and war declared. Mahammad Uzeem posted from Cashmeer, leaving his brother Jabbar Khan in the valley and took upon himself the chief direction of affairs. He defeated the troops of Kamran in the vicinity of Kabool, siezed Ghuznee and Kandahar and compelled Shah Mahmood and Kamran to retire to Herat". (HS Bhatia, Rare Documents of Sikhs and their rule in Punjab, 1992, p 117 quoting Captain William Murray's "Memoir on Historical and Political Transactions in the Punjab 1830").

Ranjit Singh sent a strong force under Misr Diwan Chand, the successful General of the Multan campaign while Ram Dayal commanded the division which was following immediately behind, and at a distance from the two armies was the third army under Ranjit Singh himself, protecting the rear and ensuring supplies to the entire force. They all moved in tandem, while Dewan Chand occupied the passes of the Pir Panjal.

The second army advanced to Rajauri and Ranjit Singh reached Bhimbar. After securing the passes when Dewan Chand advanced to valley, Ranjit Singh advanced to Rajauri. The Afghan General in the Kashmir Valley, Zabar Khan with 12,000 soldiers made a vain attempt to stand and fight at Supreyon Zabar Khan was wounded and he took to flight leaving for Peshawar by Baramulla - Muzaffarabad route. The province of Kashmir was annexed by Ranjit Singh, who appointed Moti Ram, son of Diwan Mokham Chand and father of Ram Dyal, its first¹ Governor.

The conquest of Kashmir took the Northern frontier of Punjab to the borders of China and Tibet and it created an opportunity to trade in products of the region with rest of Punjab in turn from the trading centres such as Amritsar with rest of India. All told Kashmir fetched an annual revenue of 70 lakhs of rupees to the Lahore Sarkar.

1. Lepel Griffin, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1967, p 194-195.

Conquest Along River Indus

Kangra, Kashmir and Multan were now part of Punjab. Ranjit Singh still had two main tasks before him. Firstly, to secure his Western borders against the Afghans and consolidate the territories within. Secondly, prepare the army for its ultimate task of being a deterrent to British march north-wards. Ranjit Singh was known to have remarked as early as 1809 'Sab Lal ho jai ga' all will turn red alluding to the red colour of the East India Company's troops. Marathas the last remaining power South of Satluj, was already under their suzerainty.

In February 1820, Dera Ghazi Khan was occupied by a force sent under Jemadar Khushal Singh and was assigned to the Nawab of Bahawalpur on an annual payment of rupees three lacs. In October 1821, the Sikh Army, divided in three parts by Ranjit Singh, invaded the territories of Leiah, Bhakkar and Dera Ismail Khan and of Nawab Hafiz Ahmad Khan of Mankera. They finally concentrated at Mankera and laid ¹ siege to the fort. The Nawab expected the scarcity of water to drive them away. But the Sikhs had dug wells to supply themselves with water. Faced with the steady progress of

1. Mankera was a village in the Bhakkar tehsil of Mianwali district of Punjab (Now in Pakistan). It lies in the heart of the Thal, the desert of the Sind-Sagar Doab. A large fort, said to have been founded by the Sials of Jhang, still exists there. Mankera was once the great stronghold of the Jaskani Balochs who lost it to Bhangi Sikhs about 1772. But soon after, it again become independent under the Sadozais who held it for the Durrani Kings of Kabul (Diwan Kirpa Ram, Gulabnama English translation by Prof Sukhdev Singh Charak, 1977, p 99 footnote 3 quoting Imp Gazette Punjab, II, pp 203-205 refers).

the Sikhs,¹ the Nawab capitulated. Ranjit Singh allowed the Nawab to leave Mankera unmolested and also gave him Dera Ismail Khan in Jagir.

With the fall of Mankera, the large tract of land between the Jhelum and the Indus called the Sind-Sagar Doab became part of the Punjab. This region with its good commercial traffic on the river and with the caravan route from Persia and Baluchistan to India passing through it, yielded an annual revenue of rupees ten lacs.

A contingent of the Sikh army under Ranjit Singh then moved to Dera Din Panah. Tribute was also enforced on the Baluch Mussalmans of Tonk and Sagar West of the Indus. "At Dera Ghazi Khan, he arranged with the Nawab of Bahawalpur for an increase of tribute and of rent upon the farms he held of that place and Mithankot.² Ranjit Singh rejoined his army at Multan on 10 January 1822 and returned to Lahore on the 27th³.

The same year in April Ranjit Singh received reports of Azim Khan entering Peshawar territory, plundering the country and threatening the Sikh post of Khairabad on the

1. Prinsep writes, "Mankera was fortified with a mud wall and having a citadel of brick, but protected more by its position, in the midst of a desert amongst sand hills, in which there was a difficulty of supplying a besieging army with fresh water. A division (of Sikh Army) advanced for the investment of this place on the 18 Nov, and Beldars were sent to dig wells, and seek every where for water, meanwhile the troops were being supplied water at great expense from Maujgarh on camels ponies or bullocks. By the 25 November, sufficient wells had been sunk, a further division was advanced to complete the investment of the place and Ranjit Singh moved there himself soon after, with his headquarters, to superintend the conduct of the siege". (Henry T Prinsep, Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab, reprint 1970, pp 102-103 refers).

2. Henry T Prinsep, Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab, reprint 1970, pp 103-104.

3. Ibid.

West of the Indus. Sensing time had come to display to the Afghans retribution for violating a Sikh protectorate, Ranjit Singh in December marched with his army to the West of Rawalpindi and sent Hakeem Azizudin to Peshawar to demand the payment of annual tribute. Yar Mohammad Khan, to save himself from the visit of the Sikh troops, paid the tribute due from him by way of cash and valuable horses.

Azim Khan who had succeeded Wazir Fateh Khan to the Wazirship of Kabul regime, did not approve of Yar Mohammad's action and to force his will reached Peshawar in December 1823¹. Yar Mohammad Khan to avoid a direct confrontation retired to the mountains.

On learning of these developments the Lahore Sarkar ordered its army to cross the Indus. "With it went its galaxy of generals. Mir Dewan Chand, Hari Singh Nalwa, Phula Singh, Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, Desa Singh Majithia and Attar Singh Sandhwalia. So also went the French officers Allard, Ventura and the Gurkha Balbhadra, with their newly trained battalions.

The advance guard under Prince Sher Singh and Hari Singh Nalwa had spanned the Indus with a bridge of boats and crossed over to Khairabad. The next day they reached close to Jahangira fort on this side of the river Kabul. All efforts to storm Jahangira fort were thwarted by the enemy within and by musket fire from others collected on the far

1. While Ganda Singh gives the date Dec 1823 (Ganda Singh, Maharaja Ranjit Singh a life Sketch, 1939, p 25 refers) for the same event Khushwant Singh gives the date Jan 1823 (Khushwant Singh, A History of the Sikhs, 1963, p 262 refers) the date given by Ganda Singh is more probable and hence accepted.

bank. The fort was captured after three days when it was stormed and the troops crossed Kabul river by a bridge of ¹ boats .

The main body following could not cross the river Indus immediately, for the bridge over Indus was destroyed by the Afghans and the river due to early melting of snows, was in ² spate . This did not deter Ranjit Singh from crossing the river. He went across it with the cavalry, and the field ³ pieces (Artillery) were carried on the elephants . Probably Ranjit did not wait for a bridge of boats to be constructed for he had information (which turned out to be false later on) that the delay at Jahangira was due to surrounding of ⁴ his advance guard by the Ghazis . In battle information at times is not clear. At such times successful Generals do not hesitate, they act boldly and go forward as Ranjit Singh did by crossing the Indus.

The Khattak and Yusufzai tribesmen were entrenched on a hill called Pir Sabak or Tibba Tiri on the plain between Jahangira and Peshawar. The main Afghan force under Azim Khan was separated from the tribal Ghazis by a swift running

1. Diwan Kirpa Ram Gulabnama, English Translation by Prof Sukhdev Singh Charak, 1977, p 121-122.

2. Khushwant Singh, A History of the Sikhs, 1963, p 263.

3. HS Bhatia, Rare Documents on Sikhs and their Rule in the Punjab, 1992, p 126.

4. Ganda Singh, Mharaja Ranjit Singh, A life Sketch, 1939,

stream, the Landai, also known as the Kabul river ¹. Ranjit Singh ordered artillery and troops under Kirpa Ram, Sher Singh and Hari Singh to keep Azim Khan's force engaged and from joining with the tribal Ghazis (Mulkiyas) ², while he himself with a force crossed the Kabul river and immediately ordered a cavalry charge by the Akalis ³. The Ghazis, being at a height were not only able to withstand the charge but they launched a counter attack "The Sikh artillery now opened fire, while the Sikh infantry standing in line with the Guns, resorted to the tactics of file firing, that is they fired by platoon, then filed and wheeled to the rear to make way for others who were coming up to the front, fired and retired similarly" ⁴. The Ghazis to

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1. While the strength of Ranjit Singh's force has been placed by most of the writers around 24,000. The strength of the Afghans is varying. Kirpa Ram in Gulabnama writes "Meanwhile, about forty thousand 'Mujahids', appeared like black clouds on that side of the river on a lofty place called Tihri. From another side came Sardar Azim Khan with fifteen thousand troops intent on battle and encamped on this side of the river. Moreover, Khalifah Sayyid Ahmad, the inducer of Jihad among the warlike Afghans, gave a call to a mighty crowd to hurry to the battlefield. Consequently, the King of Lahore rushed towards that direction to direct the campaign personally". (Diwan Kirpa Ram Gulabnama, English translation by Prof. Sukhdev Singh Charak, 1977, p 122 refers). Whereas, the History of the Punjab records "between four or five thousand men, and these were more mountaineers and villagers who turned out for the Ghazi, that is, to fight the religious battle" (Anon, History of the Punjab, vol II, p 72 refers). The British records of the time say "A battle was fought between the Sikhs and the Afghans at Nowshera. The army engaged numbered about twenty thousand on both sides". (ibid, quoting foreign department miscellaneous, No 128, N. A. I.).
2. Henry T Prinsep, Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab, reprint 1970, p 110.
3. Akali Phula Singh died here. His horse was shot under him. He took an elephant and pressed on. The error cost him his life... Phula Singh was riddled with bullets. He collapsed in his howdah (Khushwant Singh, A History of the Sikhs, volume 1, 1963, p 264 footnote 6 quoting Akali Phula Singh by Prem Singh, refers).
4. Fauja Singh, Military System of the Sikh, 1964, p 265

avoid the casualties being caused by the coordinated fire from muskets and guns located at a distance from them rushed forward en masse with sword in hand and captured the two guns which had caused so much loss in their number¹. In another charge of similar nature two more guns were captured by the Ghazis. The Sikhs rallied, charged and took back their Guns². But then there were others who in the confusion of battle, were retreating. This was a most anxious moment for the Maharaja, but he rose equal to the occasion³. "Seeing the doubtful nature of the battle and some hesitation on the part of his men, Ranjit Singh seized a standard and proceeding with all his personal troops, into the heat of the conflict, told the Sikhs that Lahore was distant and retreat would be fatal to them. Inspired by his presence their drooping courage revived"⁴. Making a counter attack they drove the enemy back at all points. He simultaneously directed the ghorchurras Khas to surround the hill, while fire was opened on it from all directions "Then Runjeet ordered his Nujeeb and Goorkha battalions to charge the heights"⁵. Great was the slaughter made among the enemy. Soon night followed and any remaining Ghazis made good their escape⁶.

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1. Fauja Singh, Military System of the Sikhs, 1964, p 265.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Ibid.
 4. NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975, p 63, quoting Foreign Dept miscellaneous, No 206, p 142.
 5. HS Bhatia, Rare Documents on Sikhs and their Rule in the Punjab, p 126.
 6. Fauja Singh quoting Wade to Metcalfe writes, "The Afghan tactics of rush, obstinacy in fighting and precipitate flight in the case of defeat, with no discipline and no attempt at rallying, as explained by Ranjit Singh himself to Capt Wade in 1827, were inferior to those of the Sikhs. (Fauja Singh, Military System of the Sikhs, 1963, p 266, footnote 4, refers).

Mohammad Azim Khan on learning that the Ghazis had been overpowered and had disappeared, retired from the field to Jalalabad on the Kabul road, thus leaving the path open for Ranjit Singh and his army,¹ to advance to Peshawar. Azim Khan died a few months later, "It only produced further confusion in the affairs of Afghanistan; for while he lived, he was looked upon as the head of the family in succession to Fateh Khan, whereas after his death the numerous brothers and nephews of that chief acknowledged nobody, and their quarrels and contentions only caused outrage and disturbance. Mahamud and his son Kamran (The actual rulers) were confined to the fort and city of Herat,² beyond which they could exercise no authority. "As the battle with Fateh Khan on the plains of Chuch decided the supremacy of the Sikhs eastwards of the Indus, this campaign³ established his power between that river and Peshawar".

Ranjit Singh entered Peshawar three days later. "The Maharajas sojourn was, however, not a peaceful one, what the tribesmen could not achieve in the open combat, they tried to gain by the cold blooded murder of Punjabi soldiers under cover of darkness. The victorious army soon forced both Yar Mohammad and Dost Mohammad to present themselves and they asked for Maharaja's pardon. Ranjit Singh had no desire yet to bring the territory under his direct rule, so he accepted their tribute of cash and horses. "Yar Mohammad was re-invested governor of Peshawar on promising to pay an annual revenue of Rs 1,10,000 to the Lahore Darbar.

1. Henry T Prinsep, Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab, reprint 1970, p 110.

2. Ibid, p 111.

3. NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975, p 63 quoting Foreign Dept, Miscellaneous, No 305, Paragraph 13.

The victory of Sikh arms over the Afghans caused some apprehensions in the British circles. They feared that since Ranjit Singh had reached the natural frontiers on the North-West, for him going any further across the barren hills may not be profitable and hence he may march his ever active army to Sind. In the meantime war broke out between the British and the Burmese and their fears of Ranjit Singh got relegated from issues of immediate concern¹.

The Afghan rulers in Kabul were convinced of Ranjit Singh's superiority of arms after the battle of Pir Sabak². May be they were taught a 'Sabak'. Their casualties in the battle and the humiliation in the defeat of Azim Khan was a warning to the Afghans to stay away from territories where the standards of Lahore Sarkar had been planted.

With victory comes fame and in 1826 an Agent of the Nizam of Hyderabad came to Lahore court with presents for the Maharaja. They included a beautiful canopy. Ranjit Singh declared that such a thing of beauty can only be used for the Darbar Sahib at Amritsar, it was sent there to be displayed on great religious occasions³.

The peace of Peshawar was disturbed from a new unexpected direction between the years 1827 and 1831. One Sayed Ahmad Shah of Bareilly with men and money collected

1. NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975, p 63 quoting Foreign Dept, Miscellaneous, No 305, Paragraph 13.

2. The battle is variously referred to as Pir Sabak or Tibba Tiri or Naushera, Khushwant Singh writes, "The battle is not known after the Naushera cantonment, which did not exist then, but after the old town Naukhar on the left bank (North) of the Landai river, Landai is the other name for the Kabul river (Khushwant Singh, A History of the Sikhs, 1963, p 262 footnote 4 quoting Olaf Caroe, the Pathans p 296, refers).

3. Ganda Singh, Maharaja Ranjit Singh A life Sketch, 1939 pp 26-27.

from the Eastern provinces of East India company, had made area around Peshawar his base of operations. He gave the call of Jihad against the Sikh rule. The Sayed had collected a large following of the local tribals, he was defeated in two initial battles in 1827 but in the following year, "The Sayed pounced upon the city of Peshawar with a host of forty thousand fanatics and took possession of it after the death of Yar Muhammad Khan in the struggle".¹ These crusaders soon lost their hold over the people because of their passing such weird Fatwas as all widows be married within three days and all virgin girls be married in twelve days. This raised a storm of indignation amongst the local inhabitants.² With the people against the Sayed the time was considered ripe for action and in 1830, a Sikh force under Prince Sher Singh and General Ventura was despatched to Peshawar. The Sayed was defeated but he escaped into the hills with his close followers. Sultan Muhammad Khan was appointed the Governor of Peshawar. The following year, the Sayed once again sallied out from the mountains but this time a fresh Sikh force under Prince Sher Singh and Hari Singh Nalwa surrounded him and he was killed.³ With it ended a few years anxiety which the Sayed had caused with his cry for a Jihad. There is an element of suspicion that the Sayed was a creation of the British, since he had collected all his money and manpower initially from the Eastern provinces of the East India Company. The British were then anxious to keep Ranjit Singh occupied in the

1. Ganda Singh, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, A Life Sketch, 1939, pp 26-27.

2. Ganda Singh, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, A Life Sketch, 1939, p 27.

3. Ibid, p 28.

North-West and thereby keep him out of Sind. The plan did succeed to the extent that it diverted, the Lahore Monarch's attention and some military resources. Khushwant Singh commenting on the subject writes, "The British Government made no attempt to check this crusade against a state with which it had signed a treaty of friendship. Thousands of volunteers were trained and armed in India and then permitted to cross over to Sind on their way to the North-West frontier of the Punjab. Organisations which collected arms and money for the crusaders were allowed to function without let or hindrance in many big cities of India"¹. The British had a method in their own expansion. First came the spies in the disguise of explorers and travellers, going through the targeted country gathering geographical, and statistical data as also the political views of the local rulers. Next followed the commercial treaties with their agents and Resident, all working to a well orchestrated plan of action involving amongst others, under hand interference in the native system of governance, holding rewards to rival claimants to power who would do their bidding. East India company's colonisation of Indian subcontinent during the period from 16th to 19th century by and large followed this pattern. Therefore, when Ranjit Singh showed a keen inclination to expand Southwards into Sind, The Sikh Monarch's interests clashed with those of the British. The later not only maintained a face of friendship with the ruler of Punjab, but went a step further by inviting Ranjit Singh to a meeting with the Governor General at Roper, while setting out their own game plan to outwit Ranjit Singh and acquire Sind.

1. Ganda Singh, Private Correspondence Relating to the Anglo-Sikh Wars, p 30.

Sind lying South West of Punjab was divided into three independent governments by Talpur Mirs, who had in 1780 conspired, and overthrown the old rulers and divided the country amongst themselves in three parts. First on either side of river Indus was Khairpur next was Hyderabad, the largest of all in size and the third and last division was that of Nirpur, lying towards Kuchh.

Lord Amherst, Governor-General of India returned home in 1828 and he carried with him a shawl tent presented by Ranjit Singh to the King of England, Likewise a return present was thought of by way of a team of cart horses, four mares and one stallion. When the mares arrived at Bombay, Sir John Malcolm, the Governor of Bombay Presidency, added to the dray horses, the present of a carriage of his own, probably to add substance to the excuse for sending them by boat. It soon transpired that the transmission of these 'royal' goods by boats, up the Indus and hence through the territory of the Talpur Mirs, was to give reason for travel of a British officer to gather information about the region and the facilities which the river Indus may have for
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navigation .

1. Prinsep writes, "The recent successes of Russia in Persia and the probability of that power entertaining further designs, either present, or hereafter, when the succession of Abbas Mirza to the throne of Persia, might render that kingdom a province of Russia, made it desirable, that every intelligence should be collected, as to the frontier states of India, and the means of defence offered by this great river barrier in particular. The dray horses were accordingly sent out to Bombay, and the Supreme Government instructed Sir John Malcolm, the Governor of that presidency, to take measures to have them forwarded under charge of an intelligent and prudent officer in boats up the Indus". (Henry T. Prinsep, Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab, reprint 1879, p 121, refers).

Lieutenant Burnes, the Assistant to Colonel Pottinger, who was in Political charge of Kuchh and of the British relations with Sind, was detailed for the said mission. The officer reached Lahore in July 1831. "The Maharaja received Burnes with all cordiality and the officer left for Simla on 21 August to acquaint Lord Bentinck with the result¹ of his mission" .

It was soon after, in October 1831, that Lord William Bentick arranged, through Captain Wade, a meeting with the

1. Ganda Singh informs us, "The secret object of the mission in travelling by the Indus, however, was that 'the authorities both in England and India, contemplated that much information of a political and geographical nature might be acquired in such a journey. He (Lieutenant Burnes) had received secret instructions from the Chief Secretary at Bombay that 'The depth of water in the Indus, the direction and breadth of the stream, its facilities for steam navigation, the supply of fuel on its banks, and the condition of the princes and people who possessed the country bordering on it, are all points of the highest interest to Government.'" (Ganda Singh, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, A Little Sketch, 1939, p 28 refers).

Maharaja at Roper. Unknown to Ranjit Singh while the

1. Prinsep about the meeting between the two heads of states writes, "His highness then crossed into the Governor-General's huda, and the two Chiefs proceeded together to the tents of audience that had been prepared. In an outer tent, all the European gentlemen were collected, and Ranjit Singh was detained in it a short time, that several of them might be presented to him, standing, as he passed through. In a further tent chairs were laid out, and the Maharaja, with the chiefs of his nomination, and some select officers of the suite, was led thither by the Governor General for a more private conference. It was amusing to see the pains taken by Ranjit Singh in the arrangement of his part of the ceremony. He waited at the door of the outer tent, and himself called told off, the chiefs that were to proceed to the inner, making them precede himself in order to prevent confusion or crowding. They were all like himself dressed in yellow, that and light green being the favourite colour of his court, and called Basanti, or the colours of spring... some, were elegant highly polished armour, with scarfs of this colour, and the splendour of the attire of all was very striking. The inquisitive and apparently frank manner of the Sikh Chief made the conference pass off with more liveliness than is usual on such occasions of ceremony. Presents of every variety of manufactured stuffs, which had previously been sent for, from Calcutta, Dacca, and Benaras, with Guns and jewels of value, a fine Burmese elephant, and two select thorough-bred young horses from the Hissar stud, were laid out, or passed in review before His Highness... He took his leave, apparently highly pleased with the interview, and at the door of the tent, called up, and paraded before the Governor-General, his own favourite horses, telling the names, and merits of each. Again, as he passed through the street of troops, he stopped to examine the different corps, and his enquiries into every minute particular detail or equipment were renewed. It was noon, before he reached his own camp in returning. Evening entertainments were afterwards exchanged, and reviews held of the troops collected on both sides. The Maharaja seemed particularly struck with some of the evolutions exhibited before him by the British Regiments, and sent his Sirdars up to the ranks, to examine particularly how they were executed. He himself also went up to the squares formed by the Infantry, to see how many ranks knelt, and how many kept up fire, showing in all things a most insatiable curiosity. On the 31st October, the last day of the interview, the Maharaja came across the river, to witness some artillery practice with grape and spherical-case shot. His astonishment at the effect on the curtain at different distances, from four hundred to one thousand paces, was extreme. After amusing himself afterwards with firing at a chatar, or umbrella with one of the six pounders, and exhibiting feats of horsemanship, and dexterity, by his Sirdars, he was presented by the Governor-General with two nine pounder horse artillery guns, with horses, and equipments complete. (Henry T Prinsep, Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab, reprint 1970, pp 129-131 refers).

Governor-General was keeping him thus occupied, the latter had sent Colonel Pottinger on a Politico-commercial mission to the Amirs of Sind and was followed by the treaty of April 1832, which opened river Indus to British traders.

The Sikh Monarch was disappointed but not surprised at the show of friendship by the British and behind the back their making in-roads into Sind. Ranjit Singh was a realist, he was all this while increasing his army and sharpening its skill. He had early in his career, after meeting with Holkar the Maratha chief who had fought and lost to the British, confirmed his own views about the British that, friendship only bought one 'time' ultimately for freedom and sovereignty (of Punjab) there will be a clash of arms. Therefore, when Sind offered an opportunity to exercise his will, Ranjit Singh held his hand and choosing between Sind or security of his nascent Kingdom he chose the later. Ranjit Singh always took into his own army the troops of any chief who submitted to him. But, the Talpur Mirs kept no standing army¹. What with such large territory of Sind to be governed and military posts (thanas) to be established, where will soldiers come from? The defence of Afghan frontier too required a large standing army ready to be marched at short notice. Therefore in spite of grave provocation over Sind he concentrated on the building and training of his army, to prepare for the inevitable struggle between Red and Saffron. Therefore, no wonder that when Ranjit Singh took so much interest in the equipment and battle drills of the British troops in the Governor General's Camp at Ropar, it could be for no other purpose but to gain first hand knowledge as the preparedness and strength of his own were matters of greatest concern to him.

1. Conversation at the Ropar meeting about Sind as transpired between Ranjit Singh and two officers of the staff of the Governor-General of India, recorded by Prinsep is illuminating. He writes, "Ranjit Singh, however, invited the two officers he thought most in the Governor-General's confidence to his tent. He (Ranjit Singh) said the vakils of Sind were in attendance in his camp, and he asked if he might introduce them to the Governor-General. Upon being answered in the affirmative, he added, that it was a very rich country, and much treasure had been accumulated there, ever since Nadir Shah's invasion of Hindustan, that there was no standing army, and no soldiers, except the population at large, who would be called from the plough to take the field against an invading force.. also, that nothing would be more gratifying to him, than to be invited to co-operate in an attack upon that state. Notwithstanding, however, the desire thus shown, to come to an understanding on the subject, it was not thought advisable (by the British) to make any communication yet to the ruler of Lahore... On the very day before His Highness arrived at Ropar, instructions had been issued to Lieutenant-Colonel Pottinger to prepare for a mission to Sind, with a view to the negotiation of a commercial treaty...that the river Indus should become again the channel for extensive commerce, and be frequented securely by the craft and vessels of all the adjoining districts, and even of Europe. The object of entering upon this negotiation at the particular juncture, was, perhaps in some measure political...The Governor-General, however, was not prepared to make any avowal or display of such motives, and a commercial treaty, stipulating for the free navigation of the river, seemed to him the better form in which to open relations with the Governments and Chiefs who occupied its banks. (Henry T Prinsep, Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab, reprint 1970, pp 131-133 refers).

In 1833 Shah Shuja, the ex Monarch of Kabul living at Ludhiana on dole from the British, organised one more attempt to recover his Kingdom from Dost Muhammad, the de facto ruler of Kabul. Accordingly, on 12 March 1833 he signed a treaty with Ranjit Singh and in consideration of the assistance to be rendered by the Maharaja, he foresook all possession of Ranjit Singh.

Shah Shuja's attempt was defeated in the battle fought on 30 June 1834 between the Kandhar chiefs joined by Prince Muhammad Akbar Khan and the Shah.¹

While the above developments were going on, Ranjit Singh found it the ideal time to bring peshawar under his direct control, on two accounts, firstly he did not expect any immediate opposition because Dost Muhammad and his brother were busy fighting Shah Shuja. Secondly Ranjit Singh, "feared that if Shah Shuja became successful, he might set aside the treaty of alliance so Ranjit Annexed Peshawar outright which had so far been left to Sultan Mhammad Khan as a Lahore tributary,"² A force sent under Kanwar Nau-Nihal Singh son of the heir apparent Kharak Singh, occupied Peshawar on 06 May 1834.³ The Prince was appointed the first Sikh Governor of Peshawar.

Dost Muhammad Khan, confident after the Barakzai victory over Shah Shuja at Kandahar, wrote to Ranjit Singh to vacate Peshawar or else face an army of Afghan crusaders.⁴

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1. Bikramjit Hasrat, Life and Time of Ranjit Singh, 1977, p 130.
 2. NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975, p 95.
 3. Bikramjit Hasrat, Life and time of Ranjit Singh, 1977 p 130.
 4. Bikramajit Hasrat, Life and Time of Ranjit Singh, 1977 p 130 quoting Wade August 1834 Manuscript Records in the Punjab Government Records Office, Lahore, 140 : 65.

Ranjit Singh immediately set in motion an elaborate plan for movement forward of his army to blunt Dost Mohammad's threat. Reinforcements were sent to Attock, strong detachments of infantry and cavalry arrived at Peshawar and Ranjit Singh himself marched forward to Rohtas with more contingents and heavy guns.

Dost Mohammad made attempts to get British assistance for the forthcoming battle with the Sikhs, but the British gave him no encouragement.¹

He ultimately raised the cry of Jihad and Afghan tribesmen gathered in large numbers at Jalalabad. Sultan Muhammad Khan with his troops joined his brother Dost Muhammad Khan and they together with a body of large Afghan regular and irregular troops marched across the Khyber occupying a position around the valley of Peshawar at Shekhan. "The troops assembled by Dost Muhammad by his own assertion numbered 40000 besides the infinite multitude of the voluntary Ghazis :-

The Amir Daftars probably	12,000
The Eljuri troops of Kabul	10,000
The troops of the Peshawar Sardars	1,500
The troops of Sadat Rahman Momund	1,500
The troops of Mir Alam Khan Bajore	5,000
The troops with Fateh Khan Panchtor	10,000

	40,000
	=====

He had also 37 guns provided with 700 rounds each and had a treasure of 3 lakhs of rupees. The troops of the Amir were paid in advance. Large supplies of grains were also collected at Jalalabad.²

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1. Bikramajit Hasrat, Life and Time of Ranjit Singh, 1977 p 130 quoting Wade Machaghten, 7 June 1835, Manuscript Records in the Punjab Government Records Lahore, 142 : 36, 11 Jul 1835, 142 : 45 and 19 Jul 1835, 142 : 48.
 2. NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975, p 97.

Ranjit Singh too moved up to Peshawar. He arranged his army's 35 battalions of infantry, large cavalry and Guns in a battle array which could be seen by the Afghans.¹ The sight of such a large body of disciplined Sikh army unnerved Dost Muhammad. "The Sikhs are commonly said to have had 80,000 men in the Peshawar valley about this time".²

So when negotiation were opened by the Maharaja a demand was put forward by Dost Mohammad Khan for half of Peshawar to be given in possession to his brother Sultan Muhamad Khan. While the parleys were going on, Dost Muhammad placed Ranjit Singh's emissaries Faqir Aziz-uldin and Mr. Harlan under detention with Sultan Muhammad. The latter in whose custody the hostages were given, deserted his brother³ and with the prisoners he marched into Ranjit Singh's camp. "It was well known to Sultan Muhammad that in case of Afghan success Peshawar would be annexed by the Amir (Dost Muhammad). He was not unwilling to come to terms with Ranjit. He was promised Kohat, Tank and Bannu in Jagir for himself and his own brothers."⁴ Since, the two armies were facing each other for seventeen days, according to Dost Mohammad's own version Ranjit Singh used this time to bring forward more of his troops as well as cause defections in the enemy camp. Dost Muhammad on being double crossed by his own brother thought it best to retreat. "He left the defiles of the Khyber in disgust and shame and retreated to Kabul."⁵

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1. Bikramjit Hasrat, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977, p 132.
 2. NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975, p 97.
 3. Bikramjit Hasrat, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977, p 132.
 4. NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975, p 98.
 5. Bikramjit Hasrat, Life and Times of Ranjit Singh, 1977, p 132.

The Afghans were overawed with the military might of Ranjit Singh arrayed in its battle order and they retired without firing a shot. In the annals of world history, this must be a rare tribute which an enemy can pay to its adversary and it was a well deserved acknowledgement of determination of the people of Punjab who over the centuries, particularly in the 18th, had borne the humiliation of Afghan invasions.¹

The vigour, resourcefulness and able generalship of Ranjit Singh succeeded in ensuring the defence of Peshawar by forcing the Afghans to retire from the field on the eve of the battle. The steadiness of the arrayed strength of his trained and disciplined army was itself a deterrent which unnerved the Afghans.²

Ranjit Singh assigned 'Jagirs' to Sultan Muhammad Khan and Pir Muhammad Khan to settle Barakzi brothers in peace. It also became clear to Ranjit Singh that the defence of Peshawar required special attention. Hazara located between

1. Kirpal Singh writes, "The Afghans or Pathans always considered themselves superior and considered Indians as inferior. They used to look down upon Indian Muslims and used to call them with contempt: Hindko. (Kirpal Singh, The Historical Study of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Times), 1994, p 100, refers). On the same subject Sita Ram Kohli writes, "When the Sikhs overran Peshawar the Pathans were naturally agitated and they used to say "Khalsa Hum Khuda Shurd" meaning Khalsa too has become equal to God (Sita Ram Kohli, Maharaja Ranjit Singh (Punjabi), 1957, p 153 refers).

2. Diwan Kirpa Ram, Gulabnama, translation in English by Sukhdev Singh Charak, 1977, pp 148-149.

3. Hazara was part of Kabul province during the Mughal rule though the mughal sway was nominal, the heads of each tribe were practically independent paying nominal tribute. The mughal rule was replaced by Nader Shah when he invaded India in 1738-39 A.D. After him, Ahmad Shah Abdali took over these districts and Afghan Governors maintained their rule untill Ranjit Singh decided to subdue these tribes. The battle of Chuch in 1813 had removed the Afghan influence East of Indus. Ranjit Singh had next advanced to Peshawar in 1818, appointing a Barakzai as his Governor. The following year when Kashmir was annexed it was but natural that Hazara then part of Kashmir too become a Sikh territory.

Peshawar and Kashmir had already come under Sikh rule in 1819 when Kashmir was conquered. It had taught the Sikh army on how to keep the tribals under check. NK Sinha writes, "Ranjit followed a policy not very different from that which was followed by the British Government in the years following the Sikh wars. It can be called a 'tip and run policy' i.e. when any particular tribe became too aggressive, committing too many raids, a military column went into the country, inflicted whatever damages it could and came out again. The Mountaineers were kept down by a movable column constantly in the field."¹

Hazara was peopled by Dhuni Tarin Tanol and Kharal tribes, who generally remained in rebellion. Here Ram Dayal grandson of Mokham Chand, died fighting.² So also was killed Amar Singh Majithia who was taken unawares when resting close to a stream after a day of battle in which the tribals were routed.³ "In Fakhli Damtaur, Torbela and Darband region Sikh sway was still precarious. Hari Singh Nalwa was next sent there to create a tradition of vigorous and efficient administration"⁴. Hari Singh Nalwa joined his assignment in Hazara in Feb 1822. Hari Singh Nalwa was not new to this region. As Governor of Kashmir, when on his way to join Ranjit Singh for the Mankera expedition, he had followed the Muzaffarabad route with 7000 troops and a large sum of revenue, the Hazara tribals membering about 25,000 had then denied him passage demanding a toll. Hari Singh Nalwa undeterred attacked immediately and defeated them. The Taran Chief, leader of the insuregents escaped but, more

1. NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint, 1975, p 109.

2. Lepel H, Griffin, The Punjab Chiefs, 1865, p 557. 3. Kirpal Singh, The Historical Study of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Times, 1994, pp 97-98. 4. NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975, pp 60-61.

than 2000 tribals were killed. After this resounding victory, to Ranjit Singh he seemed the right choice to be appointed the Governor of the region.

The New Governor set to work immediately and to prevent, "an enmasse gathering of the tribes, to facilitate the collection of the tribute and, where necessary, to overawe the tribes and to keep open the means of communications"¹ he built forts, connected them with roads and stationed troops in them. He built fort at Nara close to modern Abbotabad and stationed his troops in it. In the valley he built a very strong fort and called it Harkishangarh after the eighth Guru of the Sikhs. He also founded a town named Haripur. For its defence a wall was built four yards thick and sixteen yards high ground the town with four gates. A tank was constructed for drinking water with channels to carry it to different areas of the town. In the upper ranges of Pakhli where Jadun, Tanawali and Swatis lived, forts were built at Nowanshehar, Dhantaur,² Darbands and Shinkiari. The old fort at Tarbela was repaired. Having built the forts at strategically selected areas, they were garrisoned with adequate troops. Roads were built linking them, for ease of movement of reinforcements at the time of crisis of supplies ammunition and other routine maintenance of the garrisons.

Ranjit Singh, after winning the show-down with Dost Mohammad in 1834 AD, appointed Hari Singh Nalwa Governor of

1. NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975, p 111.

2. Kirpal Singh, The Historical Study of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Times, 1994, pp 98-99, quoting Surinder Singh Johar, Hari Singh Nalwa, op.cit. p 93 and Baron von Hugel, Trevels in Punjab and Kashmir, op.cit.p 207.

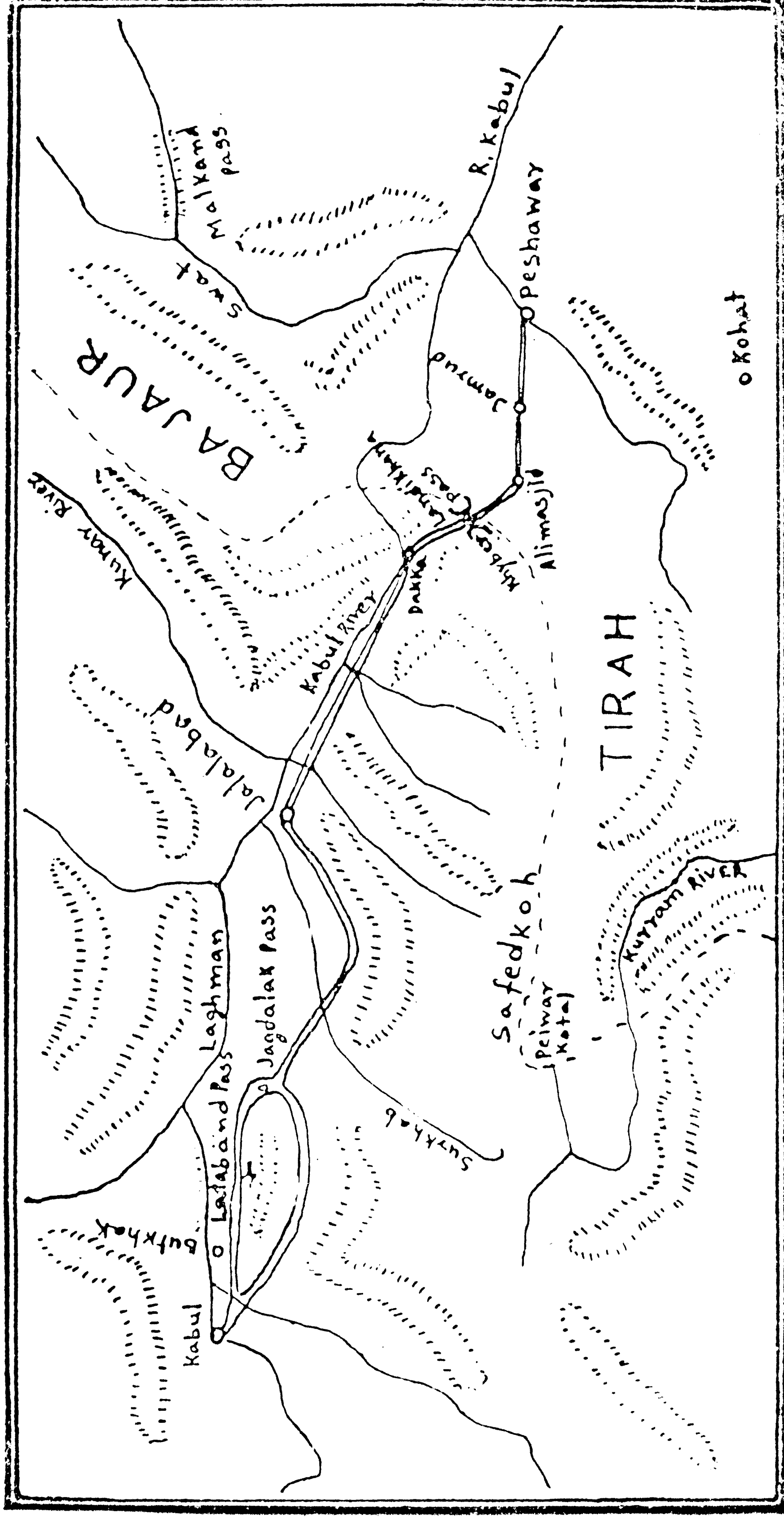
¹
Peshawar . The General had already proved successful in the neighbouring Hazara region. A force of twelve thousand was placed under the Governor to quell any sign of turbulence and to raise revenue .² Hari Singh Nalwa's immediate task was to improve the defences of the Peshawar region against recurring Afghan threat and Ghazi rebellions.

There were three rivers flowing down the Hindu Kush mountains from Afghanistan to Peshawar. The land route followed these rivers. The largest and the most important amongst them was the Kabul river taking its name from Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan. Jalalabad, Peshawar and Naushera were further East situated on its banks. It joined Indus close to Attock while river Swat joined the Kabul river from the North, the Barha the second tributary joined it from the South close to Peshawar. The nearest mountain pass to Peshawar was Khailiar pass, fourteen kilometer away. This was a favourite route of almost all invaders to India. It was decided to construct forts on all these routes of ingress. Michin fort was constructed on the bank of river Kabul, 300 infantry men, 100 housemen, 10 artillery men with 2 big and 2 small cannons were stationed here under the command of Nichhatar Singh, son of a well known Sikh General Dhanna Singh Nalwai. The Barha fort was built on the banks of river Barya. Here 300 infantry, 100 cavalry with 3 cannons were located under the command of Jhanda Singh Butalia. The fort of Shankargarh was built along the river swat where three routes converged from Kabul, Hashatnagar and Gandhav a minor Pass. In this fort were stationed 500

1. Kirpal Singh, The Historical Study of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Times, 1994, p 100.
2. Ibid, p 101.

infantry, 300 cavalry, 35 artillery men 2 big and 10 small cannons under the command of a well known Lehna Singh Sindhanwalia. In the case of Khyaber Pass, with good reconnaissance Hari Singh Nalwa found a small mound on the eastern end of the pass close to the village of Janirud. It already laid a very small mud fort¹. A strong fort on this most used route was divided upon and the work immediately started. The fort walls were 4 yards wide, 12 yards high, it was named Fatehgarh Sahib. In it were stationed 800 infantry, 200 cavalry, 80 Gunners, 10 big and 12 small guns. An officer of repute Maha Singh was appointed the fortren commander. Water was scarce here so apart from digging an extra large well inside the fort, a water channel was linked with the channel flowing through the Khyaber Pass under the control of the local tribes called Adrides, to allow regular uninterregated flow of water they were given Jagir worth Rs 1200/-. Further, for ease of command and control and security of detachments moving between PESHAWAR and the Fort of Jamrud, another fort was built in the middle. It was called Burj Hari Singh and 100 men were stationed in it, forts of Shulbkadar Jahangira, Khairabad and Attock were repaired and troops garrisoned in them. Roads were built linking these forts. Peshawar too was fortified and a line of towers was built at every 3 km linking it with Attock. These preparations alarmed the Afghans, they feared the Sikhs were preparing to invade Afghanistan¹. To stop any such Sikh designs Dost Muhammad sent his sons Akbar Khan and Shamsuddin with a force numbering 18,000 to destroy Sikh outposts of Jamrud and Shubkudur. Maha Singh, an officer of

1. Kirpal Singh, The Historical Study of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Times, 1994, pp 101-102.



Hari Singh, had only 600 men with him at Jamrud when he was attacked by the Afghans, held on for 3 or 4 days until Hari Singh Nalwa fetched up from Peshawar with force of 10,000 men and 25 piece of cannon on their arrival, artillery fire was opened on the enemy followed by the attack by Najile battalions. The Afghans retired in confusion leaving behind three guns. "The Sikhs then began plundering the Afghan camp and their ranks fell into disorder... The Afghans watching from a distance next vigorously chased the disorganised Sikhs, who retreated in disorder towards the fort. Hari Singh was mortally wounded in this action"¹. The main Sikh army rallied and Afghans were checked in their assault. The Sikhs threw up entrenchments in the night the Afghans could make no further progress and, after 5 or 6 days, they retreated. Between 500 to 800 were killed on either side. "Sardar Lehna Singh Sindhanwala who had a garrison of 1,500 men at Shubkudav to the North of Peshawar, too was attacked by the remainder part of the Afghan army but without any success"². Afghans then retreated, quickly. The Sikhs lost an experienced and capable General Hari Singh Nalwa. Ranjit Singh when informed deplored the loss and said, "it is a misfortune to lose a hero, but to lose one in a petty skirmish is sad indeed. Had he fallen in a great battle the regret would have been less"³. The Afghans did not succeed in occupying or destroying the fort of Jamrud nor in taking Shubkudar⁵.

1. NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975, pp 100-101.

2. Ibid.

3. NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975, p 108 quoting Calcutta review, 1858.

4. NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975, p 107 quoting Calcutta.

The Afghan action was aptly summed up by Jacquemont who wrote, "The Afghan were really just strong enough to have an occasional brush with Ranjit Singh and nothing more"¹.

The death of Hari Singh Nalwa, the brave and successful General of Ranjit Singh, cast a gloom over the monarch and was an excuse for the Afghans to claim victory.²

The Lahore Sarkar did not let up the pressure on the Kabul ruler. Tank, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan were placed under direct control of Lahore in order to have another approach route along the Indus to Peshawar. But Sinha quoting Wade remarks that the object was far deeper. "The seizure was intended to threaten Dost Muhammad Khan from a new quarter less difficult of access than Peshawar, while at the same time it protected the centre of the Punjab from any invasion of the Afghans when they (Sikhs) might be employed in strengthening and consolidating their power in Peshawar."³

Ranjit Singh by the year 1837 in the West had reaffirmed his rule over the frontier areas of the Hindu Kush mountains. He had also organised a foolproof method of its defence against internal and external aggression from the Afghans. Infact the Sikhs were poised for an offensive to Kabul should the monarch so decide. His Sikh Sardars and

1. NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975, p 102, quoting Jascquemont, Victor, letters from India, London, 1835, p 105.

2. NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975 p 102, Sinha quoting Osborne says, "The Maharaja seemed to bear the reverse with great equanimity and in answer to some question said that trifling defeat now and then was useful as it teaches both men and officers caution."

3. NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975, p 114 quoting political proceedings, 31 August, 1837, No 69.

French officers were no doubt eager for such an undertaking but, writes Sinha, "the mere warrior within him never got the better of the statesman".¹ May be as in Sind he was cautious of committing his army away from Satluj in a region where even Alexander the great in BC 326 had encountered difficulties, before reaching the Indus.

As many writer have noted before, Ranjit Singh and Nepoleon were contemporaries. Nepoleon student of military school joined the army as a lieutenant and rose to lead the affairs of France in 1799 and by 1815 he had fought and lost in the battle of waterloo. Ranjit Singh an unlettered oriental chief who had captured Lahore in 1799 and unified Punjab had kept the same British nation at bay in India.

Ranjit Singh when confronted by the British in 1809 just within ten years of his rule correctly assessed his own weaknesses and enemy's strengths. He knew that one day his nation will have to fight the East India company's troops and hence he must raise an army to match the 'Firangi Army'. That is why in his lifetime, on the one hand, he unified Punjab, on the other, he kept the British amused and friendly. He required time to prepare. He had a simple agenda, unify Punjab and keep the Afghans out and away. His success against Afghans at Chuch, Fir sabak Peshawar and Jamrud, and his organisation of an elaborate system of defence on the North-West Frontier, were all irrefutable pointers, to possible success against British, should events have forced a show down within his lifetime. But providence had willed it otherwise, when the constitution, the

1. NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975, p 105.

Executive and the Supreme command of the army were all centralised in the Sovereign, after his death two generations of his successors, his son and grandson died on the same day.

Ranjit Singh in his lifetime had created the where-with-all of a modern strong army. How well it would be used or otherwise were issues he left to his successors.

CHAPTER VI

ORGANISATION AND TRAINING OF THE ARMY

The army Ranjit Singh inherited had the proud legacy of waging a successful war against the Afghans. It was cavalry predominant.¹ The European organisation, and tactics which had brought victories to the East India Company's troops against the rulers of India, such as Tipu Sultan, Maharaja Sindhia and Jaswant Rao Holkar had also not escaped Ranjit Singh's attention. Ranjit Singh visited Lake's camp in disguise to see for himself the troops being drilled. Holkar, who in 1805 had come to solicit Ranjit Singh's aid too, it is believed, impressed on Ranjit Singh the new English tactics and role of infantry and artillery. The inquisitive Ranjit Singh had also questioned to watch the East India Company's troops in camp if not in action. From the very beginning Ranjit Singh perceived the advantages in the raising of infantry and artillery units. He was willing to recruit ex company sepoy to raise infantry battalions as also man his guns.

When the British in 1809 called a halt to the Lahore Sarkar's conquest of the Cis-Satluj region, it convinced Ranjit Singh on the necessity to train his army to a standard that it could checkmate the ever advancing British. How far Ranjit Singh succeeded in preparation of his army towards this end was best illustrated by the Governor General, the commander-in-chief and the few officers of their staff who witnessed the review of the Punjab troops

1. The Sikh army consisted for the most part of cavalry called 'Kattiawand', who found their own horses and received a double share of prize money (Lepel Griffin : Ranjit Singh, reprint 1967, p 86-87 refers)

with Ranjit Singh at Ferozpur on 5th December 1838 and their intimate feelings got conveyed to London by Emily Eden in a private letter.

"Thursday December 6, All the Gentlemen went at day break yesterday to Ranjit's review, and came back rather discomfited. He had nearly as many troops out as Sir G.R. had; they were quite as well disciplined rather better dressed, repeated the same military movements and several others more complicated and in short, nobody knows what to say about it, so that they say nothing except that they are sure the Sikhs would run away in a real fight. It is a sad blow to our vanities: you won't mention it to the troops in London. We say nothing about it to those here"¹.

To support the changed tactics, where a steady coordinated fire from guns and muskets could halt and may even break a cavalry charge, it was a necessity to raise the two arms, viz infantry and artillery, whereas the Sikh army in 18th century had placed very little reliance on artillery and practically nil on infantry. The foot soldier had only to guard forts, he was looked down upon and more often than not, he was transient waiting to acquire a horse of his own, to soon ride with the Ghorchara's on their next expedition. The Sikhs so despised this arm that Ranjit Singh in the beginning had to enroll Poorbias and deserters from East India Company's units both to form some new infantry units as also to impart training to the Sikh infantry. All this changed when "Maharaja himself took to attending parades in person"² and extending considerable favours and rewards to

1. Jean Marie Lafont, French administrators of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, revised edition 1988, p 32, quoting up the country, Oxford 1930, (London 1978), p 209.

2. Sita Ram Kohli, The Organisation of the Khalsa Army, Maharaja Ranjit Singh First Death Centenary Memorial, Language Department Punjab, Patiala, 1970, p 67.

infantry men, thereby making the service attractive for
 1
 Sikhs and others in Punjab. How popular it had become can
 2
 well be made out from the table-1

TABLE_1

Year	Strength Infantry	Monthly Salary (Rs)
1819 A.D.	7,748	60,172
1823	11,681	84,162
1828	15,625	1,16,284
1833	20,577	1,67,962
1838	26,617	2,27,660
1843	37,791	4,83,056
1845	53,962	5,70,205

Note : Each battalion was of approx 800 men.

Pay lists of infantry reveal that both the regimental
 officer, and the rank and file were filled with Sikhs,
 Hindus and Mohammadans. "So long as one was efficient in his
 calling the Maharaja made no distinction on the basis of
 3
 creed or community either in giving service or promotion"

Ranjit Singh with his insight and intuition in matters
 4
 military, alongwith infantry gave his serious attention to
 artillery too. It was fortunate for him that Sikhs did not
 have any strong aversion to artillery, as they did for
 5
 enrolment to infantry.

He however from 1822 onwards employed a number of
 Europeans to train his men and manage casting of Guns. In

1. Ibid, Sita Ram Kohli writes, "an examination of the pay rolls upto 1813 AD shows that the bulk of the infantry men consisted of Hindustanies, Gurkhas and Afghans, whereas those of 1818 AD and onwards reveal that the Sikh element was becoming more predominant.

2. Ibid p 70.

3. Sita Ram Kohli, The Oriantation of the Khalsa Army Maharaja Ranjit Singh First Death Centenary Memorial, Language Department, Punjab, Patiala, 1970, p 67.

4. Ibid, p 71.

5. Ibid.

artillery the most conspicuous amongst them were Galude
 1
 Auguste Court and Alexander Gardner.

The number of Guns and Swivels in the Sikh artillery
 2
 have been tabulated (Table-2). It is pertinent to note that
 swivels which moved in support of mobile columns such as the
 cavalry inspite of the change in tactics did not lose their
 importance.

TABLE - 2

Year	Strength	No of Guns	Swivels	Monthly Salary	Remarks
1818-19AD	834	22	190	5,840	Besides this
1828-29	3,778	130	280	28,390	there were
1838-39	4,535	180	280	32,906	about one
1843-44	8,280	282	300	82,893	hundred pieces
1845-46	10,524	376	300	89,251	placed in the various forts of the Kingdom

Artillery units were 'topkhana jinsi' or mixed
 batteries vis 'gavi' or those driven by bullocks, 'aspi' or
 those driven by mules and horses: and 'hoboth' or the
 Howitzer. There were also the 'Zumburs' and 'Ghumbaras' or
 3
 Camel swivels and mortars: The number of guns in a Jinsi
 battery varied from ten to twenty five and sometimes even
 more: while in a horse battery it ranged from six to ten
 pieces. A derah Zamburakkhana comprised about sixty swivels
 and later, their numbers were reduced to 25-30 swivels.

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid, p 74.

3. Sita Ram Kohli, The Organisation of the Khalsa Army, Maharaja Ranjit Singh First Death Centenary Memorial, Language Department Punjab, 1970, p 73. Kohli further writes, " The average strength of a ten gun battery was two hundred and fifty men including non-combatants. The command of a battery was held, by an officer of the rank of commandant assisted by an Adjutant and a Major. For purposes of administration, however each gun in a battery was treated as a subunit. It had about eight or nine men attached to it, who were placed under the charge of a Jamadar, assisted by a hawaladar and a naik.

Ranjit Singh had a foundary for casting Guns at Lahore. The guns cast there, "So far as strength, finish and general appearance was concerned were as good as those used in the British army of the East India Company." Sita Ram Kohli writes "it seems to leave little doubt in our mind that the art of manufacturing guns was fairly advanced in the Punjab in the early nineteenth century."

To get an idea of the state of Sikh artillery in the field we have a first hand report written in April, 1839 of Lieutenant Barr, an artillery officer who accompanied Lt Col CM Wade as part of Prince Taimur's, staff alongwith the Sikh army contingent advancing via Peshawar, in support of the British Army of India advancing to Afghanistan vis Sind.

On our arriving in front, they saluted, and the general than directed the native commandant, a fine soldierly looking man, handsomely accounted, to put them through their drill. This they performed with great credit their movements being executed with a celerity and precision that would have done honour to any army. We walked down the line and inspected the ordnance. The two guns on the right of the battery were six pounders, and were the same that Lord William Bentinck had presented to Ranjit Singh at Ropar. The rest were cast by himself from their model, and appear almost equally, good than tried some of his fuzes, which are very good, burn true, all the shot was formed of beaten iron, and cost a rupee each, and the majority of the shells are composed of Pewter, which he told us aswered uncommonly well, when it considered that all we saw was the work of the general's own knowledge and we reflect on the difficulties he has had fared and to which level he has brought his artillery. The men dress something like our own (British) horse artillery, except that, instead of helmets, they wear red turbans (the jamadars or officer being of silk) which hang down to cover the back and cross belts; and a back leather scabbard with long boots; black waist and cross belt; and black leather scarf and with brass cinaments."

1. Ibid, p 75.

2. Ibid.

3. Lient William Barr, Journal of a March from Delhi to Kabul, reprint Language Department Punjab, 1970, pp 148-149.

Ranjit Singh in reorganising his cavalry showed his shrewd common sense, that was, an outcome of an intimate knowledge of the leanings and capacity of his people. A majority of the Sikh population of the Punjab was practically soldiers and he saw no harm in allowing all such men to join his military service and continue on the old system. "These soldiers, he recognised were not amenable to strict rules of discipline, but, being born horsemen, were always happier when engaged in an enterprise attended with difficulties and dangers." ¹ Bearing these facts in mind he evolved a method of maintaining this vast body of experienced cavalry in the form of irregular cavalry either paid directly by the state for its upkeep or indirectly by way of Jagirdari system.

As he went along defeating the power of each Sikh chief, he employed great tact absorbing their forces lock stock and barrel into his own. He granted military fiefs but gradually he kept changing over to the principle of assignments. Thus he kept in his army traditional old Khalsa cavalry (Ghorcharahs) as well as the regular cavalry. The latter really taking shape after 1822.

Ranjit Singh used great wisdom in absorbing the soldiers of the chiefs he subdued. To ensure their contentment and gratitude in turn loyalty for himself and his successors, "the troops of the Ramgarhia Misal and those of Sardar Milkha Singh Thehpuria of Rawalpindi were bodily taken over and formed two big divisions, known respectively

1. Sita Ram Kohli, The Organisation of the Khalsa Army, Maharaja Ranjit Singh First Death Centenary Memorial, Language Department, Punjab 1970, p 78.

as the Derah Ramgaria and the Derah Pindiwala. Similarly, the troops of the Sardars of the Nakkai and the Kanhiya Misals, were absorbed into the corps commanded by princes Kharak Singh and Sher Singh respectively, whereas the followers of other smaller chiefs were amalgamated enblock, from time to time, with the divisions known as Derah Naula-¹kha and the Derah Ardalyan."

There was no fixed system of regimentation in the ranks of the Derahs. Though some organisational terms of the regular units had been absorbed such as "a commandant" and "major". With passage of time as in regular units Ghorcharah Derah had appropriate compliment of administrative staff authorised on the strength of each Derah and paid by the same authority as the remainder troops.

To improve administration and control in battle, the smaller Derahs were put together in 1822 and were placed under the charge of an officer of rank and distinction such as Sardar Lehna Singh Majithia, the Sandhawalia and the Atariwala Sardars.

Sita Ram Kohli writes, "almost all the military classes of the Punjab were represented in this branch of the army. The Jat Sikhs of the Central Doab, the Hindu Rajputs of Jammu and Kangra hills and the Mohamadan Rajputs. The pathan, the Khatris, and Datta Brahmins also appear in the army lists, but the Rajputs and the Jat Sikhs easily

1. Sita Ram Kohli, The Organisation of the Khalsa Army, Maharaja Ranjit Singh First Death Centenary Memorial, Language Department Punjab, 1970, p 81.

formed the predominant element."¹

The Jagirdari cavalry was maintained on the feudal principle, where each Jagirdar (fief holder) was to furnish a certain number of well equipped troopers. Their number in turn was determined by the value of their respective Jagirs. These troops were allowed to live on their own Jagirs and each Jagirdar was required to submit to the state² a descriptive roll of all the numbers of his contingent. For their mounts the practice of branding the horses was introduced.³ They were to present themselves once in a year on the day of the Dussehra festival at a grand review of the entire army held either at Lahore or Amritsar. "A strict muster was taken by the Maharaja in person and the presence of every man from the highest officer down to the ordinary soldier was made obligatory."⁴ Any breach of rules invited⁵ immediate punishment.

For all amongst Ranjit Singh's army the Ghorcharah of the once independent chiefs represented the better class of society "it had a peculiar charm and attraction for the Sikh peasants and it was not so much for a slightly higher pay that a man joined the Ghorcharah ranks as for the dignity

1. Sita Ram Kohli, The Organisation of the Khalsa Army Maharaja Ranjit Singh First Death Centenary Memorial, Language Department Punjab, 1970 p 83.

2. Ibid, p 87.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid, p 86-88.

5. Sita Ram Kohli writes, "cases are not wanting where even the highest military officers who failed to fulfil the conditions of the grant suffered punishment. Even Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa a great general of Ranjit Singh was on one occasion, fined a sum of two of rupees for not maintaining the stipulated number of men (Ibid refers).

attaching to this branch of the army."¹

Baron Hugel, a Persian traveller who visited Ranjit Singh's court in 1836, had this to say, "I requested leave to inspect them (the Ghorcharaha) and never beheld a finer nor a more remarkably striking body of men. Each one was dressed differently, and yet so much in same fashion that they all looked in perfect keeping... and reminded me of the time when the fate of empires hung on the point of a lance, and when the individual whose bold heart beat fearlessly under his steel breastplate, was the sole founder of his fortunes."²

Once Allard, a French officer joined the service of the Maharaja early in March 1822,³ he was commissioned to raise a corps of dragoons, and these regular cavalry units were to be disciplined on the same lines as was the case of a cavalry unit in Europe. Ranjit Singh after inspecting the first trained units was satisfied that the foreign officers will produce results, he then employed them granting liberal salaries.

The following table-3⁴ compiled from the records of the Sikh Government shows the strength of the regular cavalry at different periods of the Sikh rule.

TABLE - 3

<u>Year</u>	<u>Strength</u>	<u>Monthly salary (in rupees)</u>
1819	750	11,723
1823	1,656	41,609
1829	4,315	1,08,970
1833	3,914	86,544
1838	4,090	90,375
1843	5,381	1,61,660
1845	6,235	1,95,925

1. Sita Ram Kohli, The Organisation of the Khalsa Army, Maharaja Ranjit Singh First Death Centenary Memorial, Language Department, Punjab, 1970, p 88.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid. p 79, footnote 1.

4. Ibid.

The induction of European officers in the Sikh army was a post-1822 phenomenon. "Maharaja Ranjit Singh had in all 52 European officers in his army- English, Spanish, Greek, Russian, German, Austrian and French. Out of these 16 were French, notable among them were General Ventura and General Allard. These two officers, in particular, were responsible for making the Maharaja's, Fauj-i-khas, a crack battalion which had many successful campaigns to its credit."¹

Lafont gives a possible explanation as to why Ranjit Singh employed the European (French) officers when his conquests were practically already over. He writes, "the kingdom, towards the N.W. and the South was bordering purely Mohamedan states (Sind and Afghanistan) of much bigger size and historical cohesion than the petty Moslem principalities which had been subjected upto then. To attack them was to risk a general upheaval of the Moslems subjects of the state, and a possible defection of the Moslem contingent of the army, in case of a set-back, particularly if a Jihad was proclaimed by the Ulemas, a theoretical solution to such a problem was the creation of strongly disciplined units under the command of officers who, being neither Sikhs nor Moslems nor Hindus, would depend only on the Head of state and would accept no other interference in the execution of their orders."²

In 1822 at Wadai a Punjab army detachment had taken possession of the fort belonging to Sada Kaur but a force

1. Jean Marie Lafont, French Administrators of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Revised Edition, 1988, p viii.
2. Ibid.

sent by Captain Murray evicted them¹. Ranjit Singh was therefore convinced to employ Europeans to improve the discipline and training of his army. So when Allard and Ventura came along he first discreetly verified if they were not British agents and then employed them.

The discipline and training installed by them created the Fauji-khas or Royal Brigade.² "It was kept as a reserve force, like Napoleon's old Guards, to act whenever a set-back had been suffered by other regular corps and imminent danger threatened the country. Particularly remarkable was its readiness to move at two days notice with all its components, infantry, cavalry, artillery, at an extreme speed, and to appear as a compact force, with all the might on any eventual battlefield in the Punjab under the personal command of Allard and Ventura." "Allards Brigade consisted of 3 regiments and Ventura's of 5 battalions, the Adjutant General for the whole being Sheikh Dasawan.³ Two more French Officers, Court and Avitable, soon joined the Maharaja's service. Court was given the responsibility to improve the artillery branch. "Ranjit Singh by 1830 had at his disposal among other forces, three full fledged brigades.⁵

1. Jean Marie Lafont French Administrators of Maharaja Ranjit Singh revised edition, 1988, p.

2. IBID, p 13.

3. IBID, p 17.

4. IBID, p 17. Lafont writes, "Sheikh Dasawan was a smart active man about 45 years of age. He had come from the company's service and had been with the expedition to Egypt, the medal of which he wore."

5. Jean Marie Lafont, French Administrators of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, revised edition 1988, p.18. Lafont writes, "from the rare figures available in the catalogue of the Khalsa Darbar records, we find that in 1837-37 the Fauji-khas, all included (Foot horse and Artillery), had 5447 men on the rolls Court's brigade was 2430 strong, and Avitable had 2548 men under his command. That makes about 10,000 men out of 35,000 horse foot and artillery which formed the regular army of the Punjab."

After a review of these trained Brigades Ranjit Singh in 1835 ordered the reorganisation of the whole of his regular army on the Fauji-Khas model.¹

Watching such activities through intelligence reports the British instructed their agents in India and to British authorities in Alexandria and Beshire, to be vigilant and arrest any French officer travelling in disguise to join Ranjit Singh's army.²

Apart from "the full assimilation of a military concept of discipline, and the existence of highly developed esprit de Corps", Allard and Ventura had introduced in the Punjab the system of officers "En pied" and officers "a la suite" which had been instituted long time ago in the French armies, with the result that the brigade, whatever loss of officers it may sustain in the field could immediately recover its original strength with a corresponding number of officers, A La Suite" becoming officers "En pied" and taking the effective command of men whom they knew for long and who trusted them as well. This system was expensive, but it was highly efficient.³ In case of war these officers could also form the nucleus, the core of new raisings.

1. Ibid., quoting Fauja Singh, Military system, pp.77-79.
 2. Ibid., p.18.
 3. Ibid., p 19, footnote 77 explains, "officer a la suite, or Honorary officer; a kind of French Officer who without having a real employment belongs to the staff and replaces the absent officers on duty and in case of war, they are for any service or duty, on the same footing as the officers en pied of the same grade... If necessary, they become full-fledged officers and are considered as such... (In Baradier, Dictionnaire de Armees de terre, 1849, sv.)"

The strict discipline caused resentment and may be with tacit backing of political opponents to the French generals. In 1826, "Allard and Ventura faced a very serious mutiny which could have endangered their life. Ranjit Singh acted with his usual promptness and ability, pitching his camp at Anarkali with his own bodyguards, arresting the ring leaders and talking to the troops. Such a firm stand which was also a political advice to the generals, opponents, could only produce confidence and trust in the heart of the French officers. On the other hand, the Maharaja never complied with Allard's and Ventura's strong insistence on introducing death penalty in their brigades for the most serious offences and dereliction of duty."¹

In 1837 at the time of marriage of Prince Nau Nihal Singh Ranjit Singh displayed his military might to his British guests. The Commander-in-chief, Lord Fane, came with a good number of officers. "His troops, the Fauj-i-Khas, the brigades of Court and Avitable and other disciplined units - a total of 18,000 men horse and foot went on parade."² Fane and his delegation were impressed. Cunningham writes that Fane, "formed an estimate of the force which would be required for the complete subjugation of the Punjab. These views, he adds, may not be on record, but they were well known to those about his Excellency. His estimate was, as I remember to have heard from Captain Wade, 67,000 men, and he thought there might be a two year's active warfare."³

1. Jean Marie Lafont, French Administrators of Maharaja Ranjit Singh revised edition, pp 19-20.

2. Ibid p 29.

3. Ibid. pp 29-30 quoting History of the Sikhs p.173, and footnote 1.

The marriage ceremonies were hardly over when Ranjit Singh received a long letter from Hari Singh Malwa who was then alone at Peshawar with minimum troops to defend the Western frontier. Dost Mohammad had seized the opportunity to launch a desperate full scale offensive to recapture Peshawar. He had attacked Jamrud.

"The Maharaja, suddenly, realised the terrible military mistake he had committed. All the troops were at once ordered to march to Peshawar. On the 27th April Allard, Ventura and Court joined their brigades which were moving at a speed of 28 kos a day for the cavalry and 16 kos for the infantry. On the 1st May, Allard informed Ranjit Singh by letter that it would take too long to send to Lahore for supplies and the military equipments. He suggested to take whatever was needed at Rohtas and Attock."¹

No sooner the Afghans learnt of the movements of the best Khalsa troops to Peshawar, they retreated.

In Punjab nothing could be considered in any sphere of life as an equivalent of its disciplined battalions.² No wonder a few years later, at Ferozeshah in 1846 these trained brigades and battalions "gave to the British army, under the joint-command of their Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief, the only feeling of disaster they ever experienced."³

1. Jean Marie Lafont, French Administrators of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, revised edition 1968, pp 30-31.

2. Ibid, p 17, Lafont writes, "The strict discipline which Allard and Ventura introduced in 1822 never subsided. Aitavale was famous for his vociferations while drilling his platoons, but his quick expedition of disobedience cases were not less famous in the Punjab. Court was certainly the most guarded French Officer of the Lahore Darbar, and his troops in 1841 were the first to turn against him for his tentatives to prevent wide spread mutiny and abhorrent increase of pay to the soldiers. There were, therefore, and particularly in the beginning a lot of resistance and some instances of disobedience in the Fauj-i-Khas.

3. Ibid, p 18.

The troops strength and their training was under the circumstances, the best what Ranjit Singh could possibly achieve in the Punjab of his times. In fact, during the actions fought in December 1845 and January 1846, British officers were struck by the excellence of the fighting machine they had to contend with."¹ The performance of the Punjab army in the battles, that followed in 1848-49 was no less praise worthy.

1. Jean Marie Lafont, French Administrators of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, revised edition 1988, p 43.

CHAPTER - VII

RANJIT SINGH : A MILITARY ASSESSMENT

War is the last recourse of Kings when diplomacy fails. This adage was best understood by Ranjit Singh who was a Military genius. To young Ranjit Singh his national objective was clear, to unify Punjab and rule over a large Kingdom. Everything he did was with this end in view.

He was a contemporary of Napoleon but unlike Napoleon he did not make grandiose plans, Napoleon may have achieved much but within 14 years in 1815 he met his Waterloo. While Ranjit Singh on his death in 1839 left an empire to his successor along with an efficient military machine to rule over it.

Ranjit Singh in his efforts to oppose the Afghan invasions in the last decade of 18th century saw the total disarray, chaos disorder and anarchy prevailing in the country. The foreign invaders came only to loot, plunder and return, they did not stay on to govern and improve the lot of common man. The people of Punjab looked upto young Ranjit Singh to give them security and improve their economic conditions. Ranjit Singh too felt the need to improve the well being of his country-men and was prepared to fight to uphold their cause.

Ranjit Singh's rise was gradual and steady. One of his military objectives was to bring the various Misls under his rule and simultaneously increase the strength of his army by absorbing their soldiers into his own. Both the Sardars and the soldiers looked upto him with equal deference unlike the case with other rulers, where the soldier obeyed his colonel but thought nothing of the General. Thus by success of this

military objective he reduced the military opposition to him, at the same time increasing his own armed might.

He employed shrewd diplomacy with attainable objectives his ends, failing which he employed his military might with vigour and thorough preparedness. His first military campaign of note, the capture of Lahore was accomplished with surprise. He moved his forces leisurely for a pilgrimage to Amritsar, united with troops of Kanahya Misl and then with his characteristic alacrity knocked on the gates of Lahore. A gate being opened to him by some leading citizens whom he had won over earlier, Thus having won a capital the ruler of Lahore set out to put together a kingdom for himself. He sowed the seeds of dissension amongst Sardars of Misls and Nawab of Kasur; who got together to put the young upstart in his place and then soon dispersed only to be absorbed by him one by one. In 1805 he was arbitrator between Holkar and his antagonist Lord Lake. He not only helped them to come to an understanding with each other, but more important is that, he was able to quickly see them off across the Satluj¹.

1. About the Holkar Affairs Kirpal Singh in the Historical Study of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, writes, "Ranjit Singh showed great political maturity and sagacity in dealing with Holkar. It was very wise on his part to save his infant kingdom from destruction. Had he fought against the British he could not conquer Kasur, Kangra or Multan, The British would have helped the rulers of these territories. Hence there would have been no Sikh Kingdom under Ranjit Singh. However, according to Lahore diarist Sohan Lal some generals and Sardars murmured among themselves that their royal master had allied himself with hated Farangis who were the enemies of the faith". Ranjit Singh's estimate of the British resources and power was correct. He knew that the British have conquered the most parts of India, So his decision proved to be judicious and wise. (Kirpal Singh. The Historical Study of Maharaja Ranjit Singh Times, 1994, p 46 refers).

Unlike other monarchs Ranjit Singh never passed a capital sentence, nor indulged in avoidable bloodshed. In his long drawn out campaign to write the innumerable chiefs under his leadership, he showed extreme patience. For example to reduce the fort of Akalgarh when his efforts foiled, he decided to wait till by providence Sardar Dal Singh died who was an associate of his own father, Sardar Maha Singh. Ranjit Singh then with adequate force marched to Akalgarh and was waiting outside the gates of the fort, this time around requesting entrance to pay his condolence a due custom which on relentless submission, the unfortunate widow could not refuse¹.

When the British envoy Metcalfe informed Ranjit Singh that friendship between the British and Ranjit Singh is desired because of threat of France, Ranjit Singh was not the one to lose an opportunity. He immediately set course for the Cis-Satluj territory to bring to a close his Cis-Satluj Campaign. To acquire what was remaining and in so doing used the mere presence of a British envoy in his train as an aid, to meet, his own ends.

Faced with British march to Satluj, doubtful loyalties of Cis-Satluj Chiefs and knowing the mischief the English could indulge in by inciting Nawabs and Chiefs which were still to be subdued by him, he temporised; to buy time to unify Punjab and raise an army worthy of a monarch, and to fight the English in due course, he signed the treaty of Amritsar in 1809 and did not look back over his shoulder. The treaty released Ranjit Singh from any threat from Satluj direction and gave him Carte-blanche sanction to conquer the

1. Muhammad Latif, History of the Punjab, reprint 1974, p 355.

remaining areas. A treaty with British greatly increase Ranjit Singh's status amongst the local chiefs and rulers. In the next 25 years through a number of campaigns he brought under his rule all lands between river Satluj and the Hindukush mountains-Kangra, Kasur, Multan, Attock, Kashmir Hazara, Peshawar and other territories West of Indus, all became landmarks in his path of glory.

The Gurkhas in 1809 were not letting go off Kangra and Sansar Chand was not letting go off the Kangra fort but Ranjit Singh had more important engagements beyond Kangra than to get bagged down in a long campaign in the hills.

Lepel Griffin writes, "The siege (of Kangra fort) was protracted for years and Sansar Chand might at last have wearied out his persistent enemy, had he not, in an evil hour, asked for the assistance of Ranjit Singh who intrigued with both sides and gained possession of the fortress by pretending to be a relief sent by the the Nepalese general, Amar Singh Thapa. Once inside, he laughed at both Rajputs and Gurkhas and held it for himself. The ruse was brilliant and worthy of such admiration as history gives"¹

Ranjit Singh was a good judge of men. He knew how to exploit the available talent. Ranjit Singh pitted the fanaticism of the Akalis against the Afghans. He used them to storm Kasur, Multan and later most successfully at Fir Sabak.

1. Lepel Griffin, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1967, p 198.

While Khushab and Sahiwal were reduced by surprise, the battle of Chuch to secure Attock was won by careful preparation and manoeuvring. In the case of Multan campaign moderation and economy of effort was his policy. He gradually undermined the strength of the Nawab of Multan through a number of raids and realisation of an ever-increasing tribute before launching the final assault in 1810. Infact, "Whenever and wherever he found any stiff resistance, instead of meeting it with promptness, he usually adopted the policy of temporisation and lying in wait for a better opportunity"¹.

After meeting with success in his Multan campaign, Ranjit Singh had divided on Kashmir as his next military objective. To achieve it, he displayed some very sound strategic sense. He was concerned that in his absence in Kashmir the Afghans may take advantage and attack Attock thus exposing his flank. Therefore, Ranjit Singh first not only strengthened Attock but in addition he crossed Indus and marched to Peshawar, to impress upon the Afghans his rising military strength and so keep them in awe of him, while he fought the Kashmir campaign.

He was careful in timing his military campaigns. He conquered Kashmir in 1819 when its Governor Azim Khan was away to Kabul. He later (1834) annexed Peshawar when Shah Shuja and Dost Muhammad were fighting for supremacy in Afghanistan. The occupation of Peshawar was a bold and wise step as it provided peace and tranquility to the people from the lawlessness and infighting amongst the tribes of the

1. V Kiernan, p 84.

region. Subsequently when there was a stand off between Dost Muhammad and the Sikh forces over latter's occupation of Peshawar, Ranjit Singh successfully negotiated not only to gain time to build his strength but also to engineer a division within the enemy camp. He promised Jagirs to Barakzai brothers who then crossed over to his camp, forcing Dost Muhammad to retire precipitately and, in so doing, acknowledge the superiority of the Sikh arms for posterity.

Ranjit Singh in his military campaigns did not forsake diplomacy. In addition to applying force, he simultaneously endeavoured to secure the surrender of the enemy through negotiations, which carried on not only before but even during the progress of the hostilities as in the case of the capture of Mankera in 1821¹.

That Ranjit Singh, without the kind of staff the European armies were having for coordination and higher direction of war was able to move his armies for the military campaigns with alacrity, was an achievement worthy of note. His meticulous planning and preparation for the assault on Multan in 1818 and on Kashmir in 1819, are great feats. Occupation of Hazara in 1822 and Peshawar in 1834 was a bold and wise decision in consonance with his avowed policy to enlarge the kingdom. What is praiseworthy are the measures he adopted to keep the tribals under check, and the Afghans out. For his campaigns in the West, the rapidity of

1. The siege of Mankera showed how much Ranjit Singh could inspire the Sardars & troops to action. No water could be found nearer than 15 Kos of the place, But even Sardars offered in a body to dig wells and provide the army with water in case the Maharaja advanced to Mankera (NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975, p 60 refers).

movement of his troops to the west of Indus was legendary. The movements of reinforcements despatched to bolster Jamrud in 1837 speak for themselves. "All troops were at once ordered to march to Peshawar on the 27th Allard, Ventura and court joined their brigades, which were moving at a speed of 28 Kos a day for the cavalry and 15 kos for the infantry"¹ (Each kos is equivalent to a little over 4 km).

The instrument of Ranjit Singh's strength was his army, which he nurtured with great care². He was ever inquisitive to learn about anything and everything from his visitors about dress, equipment, pay, range of weapons, weight of shell, its method of manufacture and so on. He was insatiable in his questions. When he visited the Governor-General's camp in 1831 at Ruar, he examined every piece of equipment that met his fancy. Realising the importance of infantry and artillery, and the new tactics followed by the Europeanised troops of Indian rulers before him, Ranjit Singh introduced the raising of the new units and casting of guns at Lahore as early as 1803 by 1835 after the successful experimentation with the Fauj-i-khas brigade, Ranjit Singh ordered all his regular troops to be reorganised on the same pattern. The command of each brigade was given to a Colonel or a General. He was himself the minister of War and the

1. Jean Marie Lafont, French Administrators of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, revised editions 1988, p 30.

2. Ganesh Dass himself a revenue official of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the author of Char-Bagh-i-Punjab, knew the administration of Ranjit Singh intimately. He writes, "The Maharaja knew all from highest to the lowest in the army and called them for various assignments. He treated everybody according to his status. The Maharaja could recognise a person even after ten years, (Dr Kirpal Singh The Historical Study of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Times, 1994, p 23, refers).

Chief of Army. The pay rolls of Ranjit Singh's army are preserved intact and were arranged and catalogued by Sita Ram Kohli. He writes, "that a glance at the pay lists reveals that both the regimental officer, and the rank and file (In infantry) were indiscriminately filled with Sikhs, Hindus and Muhammadans, There were also a number of European officers : French, British and Italians, etc, so long as one was efficient in his calling, the Maharaja made no distinction on the basis of creed or community either in giving service or promotion"¹.

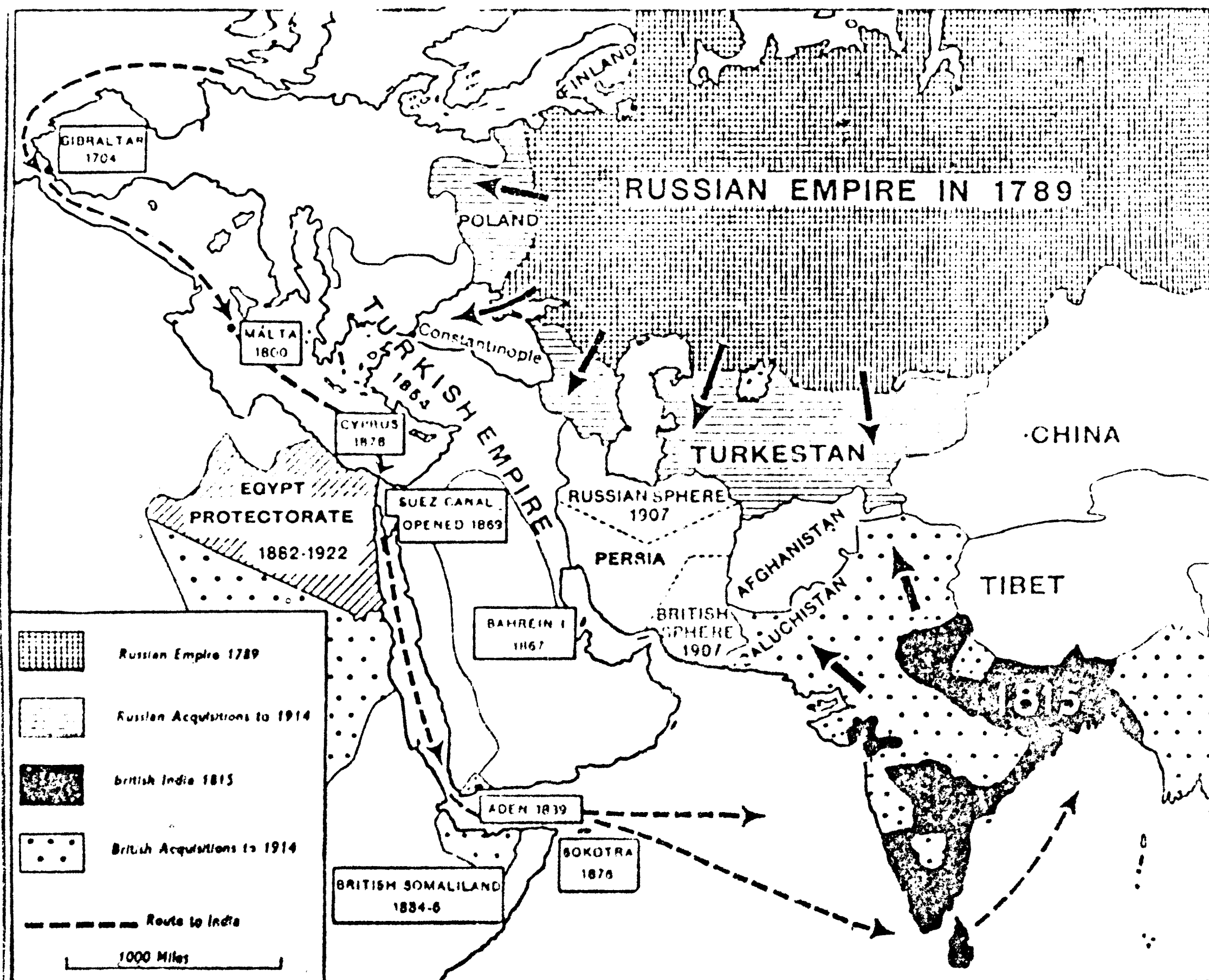
Ranjit Singh in his life time continuously kept improving his army. He endeavoured to have it so strong that it remained a deterrent to British designs over Punjab.

Lafont in his book 'French Administrators of Maharaja Ranjit Singh', makes an observation that Ranjit Singh did not appreciate the role of heavy cavalry. Whether this observation is there because of the fact that Allard, responsible for raising of cavalry units was not released enough funds by the Maharaja, one can only conjecture. Ranjit Singh no doubt neglected the roads and bridges in his kingdom, particularly those leading West to East, from the Afghan to the Satluj frontier. Possibly the depredation and loss of the 60 years preceding Ranjit Singh's reign by repeated Afghan raids was the reason for building no roads.

1. Sita Ram Kohli, Organisation of the Khalsa Army, Maharaja Ranjit Singh first death Centenary Memorial, Language Department Punjab, 1970, p 67. On the same subject Burned wrote in his report, "I have always observed the Sikh to be more tolerant in his religion" and Metcalfe admired Ranjit Singh for his unprejudiced use of talented men of all religions. "(NK Sinha, Ranjit Singh, reprint 1975, p 150 quoting Foreign Department Miscellaneous No 305, Thampson Metcalfe letter of May 9, 1831, refers).

Ranjit Singh considered roads as expedients to an invading army. However given more time and the changing security environment, where Afghans were no longer a serious threat, better and more roads and bridges would have come up in the Punjab.

Ranjit Singh could wield a pen, with his hand dipped in saffron or lift a sword, with the same hand, with equal dexterity, and his success in numerous military campaigns was no doubt the result of a sound strategic sense. When Maharaja Ranjit Singh died on 27 June 1839, he had achieved what he had set out to do; create a Kingdom and an army to defend it. That it was achieved under the very nose of the British was what only a military genius like Ranjit Singh could do.



CHAPTER VIII

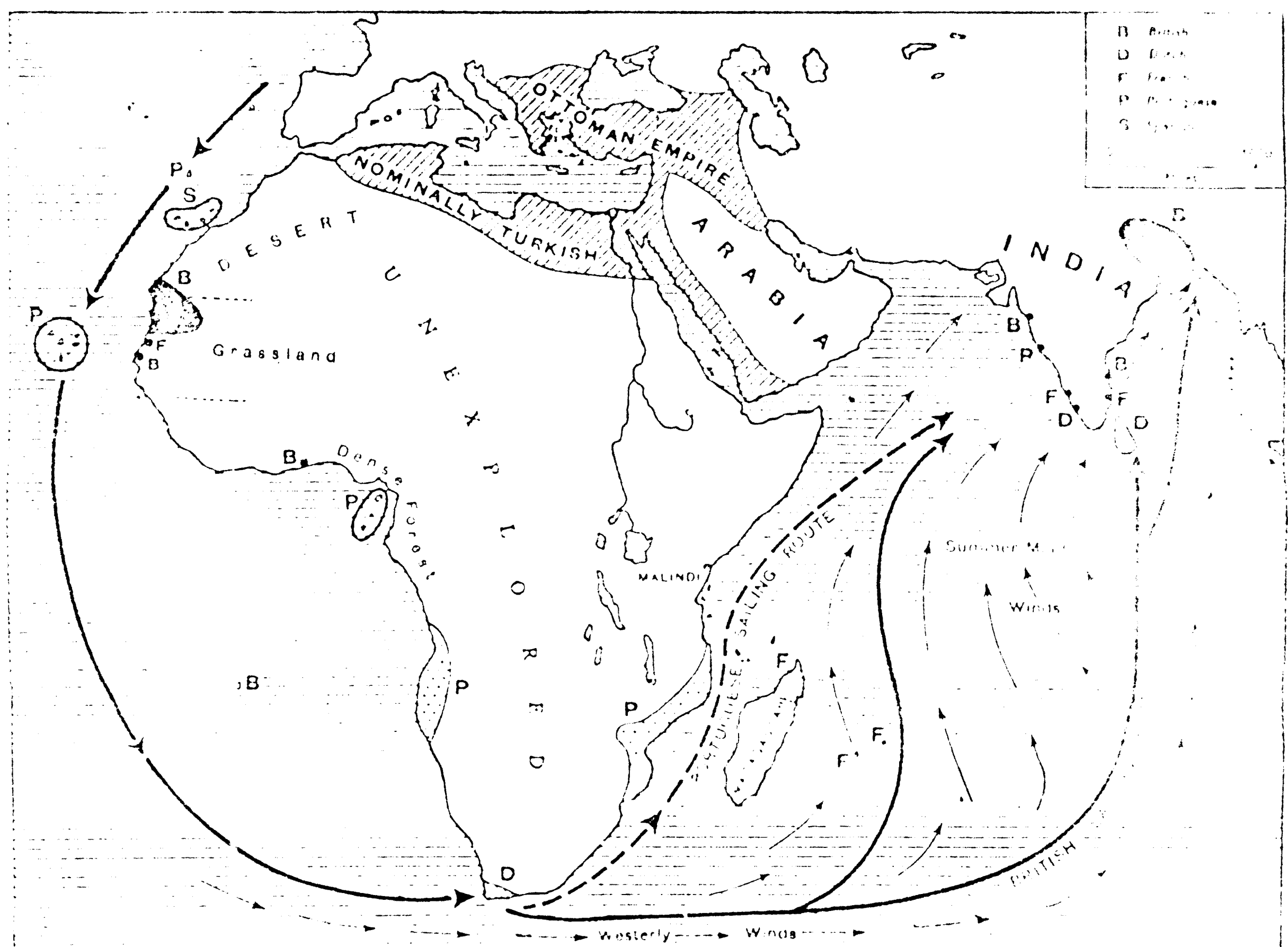
POST RANJIT SINGH ENVIRONMENT IN PUNJAB

Northern India on Ranjit Singh's death presented a picture of one unified Punjab with Tibet and China in the North, Afghans in the West and the British in the South. It was due to Frenchophobia earlier and the Russophobia later, that the British each time ended up by acquiring more territories Northwards. From their suzerainty over Cis-Satluj states in 1809 to their establishment of a puppet regime in Afghanistan in 1839, the British did find some reason, to extend their power. An examination of the British view of the Northern India of the 1830s, therefore, may help, in arriving at the likely British military objectives vis a vis Punjab, in the post Ranjit Singh environment.

After the battle of Waterloo (1815), which gave a mortal blow to the French expansionism, Russia was the only power which could occupy the intervening lands stretching between them and the 'British in India'. The Russian advance towards Constantinople had made British politicians such as Palmerston (1830-1865) demand a forward policy of their own¹. The situation was some-what repeat of French threat in the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Governor General from Calcutta had sent missions to Persia and Afghanistan including the now well known Metcalfe's mission to Ranjit Singh (1805). To meet the Russian challenge, the East India Company set itself the military objective of pushing vigorously forward to block the

1. WE Brown and AW Coysh, The Map Approach to British History 1603-1914, reprint 1975, p 17.

BRITISH SAILING ROUTE TO BENGAL



Russian advance as far away from India as possible. Militarily this policy entailed either a strong and friendly government in Afghanistan capable of opposing Russian advance or an early occupation of that country by the British themselves. Punjab under Ranjit Singh could meet the British criteria of a strong stable and friendly government and hence it was made a signatory to the Tripartite Treaty signed to solicit limited Sikh aid for installing a pro-British government in Afghanistan.

The British advance to Afghanistan from Bengal had been along the Bengal - Oudh-Delhi-Ferozpur and then via river Satluj or through Punjab. One possible reason for British, initial preference for Bengal could be that their wind power driven 'battle ships and merchant shipping were using the Westerlies and summer monsoon from the Cape of Good Hope, taking them by natural power more to the Bay of Bengal than the Arabian Sea. Hence they preferably occupied Ceylon and Bengal and their chief factories too, because of the shipping conveniences were on the East coast of India¹. The advent of iron ships, at about this time, was hoped would make the movement up the Arabian sea easier, and the occupation of Sind soon after, permitted the British a shorter route to Afghanistan, which turned out to be a significant military advantage to a sea faring nation. It also fitted well with British policy in India, as by 1820s their defeat of Mahratha's made Bombay port doubly secure. Their armies when stationed in Afghanistan would no longer require to be maintained through Punjab. Further the British

1. WE Brown and AW Coysh, The Map Approach to British History 1603-1914, reprint 1975, p 17.

occupation of Sind in 1843 in one stroke, gave them an advantage over both Afghanistan and Punjab. To Afghanistan they would get a closer route via Karachi and Multan. Secondly, from military point of view Sind gave them the ability to threaten Punjab from a new direction, that is, a new front¹, in case they ever got bogged down fighting a war against the Sikh army along the Satluj border. It is a different matter that if ever Sind was occupied by the Sikhs a door may then have opened to them to interact with the rest of the world. But they procrastinated, but the British occupied it. Sind possibly had more military significance than commercial or even political².

It was obvious that the British would support a strong, stable but friendly government in Punjab, failing which they would occupy the Sikh Kingdom to achieve their military objectives in the region. Therefore, Ranjit Singh's successors had to be stable and strong and the only other alternative for them was British occupation of their territories. The thought though obnoxious to the soldiers was welcome to the courtiers and Rani Jindan.

The British occupation of Sind in 1843 and build up of Ferozpur as their military Cantonment since 1838 under the guise of staging camp for British troops on their way to Afghanistan³, were currently matters of serious concern to the Sikh government at Lahore.

1. JD Cunningham, History of the Sikhs, reprint 1990, p251.
 2. Henry T. Prinsep, Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab, Language Department Punjab, reprint 1970, p 133.
 3. Hari Ram Gupta, Punjab on the eve of first Sikh War, reprint 1975, p 372.

At this period of time, there were three main groups interactive in the Punjab. One, the British, who had been making preparations over the years to annex Punjab and who had conveniently forgotten the written undertaking of friendship between the two nations signed at the Ropar meeting of 1831¹; two, the courtiers, with a weak central authority all too prone to let administration drift uncared for; three, the soldiers with the belief in the superiority of the 'Khalsa'; suspecting the leanings of their courtiers towards the British but not aware of their treachery.

The British were preparing for war and were working towards military objective of breaking the Sikh nation's will to fight. They were busy making all efforts to manipulate the leaders, who to safeguard their own riches and jagirs, were willing to sell not only the independence of the nation but knowingly, as subsequent events showed, sacrificed the well meaning soldiers of the army too. The British planning and preparation for war with Punjab gained momentum after the death of prince Nau Nihal Singh on 05 November 1840. The subsequent murders of princes and Wazirs in quick succession hindered the rulers at Lahore from enunciating their military objectives. They would have done so, only if they had time to spare from court politics and internal sectarian warfare.

Successors of Ranjit Singh

The de facto rule of Nau Nihal Singh followed the murder on 9 October 1839 of Chet Singh, a close confidant of Maharaja Kharak Singh. His was a successful rule. The unrest in the Hazara region was controlled as also new

1. Henry T. Prinsep, Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab, Language Department, Punjab 1970, p 131.

territories such as Skardu, Mandi and Kulu were added to the Sikh rule. The later conquests were of great military and commercial significance, for they opened a new route to Ladakh¹. Kharak Singh died on 5 November 1840. Returning from his father's funeral Nau Nihal Singh was killed by the fall of a gate. With his premature death ended the hope of a stable rule in the Punjab.

A tussle for power between Maharani Chand Kaur, Mother of prince Nau Nihal Singh, and Sher Singh, a son of Ranjit Singh, followed. The army was divided in their support, with Gulab Singh taking sides with Chand Kaur inside the Lahore fort and Dhian Singh supporting Sher Singh in his efforts to get Chand Kaur out of the fort. After an artillery duel Sher Singh occupied the fort on 20 January 1841. After the fight was over, the clever Gulab Singh had managed to march out of the fort to Jammu with the treasure of the government stored in the Lahore fort². Promises of higher pay made by Sher Singh to the soldiers before the battle, were not met and the discipline of the army suffered. "Commanders were humiliated and coerced at many places in the empire, some of them were in fact murdered. Maharaja Sher Singh and Raja Dhian Singh felt obliged to give a raise in pay. This was the beginning of the army 'Panchayats' which became a crucial factor in the deteriorating situation"³.

1. On Oct. 17 1842 the Lahore Durbar agent and Gulab Singh's personal representative signed a treaty with representative of the Chinese emperor at Lahore. It was agreed that the boundaries of Ladakh and Lhasa would be considered inviolable by both parties and that the trade particularly of tea and pashmina would as in the past, pass through Ladakh (Khushwant Singh, A History of the Sikhs, vol II, 1966, p 24 refers).

2. Secret Consultations 88 of 8.2.1841.

3. JS Grewal, The Sikhs of the Punjab, 1994, p 121.

When Chand Kaur had lost her fight against Sher Singh, her supporters Sardar Attar Singh and his nephew Ajit Singh Sandhawalia had crossed the Satluj and sought protection with the British and Chand Kaur who had continued to intrigue, was murdered. The accusing finger for the crime was pointed at Dhian Singh. Maharaja Sher Singh pardoned Sardar Attar Singh and Ajit Singh Sandhanwalia and they were allowed to return to Lahore¹.

In September-October 1841 the British army of occupation in Afghanistan met with a disaster, many were killed enmasse by a general rebellion. Sher Singh extended all help and a large Punjabi force once again occupied Ali Masjid in the spring of 1842. Supplies of grain, cattle and other provisions too were sent forward by the Punjab government. Punjabi troops relieved Jalalabad and helped to re-establish British power in Afghanistan. The legacy of friendship established by Ranjit Singh was not broken by his successors. On the contrary, the British were preparing for war. Lord Ellenborough, the Governor General wrote to the Duke of Wellington on 15 October, 1841 to seek his opinion as to the best mode of attacking the Punjab².

The British intentions became clear when on Shah Shuja's death they without even consulting the Punjab monarch scrapped the Tripartite Treaty. They ignored the Sikh interest and installed Dost Muhammad in Power in Kabul.

1. Grewal writes, "On the suggestion of a British Political agent, Maharaja Sher Singh pardoned Sardar Attar Singh and Ajit Singh Sandhawalia and allowed them to return to Lahore (JS Grewal The Sikhs of the Punjab, 1994, p 121 refers).

2. Ganda Singh, Private correspondence relating to Anglo-Sikh Wars, p 47.

Sher Singh saw through their game¹.

The Sandhawalias having returned from the British territory, earned the trust of Maharaja Sher Singh, but killed him and his son Prince Partap Singh on 15 September, 1843. This same day, they also killed Wazir Dhian Singh². Hira Singh, son of Dhian Singh was quick to arouse the ire of troops in Lahore against the Sandhawalias, who were surrounded and killed to a man. Hira Singh became Wazir and the Rule of Prince Dalip Singh with Rani Jindan as regent followed.

The persistent turmoil and uncertainty placed the lives of European officers so useful in training the Sikh army, in danger and they each, according to his opportunity left Punjab³. These officers travelled through British India and remitted their earnings through British Banks. They naturally, also passed all first hand military information to the British.

Soon resentment in the army against Hira Singh and his constant companion Misr Jalla spread, because of later's haughty manner and intemperate speech. The army 'panches' demanded his surrender but Hira Singh tried to escape with

1. Sher Singh continued to keep up appearance of friendship but stopped playing second fiddle to the British. He gave Dost Muhammad, who had crossed swords with the Punjabis in innumerable battles, a great reception when he passed through Lahore on his way to Kabul. The Durbar signed separate treaty recognising him as the Amir of Afghanistan. (Khushwant Singh, A History of the Sikhs, Vol II, 1966, p 26 refers).

2. "The intention of the Sandhawalia Sardars was to install the boy prince Dalip Singh, with his mother Maharani Jindan as the Regent to perpetuate their indirect control over the affairs of the State." (JS Grewal, The Sikhs of the Punjab, 1974, p 122 refers).

3. Carmichael Smyth, History of the Reigning Family of Lahore, p 87.

him to the hills. They were pursued and killed on 21 December 1844¹. With the death of Hira Singh, the rule of the army supreme body 'Panj Councillee' came into prominence. There was one fleeting moment for democracy to take root and throwing up some leader of merit, as had happened after French revolution. A 'Napolean' in Punjab could have emerged, but nothing of the sort happened. Instead anarchy was let loose.

The change of rulers at Lahore in quick succession had serious military implications particularly on leadership. It is pertinent to note, that from the military point of view, the form of government then prevailing in Punjab stood at a disadvantage vis a vis with the form of government of the British. In Lahore, the system of administration civil, military or revenue emanated from the Maharaja and he was himself the constitution, the executive, the judiciary, all rolled into one. The Maharaja was responsible for all departments of the government. The ruler thus was the central authority itself. If he, the head was undermined by outside influence and in this case by British influence then, it was that much easier from military point of view to defeat the country. As it is the monarch had very few advisors and, generally, he was the one man think tank. Further, when a ruler died, there were many claimants to the throne. Claims and counter claims followed. This was the time for the British to step in and take sides, make promises, give bribes and take over the reigns of government directly or through their political agents. When the leaders gave out the plans of campaigns and battles, and

1. JS Grewal, The Sikhs of the Punjab, 1974, p 122.

acted treacherously, the national cause suffered. So the soldiers became cannon fodder.

On the other hand the British had their parliamentary system of governance, their great reform bill was passed recently (1832) giving more franchise to the people. They had departments taken care of by individual ministers, Boards, Councils a civil service, and military service. Their officials were trained for their jobs to command and perform. The Prime Minister through the Home office controlled the India office where there was a Chairman, a Board of control, a court of Directors and various need based councils executing their functions after the approval by the home office, and the Prime Minister. The Governor General of India, normally residing in Calcutta, had a Governor General's Council and below that were the home, foreign and military hierarchies, manned by educated and experienced officials, executing their nation's policy. Simultaneously, up the channel from the lowest official the political agent at Ludhiana (and lately Ferozepur) through their senior officers at Ambala and Lieutenant Governor at Delhi, kept the Governor General regularly informed of the daily intelligence from across the Satluj. Along with it they gave their own assessment of the situation. Thus each recommending his action until the whole lot of views and recommendations reached the Governor General, who then discussed the subject with his council or the secret committee. He always had expert advice available till he finally made up his mind.

The British had the advantage of their experience in America and in Europe, of education and a larger world

view. They had understood the weakness of the Indian system and, right from Mir Jaffar (battle of Plassey 1757) onwards, they manipulated the local rulers and their courtiers to achieve their own ends. They could do it because of lack of control and at times anarchy which invariably followed demise of an Indian ruler, leading to different claimants seeking support, by any means, to succeed to the throne. Whereas, in the case of the British, a death or undermining of any number of individuals did not cause much adverse effect on their system, at least it did not come to a halt or end up in anarchy. Thus militarily the British system was superior to the Sikh monarchical government at Lahore. The British knew it and they exploited it as a military weapon buying Gulab Singh, Lal Singh and Tej Singh like 'Mir Jaffar' at Plassey (1757) and 'Perron' at Koil (1803), to win their military campaigns¹.

The British had a large hierarchical think tank ably supported by efficient Intelligence. Therefore, it was no wonder they always managed to out-smart the local rulers. To overcome the lack of local geo-political knowledge the British followed a well laid out intelligence gathering system, through various military and civilian officials

1. The battle Koil of 19 April 1803 was a duel between the British and the Mahrathas for supremacy over Delhi. Writing about it, Jadunath Sarkar says, "The greatest mischief done by Perron was that he selfishly removed the best and most seasoned battalions of his army far from the expected point of attack by Lake... he detached two of his best brigades to Delhi and seven battalions of another brigade to Agra, thus demanding the Doab frontier of troops. Only two thousand sepoy of a miscellaneous character, militiamen rather than regular soldiers, were left to garrison the vitally important depot of Aligarh Skinner noticed with grief how Sindhia's cause was ruined by Perron and other French Officers, whose sole aim was to ensure their safe retirement to the British dominions with their personal wealth by throwing their demanded troops into helpless destruction", Jadunath Sarkar Fall of the Mughal Empire, volume IV, reprint 1992, p 236 refers).

deputed specifically for gathering intelligence of this nature¹.

Who were these intelligence gatherers? The earliest known incident could be of February 1716, an embassy consisting of John Surman and Edward Stephenson known as Surman embassy, which witnessed the beheading of Banda Bahadur along with a number of his followers captured by the Mughal forces at Gurdas Nangal. The Surman Embassy reported in glowing terms the religious fervour and sacrifice of the Sikhs². Then followed the paper of Polier written on gathered intelligence in 1777. There were others in large numbers who followed on similar missions. They were travellers and officials with a cover up such as searching of Alexander's 'fields of battle' to those exploring possibilities of trade with Kashmir, to navigation through the Indus, all were basically doing intelligence gathering under cover, for the British. Not to mention 'Mohan Lal' and 'Shahamat Ali', they being the famous few amongst many who worked for British officers gathering intelligence³.

The occupation of Punjab by the British became a distinct possibility with the anarchy that prevailed in Punjab. The British did not want to be called 'the aggressor', they would soon find an excuse. The British

1. Intelligence as a means to aid military operations may be explained as the product resulting from the collection, evaluation, analysis, integration and interpretation of all information which concerns one or more aspects of foreign nations, or of areas of operations and which is immediately or potentially significant to planning.

2. G Khurana, British Historiography on the Sikh Power in the Punjab, 1985, p1.

3. Shahamat Ali, The Sikhs and Afghans, Language department Punjab, 1970, p kii.

exploiting every piece of information from Punjab with a view to achieving their military objective; their officials present at Ludhiana and Ferozepur, were also creating situations to suit their purpose. When Maharaja Sher Singh died, even the Anglo-Indian press of Calcutta admitted that, although there was no proof of the British Government being directly concerned in the murder of Sher Singh, it did 'smell a rat'.

In fact, the British after receiving the Sandhawalias at Calcutta, were manipulating events at the Lahore court to suit their ends; is indicative from Lord Ellenborough's remarks in his letter to the Duke of Wellington on August 2, 1843, "The affairs of the Punjab will receive their denouncement from the death of Sher Singh". From such letters one can only infer that the bloodshed as a result of British manipulation was part of a larger military offensive, and it was what are termed preliminary operations by means other than use of actual military force, with a view to weakening the central civil and military authority of the enemy. Punjab was a monarchy where all power was centered in the head of the government. By quick changes in the government, there by not allowing the head to function, the higher direction of war would crumble.

It was not new for the British they had as already mentioned, exploited this weakness in the Indian system, throughout, in their long march North from Calcutta to Delhi. After all, let not too much be made out of British officers leading native troops and hence winning wars against the Indian rulers. It was invariably the

compromising of the ruler or the General of the army itself when he gave the secret plans, the inside information to the British, and consequently, helped them achieve the victory.

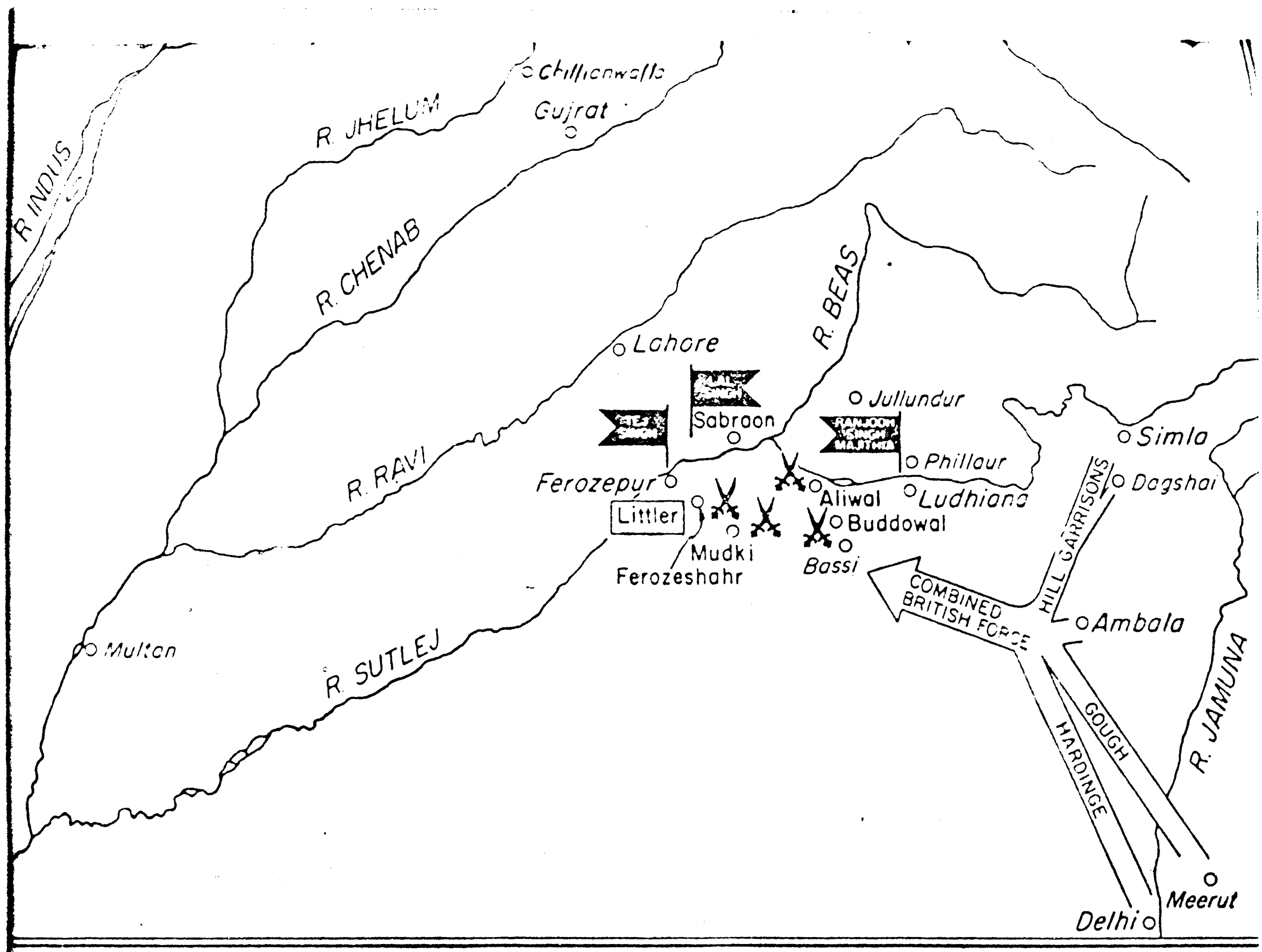
The situation on the Satluj front was no different from any two nations preparing for war. Reports were received at Lahore that 19 heavy guns had been mounted in the new fort at Ferozepur and that large quantities of ammunition from Kasauli had been forwarded to Ludhiana and Ferozepur¹. From Lahore 'Parwanah' was issued directing that none of the sipahees discharged from the British regiments, should be allowed to cross the Satluj²

To those who may ask, could war hence been averted? George Bruce had noted, "Sir Henry Hardinge, it would appear, believed in constructive diplomatic effort to avert war, beneath the 'dignity, position and interests' of the British Government"³. If the British were serious about the professed wish for peace, the least they could have done was to call for a meeting of the representatives of the two governments to examine the issues which divided the two powers. There was no such rational move to avoid war from the British, particularly when the influential courtiers at Lahore were placed to forsake the national interests for the sake of their personal gain. May be the British were influenced by two considerations. Firstly, the 'Khalsa ethos' which was the spirit of independence, the Sikh was not subservient to anyone except God and hence, leave alone ruling them by their own chief, a foreign power doing it

1. Hari Ram Gupta, Punjab on the eve of first Sikh War, p
 2. Ibid.
 3. George Bruce, Six Battles for India, 1969, p 101).

without defeating them in battle would be almost next to impossible¹. Secondly the service conditions where 'panches' and not officers administered a unit, a concept which was lately in vogue in Sikh army, if allowed to flourish in Punjab, combined with much higher salary which the Sikh army paid to its soldiers, may if allowed to continue, influence adversely the very structure of the British rule in rest of India. It was impracticable and also an uneconomical proposition for the British, they made natives fight for their cause with units officered by the British, the Sikh concept of 'panches' would at one stroke remove the British authority and thus nullify their edifice of rule in India. The higher salary would again reduce the earnings into the officers of the EI Company, thus it appears that peace proposals, if any, were given the go by and destruction of the Sikh army became a prime motive along with re-occupation of Punjab.

1. Forster, had recorded this attitude as early as 1783, "An equality of rank, p 31 Rare Documents (George Forster, A Journey from Bengal to England, volume I, Language Department, 1970 p.



THEATRE OF FIRST ANGLO-SIKH CAMPAIGN .. 1845-1846

CHAPTER IX

CAMPAIGNS UNDER SUCCESSORS

1845-1846

With the death of the able Sikh princes, successors to Ranjit Singh empire, and the sequential murder of their courtiers, the Punjab army had become leaderless. In fact, after the murder of her brother, Jawahar Singh, Rani Jindan had become afraid of the army. Gulab Singh on the other hand had preferred to maintain his own security by distancing himself from Lahore. When called to become Wazir he preferred to remain in Jammu to answering the call of the nation. If that was not enough, by August 1845, he turned to treacher by aligning with the British. Gulab Singh's agent Sheo Dutt, in August 1845, was calling on Broadfort and had it conveyed that, "he would at once cause the whole of them (the willmen) to revolt against the Sikhs and submit to the British and he could also assemble 40,000 troops from the hills and attack the Sikhs¹.

At Calcutta in July 1844, Lord Hardinge, an experienced soldier, took over as the new Governor General from Lord Ellenborough. At Lahore Rani Jindan appointed Lal Singh as Prime Minister and Tej Singh as Commander-in-Chief. They were in league with the British. The 'Panj Councillee' with multitude of speakers and even a greater multitude of options, with no experience in governance was seized with

1. Secret Consultations 46 of 25.10.1845. On the same subject, Sir Henry Hardinge in a letter addressed to his wife on 2 February 1846, a week before the battle of Sabraon, confirms the Secret deal with Raja Gulab Singh. "I have a communication from Raja Gulab Singh which may lead to overtures for an arrangement, he is to be made a minister and says he is ready to do whatever we like to order". (Microfilm copy in the state Archives, Patiala of letters of Sir Henry Hardinge, relating to First Anglo Sikh Campaign).

threat on the borders¹ (Table 1). The intelligence reports were informing of British build up, and the Panj Councille was unequal to the task in hand.

Table 1

	Strength as left by Lord Ellenborough	Strength at first breaking out of war
Ferozepur	4596 men 12 guns	10472 men 24 guns
Ludhiana	3050 men 12 guns	7235 men 22 guns
Ambala	4133 men 24 guns	12972 men 32 guns
Total force exclusive of hill stations,	17612 men 66 guns	40523 men 94 guns

(Charles Second, Viscount Hardinge, Viscount Hardinge,
p 76 refers)

Moin writes, "There is reason to believe, that at this early period they (Gulab Singh, Lal Singh and Tej Singh) had begun to nurture the idea that if they should fail to muster those all powerful soldiers, it would be a wise policy to throw them on the bayonets of the British."² These traitors, "could not perceive that this adventure would not only paralyse the Sikh army but also the Sikh community would lose their well earned identity of an independent nation."³

1. British were concerned on use of terms such as 'Sarbat Khalsa' in the official correspondence of the Durbar since the death of Maharaja Sher Singh. The British agent was instructed to stress that his government would recognise no other form of government other than a monarchy. (Secret Consultation 114 of 4.4.1845)

2. Major Moin, Chillianwala, pp 15-16.

3. "You will be so good as to report whether you have any authentic knowledge of the numbers of these influential chiefs, the identity of their projects and whether the terms they expect have been matured by combination and agreements amongst themselves, so as to constitute a powerful part representing a large portion of the Punjab property, in land as well as in feudations, and thus to have some approximation as to the importance of these chiefs supposed to represent the natural interests of that country". (Hardinge to Broadfoot, September 10, 1845. Secret Consultation 48 of 25.10.1845 refers).

The British were ready in all intent to march into Punjab and fight a protracted war if need be. Still, what they did not have was a viable reason to attack the Sikh state.¹ In the kingdom of Ranjit Singh, not only he, but his successors too, never gave the British any cause for offence. Occupation of Sind, building of Ferozepur into a Cantonment and lately moving of 60 boats into Satluj at Ferozepur, not allowing and also delaying Sikh troops from marching to their territories in the Cis-Satluj region, were instances when the Sikhs could have, but did not, go to war. Therefore, the cunning British goaded the traitors to get the army to cross the river Satluj to tell the people at large that because the Sikhs attacked them they came forward in self defence. What better proof could be than the Sikh army crossing to river Satluj. That Ferozepur territory, the area of the soon to be first campaign, belonged to the Sikh nation, did not matter. The objective of the traitors to the Sikh Raj were: Firstly To get reward from the victors for betraying their countrymen and thus making victory easy for the British. Secondly, secure some territory from the victors for Maharaja Dalip Singh to rule under their protection with his mother as regent. Lastly destroy the Sikh army and hand over the country to the British.

1. Hardinge apprised Ellenborough in a letter dated January 23, 1845, "On what plea could they attack Punjab if this were the month of October and we had our army in readiness?" He further wrote "How are we to justify the seizure of our friend's territory who in adversity assisted us to retrieve our affairs?" (Ganda Singh, Private Correspondence relating to the Anglo Sikh War, (Sikh History Society, 1995), p 72 refers).

Secret efforts were made by the traitors to arouse in the rank and file of the army a spirit of hostility towards the British. A psychological campaign was launched and, when the right type of atmosphere was formed, the Sikh army on the encouragement of their so called leaders, crossed Satluj for attacking the British¹.

The British objectives were two, firstly occupy Punjab at the earliest; secondly, decimate the Sikh Army, as a big victory would bring early submission of the Sikh nation as a whole.

The soldiers of the Sikh Army knew that their leaders were friendly with the British authorities² but they did not know that the leaders had sold themselves to the British³. The Sikh army led by disloyal leaders, crossed the Satluj on 11 December 1845⁴.

1. Major Moin, Chillianwala, p 15 & 16

2. In all probability Rani Jindan was aware that Lal Singh had written to the British. According to Captain Peter Nicholson, one of Bwadfoot's political assistants, Lal Singh had already in a letter requested the British "to consider him and the bibi sahiba (Rani Jindan) as their friends and cut up the burchas (ruffians, ie, the Khalsa) for them". (Nicholson's Diary dated 12 December 1845 refers).

3. On crossing the Satluj with the army Lal Singh communicated with Captain Nicholson at Ferozepur and asked him what to do, Nicholson replied: "Do not attack Ferozepur. Halt as many days as you can, and then march towards the governor general". (Ganda Singh, Private Correspondence relating to the Anglo-Sikh Wars, p 107. Also WW Humbley, Journal of a Cavalry Officer, pp 40-42 refers).

4. Even more emphatic on the subject is Sir George Campbell who was then posted at Kaithal (a Sikh state escheated by the British). He wrote: "It is recorded in the annals of history, or what is called history, which will go down to posterity, that the Sikh army invaded British territory in pursuance of a determination to attack us. And most people will be very much surprised to hear that they did nothing of the kind. They made no attack on our outlying cantonments nor set foot in our territory. What they did do was to cross the river and to entrench themselves in their own territory". (Sir George Campbell, Memoirs of my Indian Career, p 78 refers).

"The Lahore army of invasion may have equalled 35,000 to 40,000 men, with a hundred and fifty pieces of artillery, exclusive of a force detached towards Ludhiana to act as circumstances might render advantageous"¹ Cunningham observes that, "the whole regular army of the country did not exceed 42000 infantry, including the regiments at Lahore, Multan, Peshawar and Kashmir, as well as those forming the main army of invasion. Perhaps an estimate of 30,000 embodied troops of all kinds would be nearer the truth than any other"².

Before crossing the Satluj the authority of 'Panchas' was suspended by their own will, to facilitate better transmission of orders during the campaign. The British took great care not to be termed the aggressor. The Afghans who had invaded Punjab regularly and were aggressors, in the previous century, were always opposed vigorously by the 'Khalsa'. For some such similar considerations the British did not want to be stamped as aggressors. It appears the British were concerned to make the Sikh nation itself the aggressor³ in their own eyes; a kind of psychological consideration. Secondly it could be another military reason, the river behind the Sikh army would act as a good barrier enabling greater destruction of Sikh soldiers and opportunity to prove superiority of the British arms. They wanted people to hold them in awe so that the future administration of the country may become easier. Another related reason could be a desire to destroy the Sikh trained

1. JD Cunningham, History of the Sikhs, reprint 1990, p 262.

2. Ibid, footnote 4.

3. JS Grewal, The Sikhs of the Punjab, 1994, p 123.

units, for such a force, if allowed to remain intact, would be a menace to the security of British India¹. Who could have foreseen such a threat to the security and safety of the battalions but a general, and who could have thought and warded off such a grave danger to its army but the general himself, but as Grewal writes, "Maharani Jindan and the Sardars who supported her decided to approach the British with the suggestion that they may destroy the army and take the Maharaja under their 'protective wings' Gulab Singh had already offered cooperation on the understanding that Jammu and some other territories should be left with him"².

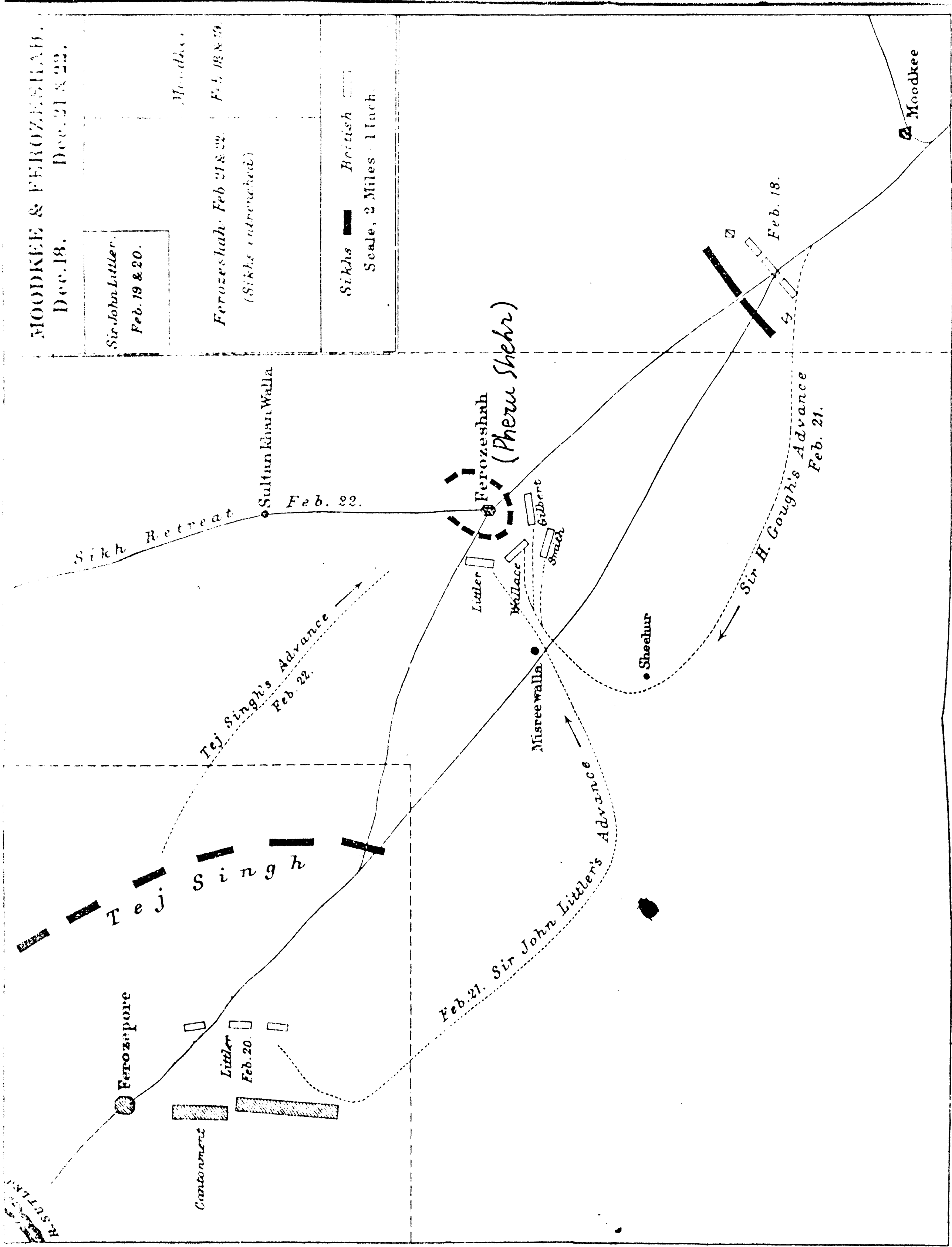
With a national objective of self destruction the army was made to cross the Satluj at Harike. The soldiers were motivated to cross by giving them detailed information on British build-up South of river Satluj³. Ferozepur which had a garrison of about 7,000 soldiers was close by. A vigorous attack would have reduced this garrison before the main British force arrived. The Sikh force under General Tej Singh as Commander-in-Chief and Lal Singh as Wazir split in two and Tej Singh closed onto Ferozepur but did nothing⁴.

1. Wellesley had similar considerations in mind when he (Jadunath Sarkar, Fall of the Mughal Empire, vol IV, 1992, p 213 refers)

2. JS Grewal, The Sikhs of the Punjab, 1994, p 123.

3. Ibid.

4. Littler, the British Commander at Ferozepur had waited for six days expecting an attack any time. Lal Singh was pressed repeatedly by his troops to lead them against Ferozepur but he had refused. "His excuse... was that he wanted to fight the Commander-in-Chief and considered anyone else below his notice". Bruce further writes, "it was an excuse for treason. Lal Singh, Prime Minister, and Tej Singh, Commander-in-Chief, were both in the field hoping to see the British destroy their own troops... The victors would then, they expected, maintain them in power as reliable ministers in a dependent State, So there was no point in Lal Singh and Tej Singh compromising themselves by destroying Littlers' small British force. They did after all act on Captain Nichololson's advice. (George Bruce, Six Battles for India, 1969, pp 103-104.



London: Published by G. & C. Hanway.

Lal Singh selected Pheru Shehr for his main defence. Preparations commenced immediately. Lal Singh then advanced with a portion of the force ahead of Pheru-shehr to intercept the approaching British army. The Sikhs were surprised to find them at Mudki. The Sikhs, not more than 2000 infantry supported by 22 pieces of artillery and 8-10 thousand horsemen¹, immediately engaged their enemy, even though the later were superior in numbers. Lal Singh headed, the attack but left the field when the battle was joined. The battle of Mudki continued till midnight. British losses in men and officers, considering the brevity of the action, were heavy; 215 killed including Sir Robert Sale, Sir Mc Gaskill and two aides of the Governor General; and 657 wounded². For an advance action, the defenders had fought well indeed.

The battle of Mudki was fought on 18-19 December 1845 night it forced the advancing British to halt for two days, giving greater time for preparation of entrenchments and earthworks at Pheru-shehr which in turn was 14 Kms North-East of Mudki and half way to Ferozepur. By 20th December the British had received reinforcements. Same day General Littler's troops, on receiving orders, left Ferozepur unopposed by Tej Singh to join with General Gough, the commander-in-chief of the British forces. Incidentally Lord Hardinge, the Governor General, otherwise of a junior military rank, was with the troops and had volunteered to serve as number two to General Gough. Thus, the two senior-most officers of each nation then at war were in the field

1. JD Cunningham, History of the Sikhs, reprint 1990, p265
 2. Sita Ram Kohli, Sunset of the Sikh Empire, p 107.

for battle. The British General Gough had decided to attack Sikh army entrenched at Pheru Shehr early on 21st December but Lord Hardinge exercised his civil seniority and overruled the General for he wanted Littler's troops to first unite with the main army. This force marched up in the afternoon. It consisted of two cavalry regiments, six infantry battalions and twenty one guns, "Littler had left his camp standing at Ferozepur to trick Tej Singh into believing they hadn't moved, but whether the Sikh commander was really taken in, in view of his treachery, is doubtful"¹.

The British intelligence reports about the Sikh defences had already reported, "the Northern, Southern and Western sides to be strongly entrenched by guns of very big calibre, with belts of jungle and low trees hampering the approaches to these three faces. The entrenchments followed the contours of clusters of low sand dunes encircling the Village some ten feet above the level of the plain. Ensign PR Lanes of Bengal European light infantry, who was present, noted that the Sikhs had thrown stumps and branches of trees over a sort of ditch to camouflage it."² The enemy formed a horse shoe around the Pheru shehr village. It was about 16 Km both from Ferozepur and Mudki. It had less than 100 pieces of artillery, twelve regiments of infantry and the cavalry eight to ten thousand strong, most of the last mentioned had seen action at Mudki. Thus the Sikh army did not surpass its assailants "except in the number and size of its guns, the English artillery consisting almost wholly of six and nine pounders".³

1. George Bruce, Six Battles for India, 1969, p-128.

2. Ibid, p-125.

3. JD Cunningham, History of the Sikhs, reprint 1990, pp 265-266.

The attack finally went in at 4 PM. "The Sikh artillery, much heavier and more numerous, were hitting the British gunners well. Brigadier 'Bull' Brooke, who commanded the main artillery in the centre, rode up to the commander-in-chief and shouted above the roar of the cannonade - 'Your excellency - I must either advance or be blown out of the field.'¹

The fighting was severe, "it was pitch dark. While Smith was retreating two or three miles off, Gough took stock of the general situation... But he did know that there was now a danger that the scattered British troops might fire upon each other. To prevent this danger Gough had the buglers sound the retire.² The Sikhs at once re-occupied the camp and entrenchments so vacated, and thus they held their entire position again.

Gough and Hardinge discussed the grim situation and agreed that retreat was not to be considered and that they must attack again at day light, yet both were aware that their exhausted men could not face another day as severe as that which they had already seen. "The likelihood of defeat was even considered, and with this in mind the Governor-General sent Prince Waldemar of Prussia, who had been present as an observer throughout the battle, back to Mudki with other non-combatants, taking with them Napoleon's sword, presented to Hardinge in 1816 by Wellington on the plains of Sedan, and messages to Robert Cust, and to Frederick Currie, his political secretary, to destroy all state papers. 'News came that our attack had failed, 'Cust wrote in his diary, 'and that Mr Currie was to destroy papers of State... Affairs appeared to be very gloomy indeed,'³.

Early morning the next day, 22 December 1845, the British reformed into an attack with their remanent troops. The situation in the Sikh camp was one of uncertainty. Tej Singh's division positioned earlier to keep Littler's troops

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1. George Bruce, Six Battles for India, 1969, p-131.
 2. Ibid, p-138
 3. Ibid.

under check, had not only failed to see such a large body march off but on Littler's joining hands in battle with British main force, Tej Singh had kept himself away. Thus "Lal Singh and his generals had failed the Khalsa, giving no leadership or encouragement." There were also some reports of 'Akalis' rebelling against Lal Singh, so under a rudderless situation after the grim fight of the previous day and night, their (Sikh's) morale collapsed and they retreated towards Satluj.

The British by the evening of 22 December were left with a feeling of relief at survival when their cavalry out posts following the retreating troops of Lal Singh reported the arrival of a big Sikh force advancing from Ferozepur. "Even Gough's indomitable spirits fell. His men were exhausted, the cavalry horses so tired and hungry that they could barely gallop; worst of all, his artillery ammunition was almost finished. Yet advancing upon him, great red and gold banners streaming, was another Sikh army, ready and eager for a battle which he could not avoid."¹

The roles at Pheru shehr were then reversed, the exhausted remnants of the British force occupying the entrenchments vacated by the Sikhs and Tej Singh with a large and fresh force ready to attack.

"Now it looked as if the British would be slaughtered."²

Obviously, only a miracle could save the British at Pheru shehr. "To Captain Cumming the fate of India 'seemed to hang upon a single hair. I believe that there were few

1. George Bruce, Six Battles of India, 1969, p-147.
2. Ibid, p-148.

among us... Who did not feel that the field would be their burial ground. Then the impossible happened, the treachery did its work. Tej Singh's infantry had begun to advance, his cavalry had re-formed for their long expected charge. The drums were beating. Victory was within their grasp. All at once their bugles blared the retreat¹", the call to confirm the unusual order was repeated a number of times. Infantry and cavalry both hesitated, then turned about and in front of the astonished British, moved off towards the Satluj. Thus, at 4 pm on 22 December 1845, in this strange and unexpected way ended the bloody battle of Pheru Shehr. George Bruce writes, "To the British army weak, disordered lacking ammunition, gun and cavalry, Tej Singh's retreat was a providential gift²". The so-called 'providential gift' was in fact the fruit of treachery, the seed of which was sown by the British among the Sikh courtiers and generals.

The British underhand offensive, to defeat the Native system of government, 'the winning over of courtiers' at the time of uncertainty on change of rulers, in this instance defeated the Sikhs and established the ascendancy of the British. To what avail are trained battalions, it did not matter if there was one Brigade of Fauj-i-khas or the whole army was trained to be a Fauj-i-Khas³.

1. George Bruce, Six Battles for India, 1969, p 149

2. Ibid, p 150. Bruce goes on to write, "The British had taken seventy five Sikh guns, but at a cost of 2415 casualties, about a seventh of their entire force, 694 of whom were killed. Sir Hugh Gough's horse, during the fighting, was killed under him. Five of the Governor General's staff were killed and two wounded. Brigadier Wallance was killed, Brigadiers Harriott, Tailor and White wounded".

3. Ranjit Singh in 1835 after being convinced with steadiness in battle of his French trained brigade had ordered that his complete regular army be trained like them.

After hearing the news of the battle Gulab Singh dispatched his agent to Ludhiana with greater assurance from his master to negotiate terms for his assistance to the British¹. In the eyes of the soldiers Lal Singh was already suspect, and he was replaced before the battle of Sabraon, fought on 10 February 1846 by a new Wazir, 'Gulab Singh'. It was a change for the worse².

The soldiers of the Punjab army, the unit and brigade commanders, left Pherushehr doubting their leaders' and not their own ability and so rallied to fight yet again. The ground chosen was Sabraon with river Satluj in the rear, while preparations were being made for the defences, the British were licking their wounds and their generals taking no chances, ordered reinforcements to come up, and more guns particularly heavy artillery, elephant drawn 24 Pounders were mobilised from cantonments in the rear.

To interfere and disrupt enemy preparations, the Sikhs carried out the only offensive action of note during the Anglo-Sikh campaign. They had received information about British reinforcements being assembled at Ludhiana before marching to Ferozepur. Ranjodh Singh Majithia alongwith Ajit Singh of Ladwa, crossed the Satluj at Phillaur. They had a force of 8000 men and 70 guns. They rapidly liberated the small forts of Fatehgarh, Dharamkote, Ghangarana and Buddowal and encamped at Baran Hara, 11 km from Ludhiana.

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1. Secret Consultations 319 of 26.12.1846.
 2. JS Grewal, The Sikhs of the Punjab, 1994, p 124.

A British force consisting of four regiments of infantry, three regiments of cavalry and eighteen guns under Smith was concentrated at Jagraon Fort then belonging to son of Fateh Singh Ahluwalia. This force then sent to evict the Sikhs operating close to Ludhiana. Ranjodh Singh attacked Smith at Buddowal on 21 January 1846 and managed to capture Smith's baggage train and stores. A few days later, Smith was reinforced at Ludhiana and he attacked and defeated Ranjodh Singh at Aliwal on 28 January 1846¹.

The Sikh Army was so deployed that the enemy approach to Amritsar and Lahore was blocked by separate forces. The route to Lahore at Sabraon was blocked by troops under the command of Tej Singh, the route to Amritsar was under the command of Lal Singh and the overall commander was Wazir Gulab Singh. At Sabraon the defences were South of the Satluj with a pontoon bridge connecting them with their base camp. "Through intermediaries, Henry Lawrence was able to glean sufficient information to enable him to prepare a rough sketch of the position and strength of the enemy at Sabraon on the night of 7th February", for transmission to the commander-in-chief".² Gough decided on a frontal attack, after the dead and wounded at Pherushehr, only an extraordinary reason must have made them attack frontally. With the Sikh generals on their side, like Lal Singh, so must have Tej Singh and Gulab Singh informed them of every criticality of the Sikh defences. The battle was joined on 10 February 1846. A defensive battle requires the

1. Lieutenant General Sir Harry Smith, The Autobiography of ..., vol II, p 186-187.

2. Henry Lawrence to the Secretary, 16 May 1846, Henry Lawrence's Private Papers.

General directing it to discern the enemy's threat, then deploy forward own reserves, order counter attacks, and finally when the attacking enemy is exhausted, order own troops to take the offensive but Tej Singh fled across the pontoon bridge early. With no central mind to direct the result of the battle was a foregone conclusion. Most of the other officers stayed on in their posts to fight. "It is due to the Sikhs to say that they fought bravely", wrote General Sir Joseph Thackwell, who was present at the battle: "for though defeated and broke, they never ran, but fought with their 'talwars' to the last and I witnessed several acts of great bravery in some of their sardars and men".¹ It was the last desperate stand against the enemy. Those who tried to escape were drowned in the swirling waters of the Satluj. Nearly 10,000 lost their lives in the action. All guns were either captured or abandoned. It was a complete defeat.² Lord Gough described Sabraon as the Waterloo of India. In his tribute he writes, "Policy precluded me publicly recording my sentiments on the splendid gallantry of our fallen foe, or to record the acts of heroism displayed, not only individually, but almost collectively, by the Sikh sardars and the army; and I declare, were it not from a deep conviction that my country's good required the sacrifice, I could have wept to have witnessed the fearful slaughter of so devoted a body of men".³

The Sikhs had lost their cause at Pherushahr itself when Tej Singh did not join up with Lal Singh, inspite of long time available and their being no doubt that the

1. Military Memoirs of Lieutenant General Sir Joseph Thackwell, edited by Col Wylly, p 209

2. Ibid.

3. Rait, The Life and Campaigns of Viscount Gough, p 108.

British were down and beaten. The reserve under Tej Singh was not far, if launched it would have completed the rout of the British pride in India. Why Tej Singh did not attack? There are no answers except his treachery.

Any fit soldier can be an officer and one amongst them some time becomes a general. It is therefore the selection criteria of what is fit, the selection of what mettle an officer is made up of that such men when placed in a position of authority decide the fate of nations. Ranjit Singh selected Tej Singh, the nephew of Jemadar Khushal Singh as an officer of high rank, he failed to see the weak character and the nation paid the price for it, not only the bloodshed at Sabraon, but the loss of independence, which followed was worst.

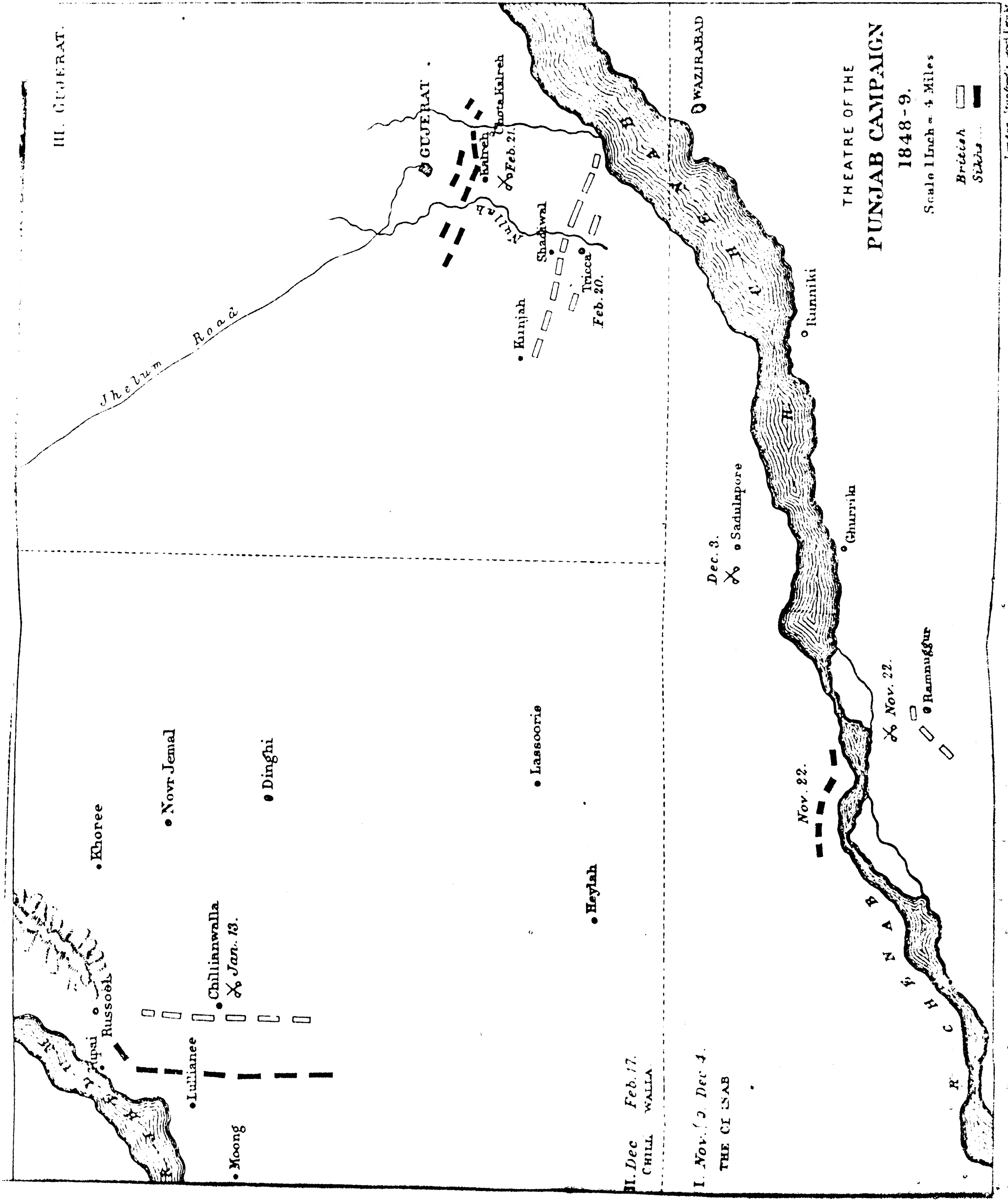
The British marched to Kasur and clamped a treaty of peace, with Lahore Sarkar being represented by Wazir Gulab Singh, who had earlier refused to take part in the battle¹. Hardinge was prepared to wait for an appropriate time to annex Punjab with a large number of soldiers still remaining at large, he did not want to get involved in long drawn out campaign. His first concern was to weaken the strong Punjab state. He did it by creating a rival Dogra power in Gulab Singh by handing over Jammu and Kashmir to Gulab Singh, it was also his reward for treachery². Henry Lawrence was sent to Lahore with a British force, which was to remain there only until the end of 1846. The Jalandhar Doab was annexed to the British territories. "The strength of the Lahore

1. George Bruce, Six Battles for India, 1969, p 175. 2. HS Bhatia, Rare Documents on Sikhs and Their Rule in the Punjab, 1992, p 217.

army was reduced. By a supplement added on March 11, the British force was kept in Lahore at the expense of the state; a British political officer was stationed there for 'advice and guidance', Dalip Singh remained on the throne, with Lal Singh as the Wazir and Tej Singh as the commander of the army, while Maharani Jindan became the Regent. This was the reward for their helpful role in the later war. The state of Lahore was not merely smaller and weaker now, it was also a protected state for all practical purpose. In a letter to Henry Lawrence it was made clear by Hardinge that 'the native prince is in fetters and under our protection, and must to our bidding'¹.

The ability of Sikhs to stop and ultimately defeat Ahmed Shah Abdali, the victor of Panipat, was not forgotten by the British. The Britishers had only bought time to recoup and reorganise themselves and also inform about the situation in Punjab to the home government as to justify its annexation. The treaty of Bhyrowal was signed on 22nd December 1846. As per the treaty the Resident at Lahore was empowered 'to direct and control the duties of every department'. These arrangements were to continue till Maharaja Dalip reached the age of 16 on 4 September 1854. To do it they first removed Lal Singh because of his complicity in the handing over of Kashmir province to Gulab Singh. The appointment of Wazir was abolished and Regency council was formed. Simultaneously Maharani Jindan was removed from her position as Regent and placed on pension. To all intents and purposes the British had come to rule

1. Sita Ram Kohli, Sunset of the Sikh Empire, p 107.



Punjab and not run an administration for Maharaja Dalip Singh¹. The revolt of Diwan Mul Raj and Sardar Chattar Singh Attariwala, was a result of the overbearing policies of the Resident at Lahore and his officers posted in provinces. It gave an excuse to the Governor General to mobilise its troops first for protection of Lahore Sarkar and subsequently when the army was ready to declare open hostilities².

1848-1849

Diwan Mul Raj Governor of Multan had resigned in 1847 and his resignation was accepted with effect from March 1848. Accordingly Frederic Currie had sent Kahn Singh Mann to take over the governorship of Multan, with Vans Agnew as his political adviser and Lieutenant Anderson as his assistant. On their arrival in Multan these two officers were murdered without incitement from Mul Raj. However his troops who were the largest losers of their privileges and authority due to the impending change forced him to lead their revolt. Currie did not order the British force at Lahore to march against Mul Raj. In fact Currie told the company's political agent posted in Bannu to 'advise' its governor, only to contain Mul Raj and not dislodge him from Multan. As subsequent events unfolded, this revolt became a reason to send the British army to defeat it.

The problem of revolt of Sardar Chattar Singh Attariwala was due to the political agent not obeying the governor's orders and further when Colonel Canora refused to obey Sardar Chattar Singh's order, he was killed. Abbott, the political agent, presented the incident as the cold

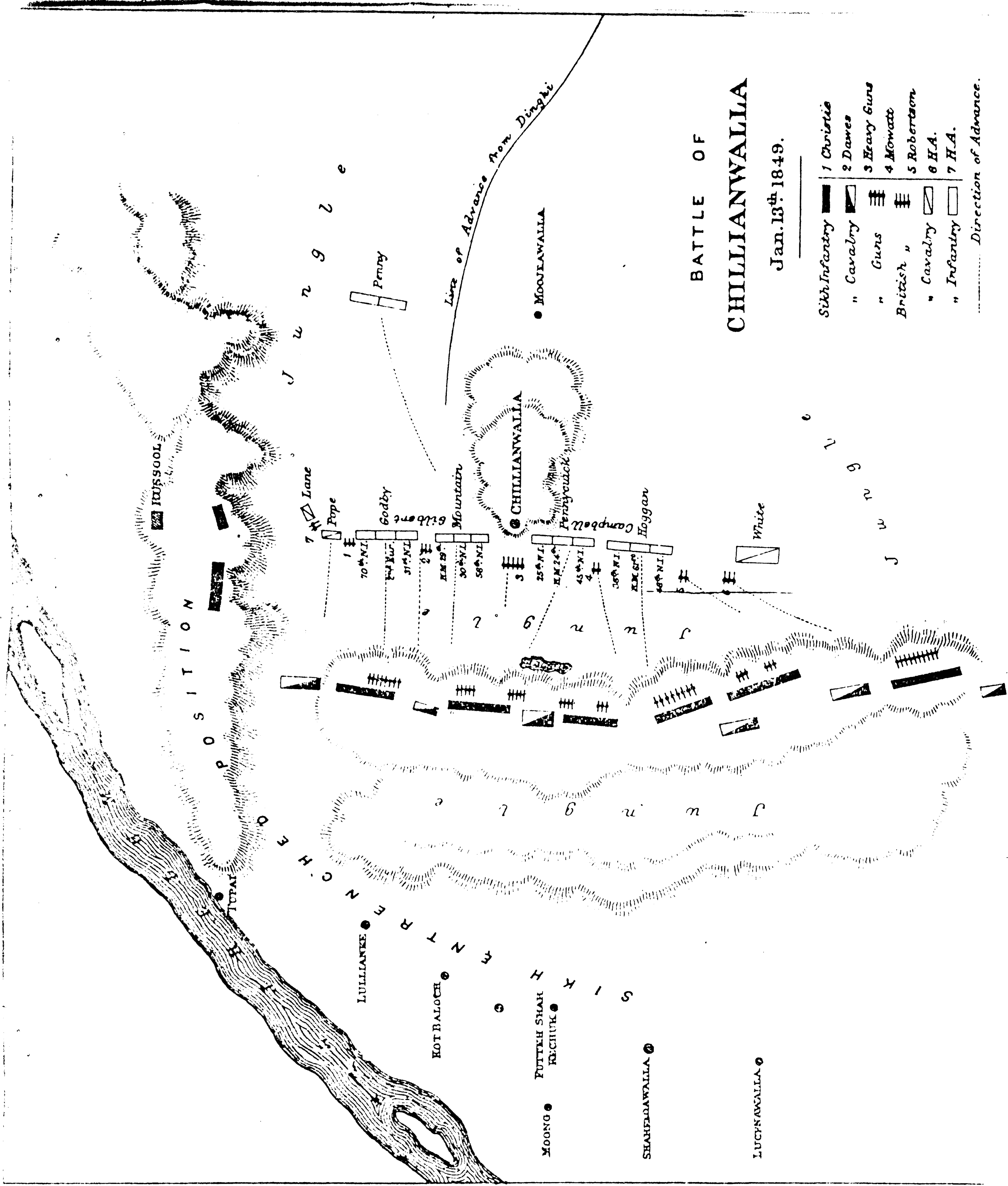
1. SS Bal, British Policy Towards the Punjab (1844-49), 1971, p 204.

2. NM Khilnani, British Power in the Punjab (1839-58), 1972, p 154.

blooded murder of a loyal officer. Currie knew that Chattar Singh was not at fault, but Dalhousie wanted the Sardar to be made an example of. He was dismissed from governorship and his jagirs were resumed. Chattar Singh decided to defy the Resident's orders. He tried to enlist the support of army units posted in the Sind Sagar Doab and the Peshawar region, approaching Dost Muhammad Khan of Kabul and Raja Gulab Singh for help towards the cause of the Punjabis to overthrow the British usurpers. He wrote to his son, Raja Sher Singh, to join him. As a consequence, Sher Singh who was then fighting alongwith the British to defeat the revolt at Multan, himself became a rebel and went over to the rebels on 14 September 1848. In joint proclamations with Mul Raj, he exhorted the Hindus and Muslims of the Punjab to join them against the British, and asked the chiefs of the Satluj Jammu Divide for support. A forged letter arranged by Edwardes to fall into the hands of Mul Raj made the later suspicious of Raja Sher Singh, who felt obliged to leave Multan on October 9. Mul Raj was left alone to defend himself against the British forces.

Lord Dalhousie had taken over the office of governor general from Hardinge in January 1848, and he had, after the revolt by Mul Raj and Chattar Singh, already written to the Resident at Lahore to treat the state of Lahore at war with the British government¹. In consonance with this policy Lord Gough, the commander in chief, with large army crossed the Satluj in November 1848 on the pretext of suppressing

1. Dalhousie made the declaration of war in his usual forthright manner. "Unwanted by precedents, uninfluenced by example, the Sikh nation has called for war and on my word, Sir, they shall have it with a vengeance". (Dalhousie to Currie 8 October, 1848, Trotter, Life of Marquess of Dalhousie, p 33.



BATTLE OF CHILLIANWALLA

Jan. 13th 1849.

Sikh Infantry	█	1 Christie
" Cavalry	▤	2 Dawes
" Guns	≡	3 Heavy Guns
British "	≡	4 Mowatt
" Cavalry	▤	5 Robertson
" Infantry	▬	6 H.A.
	▬	7 H.A.

Direction of Advance.

the so called revolts of Mul Raj and Sardar Chattar Singh Attariwala and his son Sher Singh. The objective of Mul Raj and the Attariwala sardars was to show resentment for the ill treatment meted out to them by the British authority. The objective of the British was to crush the revolt. During this British campaign at Ramnagar close to river Chenab on 22 November a British brigade was badly mauled followed by a worst defeat ever received by British arms at Chillianwala on 13 January 1849. However, at Multan, British had better luck when on 22 January 1849 a British force under General Whish stormed and captured the fort of Multan after a heavy artillery bombardment.

After the heavy losses at Chillianwal, Gough waited until Whish joined him with his troops. Gough then confronted Raja Sher Singh at Gujarat on 21 February 1849. The Sikhs were defeated and they laid down their arm at Rawalpindi on 28 February 1849. Thus ended the revolt which the British Government was bound to defeat by treaty. But having done that, the British annexed Punjab and so ended the rule of Ranjit Singh's successors and the legacy of Ranjit Singh.

The British authorities had appointed a Board of three members to administer Punjab. They were Henry Lawrence, member Army and Political, his brother John Lawrence, member Revenue and Charles Manson, member Law and Justice. While Sir Charles Napier, who had recently taken over as commander-in-chief wanted a military dictatorship, in Punjab, Henry, Lawrence President of the Board, prevailed upon the Governor General, to give Punjab the benefits of a civilian rule.

"All the forts of the Sikh Chiefs were demolished except for those necessary for the British forces of occupation. About 1,20,000 arms were surrendered by the people. About 40,000 of soldiers were dismissed and either went back to their traditional occupation of agriculture or became a problem for law and order as dacoits and cut-throats. The latter class was, however, soon suppressed"¹.

Soon a Punjab force was built consisting solely of Sikhs, to be employed as per the needs of the new rulers. The Punjab police took into its employ 15,000 soldiers. Further manpower got busy in constructing the Grand Trunk road from Lahore to Peshawar. A few years later the construction of canals in Punjab got underway and thus alongwith water came prosperity.

1. Dr Gopal Singh, A History of the Sikh People, 1979, p 586.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

Ranjit Singh was born to rule and was the first native ruler of the Punjab after the disintegration of the Mughal Empire. He expelled the Afghans and organised a fool-proof defence of the North Western frontier. But, the British were marking time, waiting for him to disappear from the scene in North India, so that could annex his kingdom. This study 'The Military campaigns of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Under his Successor's' was undertaken with the objectives: one, list the military campaigns in the chronological order; two, determine the objectives of each campaign; three, analyse the diplomatic and military strategy used, to get these objectives fulfilled; fourth, examine the results of these campaigns; fifth, place the military campaigns of Ranjit Singh and under his successors in their historical perspective.

Ranjit Singh was the product of a turbulent century (1699-1799) belonging to a society organised for war and constantly at war. His father Maha Singh and his grandfather before him were chiefs of a misl; when there were many such misls constantly at war with their neighbours to acquire more territory. It was but natural that one strong chief would combine the potential of many such misls to form a strong single force, unifying and enlarging, all that what belonged to each of them individually, into a strong kingdom. From the strength of such a unity of Misls, Ranjit Singh reduced to obedience those who did not acknowledge his sovereignty.

The major military campaigns undertaken by Ranjit Singh for the unification of Punjab and the subsequent expansion

of its frontiers were Lahore, Kasur, Cis-Satluj, Kangra, Multan, Kashmir and the campaigns for the conquest of territories along the river Indus. The major military campaigns under Ranjit Singh's successors were, apart from Ladakh, the First and the Second campaigns against the British in 1845-46 and 1848-49 respectively.

Ranjit Singh's objectives was simple: 'conquer and unify'. To do so he increased his army by absorbing the army of the Misaldars into his own. He gave Jagirs to the vanquished to settle them with choice to join his forces. Where Ranjit Singh differed from many a ruler was his diligent efforts to win his objective by strategem or diplomacy. Akalgarh, Kangra, Attock are just a few examples. He kept a strong national reserve force called 'Kambu-i-Muala' which was capable of marching out in a few hours, to influence and enforce his decisions.

Ranjit Singh's meticulous planning and preparation is evident from his objective when unifying the Misls. It was to obtain trained soldiers and maintain order and tranquillity in his kingdom. To do so he treated the vanquished with honourable alternatives; they could join his army or live peacefully on their lands. He allowed the chiefs of conquered lands to accept his suzerainty and pay tribute. Thus, without burdening himself with direct administration, he waited until he was ready to exercise direct control.

The objective of Ranjit Singh to undertake his military campaigns was firstly, capture Lahore (the traditional

capital of Punjab), secondly, unification of Punjab and thirdly, expansion of Punjab to its natural frontiers. Ranjit Singh's successors also continued expansion and acquiring territory which was of strategic value for the defence of the Kingdom from the North. However, the major objective of the Sikh army in the campaigns of 1845-46 and 1848-49 was the defence of the Kingdom against the aggressive designs of the British from the south. But the ruler, wazir and the Generals who mattered had a different objective, of securing their personal fiefdoms and privileges. They went to the extent of compromising the sovereignty of the state and even colluding with the British, whose objective at that time was to annex Punjab. In this conflict of objectives the soldiers became cannon fodder. Their sacrifices and patriotism went unappreciated and unrewarded. Ironically, their valour was not recognised by incompetent and disloyal rulers and courtiers. They failed to recognise the real worth of the Sikh soldiery whereas, the British after extending their rule over Punjab used the same human material for safeguarding not only their Indian Empire but later also the overseas territories elsewhere.

Ranjit Singh was a down-to-earth realist. He neither overstretched himself nor stood on false prestige. Before launching any campaign he assessed the strength of his adversary in relation to his own strength; he undertook the campaign only if he was almost certain of success. If ever he found the campaign, was not progressing as planned, he would postpone it or even abandon it, to reduce losses in material and men. He would come at a later date, to fulfil

the objective with minimum loss to his own army. He always calculated the cost and economised his effort.

In his first major campaign of capturing Lahore, he took the enemy by surprise; by first proceeding to Amritsar and then reaching Lahore in one swift march. Even though the choudharies of the city had opened the gate for him, he entered the city only when he was sure of his success.

In the Kasur campaign (1800-1807) Ranjit Singh sent forces to attack Kasur in 1801 and 1802. He even made a diplomatic effort to subdue the ruler, before annexing Kasur in 1807.

In the case of Multan Province he started with reconnaissance in force in 1802, and followed with the reduction of Jhang in 1805. He attacked Multan itself seven times before storming and occupying the fort of Multan in 1818. Kashmir required greater skill, for before occupying it with the Lahore troops, Ranjit Singh secured his western borders first, through diplomacy, winning over Attock and then defeating the Afghans in the battle of Chuch. His show of force in Peshawar in 1818 helped him keep the Afghan border secure while he attacked and occupied Kashmir in 1819. Peshawar, though paying tribute to Ranjit Singh ever since 1818, was not annexed until 1834. After the annexation, when Ranjit Singh was confronted by Dost Muhammad, he prolonged the negotiations while his army all the while moved into position. In this campaign the diplomatic offensive was successful because Sultan Muhammad, brother of Dost Muhammad, crossed over to the Sikhs. Dost Muhammad confronted with the military might and defeated in

diplomacy retired. Peshawar province thereafter become a part of Ranjit Singh's kingdom.

Right from 1805 onwards Ranjit Singh avoided war with the British, because he knew that even if he won a few battles against them, ultimately the better trained army of the British may prevail. To overcome this limitation Ranjit Singh insisted on regular training of his army. He also restructured his army. He thus modernised and strengthened his own army to give the British a befitting reply should they ever commit aggression against him.

While earlier he was one among equals, after the capture of Lahore he became at least the first among equals. He had a capital, but not yet a vast state to rule over. He assumed or consented to be given the title of Maharaja in 1801. He had the unique distinction of becoming a Maharaja, without having this title confirmed on him by any power superior to him.

The consolidation of Misls which started with his marriage alliances gave him this strained soldiers. The defeated chiefs became his officers either performing administrative or military duties.

Kasur was too close to the capital to be left unconquered. Its annexation in 1807 secured Lahore.

Victory over Kangra eliminated Gurkha threat in the region. It also gave Ranjit Singh the much needed hill troops for his subsequent campaigns in Kashmir, Hazara and Peshawar. The capture of Multan opened for Ranjit Singh the door to Sind. Kashmir, gave good revenue from its trade and

was the bridge between the far north and the territories of Punjab. The occupation of Mankera in 1821 was a check on Afghan movement into Punjab, through the Gomal pass. The other conquests along the river Indus, such as the Khairabad opposite Attock, and territories attached to it, in 1818, Dera Ghazi Khan in 1820, Dera Ismail Khan in 1821 once for all stopped the easy and free access of Afghan rulers into Punjab. Though the Kingdom created by Ranjit Singh did not survive beyond a decade of his death, the defence of the Western borders against the Afghan power organised by Ranjit Singh, continued even under the British.

By 1822 Ranjit Singh had extended the Punjab to its natural boundaries. His apprehension of the British, next forced him to upgrade the strength and training of his army. Lafont notes the total mismatch between the discipline of his Fauj-i-khas and the general education, awareness and discipline of the people of the Punjab as a whole. That Ranjit Singh by personal interest and involvement could ensure such a force to be raised and trained, shows the determination of the Sikh monarch to achieve his objectives.

Ranjit Singh showed great understanding and realism by accepting the treaty of Amritsar (1809) thus gaining security in the south to enlarge his kingdom to the North and also build strong defences in the North-West, to finally tackle the British in the South. It is here that Ranjit Singh outshines Napoleon, for the latter a contemporary of Ranjit Singh bit much more than he could chew, so lost as speedily. On the other hand faced with the modern global power, the British, Ranjit Singh traded territory but built an army to match the British. He retained the Ghorcharas for their traditional role. As Cunningham says, Sikh

infantry supported by Artillery would have stopped the British Queen's and Native army while the Ghorcharas in their sweep would have subdued the country side. The Sikh arms then would have had no match in Asia except in the mobile brigades of the British.

Under Ranjit Singh's successors the first campaign was an equal struggle made unequal by the treacherous loss of the leaders to the British, with the battle plans made known to the enemy. The leaderless army remained on the defensive without any offensive; it was regrettable that an army built with such care, when time came, lost for lack of a leader and offensive action. In the second campaign, the lack of offensive spirit after Chillianwala allowed the British to concentrate their troops and defeat the Sikh.

The military campaigns of Ranjit Singh are characterised by clear objectives and minimum bloodshed. Ranjit Singh was prepared to call off a battle, never a campaign, to return to his objective after a time, to reduce the enemy to submission. He knew the importance of bold and resolute action, his crossing of Indus in flood, a resolute attack at Pir Sabak, are examples of Ranjit Singh's genius to differentiate between necessity of pressing an attack and retiring to fight on another day.

Vast distances, poor means of transport and communications did force Ranjit Singh to personally ensure logistics support for his troops in battle. Multan and Kashmir are two examples of the same. That this aspect was essential to victory was well understood by Ranjit Singh. For the Multan campaign he deputed Rani Nakai to superwise the supply and movement of logistics. For the Kashmir

Campaign in 1819, he personally commanded the reserve following the main army and took on the responsibility of smooth movement of supplies to the mountainous Kashmir.

By nature, Ranjit Singh, as Metcalfe noted, was not inclined to desperate enterprise; Realism never escaped him. Ranjit Singh is said to have remarked; "I might perhaps drive the British as far as Allyghur but I should be driven back across the Satluj and out of my kingdom¹."

Loss of Punjab to the British was a struggle between a medieval and modern outlook.

Not only the native system of Government was liable to tinkering by the British but it did not stand a chance against the industrialised England with vast resources. Agreed, given a leader Sikh armies would have won. Then what next? how far these armies could have succeeded, Ultimately with superior global view and resources available the British may have lost a battle or two before returning to India to return to the battlefield to win. If Ranjit Singh could train and maintain Fauj-i-khas then there is no reason why able successors of Ranjit Singh could not have defeated the British and in turn ruled over their territories for a longer period.

Ranjit Singh possessed, in a very high degree, one particular kingly quality not usually conspicuous in oriental monarchs, wrote Sir C Gough in 'The Sikhs and Sikh Wars', "Ranjit Singh always knew exactly how far he could go, however large and far reaching his ultimate designs might be, his immediate measures were always practicable. His each step was a part of his large design, and he made each step secure before he took the next".

1. MC Gregor, History of the Sikhs, Volume II, p 35.

"This man's curiosity balances the apathy of the whole of his nation", wrote Victor Jacquemont from Ranjit Singh's court in a letter in 1834. "His conversation is like a nightmare. He is almost the first inquisitive Indian I have seen. He asked a hundred thousand questions to me about India, the British, Europe, Bonaparte, this world in general and the next, hell, paradise, the soul, God, the devil and a myriad of others of the same kind"¹.

Indian outlook is backward looking and tradition bound. Porus lost to Alexander for continuing to depend on elephants in battle. He was out-manuevered by the horse-dependent army of Alexander. Ibrahim Lodhi lost to Babar because the latter had introduced the use of artillery in his army. Mahmud as he planned his assault on Somnath, carried even drinking water from Multan for a journey of 1000 kms to Somnath. Whereas, the priests who had blind faith in the divine power to protect the temple advised people not to resist the invader; because they believed divine wrath would destroy the invader the result was obvious.

Ranjit Singh was the first Indian ruler to plan and prepare for his campaigns keeping in view the resources and strength of his adversaries. Taboo and tradition never fettered him from adopting new ideas.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was the last of the medieval monarchs and at the time first of the moderns. May be his modern outlook owed much to the basic principle of Sikhism to welcome any new thought or idea irrespective of its

1. Maharaja Ranjit Singh as others saw him, The First death Centenary memorial, Language Department, Punjab, 1970, p-232.

source or origin. Hence he modernised his army. He was the first to perceive the value of drill for the army, even though the soldiers and his commanders initially were not convinced of its value. Infact, he had to try this experiment to begin with on non-Punjabi soldiers of the army.

Ranjit Singh had the foresight to visualize that ultimately the strength of the Sikh army would be measured against the British. This was eminently proved in battles of Mudki and Pherushehr, where the British with the best of their Generals almost lost the field against the disciplined and dauntless Sikh soldiers, even though they (the Sikhs) had been betrayed by their own generals. Thus Shah Muhammad's famous line, beautifully sums up the result of the battles between the British and Sikhs; "Shah Muhammada ik Sarkar bajon, faujan jitke, ant nu harian ni". For want of a ruler of Ranjit Singh's calibre the army having nearly won the battles, still lost the campaign.

The British planned meticulously and methodically well in advance to realise their objectives which were formulated to suit their wider interests at global level. They targetted the personal weaknesses of rulers and courtiers and the faults of the systems of their adversaries to economize their losses in actual fighting.

In all narratives of Anglo-Sikh campaigns, the steady and bold stand taken by the Sikh army has been repeatedly commended. Also the Sikh Army throughout was on the defensive. It is a well known fact that normally the attackers had suffered much higher casualties. Therefore in

the first Anglo Sikh campaign the claims of the British "Historians that British losses were much smaller could only be possible due to the treachery of the Sikh Generals, whose objective was to win favours of the British at the cost of the precious lives of their own soldiers".

The modernisation of Punjab the seeds of which lay in the teachings of the Gurus, the germination of which was made possible by the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was nurtured by the British and this plant blossomed later and no wonder till today it is the most modern state in the Indo-Pak-subcontinent. Maharaja Ranjit Singh's kingdom is no more, none of his lineal descendents is alive but his legacy lives on in the minds of millions who live today in the territories he ruled once.

APPENDIX A

Ittalahnama, 9th February, 1809.

The British army having encamped near the frontiers of the Maharaja Ranjit Singh's kingdom it has been thought proper to signify the pleasure of British Government by means of this precept in order to make all the Chiefs of the Maharaja acquainted with the sentiments of the British Government which have solely for their object and aim to confirm the friendship with the Maharaja and to prevent any injury to his country. The preservation of friendship between the two states depending on particular conditions which are hereby detailed.

The Thanas in the fortress of Kharar, Khanpur, Faridkot and other places on this side of the Sutlej which have been placed in the hands of the dependants of Maharaja, shall be raised and the same places restored to their ancient proprietors.

The force of cavalry and infantry which may have crossed to this side of the Sutlej must be recalled to the other side of the country of the Maharaja.

The troops stationed at the ghat of Phillaur must depart on the other side of the river as described and in future the troops of Maharaja shall never advance into the country of the Chiefs situated on this side of the river who have called in for their security and protection.

Thanas of the British Government: If in the manner that the British have placed Thanas of moderate number on this side of the Sutlej, if in like manner a small force by way of Thana be stationed at the ghat of Phillaur, it will not be objected to.

If the Maharaja perserveres in the fulfilment of above stipulations which he so repeatedly proposed to do in presence of Mr. Metcalfe such fulfilment will confirm the mutual friendship. In case of non-compliance with these stipulations, then shall it be plain that the Maharaja has no regard for the friendship of the British but on the contrary resolves enmity. In such case the victorious British army shall commence every mode of defence.

The communication of this precept is solely with the view of publishing the sentiments of the British Government and to know those of Maharaja. The British are confident that the Maharaja will consider the contents of this precept as abounding to his real advantage and affording a conspicuous proof of their friendship, that with their capacity for war they are also intent on peace.

A True Translation.

(Sd.). R.B. STUART.

(Sd.). St. LEGER,
Seal and Signature of
Colonel Ochterlony.

APPENDIX B

Treaty of Amritsar, 25th April, 1809

Whereas certain differences which had arisen between the British Government and Raja of Lahore have been happily and amicably adjusted and both parties being anxious to maintain the relations of perfect amity and concord the following articles of the treaty which shall be binding on the heirs and successors of the two parties have been concluded by Raja Ranjit Singh on his own part and by the agency of Charles Theophilus Metcalfe, Esquire, on the part of the British Government.

Article I :- Perpetual friendship shall subsist between British Government and the state of Lahore. The latter shall be considered with respect to the former to be on the footing of the most favoured Powers and the British Government will have no concern with the territories and subjects of Raja to the Northward of the River Sutlej.

Article II :- The Raja will never maintain in his territory occupied by him and his dependants on the left bank of the river Sutlej more troops than are necessary for the internal duties of that territory, nor commit or suffer any encroachment on the possessions or the rights of the Chiefs in its vicinity.

Article III :- In the event of a violation of any of the preceding articles or of a departure from the rules of friendship on the part of either state this treaty shall be considered null and void.

Article IV :- The treaty consisting of four articles having been concluded and settled at Amritsar on 25th day of April, 1809, Mr. C.T. Metcalfe has delivered to the Raja of Lahore a copy of the same in English and Persian under his seal and signature; the said Raja has delivered another copy of the same under his seal and signature; and Mister Charles Theophilus Metcalfe engages to procure within the space of two months a copy of the same duly ratified by the Right Hon'ble Governor-General-in-Council on the receipt of which by the Raja the present treaty shall be deemed complete and binding on both parties; and the copy of it now delivered to the Raja shall be returned.

Seal and signature of

C.T. METCALFE.

Seal and Signature of

MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH

Company's Seal.

Ratified by the Governor-General-in-Council on 30th May, 1809.

(Sd.). MINTO.

APPENDIX C

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS
FROM 1761 TO 1849

- 1761 January 14 the Marathas defeated by Ahmad Shah Abdali in the battle of Panipat
- 1761 September Khwaja Abed, the Afghan governor of Lahore, defeated by the Sikhs near Gujranwala
- 1764 January the Afghan governor Zain Khan killed and the territories of Sarhind occupied by the Sikhs
- 1765 May Lahore captured by Gujjar Singh, Lehna Singh and Sobha Singh; Gobind Shahi coin struck at Lahore
- 1767 Pind Dadan Khan, Ahmadabad, Jhelam and Rohtas occupied by Charhat Singh Sukarchakia in concert with Gujjar Singh Bhangi
- 1767 The Gakkhar chief Muqarrab Khan ousted from Rawalpindi by Milkha Singh Thehpuria in association with Gujjar Singh Bhangi and Charhat Singh Sukarchakia
- 1772 October 23 death of Ahmad Shah Abdali
- 1772 occupation of Multan by Jhanda Singh Bhangi
- 1774 Death of Charhat Singh Sukarchakia
- 1780 November 13 birth of Ranjit Singh
- 1780 Multan recovered by Timur Shah; Muzaffar Khan Saddozai appointed as its governor
- 1783 Occupation of Alipur and Manchar by Mahan Singh Sukarchakia
- 1790 Death of Mahan Singh Sukarchakia
- 1793 Death of Jai Singh Kanhiya
- 1793 Death of Timur Shah
- 1798 November occupation of Lahore by Zaman Shah
- 1799 July 7 occupation of Lahore by Ranjit Singh
- 1803 Tribute paid by Muzaffar Khan of Multan and Ahmad Khan Sial of Jhang to Ranjit Singh
- 1804 Tribute paid by Fateh Khan Baloch of Sahiwal and Jafar Khan Baloch of Khushab to Ranjit Singh
- 1805 Occupation of Amritsar by Ranjit Singh
- 1806 January treaty of the East India Company with Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh Ahluwalia
- 1807 Occupation of Qasur, Dipalpur, Hujra Shah Muqim, Pathankot and Sialkot by Ranjit Singh
- 1808 Occupation of the fort of Shaikhupura by Ranjit Singh
- 1809 April 25 the Treaty of Amritsar signed by Ranjit Singh alone with the East India Company
- 1809 August 24 occupation of the fort of Kangra by Ranjit Singh
- 1809 Occupation of Philaur, Adina Nagar and Sujampur by Ranjit Singh
- 1810 Occupation of Sahiwal, Khushab, Kusak, Khari Khari and Gujrat by Ranjit Singh

- 1811 October 7 occupation of Jalandhar by Ranjit Singh
 1812 Occupation of Akhnur by Ranjit Singh
 1813 Occupation of Shamsabad, Pindi Gheb and the fort of Attock by Ranjit Singh
 1815 Occupation of Jammu and Rawalpindi by Ranjit Singh
 1816 Occupation of Jhang and the territories of the Ramgarhias by Ranjit Singh
 1817 Occupation of Nurpur Tiwana by Ranjit Singh
 1818 June 2 occupation of Multan by Ranjit Singh
 1819 June 23 occupation of Rajauri by Ranjit Singh
 1821 December 14 occupation of Mankera by Ranjit Singh
 1831 The territory on the west of the Satlej allowed earlier to remain under Bahawal Khan now taken over by Ranjit Singh
 1831 October 25 meeting between Ranjit Singh and William Bentinck at Ropar
 1832 December 26 the Indus Navigation Treaty signed by Ranjit Singh with the East India Company
 1834 Occupation of Peshawar by Ranjit Singh
 1836 Occupation of Dera Ismail Khan by Ranjit Singh
 1837 April 30 the battle of Jamrud
 1837 October death of Fateh Singh Ahluwalia
 1838 June 25 the Tripartite Treaty signed by Ranjit Singh with the British and Shah Shuja
 1839 June 27 death of Ranjit Singh
 1839 September 1 investiture of Kharak Singh as the ruler of Lahore
 1840 Occupation of Mandi, Suket and Kulu by Kharak Singh
 1840 May Iskardu made tributary by Kharak Singh
 1840 November 5 death of Kharak Singh and Prince Nau Nihal Singh
 1840 December 2 Rani Chand Kaur proclaimed Regent of the Punjab
 1841 January 20 Prince Sher Singh invested as the Maharaja
 1841 June 12 Maharani Chand Kaur murdered by her female attendants
 1843 September 15 Maharaja Sher Singh and Raja Dhian Singh assassinated by the Sandhwalias
 1843 September Dalip Singh proclaimed Maharaja with Raja Hira Singh as the Prime Minister
 1844 May 21 Raja Hira Singh and Pandit Jalla assassinated by the army Panchas
 1845 September 21 Jawahar Singh, brother of Rani Jindan, murdered by the army Panchas
 1845 December 11 the Satlej crossed by the Lahore army
 1845 December 13 war declared by the British against the rulers of Lahore
 1845 December 18 the battle of Mudki
 1845 December 21-22 the battle of Pherushahr

- 1846 January 21 a skirmish near Baddowal
 1846 January 28 the battle of Aliwal
 1846 February 10 the battle of Sabraon
 1846 March 9 the Treaty of Lahore
 1846 March 16 a separate treaty signed by Raja Gulab Singh with the British by which he was made the ruler of Jammu and Kashmir in subordination to the British
 1846 December 22 the Treaty of Bhayirawal
 1848 April 20 murder of Vans Agnew and W Anderson at Multan
 1848 September 4 siege of Multan
 1848 November 22 the battle of Ramnagar
 1849 January 13 the battle of Chillianwala
 1849 January 22 fall of Multan
 1849 February 21 the battle of Gujrat
 1849 March 11 Chattar Singh and Raja Sher Singh surrendered to Major Gilbert near Rawalpindi
 1849 March 14 arms laid down by the supporters of Chattar Singh and Raja Sher Singh
 1849 March 29 annexation of the Punjab

APPENDIX D

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Field-marshal Sir Henry (later 1st Viscount) HARDINGS (1785-1856) was a grandson of the distinguished poet, Latin scholar and clerk to the House of Commons, Nicholas Hardinge (1699-1758). He was one of the earliest pupils of the Royal Military College when it was still at High Wycombe. At 14 he bought an ensigncy in an infantry corps. He joined Arthur Wellesley as a staff officer, and was wounded at Vimeiro (1808). He served through the retreat to Corunna and was with Moore at his death. From 1811 he served on Marshal Beresford's staff with the Portuguese brigade at the storming of Palais, near Bayonne, in 1814. The same year he became 'Captain and Lieutenant-Colonel' in the 1st Guards (the Grenadiers), with which regiment he remained till 1827. In the Netherlands campaign of 1815, Hardinge, whose superior intelligence and capacity for hard work were early appreciated by Wellington, was military commissioner at Blucher's headquarters. He lost his left hand at Ligny.

Hardinge was elected a Tory Member of Parliament in 1820, and became, first, secretary of war (1828-30), and then, for a short time, Irish secretary in Wellington's ministry. This post he held again in 1834-5. He was for a second time secretary at war, under Peel, from 1841 to 1844.

In the following year he succeeded his brother-in-law, Lord Ellenborough, as Governor-General of India. Being present at some of the battles of the First Sikh War, he waived his right to command in the field, and served as Gough's second-in-command. At Ferozeshah, however, he momentarily reasserted his civil power to restrain the Commander-in-Chief from attacking, until the Ferozepur garrison had joined him.

After the war he was created Viscount Hardinge of Lahore, and granted a pension of \$3,000 a year. He returned to England in 1847, first to become Master-General of the Ordnance, and then to succeed Wellington as Commander-in-Chief. In this post he remained till the end of the Crimean War, for the military unpreparedness for which, public opinion rather unfairly blamed him. He was promoted to field-marshal in 1855 and died, in his 72nd year, in 1856.

Field-marshal Sir Hugh (later 1st Viscount) GOUGH (1779-1869) came of an old Limerick family. At 15 he was adjutant of an infantry regiment. He served in South Africa and the West Indies (1795-1803), and throughout the Peninsular War. He commanded the 87th Foot (later the Royal Irish Fusiliers) at Talavera in 1809, where he was gravely

Marquess of Anglesey; Sergeant Pearman's Memoirs, pp 135-136, Biographical notes.

wounded. At Wellington's request he was the first British officer ever to receive brevet promotion (to lieutenant-colonel) for service in action at the head of a regiment. At Barossa in 1811 he led the 87th Foot and part of the 1st Guards with extreme bravery. Later the same year, he defended Tarifa, where the French commander fell mortally wounded at the portcullis which closed a breach in the walls, and gave up his sword to Gough through the bars. He was in action at Victoria, and again severely wounded at the Nivelle. Knighted in 1815, he became major-general in 1830. Seven years later, he obtained command of the Mysore division of the Madras army. In 1841, he was promoted to lieutenant-general on the same day as Henry Hardinge. In 1841-2, he held the chief command in the China War which ended in the Peace of Nanking. In 1843 he was appointed Commander-in-Chief, India, at the age of 64. He commanded the army in the successful 48-hour Gwalior campaign the same year.

After the first Sikh War he was created Baron Gough of Chingkeang-foo in China, Maharajpore and the Sutlej in the East Indies. After the second Sikh War he returned home to be made a viscount and receive a pension of \$2,000 a year. He was promoted as full general in 1854, and became, on the death of Lord Raglan, in 1855, Colonel of the Royal Horse Guards. In 1857 he was made the first Knight of St Patrick not holding an Irish peerage, and in 1862 a field-marshal. Seven years later he died in his ninetieth year.

Gough was a forceful soldier, famed for his courage and determination, if not for his brilliance as a general. His noble presence and chivalry made him intensely popular with his troops, though he was at times prodigal with their lives. He is believed to have commanded in more general actions in the nineteenth century than any other British officer except Wellington.

Major-general Sir Robert Henry Dick, K.C.B. (1785-1846), was the son of a poor Scottish doctor who made a fortune as surgeon in the service of the East India Company. First commissioned in 1800, he was wounded at Maida in 1806, and served throughout the Peninsular War in the Black Watch. He was again wounded at Quatre Bras, but was nevertheless present in command of his regiment at Waterloo, where he particularly distinguished himself. In 1838, as major-general, he was given command of the centre division of the Madras Army. From here he was transferred to the Bengal Army in 1842. He was killed at the head of his Division at Sobraon.

Tej Singh. Originally Tej Ram, a Brahmin of Ekri in Meerut district of Uttar Pradesh, he was son of Niddha, brother of Jamadar Khushal Singh. In 1811, when he was only 12 years of age, his uncle summoned him to Lahore and got him employment in the Sikh government. During the 1814 campaign of Kashmir, Tej Ram attended on the Maharaja. In 1826, in order to please Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Tej Ram accepted Pahul and became a Sikh and his name was changed to Tej Singh. Then his rise became rapid and he was soon promoted to the position of Divisional Commander in the Army. At the court, he represented his uncle during his absence on active service. After 1818, he was made a general in the regular force. In 1819, he accompanied Missr Dewan Chand to the final conquest of Kashmir and two years later, on several minor engagements on the frontier. He was also present at the Teri campaign. In 1831, he had 22 regular battalions under his command. In May 1837, Maharaja Ranjit Singh granted him the title of 'Ujjal Didar' Nirmal Budh, Sardar-i-ba-Qaqa, General-i-Awwal, Shams-ud-daula Sardar Jang bahadur. In 1838, he was sent to Hazara to construct a fort there. In 1839, he succeeded General Avitabile as Governor in 1839. In 1844, on hearing the news of Raja Suchet Singh's murder, and the consequent distribution of cash and gold to the troops stationed at Lahore, the troops under him became mutinous. They demanded that the money in the treasury should be distributed among them. But Tej Singh handled the situation very tactfully and firmly. Early in November 1845, he was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Panjab forces. He commanded the Sikh forces during the First Anglo-Sikh War of 1845-46. During the War, he proved treacherous to the state to the extent that his aim was to get his own troops destroyed as the Lahore government was fearful of the army. He discovered early in the operations that his artillery ammunition had been tampered with and much of it rendered useless. Such treachery on the part of his own men, doubtlessly had considerable effect upon his subsequent conduct. At Pherushahr, his reserves could tilt the balance and the English could be defeated, but he feigned his support and after a time precipitately fled awarding victory to the British when they were retiring to Ferozepur. After the war, as a reward for his treachery, he was made a member and head of the Council of Regency. He was given the title of Raja and was confirmed in the appointment of Commander-in-Chief of the Sikh army. In August 1847, Tej Singh was given jagir on Sialkot with its fort and the adjacent villages with the annual income of Rs 28000. During the Second Anglo-Sikh War of 1848-49, he fought against Raja Chattar Singh Attariwala and his son Raja Sher Singh Attariwala. After annexation of the Panjab, his jagirs worth Rs 92,779 were confirmed. During the 1857 mutiny, he rendered immense help to the British. In 1861, his scattered jagirs were consolidated in the area of Batala when he became the Raja of Batala. He died at Lahore on 2nd December, 1862.

Balraj Saggar, Who's who in The History of Punjab, p-382.

Lal Singh, Raja. He was son of Jessa Mal, an ordinary scribe in Ranjit Singh's treasury. He belonged to Singhulan, a village in Jhelum district now in Pakistan. He was employed in the treasury in 1832 and succeeded to his father's office on his death in 1836. But as he was too young to discharge the duties of the office, business was transacted in his name by his elder cousin Missr Amir Chand. When Missr Beli Ram was imprisoned for several months by Nau Nihal Singh, Lal Singh held his office of Treasurer; and when four years later, Beli Ram was murdered by the orders of Raja Hira Singh, Lal Singh received the permanent appointment. He was an intriguing and crafty Brahmin and in fact, he conspired in the killing of Missr Beli Ram and Bhai Gurmukh Singh, his benefactors and patrons. He was one of the chief instigators of the murder of Raja Hira Singh and Pandit Jalla, although they had helped him to become Raja of the Rohtas and Domelia. He was a great favourite and paramour of Rani Jindan. He was nominated Wazir after the murder of Sardar Jawahar Singh, brother of Rani Jindan, on 8th November, 1845. He induced the army which he feared and hated to cross the Satluj in 1845, and invade the British territory. He rose to power by the exercise of arts which in a civilized community would have sent him to the scaffold. By ingratitude, treachery and cunning, he succeeded in acquiring the wealth and power for which better men are indebted to their virtue or their genius.

During the first Anglo-Sikh War of 1845-46, he led the Sikh forces against Gough and Hardinge at Mudki. He ordered his men to commence hostilities while he himself ran away leaving the army leaderless, to a safer place, and was held in the highest contempt by the people. Rani Jindan meted out to him a dreadful treatment at first when he returned to Lahore after 20 days absence, jeering at him for his cowardly behaviour. But he being her favourite, orders were soon given to stop any further humiliation. After the war, the conduct of administration of Panjab was placed in the hands of a Council of Regency, comprising a few of the Sardars at whose head was placed Lal Singh. Thus he was confirmed as Minister of the State of Panjab, once more. In 1846, he privately encouraged and instigated Shaikh Imam-ud-Din, the Sikh Governor of Kashmir which was handed over to Maharaja Gulab Singh by the Treaty of Amritsar on 16th March, 1846, to retain possession of that province and not to hand that over to Maharaja Gulab Singh. His involvement in the rebellion having been proved, he was exiled and sent as prisoner first to Agra and then to Dehra Dun at a pension of Rs 12000/- per annum.

Balraj Sagar, Who's who in The History of Punjab, p-228.

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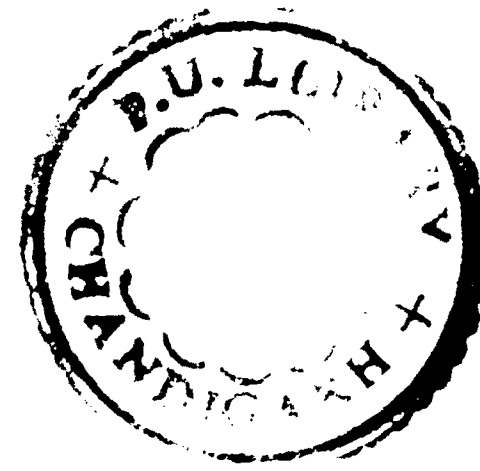
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