

Patiala Imperial Service Infantry, 1914-1916

Introduction

As mentioned in my article About the 15th Ludhiana Sikhs during the First World War, the 15th Ludhiana Sikhs were reinforced with two companies from the Patiala Imperial Service Infantry during the autumn of 1915. The soldiers were to replace losses from the action on the Western Front in 1914-1915. This information appears in General Maxwell's official report (Source 1), but is not mentioned in my other sources about the military units from Patiala.

15th Ludhiana Sikhs recruited in peacetime i.a. part of his soldiers among the Sikhs of Patiala, whereby it seems natural that the Patiala Imperial Service Infantry should now contribute soldiers to the regiment.

The Maharaja of Patiala was, from 15 June 1918 until his death, Honorary Colonel of the 15th Ludhiana Sikhs (from 1922: 2nd Battalion, 11th Sikh Regiment (Ludhiana Sikhs)).



Coat of Arms of Patiala [1](#)

Patiala

Patiala was one of India's many independent principalities, located in the northern part of the province of Punjab [2](#).

The area spanned approx. 8,700 square kilometers and in 1901 the country had approx. 1.6 million inhabitants, mainly Sikhs.



*The Maharaja of Patiala (1891-1938),
Sir Bhupindar Singh.
From Patiala Online.*

The Maharaja of Patiala, following a long tradition (dating back to 1809), placed some of his military units at the disposal of the Indian central government, including the cavalry regiment, the Patiala Imperial Service Lancers, discussed in my article [On the Bikanir Camel Corps, 1914-15](#).

The Maharaja also mustered two reduced infantry battalions as part of these forces:

- 1st Infantry (Rajindra Sikhs)
- 2nd Infantry (from 1938: 2nd Yadavindra Infantry).

Patiala Imperial Service Infantry

Each battalion consisted of 606 men, organized into 6 companies. At the mobilization in August 1914, one joint battalion was raised, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Gurbuksh Singh, assisted by two English officers, Captain GSF Routh, 56th Rifles and Captain H. Campbell, Corps of Guides.

The battalion arrived in Egypt on 16 November 1914 as part of the 32nd Imperial Service Infantry Brigade [3](#)), 11th Indian [Division](#), and was deployed in the defense of the Suez Canal (as of January 1915 at Tineh in the northern part of the defense, Sector [1.4](#))).

The battalion performs various guard duties along the canal until April 1917.

During the subsequent campaign in Palestine, the battalion was part of the 20th Indian Brigade, i.a. as part of Chaytor's Force [5](#)). [__](#)

The Maharaja himself served on the British General Staff on the Western Front and later in Italy.



Officers of 14th King George's Own Ferozepore Sikhs, just before Gallipoli.
From *The Sikhs at Gallipoli* (Digger History).

Gallipoli

Two Patiala companies, A and C, are sent to Gallipoli in July and September 1915 respectively to reinforce the 14th Sikhs.

The companies return to Egypt at the beginning of January 1916.

Read more about the efforts of the 14th Sikhs and the two Patiala companies at Gallipoli in [Sikhs in British Armed Forces - First World War - Gallipoli, April - December 1915 \(All about Sikhs\) 6](#) .

Tab ribbon

The Patiala Imperial Service Infantry was awarded the banners: Suez Canal; Egypt, 1915-17; Gaza; Palestine, 1917-18.

In practice, they were per 26 February 1926 assigned to 1st Infantry (Rajindra Sikhs), but also led by 2nd Yadavindra Infantry, as soldiers from here had also been part of the Patiala Imperial Service Infantry.

Later History (Source 4)

After India's independence in 1947, the two infantry battalions from Patiala became part of the regular Indian Army's Punjab Regiment from 1950. From 1954, they bore the names 15th (Patiala) and 16th (Patiala) Battalion, The Punjab Regiment, respectively.

The 15th (Patiala) Battalion, apparently nicknamed First Patiala today, is the only infantry battalion in the Indian Army's Punjab Regiment that is made up entirely of Sikhs.

Closing

It has not been possible to find photographs showing the infantry battalions from Patiala. Should anyone be in possession of such material, I would like to hear about it.

Sources

1. Sir John Maxwell's Egypt Despatch (The Long, Long Trail).
2. *Armies of the Indian Princely States - Volume I: An Historical Overview* by Richard Head and Tony McClenaghan, The Military Press, Milton Keynes/Buckinghamshire, 1998. ISBN 0-85420-070-3.

3. *Armies of the Indian Princely States - Volume II: Patiala* by Richard Head and Tony McClenaghan, The Military Press, Milton Keynes/Buckinghamshire, 1998. ISBN 0-85420-143-2.
4. 15th Battalion (First Patiala), Punjab Regiment (GlobalSecurity.org)

Per Finsted

Notes:

- 1) From Patiala (Royal and Ruling Houses of Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas).
- 2) Patiala (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1911) .
- 3) The brigade's other battalions were: 33rd Punjabis (from the regular Indian Army) as well as the Alwar Imperial Service Infantry and the Gwalior Imperial Service Infantry. See my article *The Indian Army - On World War I Training Units* for a rendering of the Alwar Infantry as well as Patiala's own cavalry regiment, the Patiala Rajindra Lancers.
- 4) A map with the defense zones is reproduced in my article *Defense of the Suez Canal (1914-1915)*.
- 5) The other battalions in the brigade were 110th Mahratta Light Infantry, Alwar Imperial Service Infantry and 4th Gwalior Imperial Service Infantry. See my article *About the British West Indies Regiment during the First World War*.
- 6) Two other interesting chapters on the 14th Sikhs are found in the same source - see *Sikhs in British Armed Forces - First World War - Egypt, November 1914 - April 1915* and *Sikhs in British Armed Forces - First World War - Mesopotamia, 1918-1919 (All about Sikhs)*.