

Shivaji's Army

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Source

Majumdar, R [1991] *The Maratha Supremacy* Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay.

Suggested reading on who were the Marathas

<http://www.chhatrapati-shivaji.com>

Note on the Mahar Regiment¹

In a sense, the Indian Army's Mahar Regiment owes its origins to Shivaji's recruitment of the Mahars, considered outcastes in the Indian social hierarchy. He also recruited from two other low caste groups. ²After Shivaji's death his successors ended Mahar recruitment and again subjected them to the severest discrimination. This led them to enlist in the British armies when these arose in India, and ironically, the British-enlisted Mahars were a factor in the defeat of the Maratha Empire. ³

Shivaji's Army⁴

Shivaji's standing army numbered 100,000 cavalry and 100,000 infantry. It spent 8 months on campaign, and 4 in camp. No intoxicants, women, or children were permitted on campaign.

The army had no tents, equipage, commissariat, or provisioning. As a consequence the cavalry had high mobility. The sole exception to the tent rule was for the king's camp. It had two tents, one of which was for his minister.

The cavalry was composed 25% of sildars – men who provided their own mounts and arms, and the rest of Bagirs, who were assigned 3 horses for every 2 men.

¹ For more details on the Mahar Regiment, go to <http://www.bharat-rakshak.com/LAND-FORCES/Army/Regiments/Mahar.html>

² <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/41879867.cms>

³ For details of the military service rendered by the Mahars to Shivaji and to the British, access "The Mahar Movement's Military Component" by Richard B. White at <http://inic.utexas.edu/asnic/sagar/spring.1994/richard.white.art.html> White's work was done as part of his Masters thesis. He was also a foreign student at the Indian Defense service's College in Wellington.

⁴ For more on the treatment of Shivaji in Indian history, access the excellent summary "COMMEMORATING THE "GOLDEN AGE" OF SHIVAJI IN MAHARASHTRA, INDIA AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF MAHARASHTRIAN PUBLIC POLITICS" by Daniel Jasper writing in the Journal of Political and Military Sociology, Winter 2003 http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3719/is_200301/ai_n9197835/pg_1

The cavalry was known to march 80-km/day. It used guerilla tactics, avoiding frontal approaches. Instead of used enveloping tactics to harass and cut of supplies, and broke off unfavorable engagements.

After Shivaji, when the army became organized, it was defeated by superior English and French organization. The Europeans used cavalry to disrupt Maratha mobility, and infantry/artillery to destroy.

The Duke of Wellington in 1803 said that adding artillery and infantry led to the defeat of the Maratha army. The Marathas did not enlist in these two combat arms. “Foreigners” from other parts of the country were instead enrolled, which led to the loss of Maratha cohesiveness.

Infantry TO

10 men, led by a Naik

50 men, led by a Havaladar

100+ men, commanded by a Jumladar

1000+ men, commanded by a Hazari

Cavalry TO

25 troopers (Sildars and Bargirs), led by a Havaladar

5 havalgars, commanded by a jumladar

10 jumladars, commanded by a Hazari

Several Hazaris, commanded by a Panch (5) Hazari

Senior Command

The supreme commander was called a Sarnobat. In other sources, he is termed as the Senapati.

The Sarnobat sat on the Council of Eight, which was Shivaji’s cabinet. Merit was the sole criteria for choosing council members. After Shivaji’s death in 1680, his son made the positions hereditary. They gradually became ceremonial, and this was a big reason for the fall of the Maratha Empire.

Forts

Shivaji was a great builder of forts – he had perhaps 240. The difference between him and other kings who invested in forts was that his were used as static support bases and to protect communication lines/vital areas. Shivjai did not fight from his forts, keeping his army highly mobile and on the offensive.

Fort command vested in 3 officers of equal rank.

- Havaladar, head of the garrison and holder of the keys
- Sabnis, head of accounts
- Karchanis, head of the commissariat