

**RULES OF INDIA. RANJIT  
SINGH AND THE SIKH BARRIER  
BETWEEN OUR GROWING  
EMPIRE AND CENTRAL ASIA**

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Rules of India. Ranjit Singh and the Sikh Barrier between Our Growing Empire and Central Asia by Sir Lepel Griffin

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**SIR LEPEL GRIFFIN**

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# RULERS OF INDIA

## Ranjit Singh

*AND THE SIKH BARRIER BETWEEN OUR  
GROWING EMPIRE AND CENTRAL ASIA*

By SIR LEPEL GRIFFIN, K.C.S.I.

Fourth Thousand

Oxford

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## PREFACE

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IN writing this sketch of the life and times of Mahárájá Ranjít Singh I have made large and frequent use of my former works on the cognate subjects; *The Punjab Chiefs*, *The Rájás of the Punjab*, and *The Law of Inheritance to Sikh Chiefships*. On these books several years of my official life, and several subsequent years of such leisure as belongs to Indian officials, were employed. They contain in full detail the histories of all the great Sikh families in the Punjab proper and the Cis-Sutlej territories, of the men who were the courtiers, the advisers, and generals of the great Mahárájá. There was no noble family in the province with which I was not personally acquainted, and from their records and information, as much as from official manuscripts and documents, the history of the time was compiled. It is thus obvious that I am compelled to plagiarize from myself. To Dr. Ernest Trumpp's work on the *Adi Granth*, I am indebted for some portion of the information contained in the Chapter on The Sikh Theocracy, and to Mr. Denzil Ibbetson's admirable Census Report of 1881, for certain statistics and deductions therefrom.

LEPEL GRIFFIN.

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### NOTE

The orthography of proper names follows the system adopted by the Indian Government for the *Imperial Gazetteer of India*. That system, while adhering to the popular spelling of very well-known places, such as Punjab, Poona, Deccan, etc., employs in all other cases the vowels with the following uniform sounds :—

a, as in woman : á, as in father : í, as in kin : é, as in intrigue :  
o, as in cold : u, as in bull : ú, as in rule.



**NOTE TO p. 25.**

The administrative divisions have lately been enlarged and include more districts; but it is convenient to maintain the arrangement which prevailed during the twenty years subsequent to annexation.

**ADDITION TO NOTE, p. 138.**

They had however been obviously utilized by Major Carmichael Smyth in his account of the reigning family of Lahore, although without any acknowledgment. This may have been due to prudential regard for Colonel Gardner's safety and position.

# RANJIT SINGH

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

THERE is, perhaps, no more notable and picturesque figure among the chiefs who rose to power on the ruins of the Mughal Empire than Mahárájá Ranjít Singh, the founder of the short-lived Sikh kingdom of Lahore. In the stormy days at the beginning of the century, amid a fierce conflict of races and creeds, he found his opportunity, and seizing it with energy, promptitude, and genius, he welded the turbulent and warlike sectaries who followed the teaching of Govind Singh into a homogeneous nation. Under his strong and remorseless rule, the Sikhs, trained and disciplined on a military system more perfect than had before or than has been since employed in the native States of India, were rapidly converted into a formidable fighting machine, which only broke in pieces when the folly and weakness of the great Mahárájá's successors persuaded them to use it against the English.

The Sikh monarchy was Napoleonic in the suddenness of its rise, the brilliancy of its success, and the completeness of its overthrow. Like his contemporary,

Napoleon Bonaparte, the Mahárájá of Lahore failed to found a lasting dynasty on the ruins of the petty States, Rájput, Muhammadan, and Sikh, which he in turn attacked and destroyed. His victories had no permanent result; his possessions, like a faggot of sticks, bound together during his lifetime by the force of his imperious will, fell asunder the moment the restraining band was severed. His throne and the tradition of his power and greatness passed into the hands of incompetent successors, who allowed the ship of the State to drift on to the rocks in irremediable wreck. It is very easy to stretch historical parallels too far, but the likeness between the character and fortunes of Napoleon and Ranjít Singh is not only striking in its superficial resemblance, but interesting as showing how similar conditions work out the same results in Asia as in Europe; among Frenchmen intoxicated with the first triumphant revolt against feudal tyranny, and Sikhs fresh from a revolt as momentous against the crushing spiritual despotism of Bráhmanism. The revolutionaries of the West and the East found their masters in Napoleon and Ranjít Singh, men of military genius, absolutely selfish, pitiless and immoral; but the power they seized they were unable to transmit to others. It is true that Napoleonism had in our day a late revival, but it did no more than emphasize the fact that adventurers do not easily found dynasties. The popular obedience is willingly given to the great captain, the leader of men, who seems in the dazzled eyes of the people