PREFACE

This study may be prefaced with a few remarks on the choice of its period and its subject. The reason for choosing the year 1858 as marking the close of the period under study is obvious. The choice of the year 1798, however, as marking the beginning of the period of this study needs some explanation. It was in 1796 that orders were passed for a comprehensive re-organisation of the armies of the East India Company, but these orders did not become effective before 1798. Consequently, actual re-organisation of the armies started only in 1798. And since the re-organised armies were markedly different from what they had been before, there is enough justification for choosing the year 1798. However, the 'background' to the period of this study has not been completely ignored and this 'background' will suggest a certain measure of continuity in the history of the armies of the East India Company. Nevertheless, the period under study is distinct from the earlier period and possesses a unity of its own.

The military system of the East India Company during this period of sixty years is a vast subject. The choice of such a vast subject in these days of 'micro-studies' is not easy to justify. But no comprehensive study of this subject has yet been made even on an elementary level and in the absence of a general framework it may not be very fruitful at this stage to undertake detailed studies of the various aspects of this extremely important subject. It is not being suggested, however, that the present study is not based on
factual details. On the contrary, an attempt has been made here to combine detail with comprehensiveness, so as to provide a reliable framework for further researches. In due course this entire framework might be modified or even discarded but, by then, it would have served its purpose.

This study is based mainly on manuscript sources and printed records. An extensive use has been made of the military letters between the Court of Directors and the Government of India, the military consultations, the foreign secret consultations, parliamentary papers and reports of enquiries and committees. Use has also been made of biographies and autobiographies, army orders, military proceedings, home department public proceedings and periodical material.