

# HEROES OF THE HIMALAYAS



## 高原英雄

Nepal's Gurkhas soldier on with a proud warrior tradition  
尼泊爾的啞喀兵，延續戰士的光榮傳統

TEXT/文 DANIEL ALLEN

**O**N A HILLSIDE above the western Nepalese town of Pokhara, overshadowed by mighty snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas, a gruelling competition is in full flow. Ten sweat-soaked Nepalese youths, each weighed down with a doko basket crammed with 35 kilograms of rocks, are scrambling three kilometres along a steep incline to prove their supreme physical prowess. With the odds stacked against them, a single burning ambition drives these young men onwards – to pass the strenuous recruitment exercises to become a Gurkha in the British Army.

“If you want to be a Gurkha you need to be strong, smart, and above all, determined,” says Himel Chand, a former Gurkha now living in Hong Kong. “Last year

A Gurkha emblem features crossed kukri knives (above)

綉上兩把交疊啞喀爾克軍刀的徽章（上圖）

**尼**泊爾西部的博克拉鎮位處於雄偉壯麗、峰頂終年積雪的喜馬拉雅山群峰之下。山坡上，十名汗流浹背的尼泊爾少年正進行一場激烈的競賽；他們各自背負一籃重達35公斤的石頭，在陡峭的山坡上奮力行走三公里的路，以證明自己擁有非凡的體力。儘管面對重重險阻，一股強烈的欲望推動著這些年輕人奮勇前進——他們均渴望通過艱苦的英軍新兵徵募考驗，成為啞喀兵。

現居香港的退伍啞喀兵Himal Chand說：「要成為啞喀兵，除了必須智勇雙全外，更重要的是擁有堅毅的意志。去年有18,000人投考230個英軍空缺。不用說，最後一輪淘汰後留下來的人，都不會輕言放棄。」

啞喀兵的生涯到底魅力何在？這份職業其實有不少缺點，例如需要在異地接受艱苦的訓練；長年與家人和朋友分隔兩地，並經常需要在高危險環境中工作。然而，即使英軍



The kukri knife is the traditional weapon of the Gurkha soldier

喀爾克彎刀是喀爾兵的傳統武器



Gurkha troops were among the NATO peacekeeping forces sent to Serbia in 2004

北大西洋公約組織於2004年派兵往塞爾維亞執行維持和平任務，由喀爾兵組成的軍隊亦有參與是次任務



Young Nepalese men take part in strenuous physical tests to qualify for the British Gurkhas (above)

為了成功獲選成為英軍  
噶喀兵，年輕的尼泊爾  
男子接受艱辛的體能考驗  
(上圖)

Queen Elizabeth II reviews Gurkha troops in 1978 (left)

英女王伊利沙伯二世  
於1978年檢閱噶喀  
兵團 (左圖)

Troops present their kukri knives for inspection (right)

噶喀兵團於閱兵儀式中  
展示喀爾克彎刀 (右圖)



there were 18,000 applicants for only 230 places in the British Army. Needless to say hardly anyone drops out after they've made the final cut."

So what is it that makes the life of a Gurkha so appealing? The downsides – tough training in a foreign land, years away from family and friends, often highly dangerous working conditions – are numerous. Yet after almost 200 years of recruitment, the desire to serve is as strong as ever.

"There are two main reasons why many young Nepalese men want to be Gurkhas," explains Chand. "First, there is tradition. My father was a Gurkha, and my grandfather before him. Gurkhas have fought with

招募噶喀兵已有近200年歷史，尼泊爾人渴望成為噶喀兵的熱情並沒有絲毫減退。

Chand解釋說：「那麼多尼泊爾青年渴望成為噶喀兵有兩個主要原因，首先是繼承傳統，我的祖父和父親都當過噶喀兵。噶喀兵在世界各地都留下了光輝戰績，讓子孫引以為傲，願意追隨先輩的足印。」

他續說：「其次是經濟上的考慮，尼泊爾不是一個富裕的國家，人均收入每年少於400美元。加入英軍噶喀兵團可以賺取年薪約16,500英鎊（約211,000港元），還可獲得豐厚的退休金。在尼泊爾，當噶喀兵可進身富裕階層，並對當地的經濟作出極大的真獻。」

在1814年至1816年的英尼戰爭中，尼泊爾人奮起對抗東印度公司，英勇的表現令英國人留下深刻印象。因此，戰後

courage and honour all over the world. With such a proud heritage, following in the footsteps of previous generations is a big incentive.

“Secondly, there is the financial consideration. Nepal is not a rich country, with an average annual income of less than US\$400. On entering the British Army Gurkhas receive about £16,500 (about HK\$211,000) a year, and a good pension after they retire. In Nepal Gurkhas are rich men, and they contribute a lot to the Nepalese economy.”

The British started recruiting Gurkhas after the Nepalese fought the East India Company in the Anglo-Nepal War of 1814-16, their fighting prowess impressing the British.

During the 20th century Gurkhas fought all over the world as part of the British Army; about 200,000 were involved in both World Wars, more than 45,000 have died in action, and 13 have won the Victoria Cross, the British Army's highest award for valour and heroism in the line of duty.

Reinforcing the reputation of Gurkhas as formidable fighters is their legendary choice of weapon – the kukri. A 16- to 18-inch curved blade of tempered steel, the kukri is exceedingly sharp and has innumerable uses, from shaping timber to chopping food. The



**Front lines: Gurkha troops on duty in Afghanistan**  
戰場前線：啞喀兵團在阿富汗執行任務

英國人開始徵募他們成為啞喀兵。

在20世紀，啞喀兵隨同英軍在世界各地奮勇作戰，曾參加兩次世界大戰的啞喀兵約有20萬人；超過45,000人戰死沙場，並有13人因為英勇作戰，獲頒英軍最高榮譽的維多利亞十字勳章。

啞喀兵驍勇善戰，使用的獨特武器喀爾克彎刀更讓他們聲名大噪。彎刀的長度由16至18吋不等，以精鋼打造，鋒利異常，用途廣泛，從削木到剝碎食物都能派上用場。刀柄一般以木材或水牛角製造，刀鞘則以木材和皮革製成。

時至今日，啞喀兵受訓和出勤時仍配備喀爾克彎刀，並

## ON GUARD: GURKHAS IN HONG KONG 護衛者：啞喀兵，香港情

For many years the majority of Gurkhas serving in the British Army were stationed in Hong Kong. In 1997, after the territory was reunified with China, the Gurkha Brigade moved its headquarters to Britain, but about 700 ex-Gurkhas still remain with their families and there are Nepalese communities in the Kwun Chung area of Yau Ma Tei and Yuen Long.

With their rigorous training and tough soldiering reputation, the move into private security work was a natural progression for many former Gurkhas in Hong Kong. “With their military background ex-Gurkhas make excellent security guards,” says Hem Chanra Thapa of Gurkha International (Hong Kong) Ltd., founded in 1994 to help find employment for Nepalese men and women worldwide. “They’re also used as bodyguards and drivers by most of the rich business tycoons and VIPs in Hong Kong.”

Between 1968 and 1996 thousands of

Gurkhas stationed in Hong Kong benefited from a philanthropic venture at Kadoorie Farm, established in 1956 by Hong Kong entrepreneurs Lord Lawrence Kadoorie and his brother Sir Horace. It taught Gurkhas skills to help them make a living when they returned to Nepal after demobilisation.

多年來，英軍的啞喀兵團大部分都屯駐香港。1997年香港回歸中國，啞喀兵團把基地遷移到英國，但是約有700名退役啞喀兵與家人仍然留居香港；在九龍油麻地官涌地區和新界元朗，都有為數不少的尼泊爾人居住。

啞喀兵接受過嚴格的軍事訓練，因此很多啞喀兵退伍後，在香港選擇以保安員為職業。Gurkha International (Hong Kong) Ltd.

**In Hong Kong, some former Gurkhas work as security guards**

在香港，許多退役啞喀兵主要擔任保安工作

於1994年成立，專責幫助世界各地的尼泊爾人尋找工作，來自該公司的Hem Chanra Thapa說：「憑藉他們的訓練，退伍啞喀兵最理想的職業是擔任護衛員，很多香港的商人和富豪，都聘用他們做保鏢和司機。」

在1968年到1996年之間，屯駐在香港的數千名啞喀兵被安排在嘉道理農場接受農業訓練，讓他們學習各樣有用的技能後，即使退役後返回尼泊爾，也能擁有一技之長來謀生。這個農場是羅蘭士嘉道理勳爵和弟弟賈理士嘉道理爵士於1956年創辦的慈善機構。





A soldier of the First Battalion of the Royal Gurkha Rifles shows how it's done

一名來自皇家噶喀兵步槍隊第一營的士兵，正在示範如何以噶爾克彎刀進行搏鬥

## “The kukri is much more than just a weapon, it embodies the bravery, honour, skill and power of the Gurkha soldier” 噶爾克彎刀不只是武器，更體現了噶喀兵的勇敢、榮耀、技術和力量

handle is usually made from wood or buffalo horn and the scabbard from wood and leather.

Gurkhas are still equipped and train with the kukri today, carrying it with them in areas of conflict such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Over the years the mere sight of a group of Gurkhas brandishing their kukri has been enough to put the enemy to flight. During the Falklands War a photo of Gurkhas queuing at a grindstone to sharpen their kukris was released to the Chilean media and did little to enhance the appetite of Argentine soldiers for close-quarters combat.

“The kukri is much more than just a weapon,” says Saroj Lama Tamang, Managing Director of the Khukuri House, which supplies the knife to the British Army. “With a time-honoured history this iconic blade embodies the bravery, honour, skill and power of the Gurkha soldier. In villages and towns across Nepal ex-Gurkhas decorate their houses using crossed kukris, with their regiment number placed underneath.”

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於伊拉克和阿富汗發生衝突的地區使用它作戰。多年以來，噶喀兵團揮舞噶爾克彎刀的英姿，已經足夠讓敵人落荒而逃。在福克蘭戰爭中，噶喀兵們輪流在一塊磨刀石上磨礪噶爾克彎刀的照片，被智利媒體公開，令阿根廷士兵對近距離的肉搏戰抱有更大的戒心。

為英軍提供噶爾克彎刀的供應商Khukuri House董事總經理Saroj Lama Tamang指出：「噶爾克彎刀不只是武器那麼簡單，這種擁有光榮歷史的傳統刀刃，體現了噶喀兵的勇敢、榮耀、作戰技術和力量。在尼泊爾國內的村莊和小鎮中，退伍噶喀兵的家中大多以兩把噶爾克彎刀互相交疊作為裝飾，彎刀下則展示他們所屬軍團的編號。」

在通往博克拉鎮的路上，位於加德滿都以西140公里的尼泊爾古鎮戈爾卡，是探索噶喀兵歷史根源的理想地點。屹立在小鎮山頭的壯麗城堡戈爾卡皇宮，正是當年沙哈王（1723—1775年）展開統一尼泊爾大業的起點。沙哈王經過終身奮鬥，成功達成統一的心願，主要是憑藉他的高超戰術，以及在當地招募驍勇善戰的軍隊，這些軍隊就是噶喀兵團的前身；而「噶喀」一名，正是源自「戈爾卡」這個市鎮。

Situated 140 kilometres west of Kathmandu off the road to Pokhara, the ancient Nepalese town of Gorkha is a good place to explore the historical roots of the Gurkha soldier. From the town's imposing hill-top fortress, the Gorkha Durbar, King Prithvi Narayan Shah (1723-1775) launched his lifelong and ultimately successful attempt to unify Nepal. This ambitious project succeeded largely due to the king's tactical awareness, and the effectiveness of his locally recruited troops, the forebears of today's Gurkhas who take their name from the town.

"It is believed that the name Gorkha was derived from Goddess Gorkha Kali, who inspired King Prithvi Narayan Shah to unify Nepal," explains Yadu Lamichhane, Gorkha native and founder of Yala Adventure Travel. "Gorkha is Nepal's most interesting historical town. The Gorkha Durbar has a fascinating history and offers spectacular views of Mounts Manaslu and Himalchuli. Other attractions include the temple of Manakamana and sacred Gorakhanath Cave."

For now, the future of Nepal's Gurkhas is unclear. "Gurkha servicemen want to continue the traditions of serving the British crown," says Major Gerald Davies, curator of The Gurkha Museum in Winchester, England. "The British Army highly values the Gurkhas and needs soldiers of such quality. However, decisions over recruitment lie in the hands of the UK and Nepalese governments."

Chand says Gurkhas have a famous and historical relationship with the British Army. "For the benefit of the UK and Nepal, let's hope it continues for a long time to come."



**Retired Gurkha soldiers salute a photograph of Queen Elizabeth II (top); a badge of the Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment (top left)**

**退休的噶喀兵向英女王伊利沙伯二世的照片致敬（最上圖）；英女王御用噶喀後勤兵團的徽章（左上圖）**

在戈爾卡出生的Yala Adventure Travel旅行社創辦人Yadu Lamichhane解釋說：「據說戈爾卡這名字源自女神Gorkha Kali，沙哈王受到女神的啟發，促使他完成統一尼泊爾的大業。戈爾卡是尼泊爾最具吸引力的歷史古鎮，登臨歷史名勝戈爾卡皇宮，可以欣賞到馬納斯盧峰和喜瑪珠麗峰的迷人景色。這裡還有其他旅遊景點，包括瑪納卡瑪納神廟以及神聖的喬羅迦陀洞。」

目前，尼泊爾噶喀兵面對不明朗的前景。英國溫徹斯特噶喀兵博物館館長Major Gerald Davies說：「噶喀兵希望能夠延續他們為英國王室效力的傳統，英軍一向對噶喀兵有高度的評價，同時也需要如此高質素的士兵。可是，徵兵的決定權在英國和尼泊爾政府手中。」

Himal Chand表示，噶喀兵和英軍的關係頗具歷史淵源，這是眾所皆知的事。他說：「為了英國和尼泊爾的利益，我們希望這種關係能夠延續下去。」

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