

ESSAYS ON NEPAL



Sam Cowan

Sam Cowan first visited Nepal in 1966 when he trekked for two months in east and west Nepal. At the time he was on a three-year tour as a junior officer with Queen's Gurkha Signals in Borneo, Malaya and Hong Kong. During a long and distinguished career, until his retirement as a four-star general in 2002, he performed numerous staff and command jobs culminating in the successive appointments of Inspector General of Army Training, Quartermaster General, and Chief of Defence Logistics. In 1989, he became Colonel of Queen's Gurkha Signals and a trustee of the Gurkha Welfare Trust (GWT). In 1994, he was appointed Colonel Commandant of the Brigade of Gurkhas, the titular Head of Gurkhas in the British Army, an appointment which also carried with it the responsibility of being Chairman of the GWT. His annual visits to Nepal as Colonel Commandant included eight official audiences with the reigning monarchs to deliver a report on the Brigade of Gurkhas. Since 1989, he has done a further 30-plus treks.

Sam Cowan's knowledge of Nepal is as deep as it is broad, deriving from his life-long professional engagement with the British Gurkhas and from his personal journeys through some of the country's remotest communities. His writing bears a scholar's acuity and precision. In his essays he investigates many points of lingering confusion, deliberate obfuscation or wilful ignorance about Nepal's history and current events, revealing, instead, Nepal's complicated truths. Whether close-up or panoramic in scope, Cowan's vision is always crystal clear. Both scholars and lay readers will learn much from this essay collection, which is bound to be an instant classic.

—Manjushree Thapa
author of *Forget Kathmandu: An Elegy for Democracy*

Sam Cowan's unique essays are essential for the specialist and highly entertaining for the generalist. His analyses of the battles of the Maoist insurgency, or 'People's War', were pathbreaking when originally published and remain deeply insightful. What he has to say on frontiers, human rights abuses, corruption in high places, and the misjudgements and foibles of Nepal's rulers, makes for compulsive reading.

—David Gellner
Professor of Anthropology, University of Oxford

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