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## The Tarai: A Part of Moghlan or Gorkha? Perspectives from the Time of the Anglo- Gorkha War (1814-1816)

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# THE TARAI: A PART OF *MOGHLAN* OR GORKHA? PERSPECTIVES FROM THE TIME OF THE ANGLO- GORKHA WAR (1814-1816)

The Tarai has always been considered an integral part of the modern Nepali state. However, the status of this important stretch of territory was open to ambiguity and flux in much of the period prior to the Anglo-Gorkha War of 1814-1816. A host of petty hill principalities and little kingdoms, further south in Moghlan (the plains of North India below the foothills of the Himalaya) constantly competed to control these lands and their resources. Furthermore, a web of tenurial, taxation, and hierarchical political relationships knitted the lands of the Tarai to those of Moghlan. For the rulers of the emerging kingdom of Gorkha, governance of the Tarai posed the usual set of dilemmas and possibilities—disputes with neighboring little kingdoms and problems of revenue administration mediated their efforts to tap the valuable agrarian resources of these lands. Gorkha was also increasingly drawn into a series of disputes with an emerging territorial power in north India—the East India Company. Company officials increasingly articulated their claims in terms of the establishment of clear territorial boundaries all the while choosing to ignore the web of tenurial, taxation, and political relationships that had traditionally constituted territory in South Asia. The Anglo-Gorkha War of 1814-1816 resulted in the delineation of the boundaries between Gorkha and the Company state. Nepal's Tarai as we know it emerged, it might be argued, out of the historical specificities of that colonial encounter and its aftermath, an encounter that affirmed the geographical credentials of the modern state in South Asia—occupying a definite portion of the earth's surface, and divided into non-overlapping divisions and sub-divisions.

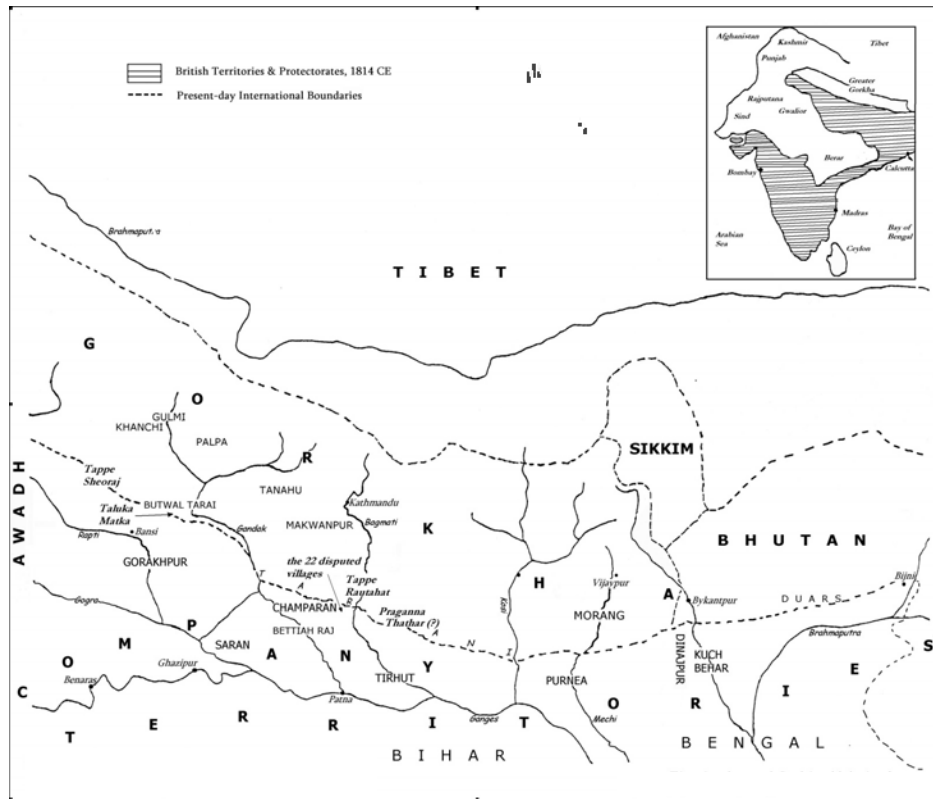
## INTRODUCTION

Nepal's Tarai constitutes an important strip of land that presents the southern face of the country. In recent times it has been viewed as a natural, and inalienable part of the Nepali state. However, this was not the case prior to the early nineteenth century. Historically, the lands of the Tarai fluctuated back and forth between the hill kingdoms nestled in the foothills and mid-hills of the Himalaya and the little kingdoms of the north Indian plains further south. Frequent disputes and transfers marked the histories of these lands. In the early nineteenth century these lands formed part of a fuzzy and shifting frontier that became the subject of dispute between the English East India Company and the Himalayan kingdom of Gorkha (see Map 1). The Gorkhalis made a distinction between these Tarai lands and the Indo-Gangetic plains (*Moghlan*) lying further south. Gorkhali claims to Tarai lands were usually made on grounds of a host of tribute, taxation, and tenurial claims they had inherited by virtue of territorial conquest. The truth was that there were a number of other states, in the hills and plains, including the East India Company,

which had similar claims. This left the lands of the Tarai inextricably intertwined with lands lying in Moghlan as well as in the mid Hills of the Himalaya.

These territorial disputes resulted in the outbreak of the Anglo-Gorkha war in 1814 which ended in 1816 with the defeat of Gorkha and the demarcation of the modern Indo-Nepal boundary. The Anglo-Gorkha war has been examined by historians who have often portrayed the event from nationalist, diplomatic and military perspectives (Rana 1970; Husain 1970; Shaha 1990; Pemble 1971; Khanduri 1997; Pant 1963 [2021 B.S.]). What has been missed in these accounts is a detailed examination of the territorial disputes that led to the war along with the issue of spatiality that animated them. Including questions of space in such a study steers our inquiry towards a better understanding of the organization of territory along the Anglo-Gorkha frontier, something that has eluded previous writings on the Anglo-Gorkha War (but see Stiller 1974; Burghart 1984; DesChene 1991).

In order to better understand the organization of territory along the Anglo-Gorkha frontier, this paper is also informed by the wider multi-disciplinary liter-



MAP 1: THE ANGLO-GORKHA FRONTIER, 1814 CE.

MAPWORK BY SARAMMA & SHARON MICHAEL

ature on the production of space that has emerged in the past two decades. Following this, space is no longer perceived in terms of a neutral or abstract entity, or empty container within which human action unfolds. Rather, space is always socially produced out of the materiality of representations and practices (Lefebvre 1991; Massey 2005; Soja 1989). The physical body of any territory (a patch of land, a region, little kingdom, administrative district, or nation) is produced by a host of social relationships. Such insights have already been taken up by historians to explore the production of space or territory in distinct temporal and social settings (Kierstead 1992; Thongchai 1994). This paper will explore the spatial implications of social relationships—more specifically the way in which they impacted the layout, organization, and boundaries of territories. More specifically it will explore the political, taxation, and tenurial relationships that produced these connected histories and spaces, and the problems of governance it posed for the East India Company (hereafter the Company State) and Gorkha. The Anglo-Gorkha war of 1814-1816 was primarily a struggle over how to disentangle these complex relationships and the underlying visions of territory the two states adhered to. And it is this colonial encounter and the subsequent defeat of Gorkha that resulted in the territorial delineation of most of Nepal's Tarai as we know it today.

### THE TARRIANI: PRAGANNA THATHAR ('TAUTER'), TAPPE RAUTAHAT

The Nepali Tarai took nearly a hundred years (1760-1860) to crystallize in its present form. It emerged out of a process of territorial consolidation as the Gorkhali state expanded from the mid-eighteenth century, conquering hill kingdoms and laying claim to their possessions in the plains (see Map 1). By 1810 Gorkha's possessions stretched to their maximum extent ever—from Bhutan in the East to Kangra in the west. Later, the 1814 war with the British resulted in a dramatic reduction in Gorkha's territorial extent. However, some of the Tarai lands lying between the Mahakali and Karnali rivers (also called the Naya Muluk) were restored to Gorkha following the military assistance provided to the British to suppress the Revolt of 1857.

In eighteenth century Gorkhali documents the eastern Tarai finds initial reference as the '*tarriani*'—the strip of thickly forested plains covering the districts of Chitwan, Parsa, Bara, Rautahat, Saptari and Mahottari (F. Buchanan-Buchanan-Hamilton, 1971: 62, 101-117). These *tarriani* districts were divided and subdivided into divisions called *parganas* (*praganna* in Gorkhali documents), *tappas* (*tappe/tape* in Gorkhali records), and *tarafs* in, though not always, descending order. In 1762, the Gorkhali ruler Prithvinarayan Shah toppled the hill kingdom of Makwanpur and laid claim to its possessions

in the *tarriani*. It is in making such territorial claims, in a piecemeal fashion, that the Gorkhali were able to extend their sway over what is today called the Tarai (D.R. Regmi 1975: 161-166; M.C. Regmi 1971, 1978, 1984, 1995). Prominent among the claims was the *pargana* of Thathar (Tauter in British documents).<sup>1</sup>

The proprietorship to the Thathar *pragannas* seems to have fluctuated in the past. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the rights to these *pragannas* shifted back and forth between the royal family of Makwanpur and the *fauzdars* of Tirhut in present-day Bihar.<sup>2</sup> By the end of the seventeenth century the Thathar *pragannas* were integrated into Makwanpur's territories on the condition that the rajas of Makwanpur would have to pay an annual *peshkash* (tribute) in elephants at the Tirhut *fauzdar's* office at Darbhanga. In this manner, the Thathar *pragannas* became dependent on *sarkar* Tirhut and by extension, the *suba* of Bengal. The fall of Makwanpur to Gorkha in 1762, and Bengal to the British in 1765, placed the Thathar *pragannas* under a new layer of overlords. In 1771 Dinanath Upadhyaya the Gorkhali *vakil* was deputed to Darbhanga to present Gorkha's case for possession of the Thathar *pragannas* (Narharinath 1955: 4-7). The *vakil* also indicated Gorkha's willingness to pay tribute to the Company in the form of elephants. The elephants were required to be 8 ½ "*hauts*" in size, though this size was increased over the years, following some dispute between the Makwani raja and the *fauzdar* of Darbhanga. Subsequently, the Company recognized Gorkha's claim to the Thathar *praganna* while at the same time accepting the Thathar *pragannas* subordinate relationship to *sarkar* Tirhut, *suba* Bengal (now under Company rule). Older customary rituals cementing this tributary relationship were also preserved. So, following the arrival of the customary tribute, the Gorkhali raja's representative received two horses and two *khillats* in pieces of cloth from the rajas of Tirhut. Gorkha continued to collect taxes from the Thathar *pragannas* and pay tribute in elephants right upto 1801, when the practice was discontinued under the terms of a commercial treaty of 1801 signed between Gorkha and the Company.

The Thathar *pragannas* have never been conclusively identified. Maharaja Shitab Rai the *diwan* (chief of the revenue department) at Patna noted in 1771 that the Thathar *pragannas* were bounded on the west by *pargana* Mehsi (in

Champaran), on the east by *sarkar* Purnea, on the south by the river Gandaki, and on the north by Gorkha's *tarriani*. The area falling in between corresponds roughly to the districts of Mahottari, Sarlahi, probably parts of Rautahat (now in Nepal), the northern reaches of *sarkar* Tirhut (now in Bihar), and other lands in present-day north India (Ahmad 1958; Pradhan 1990: 72-83; D.R. Regmi 1975: 183, 186, 193, 195, 197, 249-250).<sup>3</sup> The *praganna* was itself made up of 23 *mahals*.<sup>4</sup> These *mahals* might have been constituted by clusters of villages, lying in a non-contiguous manner (?) and scattered over the forested possessions of Gorkha's Tarai as well as the northern reaches of Tirhut and its adjacent districts.

It is the spatial implications of these claims that are of interest to us. The Thathar *pragannas* in the last quarter of the eighteenth century became a patch of territory where two states enjoyed overlapping claims—Gorkha and the Company state. The Gorkhals inherited these territorial claims from preceding regimes (the kingdom of Makwanpur, and the authorities in Tirhut) by virtue of their conquest of the Makwani kingdom. As was usually the custom, they continued the older tribute relationship of presenting elephants, this time to the East India Company. Not much else is known about the Thathar *pragannas*. Like many administrative divisions of their time, the Tauter *pragannas* disappeared from the historical record by the early nineteenth century. It is possible that the *praganna* was broken up and incorporated into Gorkha's Eastern Tarai districts as well as into territories lying in India.

A similar set of entanglements bound the *tappe* of Rautahat in Gorkha's eastern Tarai.<sup>5</sup> *Tappe* Rautahat belonged to the former kingdom of Makwanpur whose rulers had granted it to one Mirza Abdullah Beg as a reward for services performed. The Gorkhals now claimed this Tarai dependency by virtue of their conquest of Makwanpur in 1762 and accordingly petitioned the British. This combined with the maneuverings of local rajas, landlords, officials, and migratory labor to leave the *tappe* of Rautahat riddled with all kinds of competing territorial claims based on tenurial and taxation rights. Agents along both sides of the [then] Anglo-Gorkha frontier rendered illegible the ownership of this district. The *tappe* of Rautahat for all practical purposes lay ill-defined, internally incoherent, and subject to frequent changes in its organization and layout. Some of these competing claims would contribute to the outbreak of the Anglo-Gorkha war in 1814, such as the

1. The Gorkhals defeated expeditions sent by the Nawab of Bengal under Gurgin Khan (1763) and the East India Company (1767) under Captain George Kinloch. For details see An Account of the Origins, Progress and Termination of Captain Kinloch's Expedition to Napaul, 1767, Memorandum Containing Minutes and Dispatches by Governor-Generals, Item 1, Foreign Miscellaneous, no. 8, NAI. Kinloch remained in the Tarai districts of Bara, Parsa and Rautahat occupying them for over 3 years. For details about the Kinloch expedition see, Journal of Captain George Kinloch on the expedition to Napaul begun the 26th August, 1767, Add. Mss. 6633 Western Manuscripts, BL.

2. A *fauzdar* is a military official in charge of prosecuting criminal matters in a district.

3. References to the Thathar *pragannas* may be found in the following: Raja Shitab Roy's Account of Pergunnah Tauter Belonging to Sirkar Tirhut of Bihar Province, 30 July 1771, Proceedings of the Comptrolling Council of Revenue at Patna (CCRP), vol. 1, 1 January 1771 to 30 July 1771, WBSA; Letter of J. Kieghly, Collector of Tirhut to the CCRP, 14 February, 1772, in Procs. CCRP, vol. 3, p. 79 (with translation of a letter from Prithvinarayan Shah enclosed), WBSA.

4. The 23 *mahals* were—Thathar, Nandrakajouly, Assiloo, Abijoot, Beya, Muerrahpore Narabad, Bikerrya, Beera, Mande, Jumna, Resary and 5 other unnamed *mahals*, Shahpore, Goladypore, Bunnran Malki, Jery and 3 other named *mahals*. See Shitab Rai's Account, cited above.

5. This *tappe* once belonged to the older *pargana* of Simraon (*praganna* Gadh Simraon in Gorkhali documents).

disputes over 22 villages on the southern boundaries of Rautahat (Michael 1999). Ultimately, it was the Company state's decision in 1783 to restore Rautahat to Gorkha, and the subsequent boundary delineations of the 1820s that would place Rautahat firmly within the confines of Gorkha's Tarai.

### TALUQA MATKA

There is ample evidence that other parts of Gorkha's expanding Tarai lay entangled with authorities and lands lying further south in *Moghlan*. Take for instance the lands straddling the Gorakhpur-Butwal frontier. Like lands lying elsewhere along the Anglo-Gorkha frontier, these territories too were carved into divisions such as *pragannas*, *talukas*, and *tappes* whose political, tenurial, and taxation affiliations sometimes made it hard to discern if they belonged to Gorkha or to authorities lying to the south. Once again, Gorkha's disputes with the Company arose when the former inherited claims to the Tarai lands of defeated hill kingdoms.

The case of *taluka* Matka (in Kapilbastu district in present-day Nepal) is an example of such disputes. Prior to 1786, the *taluka* of Matka belonged to the hill kingdom Gulmi.<sup>6</sup> It had been made up of 18 or 19 *tappas*.<sup>7</sup> Some time after 1768, this *taluka* became the subject of dispute between the rajas of Gulmi and Palpa. There are conflicting accounts of how the kingdom of Palpa developed a claim to this *taluka*. Kanak Nidhi Tiwari, the *vakil* of the raja of Palpa noted that in 1786, Gulmi, along with the hill kingdoms of Khanchi and Argha were incorporated into the Palpali raj as a reward for the Palpali assistance provided during Gorkha's western campaigns.<sup>8</sup> According to the *quanungo* (accountant) of *pargana* Ratanpur Bansi (Gorakhpur district), when the Gulmi raja's power declined, the Palpali raja (Mukund Sen II, 1752-1782) executed a *kabuliyat* for the 17 *tappas* with Sitaram, the *amil* (revenue collector) of *nawab* Shujaudaulah in *pargana* Bansi.<sup>9</sup> The

6. This *taluka* had been the subject of a long-standing dispute between the rajas of Gulmi and Palpa. I have come across no conclusive evidence as to who the original possessor of this *taluka* was. The earliest recorded instance of a dispute between the two rajas seems to have taken place in 1768 A.D. (A. Ross, Collector of Gorakhpur to BOR (with enclosures), 9 June 1804, Letters Issued Register, GCR, basta 16, vol. 3, RSA).

7. The physical size and internal divisions of a fiscal division was amenable to variations. This was because of numerous disputes taking place between the holders of various kinds of rights. For instance, both the rajas of Gulmi and Palpa, laid claim to the *taluka* of Matka. The former claimed that this *taluka* contained 19 *tappas* while the latter argued that it comprised 18 *tappas*. At the same time some of these rulers were politically subordinate to multiple overlords, such as the Company State, Gorkha and Awadh. So, Babu Nar Bhupal Shah, the manager of the Gulmi raja, stated that the Company was the master of Gulmi and Butwal in the plains, while the raja of Gorkha was their master in the hills. See "List of tupphehs of Purganah Mutka, Received 14 March 1804, in Claim of the Nepal Government to possess the Zamindary of Butaul," Boards Collections, F/4/185, IOR, APAC, BL.

8. See A. Ross, Collector of Gorakhpur to BOR (with enclosures) 9 June 1804, Letters Issued Register, GCR, basta 16, vol. 3, pp. 100-23, RSA. See also PRNW, Vol. 1, p. 19.

9. See Translation of the deposition of Semnarayan, *quanungo* of Bansi on 24 April 1804, Boards Collection, F/4/185, pp. 256-60, IOR, APAC, BL.

raja of Gulmi complained that the Palpali raja had wrested the *taluka* from him by paying a *nazrana* (present) to the *amil* of *pargana* Bansi under whose collection charge the *taluka* lay.<sup>10</sup> The rajas of Gulmi were never happy with this arrangement and thus between 1786-1814, the *taluka* remained disputed between the rajas of Gulmi and Palpa.<sup>11</sup> This left uncertain the territorial connections of the *taluka*.

But the matter did not end there. In 1786, the Gorkhalis confirmed the Palpali raja's rights of possession to *taluka* Matka. At the same time, the Palpa raja got his rights to the *taluka* of Matka confirmed by *nawab* Asafuddaulah of Awadh and had it included in the settlement of the *pragannas* of Tilpur and Binayakpur.<sup>12</sup> In 1799, the Palpali raja's possessions were again confirmed by the Gorkha raja.<sup>13</sup> I might add that it seems to have been a common practice for a landholder or ruler to receive confirmation of his territorial possessions from two or more superior authorities. This was necessary if this lesser landholder were to survive politically, and tenurially. This must have happened sometime between 1786 (the year in which Butwal secured Matka) and 1793, the year in which the Palpali raja Mahadat Sen (1782-1793) died. Matka it appears had over time become detached from the *pargana* of Ratanpur Bansi and attached to the kingdom of Palpa. Further confirmations of this grant from the *nawab* of Awadh and the Gorkhali rajas resulted in the *taluka* of Matka being attached to the dominions of Gorkha, as well as Awadh.

From this it is clear that the *taluka* of Matka displayed spatial dynamics common to the fiscal divisions on the Gorakhpur-Butwal frontier (and elsewhere). The *taluka* belonged at various times to the *pragannas* of Ratanpur Bansi and Binayakpur, the little kingdoms of Gulmi and Palpa, and later to Awadh, Gorkha, and the East India Company. By 1814, prior to the Anglo-Gorkha War, these fluctuations in the political and fiscal attachments of the *taluka* Matka had rendered its actual location problematic for Company officials who were not willing to entertain the competing and overlapping claims of other parties. Company officials increasingly viewed their territories as being distinct, well bounded, and non-overlapping, a vision easily disrupted by these competing hierarchies of agrarian relationships that left territories ill defined, overlapping, intertwined, and dispersed. A very similar set of circumstances informed the histories of divisions along the Gorakhpur-Butwal frontier: viz. the *taluka* of Khajahani Bhandar, the *pragannas* of Ratanpur Bansi, Tilpur and Binayakpur, and the *tappas* of Dholiya Bhandar and Sheoraj. Sheoraj in par-

10. The Palpali raja in question was Mukund Sen II (1752-82). The raja of Gulmi claimed that his family had held this *taluka* for ten generations. Translation of an *arzi* from Shakti Prachand Shah, the minor raja of Gulmi, 17 January 1804, *Boards Collection*, F/4/185, pp. 46-50, IOR, APAC, BL.

11. For details of this dispute see "Questions put to Bandhu Khadka (?) *vakil* of the raja of Gulmi," in Magistrates Procs. of the Faujdari Court, Zilla Gorakhpur, 7 March 1804, *Boards Collections*, F/4/185, pp. 207-20, IOR, APAC, BL.

12. Ibid.

13. Cited in RRS 3 (April 1971): 79.



ticular would become the focus of Anglo-Gorkha dispute in the early nineteenth century.

#### TAPPE/TAPPA SHEORAJ<sup>14</sup>

*Tappe/tappa* Sheoraj, had long been attached to the hill principality of Pyuthana, and formed a part of its possessions in the plains. It had also been attached to the possessions of the raja of *praganna* Ratanpur Bansi who was a dependant of the nawab of Awadh. In November 1786, Pyuthana was forcibly incorporated into the territorial possessions of Gorkha (Giri, 1995 [2052 B.S.]: 20; D.R. Regmi 1975: 324). From then on, the Gorkhals began to take a greater interest in managing the territorial possessions of the Pyuthana raj, including *tappa* Sheoraj. In 1795, Gorkhali officials were deputed from Kathmandu in order to survey those lands mortgaged by the Pyuthana raja (Giri 1995 [2052 B.S.]: 49).

In addition to this, the *tappa* itself lay mired in long history of disputes that preceded the Anglo-Gorkha disputes over it. The French traveler Tavernier who traveled through different parts of India in the mid-seventeenth century observed an intense struggle over this *tappa* between the rajas of Pyuthana and Butwal (Regmi 1975 1:11). At the same time in 1782, Raja Kirtibam of the hill kingdom of Malebhum (Parbat) claimed the *pargana* of Bansi (and possibly by extension, the *tappa* of Sheoraj).<sup>15</sup> At the time of the takeover of Sheoraj by Gorkha in 1786, the *tappa* was for purposes of revenue collection attached to the *pargana* of Ratanpur Bansi, in *sarkar* Gorakhpur. In 1790 after the Gorkhals had taken possession of the *tappa*, a dispute arose between Gorkhali officials stationed there that the *amils* (revenue collectors) of *pargana* Bansi had encroached on *tappa* Sheoraj.<sup>16</sup> In 1791 information about these disputes over the *tappa* of Sheoraj was sent to the Court of Directors in London by the Company's government at Calcutta. But the Governor-General's Council at Calcutta observed that the dispute over the *tappa* of Sheoraj was a trifling one, "not likely to lead to any serious consequences or embarrassing consequences."<sup>17</sup> Since Sheoraj at this time did not lie on the frontiers of the Company's territories, Company officials were content to treat this as a dispute primar-

14. As in the case of most administrative divisions along the Anglo-Gorkha frontier, there is confusion as to whether Sheoraj was a *tappa*, *praganna* or *talua*. But for purposes of convenience I will use the terms *tappe* and *tappa* interchangeably since Sheoraj was claimed by parties lying on both sides of the Anglo-Gorkha frontier. At one time Sheoraj seems to have been attached to the *praganna* of Deokhori. See *Chaudhrai* grant made to Jas Raj Chaudhari, from *praganna* Deokhori-Sheoraj, 1796 AD., pokha 9, no. 8, Sno. 919, *Lagat Phant*, Kathmandu.

15. The Parbat raja mentioned only the *pargana* of Bansi and made no reference to *tappa* Sheoraj. But since Sheoraj was attached to Bansi, it is possible that the raja would have laid claim to it as well. However, I have been unable to discern the grounds on which the raja claimed *pargana* Bansi. See Letter of Kirtibam of Parbat to Governor-General Warren Hastings, 15 February 1782, *CPC* vol. 5, no. 378.

16. Details can be found in *CPC* vol. 9, no. 653; *CPC* vol. 9, no. 1737.

17. See Governor-General-in-Council's Political Letter to the Court of Directors, 4 August 1791, paragraphs 68-79, in *Fort William India-House Correspondence, 1787-1791*, vol. 16, p. 397.

ily involving the kingdoms of Awadh and Gorkha. However, once the Company acquired territories in this region after the Treaty of Cession of 1801, they got drawn into the messy logic of these disputes.<sup>18</sup> When this happened, as it did ten years later, the Company state would be once again confronted with the spatial legacies of such territorial disputes.

In August 1804 when Sheoraj's taxation arrears (apparently still payable at Bansi) began to mount, the raja of Bansi's officials stationed at that *pargana* demanded payment of these outstanding dues from the Gorkha raja.<sup>19</sup> The outstanding balances due from Sheoraj rose from Rs. 2,656 in 1801-02 to Rs. 7,650 in 1803. The *nawab* of Awadh too had sent a complaint to Company authorities that outstanding arrears were due from the authorities of Sheoraj for the years prior to the Treaty of Cession of 1801. The Gorkha raja rejected these demands, arguing that since 1765 (1786?) Sheoraj, which had been a dependent of the hill kingdom of Pyuthan, had been incorporated into Gorkhali territory, following the latter's conquest by Gorkha. There seems to be some truth in this as Gorkhali records for the period refer to Sheoraj as belonging to *zilla* Pyuthana.<sup>20</sup> Company officials also conducted an investigation into the matter and concluded that *tappa* Sheoraj by virtue of being attached to *pargana* Bansi through its previous taxation relationship, actually formed a part of the Company's possessions. However, Company officials also admitted that the *tappa* of Sheoraj had for all practical purposes been in the possession of the Gorkhals prior to Awadh's ceding of Gorakhpur to the Company in 1801.<sup>21</sup> Documentary evidence from the Gorkhali side, while scarce, attests to the growing Gorkhali presence in Sheoraj, encouraging the reclamation of waste lands, clearing of forests, and granting of fresh lands in an effort to extend cultivation.<sup>22</sup> The

18. According to the treaty of Secession of 1801 signed between Awadh and the Company, the latter obtained the province of Gorakhpur lying south of *tappe* Sheoraj.

19. See, *Boards Collections* F/4/422, no. 10381, p. 426, *IOR, APAC, BL*; BOR to A. Ross, Collector of Gorakhpur, 20 August 1804, Letters Received Register (10 August 1804-2 April 1805), *GCR*, basta 1, vol. 4, *RSA*.

20. In 1806 the Gorkhali commander Amar Singh Thapa offered to take the Butwal *zamindari* on a farming contract. The Company rejected this offer on the ground there was no security that the revenue engaged for with the Gorkhals would ever be realized. See N. B. Edmonstone, Secretary to Government to J. Ahmuty, Collector of Gorakhpur, 29 December 1806, *Procs. BOR for Ceded and Conquered Provinces*, 31 July 1810, no. 31A, *UPSA*. See also endnote 37.

21. J. Ahmuty, Collector of Gorakhpur to N. B. Edmonstone, Secretary to Government, *FS Consl.* 16 January 1806, no. 106, para 2, *NAI*.

22. See, for instance, the following. Order to local functionaries in Sheoraj regarding reclamation of waste lands, 1797 AD., *RRC* 25: 346; Jhunga Chaudhari, Mansukha Chaudhari and Santhokhi Chaudhari asked to make the *bandobast* [settlement] for the *raiayat* to cultivate in "praganna" Sheoraj. They are to remain loyal and settle the land. One Jhunga Chaudhari was also given the *kalabanjar mauza* of Maladeva (?) on a *jagir* basis, 1800 AD., *RRC* 24: 32; Tax assessment rate applicable to the 4 *varnas* and 36 *jat* in "praganna" Sheoraj, *zilla* Pyuthana, 1800 AD., *RRC* 24: 31; Order regarding new villages settled by *kaptan* (captain) Chandra Bir Kunwar on *bekh buniyad* lands in Sheoraj, 1812 AD, *RRC* 40: 341; Confirmation of *bitalb birta* lands of Brahmans in Pyuthan, 1797 AD.,

records of the *quanungos* of Bansi go back to 1763 and reveal *tappa* Sheoraj to be in the hands of the Gorkhals since 1785 (actually 1786 AD).<sup>23</sup> It is probably with this in mind that the Governor-General Lord Minto displayed a willingness to surrender all claims to Sheoraj in 1810, provided the Gorkhals refrained from “encroaching” anywhere else on the Gorakhpur-Butwal frontier. The Gorkhals it appears never responded to this offer.

There is strong evidence to suggest that the *tappe* of Sheoraj was incorporated into the fiscal portfolio of *pargana* Bansi in Gorakhpur. Between 1786 and 1800, revenue was collected on an irregular basis by officials stationed at Bansi. For six years no collections were made and when it was collected, force had to be used.<sup>24</sup> Moreover between 1792-95 Sheoraj along with its parent *pragana* was separated from *sarkar* Gorakhpur and attached to the *sarkar* of Bahraich.<sup>25</sup>

Sheoraj was also connected to lands in Moghlan thanks to numerous local disputes, as for instance with the neighboring *tappe* of Dhebarua lying in *praganna* Bansi. In the first decade of the nineteenth century, the tax-payer (*malguzar*) of *tappa* Dhebarua was involved in a protracted multi-cornered dispute with Gorkhali officials and Rajput and Tharu magnates.<sup>26</sup> These disputes involved localized struggles to control various kinds of resources (such as crops, land, taxes), that initially at least, took little notice of the political and ethnic affiliations of the actors. For instance, Jurawan Chaudhari, while being a Company subject, also possessed land in Gorkha’s territories. He was involved in a number of disputes with subjects and officials belonging to Gorkha and the Company. Such multi-cornered disputes often drew their social energies from localized systems of power and influence. It is only later

that they assumed the dimensions of an “inter-state” question. The historical record belonging to this period speaks enough to reveal that local initiative was very visible, and probably formed a crucial prelude to the larger Anglo-Gorkha disputes that broke out on this frontier.

Thus, in 1813, *tappa* Sheoraj—wracked by persistent multi-cornered disputes, and fluctuating political and fiscal relationships—had become an illegible landscape that eluded the centralizing thrust of both Gorkha and the Company. Indeed, in 1813 the Gorkhals made several attempts to obtain records, win over local officials, and gauge the mind of *amins* or surveyors deputed by the Company to investigate the boundary question.<sup>27</sup> Whatever the result of the investigations, by 1814 it was clear that senior Gorkhali officials were unwilling to consider Sheoraj as anything less than a part of Gorkha’s territorial possessions (*ajasamma aafnu amval bhayako jaga*).<sup>28</sup>

The interesting conclusion from all this is that the *tappa* of Sheoraj possessed a fluctuating political, fiscal, and tenurial history. Between 1780-1814 it had become entangled with the agrarian histories of a number of *pragannas* (Bansi, Deokhori), little kingdoms (Pyuthana, Butwal, Bansi), and more powerful state formations (Awadh, Gorkha, and the East India Company). In 1814, while the Company was willing to relinquish its claims to Sheoraj, it was unwilling to do the same for the larger Butwal tarai, to which the Gorkhals were also laying claim, by virtue of their incorporation of the Palpali kingdom into Gorkha (Ghimire 1988 [2055 B.S.]).<sup>29</sup> Senior Company officials at Calcutta would argue that

No documents which have yet been submitted to the Governor-General, afford the least sanction to the authority which the raja of Napaul claims the right of introduction into the lowlands of Bootwal upon the ground of ancient usage, nor does the Governor-General admit the pretensions of the Raja to the management of that zamindaree upon any principle of Justice or of equity founded upon the authority which he exercises over the raja of Palpa, as a subject of the Government of Napaul. As a matter of right, therefore the Governor-General is resolved not

RRC 25: 359; Salam (?) Chaudhari and Laskari Chaudhari are appointed *chaudharis* for the whole of Sheoraj. They were granted one *kalabanjar mauza* Shankarpur (?) in *praganna* Sheoraj as *jagir*, 1800 AD., RRC 24: 32; Biryā Rokaya deputed to Sheoraj along with troops under his jurisdiction, 1797 AD., RRC 25: 639.

23. Information on the revenue accounts of Sheoraj was obtained from the office of the *sadr quanungos* of *chakla* Gorakhpur and the *mufassil quanungos* of *praganna* Ratanpur Bansi. No documents were found pertaining to Sheoraj in the *nawabs* record room in Lucknow. See PRNW Vol. 2, p. 680-700.

24. Alexander Ross, Collector of Gorakhpur to Charles Buller Secretary, BOR, 12 February 1805 in Letters Issued Register, GCR, basta 16, vol. 3, RSA; and *ibid.* in *Procs. BOR for Ceded and Conquered Provinces*, Procs. 31 July 1810, no. 31A, UPSA.

25. See PRNW, Vol. 2, pp. 680-700 and previous endnote.

26. The *malguzar* of Dhebarua was a Tharu zamindar, Jurawan Chaudhari. He held 39 villages. The Gorkhali officials were *fauzdars* Maniraj Bhaju, Tarapeet Upadhyaya, *jemadar* Lashkari Chaudhari, and *mutsaddi* Shiv Baksh. At least two Rajput *zamindars* were also involved in these disputes, one Hanumant Singh and another Pahalwan Singh. My information is derived from the following sources: J. Grant, Collector of Gorakhpur to Board of Commissioners, 22 September 1811, Revenue Letters Issued Register, GCR, basta 17, vol. 18, RSA; D. Scott, Acting Magistrate of Gorakhpur to G. Dowdeswell, Secretary to Government, 19 November 1811, Letters Issued Register, GCR, basta 25, vol. 164, pp. 100-106, RSA; FP Consl. 17 January 1812, no. 46, NAI; See also Letter from J. Carter, acting Collector to Board of Commissioners, 22 January 1819, Letters Issued Register, GCR, basta 17, vol. 122, pp. 144-48, RSA.

27. The name of the *amins* deputed is not mentioned. But it is possible that it might have referred to Paris Bradshaw, the Company’s officer deputed to look into the Anglo-Gorkha border disputes. Attempts were also made by Gorkhali officials like *kaji* Amar Singh Thapa to influence local officials like *quanungoes*, and possibly even Paris Bradshaw’s own *munshi* so as to conclude the investigations in their favor. See the following: *kaji* Amar Singh Thapa to *janral* (General) Bhim Sen Thapa and Ran Dhvaj Thapa, n.d. (probably 1813) *Bir Pustakalaya Aitihasik Chittipatra Samgraha*, no. 169, NAN; *kaji* Amar Singh Thapa to *janral* (General) Bhim Sen Thapa, April 1813, *Bir Pustakalaya Aitihasik Chittipatra Samgraha*, no. 400, NAN.

28. *Bir Pustakalaya Ithihasik Chittipatra Samgraha*, no. 400, NAN.

29. The raja of Gorkha in 2 letters sent in May and June 1814 would reassert Gorkha’s claims to this *tappa*. See Raja of Nepal to Governor-General, 4 May 1814 & 3 June 1814 in FS Consl. 23 June 1814, nos. 22 & 23, NAI.

to accede to the introduction of the authority of Napaul, into the zamindaree in question...the Governor-General is of the opinion that the British Government would possess no security for the regular payment of the revenue by the officers of the Napaul state should the lowlands of Bootwal be entrusted to the Rajah in farm (*theke*)...<sup>30</sup>

The dispute over the lowlands of Butwal became a prominent cause for the outbreak of the Anglo-Gorkha war in 1814. It was only after the Anglo-Gorkha war, and the demarcation of the Anglo-Gorkha boundary that *tappa* Sheoraj formally became a Gorkhali possession. The claims of the rulers of Pyuthana, to whom this *tappa* originally belonged, were forever silenced.

### MORE TARAI-MOGLHAN ENTANGLEMENTS

Territorial disputes between kingdoms in the hills and plains over Tarai lands were present all along the emerging Anglo-Gorkha frontier in the decades prior to the outbreak of the Anglo-Gorkha war in 1814. Various kinds of tribute, taxation, and tenurial relationships left the Tarai entangled between hill and plains. For example, the *talua* of Khajahani Bhandar was disputed between the hill kingdoms of Khanchi and Palpa. At various times it had got attached to both these kingdoms, as well as to the *praganna* of Ratanpur Bansī, and possibly even to the *praganna* of Binayakpur.<sup>31</sup> Khajahani was originally held by the rajas of Khanchi in the hills above Gorakhpur.<sup>32</sup> Later it went to Palpa following an agreement with Gorkha by which Palpa got the hill kingdoms of Gulmi, Argha and Khanchi in return for military assistance to Gorkha in its western military campaigns.<sup>33</sup> The Palpa rajas had been making revenue collections in this *talua* since 1782. However, in the *qanungo* records of the period, the *talua* was entered as being united with the *tappa* of Sheoraj, which had been traditionally attached to the *pargana* of Bansī.<sup>34</sup>

30. See Letter from the Secretary of Government to J. Ahmuty, Judge and Magistrate of Gorakhpur, 16 January 1806, *FS Procs.* 16 January 1806, no. 105, paragraphs 3 & 4, *NAI*.

31. In 1786, the Khanchi raja had granted a *guthi* (religious grant) in *tappa* Khajahani, in *praganna* Binayakpur. The rulers of Khanchi claimed the *tappas* of Khajahani, Chop and Gurhwa(?) in the Butwal tarai. See, *RRC* 4: 948-50.

32. This relationship is also confirmed in the petition of one Subah (*subba*?) Lal Sahye [Shahi?] to the British claiming ownership to the *tappa* of Sheoraj. Sahye's petition mentions that the *tappa* of Khajahani belonged to the districts of the Khanchi raj. See, Papers relating to the proposed grant of land to Soobah Lal Sahye, *Boards Collections* F/4/550, no. 13378, 21pps, *IOR, APAC, BL*.

33. See Reports and Observations submitted by Paris Bradshaw on the negotiations and correspondence with the Nepalese Commissioners, April-May 1813, *FP Procs.* 18 June 1813, nos. 18-24, *NAI*.

34. See Extract from John Routledge's Report on the Settlement of Butwal, 14 December 1802, in Letters Issued Register (December 1802-February 1804, *GCR*, basta 16, vol. 2, *RSA*); John Routledge to Lt. Governor-General and Board of Commissioners of the Ceded Districts, *Boards Collections*, F/4/185, p. 91-108, *IOR, APAC, BL*). For details pertaining to the *praganna* of Bansī see Translation of Procs. held in the

Similarly, the *praganna* of Tilpur was disputed between the rajas of Palpa and Bansī, being variously attached to the different kingdoms on the Gorakhpur-Butwal frontier. In another instance, the *tappa* of Dholiya Bhandar, lying to the north of *pargana* Bansī, was reputed at one time to have been attached to the *praganna* of Binayakpur.<sup>35</sup> This was alluded to in 1809. But this *tappa* belonged earlier to a Magar chieftain of Baliyang (Baldyang). After the defeat of this chieftain by the combined forces of Gulmi, Argha, Khanchi and Palpa, this area first went to Khanchi (Subedi 1998 [2055 B.S.]: 43),<sup>36</sup> and then to the rajas of Palpa and Gulmi.<sup>37</sup> Elsewhere, between 1800 and 1814, numerous disputes raged on many sections of the frontier—Tirhut-<sup>38</sup> rnea-Morang,<sup>39</sup> and elsewhere.<sup>40</sup> Similar disputes are visible all along the Company's frontier with the states of Awadh, Rampur, Bharatpur, Bhutan, Kutch-Bihar and Bykantpur. Earlier in 1805, C. T. Metcalf had noted numerous complicated disputes pertaining to land rights on the territories of the rajas and zamindars lying west of the river Jamuna.<sup>41</sup> So complicated were these disputes that

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Gorakhpur Kutcherry with other Reports, 25 July 1806-23 August 1806, Letters Issued Register, *GCR*, basta 16, vol. 116, pp. 547-596, *RSA*.

35. See Francis Buchanan-Hamilton's "An Account of the Northern Part of the District of Gorakhpur," Eur Mss D 91-93 and G 22-23, *European Manuscripts*, Vol. 2, pp. 147-148, *IOR, APAC, BL* (hereafter *The Gorakhpur Report*). There is some confusion about the actual location of this *tappa*. Buchanan-Hamilton mentions that they were once two *tappas* which had by 1809 (when Buchanan-Hamilton was in the area) become one, for reasons which are unclear. See *The Gorakhpur Report*, Vol. 1, p. 324. See also, Translation of deposition of Semnarayan, *qanungo* of Bansī, 24 April 1804, *Boards Collections*, F/4/185, pp. 256-60, *IOR, APAC, BL*.

36. After the fall of the Baliyang kingdom, its hill territories went to Palpa, the tarai to Khanchi, and Baliyang to Gulmi. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

37. The Gulmi raja is also reputed to have built two temples dedicated to his tutelary deity, Palata Devi in this *tappa*. See Buchanan-Hamilton, *The Gorakhpur Report*, vol. 1, p. 324.

38. For disputes on the Tirhut-Sarlahi frontier see the following. Translations of Report of *tehsildar* Fazl Ali of Turki, and *kaifiyat* (account) of Nadir Ali, *daroga* (police officer in-charge) of *thana* Ruga sent to Collector of Tirhut, 16 September 1801, *FS Procs.* 16 September 1801, no. 3, *NAI*; Extracts of Judicial Department, no. 1831 containing letters from Magistrate of Tirhut, C. I. Sealy as well as Persian Translate relating to these disputes, January-February 1813, *FS Procs.* 14 June 1813, no. 47, *NAI*; Report of C. I. Sealy Magistrate of Tirhut to John Adam, Secretary to Government, Fort William, *FS Consl.* 16 August 1814, no. 20, *NAI*.

39. In 1809, on the Purnea-Morang frontier a dispute arose over the lands pertaining to the village of Bhimnagar. It was resolved in 1811 when the "Gorkhals" withdrew their claims. See Letter from the Governor-General, the Earl of Minto to Raja Girbana Juddha Bikram Shah of Gorkha, 5 June 1809, *FP Consl.* 13 June 1809, no. 72, *NAI*; Raja of Gorkha to the Governor-General 25 April 1810, *FP Consl.* 15 May 1810, no. 35, *NAI*; Raja of Gorkha to Mr. Lumsden, late Vice-President, received 11 July 1810, *FP Consl.* 12 October 1810, no. 172, *NAI*; Gorkhali *sardar* Gaj Singh Khatri to Gorkhali *vakil*, received 1 November 1810, *FP Consl.* 7 December 1810, no. 73, *NAI*; Raja of Gorkha to Governor-General, received 12 January 1811, *FP Consl.* 19 April 1811, no. 46, *NAI*. See also *Stiller Typescript* 2: 104-106. The *Stiller Typescript* is a transcription of 3 reels of microfilm documents obtained from the National Archives of India and preserved in the Tribhuvan Library (Kirtipur) by Father Ludwig F. Stiller, S.J.

40. These land disputes pertain to the Khairigarh frontier in the west, and the Chittagong frontier in the northeast.

41. See Memorandum of British Possessions West of Jamuna by C. T.



even a detailed inquiry would not have been able to resolve them. They left uncertain the rights to access and use of the agrarian resources (land, forest, taxation, and tribute paying) of these lands. They also left unclear the boundaries of villages and districts. Given the contested nature of these claims, tracts of land kept shuffling back and forth between competing parties, leaving fuzzy and ill-defined the organization and layout of territories along the inter-state frontiers.

### DEMARCATING THE ANGLO-GORKHA BOUNDARY

The formation of Nepal's Tarai needs to be understood against this backdrop of entangled territories, recurring disputes and conflicted claims to land, taxes, and political authority. Gorkha's Tarai districts had always been the subject of contention between the hill kingdoms and their neighbors in Moghlan. The rights to these territories fluctuated over time leaving these lands inextricably bound to political authorities in the hills and the plains. Faced with such illegible landscapes, the British would seek to reshuffle territories and render them visible through cartographic means. Colonial boundary formation became a critical process through which the Company state would demarcate territories. Gorkha's Tarai was a product of this colonial anxiety and it could be argued that the Anglo-Gorkha war was fought by the Company state to resolve these spatial anxieties. It should then come as no surprise that following their victory over Gorkha in 1816, the Company state set about the task of formally demarcating the boundary separating the two states.

The Company began to institute measures for the demarcation of the Anglo-Gorkha boundary well before the conclusion of the war. In early December 1815, Company authorities instructed their officials on the frontier thus:

In determining the limits of the respective states, attention must be paid to the selection in all possible cases of natural and well defined boundary marks not liable to alterations or decay—when these cannot be had, as from the general course of the rivers in the Teraiee and the distance of the forests, as His Lordship apprehends will be the case, artificial boundary marks must be resorted to.<sup>42</sup>

Following the cessation of hostilities in March 1816, negotiations began on the demarcation of boundaries. It was decided that the new boundary would be drawn 2 *cos* (about 4 miles) from the southernmost point of the old frontier.<sup>43</sup> The

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Metcalf, Assistant to the Governor-General, 1805, *Memoirs of the Survey of India*, Memoir no. 19, *SOIR,NAI*.

42. Instructions from the Governor-General in Council to Lt. Col. Paris Bradshaw, *FS Consl.* 9 December 1815, no. 2, *NAI*.

43. See J. Adams, Secretary to Government to E. Gardner, Resident at Kathmandu, 4 May 1816, *FS Procs.* 4 May 1816, no. 70, *NAI*; *FS Procs.* 24 August, 1816, nos. 8-12, *NAI*.

line was to be a straight one.<sup>44</sup> Where indentations occurred, exchanges of territory were to be made to keep the line direct. The term "tarai" also threw up some unexpected problems of definition. At the time of the boundary negotiations, the Gorkhals used it to mean only the flatland upto the Bhabar forests, and not inclusive of these forests. The Company on the other hand used the term as a blanket to cover all the lands upto the foothills, inclusive of the Bhabar forests. The Gorkhals ultimately agreed to the Company's definition of the term.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, the Company decided that wherever possible, territories whose location rendered the boundary sinuous would be exchanged in order to keep the boundary line straight.<sup>46</sup> The demarcation proceedings dragged on until 1821 when the entire Anglo-Gorkha boundary was demarcated as a line on the ground using masonry pillars (Hasrat 1970: 191; Shaha 1990: 148-149). This boundary was deemed sacred, and any attempts to violate it by Gorkha or any other indigenous power would be stiffly repulsed by the British.

Nevertheless, on the other side of the picture was the continual reaffirmation by the Company of the sanctity of the Anglo-Gorkha boundary. For example, in 1839, Gorkhali troops made a number of incursions into the Ramnagar area and laid claim to eleven villages. In 1803, these villages were originally granted as dowry to the Ramnagar raja's son for marrying the daughter of the former Gorkhali raja Ran Bahadur Shah. The Gorkhals claimed that since the queen had now died, these villages were due for resumption (Adhikari 1998 [2055 B.S.]: 70; Giri 1995 [2052 B.S.]: 20,76). However, the Gorkhals were forced to withdraw on seeing the British determination to use force to evict them. In another instance, in the 1860s Gorkha's rulers discovered that the British no longer honored the terms of a Gorkhali religious land grant in Kedarnath, made at a time when Kumaon and Garhwal were Gorkhali possessions. When Jang Bahadur, the then Gorkhali Prime Minister complained to the British Resident in Kathmandu (about the British mismanagement of the Kedarnath hostel), he was told, "You can do what you like on lands situated in your territory; we can do what we like on ours" (Burghart

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44. In those areas where the hills ran in an East to West direction, all lowlands would go to the British, while the highlands to the Gorkhals. But when the hills ran from North to South, then the low lands to the right and left of them were Gorkhals. Also hills that were detached from the main ranges would have all the lowlands lying to the north of them placed under Gorkha's charge. See letter from the raja of Gorkha to E. Gardner, 2 October 1816, *KRR R/5/37*, pp. 73-74, *IOR, APAC, BL*; Raja to chautara Bam Shah, 2 October 1816, *KRR R/5/37*, pp. 77-79, *IOR, APAC, BL*. The original Nepali version of this letter can be found in the Lal Mohar Collection, no. 455, *NAN*.

45. See E. Gardner to J. Adams, 14 July, 1816, *FS Procs.* 3 August 1816, no. 12, *NAI*.

46. Instructions from J. Adams, Secretary to Government to W. F. Clarke, Acting Magistrate of Saran, 17 December 1816, "Nepal Correspondence," 1 vol., Saran Collectorate Records, *BSA*; J. Adams, Secretary to Government to E. Gardner, Resident at Kathmandu, 4 May 1816, *FS Procs.* 4 May 1816, no. 70, *NAI*; See Letter from Ujir Singh Thapa to Bhim Sen Thapa, no year., in *Shahkalin Aitihāsik Chittipatra Samgraha*, ed. Shankarman Rajbanshi (Kathmandu, 2023 B. S.), pp. 188-90. See especially p. 189.

1984: 116). In this manner, the reality of the boundary was driven home to the Gorkhals. Today, despite occasional disputes between India and Nepal, the boundary continues to inform and give meaning to the lives of those millions of citizens on both sides, whose identities it has come to demarcate and fix.

## CONCLUSION

Nepal's Tarai emerged against this background of colonial spatial anxieties that sought to disentangle the intertwined territories of the two states. The Anglo-Gorkha war was followed by the establishment of a linear boundary to separate the territories of the two states. This serves as a timely reminder of the role of European colonization in the formation of the Tarai. It was the politics of British imperialism that created some of the critical conditions of possibility for the formation of Nepal's Tarai districts. The Tarai was not some natural territorial container that formed an integral part of Nepal. Rather, its social production needs to be understood within the wider perspective of its entanglements elsewhere. More specifically, Nepal's Tarai has always been closely connected to little kingdoms in the hills of Nepal, but it has always forged dense territorial bonds with lands to its south, in Moghlan. In the decades leading to the Anglo-Gorkha War, Gorkha's Tarai districts were formed out of an underlying continuum of fluctuating rights—political, tenurial, and taxational—that connected them to the territories lying in the Hills of Gorkha as well as to the plains further south, in Moghlan. This regime of rights and relationships (of tribute, taxation and land grants) witnessed constant fluctuations, especially when newer sources of political authority emerged, such as Gorkha and the Company state. Together, such a regime of rights and relationships made up the bodies of precolonial states that straddled the Anglo-Gorkha frontier.

The loss of the western Tarai lands to the British after the Anglo-Gorkha war, their subsequent return to Nepal in 1860, and their territorial delineation through British surveying and mapping signaled the intervention of the colonial state and its technologies of rule (Cohn 1996). The Anglo-Gorkha War of 1814-1816, and the colonial demarcation of Gorkha's Tarai, reflect one of the crucial moments in the geographical construction of the colonial state in South Asia—in the redefinition of its frontiers into linear boundaries, and the rearrangement of its provinces and districts. Colonial boundary formation, though an ill-coordinated project, was predicated on a fundamental principle—*that states occupy a definite portion of the earth's surface, and are divided into non-overlapping divisions and sub-divisions*. This vision materialized in a piecemeal fashion throughout the colonial period. Thus, it might be argued that Nepal's Tarai emerged as a clearly defined territorial entity discernible on a map, through a colonial encounter. Needless to say, this does not mean that Nepal's Tarai lands are watertight spaces with no room for social overflows. Even today, the presence of boundary disputes between India and Nepal clearly show that this project of drawing modern

boundaries will always be an unfinished one, because human actions can never be fully constrained by lines drawn on a map (see Van Schendel 2002).<sup>47</sup> The interventions of history, the shared cultures of local communities on both sides of the boundary, trade practices, and the ongoing inter-state boundary disputes will always provide a counterfoil to the constraints of modern boundaries.

Integrating the Tarai's history into a wider unfolding story of spatial and world historical connections confirms the benefits of an approach that is interdisciplinary and transnational such as those being attempted by writers of world history, the new imperial history, and the new military history (Bentley 1993; Michael, 2007; Pollock 1996; Cooper & Stoler 1997; Wilson, 2004; Chambers, II 1991; Simons 1999). They then create the possibility of writing a history of the Tarai in terms of its transnational entanglements and colonial genealogies that continue to provide an important historical context for understanding subsequent developments in this vital part of the country.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

APAC	Asia, Pacific, Africa Collection
BL	British Library, London.
BOR	Board of Revenue.
BSA	Bihar State Archives, Patna.
Consl.	Consultation.
CCRP	Comptrolling Council of Revenue at Patna
CPC	Calendar of Persian Correspondence.
FP	Foreign Political.
FS	Foreign Secret.
GCR	Gorakhpur Collectorate Records, RSA, Allahabad.
IOR	India Office Records
KRR	Kathmandu Residency Records, BL, London & NAN, Kathmandu.
NAI	National Archives of India, New Delhi.
NAN	National Archives of Nepal, Kathmandu.
Procs.	Proceedings.
PRNW	Papers Respecting the Nepaul War.
RRC	Regmi Research Collection, NAN,

47. A number of these disputes pertaining to the modern Nepal-Champaran boundary are recorded in the 54 files of the Search Series: Nepal Champaran Boundary, file 1-54, BSA.

	Kathmandu.
RRS	Regmi Research Series.
RSA	Regional State Archives, Allahabad.
SOIR	Survey of India Records, NAI, Delhi.
UPSA	Uttar Pradesh State Archives, Lucknow.
WBSA	West Bengal State Archives, Calcutta.

## GLOSSARY

<i>Bikhbuniyadi Birta</i>	a category of usually tax free, inheritable land grants ( <i>birta</i> ) usually made on a lifetime basis to individuals
<i>Bitalab Birta</i>	a <i>birta</i> grant made in lieu of specific services to be provided by the beneficiary
<i>Chaudhari</i>	an official tax collector appointed in each Tarai <i>praganna</i>
<i>Chaudhrai</i>	rights accruing to a <i>chaudhari</i> which often included a grant of land in lieu of services performed as <i>chaudhari</i>
<i>Chautara</i>	a top ranking member of Gorkha's royal elite usually of a ministerial rank and belonging to the royal family
<i>Jemadar</i>	low ranking soldier, sometimes also head of servants
<i>Kaji</i>	a senior member of Gorkha's elite, higher in rank than a <i>sardar</i> and in charge of civil and military affairs
<i>Kalabanjar</i>	uncultivated forest lands that if cleared are capable of high agricultural yields
<i>Malguzar</i>	someone who pays revenue to a superior authority
<i>Mauza</i>	village
<i>Mofussil</i>	area away from the capital or headquarters, countryside.
<i>Munshi</i>	scribe
<i>Mutsaddi</i>	clerk
<i>Quanungo/quanungoye</i>	accountant
<i>Sadr</i>	capital, headquarters

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DOORWAY OF A THARU HOUST, MORANG.

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