Chapter 1

STATEMAKING, CULTURES OF GOVERNANCE AND THE ANGLO–GORKHA WAR OF 1814–1816

> The word [state] commonly denotes no class of objects that can be identified exactly, and for the same reason it signifies no list of attributes which bears the sanction of common usage.
>
> —George Sabine[1]

> […] we recognise space as the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny.
>
> —Doreen Massey[2]

1. Approaching States and Statemaking

It was the start of a warm day in the month of Jeyt in 2046 BS (May/June 1989 CE) when I awoke at 4.00am to undertake the six-hour trek to the Indian border. I had been living in a small town, in Far Western Nepal, teaching in a public school and now had to travel to Delhi to repair school equipment and purchase textbooks. I trudged along under the weight of a backpack full with nearly thirty mismatched pounds of damaged machine parts, punctured soccer balls and books in need of binding. As the day headed purposefully towards its consummation in a scorching finale of 110 degree Fahrenheit, I broke for a cup of tea along the Mohana River which marked the Indo–Nepal boundary. Always a porous zone of flows, this section of the Indo–Nepal boundary had been a mobile space attracting traders, migrant labor, smugglers and tourists alike. That day, however, the Nepali guards were out, armed, vigilant as they gazed across the river at the outpost of their Indian counterparts. I unpacked my bags for the guards to rummage through. When they discovered I was a teacher, they quickly waved me on. I received the same treatment on the other side of the river where there was an unusual buzz of activity on what should have been a quiet and uneventful day. All of a sudden the border had come alive and the boundary that had been irreverently crossed all these days was now being carefully monitored, especially by the Indian side. This was a tense time in the relations between the two neighbors. The Indo–Nepal Trade and Transit treaties had expired and the Indian government had imposed an economic blockade on Nepal by sealing the borders. At such times a tighter regime of discipline and control ensued with new protocols of crossing, examination, and scrutiny. It felt as if the boundary which had always seemed like an imaginary line on the ground had suddenly been reincarnated into a real wall of separation. Out of all the innumerable boundary crossings I made during my nearly eight year stay in Nepal, these remain most vividly ingrained in my imagination – signifying the boundary as both porous and impermeable.

This book is a historical account of the emergence of the Anglo–Gorkha boundary set against a wider backdrop of colonial territorial formation. It bridges two distinct but dispersed historical junctures where the idea of the modern state as a geographically discernible and territorially circumscribed entity emerged in colonial South Asia. Firstly, it examines the territorial disputes that emerged along the common frontiers of Gorkha (present-day Nepal) and the English East India Company that eventually led to the outbreak of the Anglo–Gorkha War in 1814. I suggest that at the heart of these disputes were questions pertaining to the geographical construction of the state, more specifically the precise location and layout of territorial divisions along the shared frontier of the two states. These disputes coalesced around older tribute, taxation and tenurial claims that left their territories perpetually intermixed with ill-defined boundaries. Following the defeat of the Gorkhalis in 1816, the Company's officials surveyed the frontier to establish a linear boundary that would clearly demarcate their respective territories. Secondly, this book also argues that such exercises in colonial boundary formation formed part of a long-drawn process whereby the colonial state, through various cartographic projects and changes in administrative routines, rearranged its internal administrative divisions in an attempt to create the geographical template of the modern state – occupying a definite portion of the earth's surface and divided into non-overlapping divisions and sub-divisions. The Gorkhali state would initiate similar proceedings only in the twentieth century.

The observation of the historical sociologist Michael Mann, that "societies are much messier than our theories of them," could very easily be applied to the study of the state and the messy middle ground that marks state–society relations.[3] It is at this middle ground, where abstractions such as "state" and "society" break down to reveal their form in terms of process rather than some fixed unyielding structure, that the study of statemaking can be located.[4] Consequently, statemaking calls for the study of the complex embroidery of social forces that make up the middle ground between the state and society and the negotiated and contingent manner in which these forces are produced, sustained and transformed through time.[5] Furthermore, and from the standpoint of this study, the role of culture, power, space and history in shaping processes of statemaking is clearly acknowledged. Such an approach to statemaking reveals the finest local details in all their complexity, while balancing them with broad generalizations of dominant trends and patterns.

Within the specific context of South Asian history the state has been an object of scholarly scrutiny. Many studies traversing the length and breadth of the subcontinent's history have generated a rich palette of histories and interpretations of states and statemaking. Here, states and statemaking have been defined and interpreted in terms of an intersecting array of political, economic, ideological, environmental and cultural forces. This has led to the study of military and bureaucratic institutions, agrarian systems, long-distance trade, nationalism, the environment, colonial constructions of knowledge and subaltern life. Given this context, studies on statemaking emerging from South Asia continue to evolve in new and innovative directions – questioning received wisdom on the subject and pursuing interdisciplinary agendas that are sensitive to the socio-cultural complexity expressed through the nuances, vagaries and varieties of human agency.[6] On this point, the state of history writing in modern Nepal deserves special comment.[7] Over the last fifty years or so, scholars have mined archival repositories to

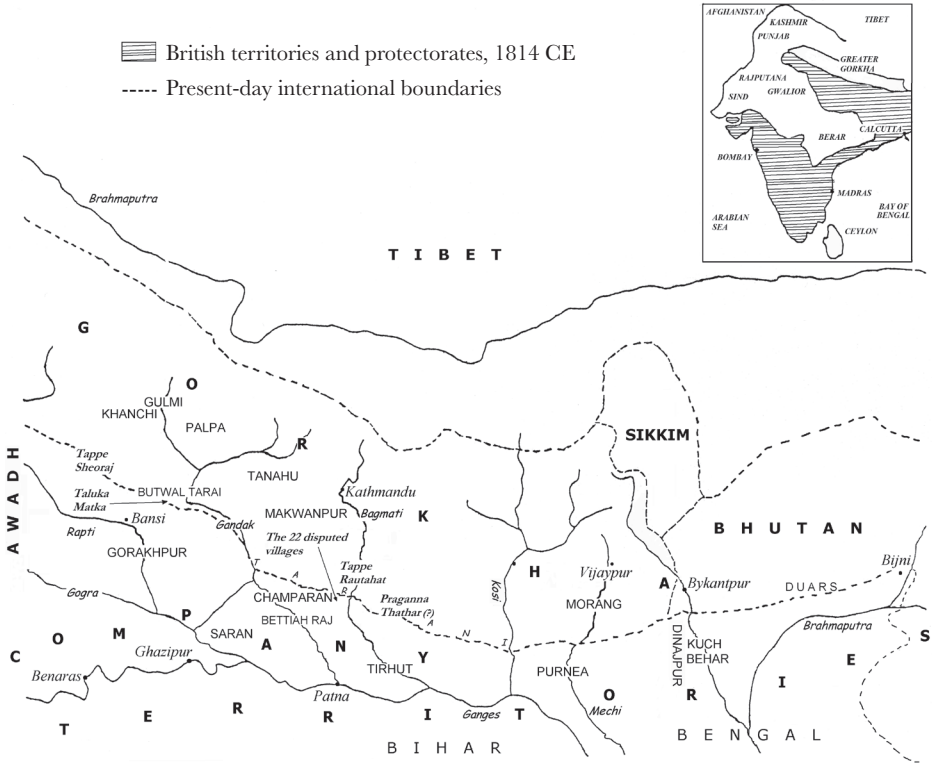
produce historical works on the Nepali state that are varying in their range and quality.[8] These mostly nationalist accounts have explored themes of administration, diplomacy, national unification, politics, war and the activities of famous personalities.[9] The pathbreaking work of historian Mahesh Chandra Regmi has yielded rich descriptions of general administration, land distribution and taxation, the nature of the state, trade, production and resource mobilization commencing from the late eighteenth century onwards.[10] However, there have been few attempts to replicate or expand on his work.[11] These scattered and uneven writings on the Nepali state underscore the continuing need for "greater pluralism in history writing practices" and conversations between its practitioners.[12]

2. Statemaking, Cultures of Governance, Space

Recent studies on statemaking have profited immensely from gains made in theorizing the cultural turn in the humanities.[13] These new approaches have called for a process-oriented view of the state and statemaking discerned in terms of complex intertwined strands of historically unfolding meanings and practices.[14] Such a view rests on a notion of culture that is structurally implicated yet continually emergent, and simultaneously ordered and disordered, as it incessantly triangulates with forces such as power and history.[15] Taking a process-oriented approach to culture blends the older antinomies of continuity and change to conceive of social reality in terms of finely woven, layered and difficult-to-parse webs of signs and meaningful practices – constituting a blurred and boundless world that is given shape by language, institutions and power.[16] The heuristic ambitions of such a view are balanced by a refusal to reinstate an omnibus notion of culture that can be universally applied over time and space. That is, cultural approaches to statemaking need to be carefully designed and calibrated to engage the questions posed by specific research agendas, which in the case of this book is statemaking and the organization of territory along the Anglo–Gorkha frontier in colonial South Asia (see Map 1.1).

Informed by such a perspective, this book seeks to examine how specific cultures of governance – meanings and practices of rule concerning a range of agrarian entitlements – determined territorial organization along the Anglo–Gorkha frontier. Such cultures of governance crystallized around the complex territorializing strategies individuals and groups employed to "affect, influence and control access to [entitlements involving] people, things, and relationships."[17] These entitlements, when viewed in terms of land tenures, may be provisionally divided into *malguzari* (arising out of revenue collection arrangements), *khidmatguzari* (service tenures) and *maafi* (tax-free) tenures. Intricately woven into such rights to "enjoy" the fruits of the land were whole systems of customary privileges concerning rights to exercise authority, exact fees and services, and bear titles, objects, emblems and honors. It follows that these entitlements, which were simultaneously symbolic and material in their manifestations, found expression in maneuverings over resources such as land, labor, water, forests, markets, commodities and capital. Such rights, which went by various names, were enjoyed on a hereditary basis or bestowed by some superior authority or overlord – such as the Mughal emperor, high-ranking officials,

Map 1.1 The Anglo–Gorkha frontier, 1814 CE



This map is not drawn to scale. Boundaries and the locations of tappes, pragannas, and villages are approximate. Mapwork by Saramma and Sharon Michael.

petty chieftains and landlords. This created hierarchies of political relationships that were prone to frequent realignments arising out of the vagaries of statemaking. Such a conflicted structure of entitlements and shifting hierarchical political relationships formed the deep-seated institutional infrastructure of territorial governance and animated the histories of the little kingdoms that straddled the Anglo–Gorkha frontier, such as Gulmi, Argha, Kanchi, Pyuthan, Tanahu, Makwanpur, Palpa and Bettiah.[18] Consequently, when Gorkha and the Company state acquired the territories of these little kingdoms, they also inherited an older history of entitlements and territorial disputes whose significance for our understanding of the Anglo–Gorkha War has never been fully explored.[19] While colonial and postcolonial scholars have written histories of such agrarian rights and privileges, they have rarely examined them for the spatial or territorial implications arising out of the dynamic ways in which they were accessed, maintained, reconfigured and even lost.[20] Consequently, such rights and privileges remained prone to frequent fluctuations in their definitions, terms and territorial extent.[21] These fluctuations triggered commensurate rearrangements and mutations in the boundaries and layout of the parent territorial units they were housed within. These precolonial territorial divisions such as *parganas*, *tappas*, *tarafs,* and *mouzas* came to possess intermixed bodies and discontinuous

boundaries. Consequently, in the first half of the book, I seek to trace the connections between such themes and the production of territory along the Anglo–Gorkha frontier.

A crucial dimension of statemaking is manifest in the struggles surrounding the capacity of states and their agents to bind and mark space or territory.[22] Spatiality is the common thread that connects the study of statemaking to cultures of governance and territoriality. In recent years, space, which has for a long time been the compelling object of study for geographers, has witnessed a reassertion in social theory.[23] In this book I define space in terms of the organization and layout of territory, and not some neutral stage or container on or in which life unfolds.[24] Rather, it is a dynamic entity produced out of a shifting ensemble of meanings, practices and interrelationships involving human communities, institutions (such as the state) and struggles to define and control resources. Space is historically produced, being made manifest at distinct times and places by embodied human agents interacting with each other and their environments. Space does not sit apart from and above the local situatedness of place. Rather, the production of space is the history of the thrown-togetherness and interpenetration of space and place.[25] Such a conception of space, as detailed in this book, views the production of territory as a power-laden, culturally determined, contentious process involving access to resources, both material and symbolic, that are derived from agrarian environments. Ultimately, connecting cultures of governance to their agrarian environments through the pursuit of questions of space affords an opportunity to write histories of territory that evade the passive metageographical constructions of area studies approaches.[26]

The existence of this rich body of writing on space has produced a renewed interest in the historical production of territory and especially in the efforts of states to manage, organize and bind territory.[27] Historian Thongchai Winichakul's groundbreaking study of the emergence of Siam as a territorial entity – or "geo-body" – has shown how the Southeast Asian kingdom of Siam completed the colonization of neighboring kingdoms not just through conquest but also by incorporating them into the singular territorial representation of the state on modern maps.[28] This territorial representation became an important symbol of Siamese unity and identity which hid from view its multifarious and contested history of territorial relations with numerous smaller kingdoms, prior to their incorporation into Siam. This book builds on the insights of Thongchai's work, but seeks to go further by taking a closer look at the contested territorial relationships involving various polities along the Anglo–Gorkha frontier. By examining the cultures of governance that produced territory along this frontier, I seek to give greater agency to the local and regional actors who are often lost in the nationalist-driven narratives of the Anglo–Gorkha War or of Siamese state-formation. Such "non-state spaces" – of local power, action and influence – that resisted the centralizing thrust of political elites reveal the highly nuanced and variable character of processes of statemaking.[29] Consequently, the Anglo–Gorkha frontier became a borderland made up of dynamic, shifting and hard-to-govern territories – a fact that has eluded most studies of the war.[30]

To conclude, the notion of cultures of governance was also designed with the intention of creating a framework that would make territorial sense of the structure of entitlements and many multi-cornered contests that took place over agrarian resources along the Anglo–Gorkha frontier. Consequently, the large number of territorial disputes

that broke out on this frontier between 1760 and 1814 crystallized mainly around diffuse relationships of power, as they unfolded unevenly across the boundaries of caste, kinship and ethnicity.[31] Numerous agents, located at multiple levels, constantly undertook situational adjustments that produced shifts in existing configurations of culture, power, history and space. Competing agents sought to exploit the indeterminacies of their situations by reinterpreting or redefining the rules that gave them access to and control over agrarian entitlements. Such strategies generated conflict and indeterminacy in social interactions and plasticity in territorial arrangements.[32] They form the subject matter of the next three chapters.

3. Spatiality and the Study of Cartographic History

Ever since the English East India Company acquired territory in 1765, it had been confronted with the persistent puzzle of discovering the layout, internal organization and limits of its territories. Company officials struggled to come to terms with the intermixture, overlaps and fluid boundaries of its territories. Without this territorial knowledge, the colonial state's capacity to tax its subjects, impose law and establish order was severely blunted. This problem was accentuated all along its frontiers with neighboring states, and not just along the Anglo–Gorkha frontier. In 1818, George Dowdeswell, the vice-president of the Company's governing council at Calcutta echoed the sentiments of many Company officials when he observed: "We have almost *daily experience* of the very defective state of our geographical information in many parts of our own territories and of the serious inconveniences and embarassments arising from this cause in the conduct of *ordinary* affairs of the administration."[33] Dowdeswell's comment is a reminder of how colonial anxieties about clearly defined territories reflected a wider and more ubiquitous drive to parse, reorder and systematize life in the colony. At the heart of empire lay a tremendous concern for things spatial – in rearranging territory, relationships, objects and bodies.[34] This book seeks to unearth these spatial anxieties to reveal how they nourished processes of statemaking and territorial production along the Anglo–Gorkha frontier.

In making this argument, I use the theme of spatiality to connect two oft-disconnected bodies of knowledge and inquiry: the study of agrarian entitlements and the history of modern cartography. I argue that colonial anxieties at the time of the Anglo–Gorkha War about the need for accurate geographical information (which ultimately led to the institution of surveys and the delineation of the Anglo–Gorkha boundary) can be fruitfully connected with the spatial history of agrarian entitlements along the frontier. While the spatial effects of agrarian entitlements have been discussed in previous paragraphs, the study of the history of cartography deserves further mention. Long considered neutral and unproblematic representations of the world, and celebrated for their technical qualities, maps have recently come under critical scrutiny. Over the last three decades this critical approach to the history of cartography has, in the fashion of Ariadne's thread, tried to trace the connections between the map viewed purely as a representational artifact and the social world that produced and consumed it. Under the influence of the pioneering work of scholars like Arthur Robinson, David Woodward and John Brian Harley, it became evident that maps are not merely the products of technical

skill, but are also awash with the forces of culture, power and history.[35] Harley's work was followed by a spate of writings that have carefully unpacked themes of European imperial domination, the creation of colonial knowledge, the development of modern science, the dynamics of state formation and indigenous mapmaking traditions.[36] More recently, this genre of writing has extended itself to the study of South Asian history, producing rich studies ranging from histories of surveying institutions and endeavors to the ideological and representational effects of maps.[37] Still others have conducted detailed studies of the circulation of geographical knowledge and the formation of the boundaries of modern nation-states such as India and Pakistan.[38]

Such histories of cartography have broadened the study of maps by encouraging greater theoretical innovation and the pursuit of a more inclusive agenda.[39] There is a growing realization that cartographic agendas can be informed by spatial impulses that originate in arenas of social life far removed from the confines of surveying departments and the technicalities and representational effects of mapmaking.[40] For instance, maps are not innocent creations of states and their agents; rather, they are also the product of deep-seated and conflicted social forces far removed from the surveyor's office.[41] A growing chorus of both elite and subaltern agents, inhabiting diverse social landscapes, is now perceived as contributing to the production and consumption of maps. For instance, cadastral mapping may be viewed as the cartographic component of the larger social arena within which various forms of agrarian property rights are defined, organized and regulated. Consequently, this book seeks to trace the elusive dots that connect maps to the wider socio-spatial conditions of their production. It pursues Harley's initial call to "deconstruct" maps with greater vigor and attention, by focusing on the "lived geographies of empire," where such socio-spatial dynamics unfolded.[42] The first half of this book raises the hope that the study of colonial cartography in South Asia can be informed by the inclusion of the highly localized socio-spatial histories of agrarian territories along the Anglo–Gorkha frontier. The inclusion of the rich voices lying along the margins of states helps resist the urge to present simplistic readings, in order to reveal new and valuable counterpoints that have remained underdeveloped in previous studies on the history of cartography, statemaking and spatiality.

Such an approach to the study of the history of cartography has methodological implications as well. It calls for the interdisciplinary pursuit of historical questions that engage fields such as cultural geography and anthropology, history, environmental studies, postcolonial literature and critical cartography. Historians seeking to establish deeper connections between maps than their socio-spatial contexts will need to examine a wider range of archival materials that are not confined to map collections and survey records. Primary source documents on land revenue administration in colonial South Asia lying in provincial and district level archives provide valuable information on the organization of territory and its implications for the cartographic projects of the colonial state. The territorial disputes between the English East India Company and Gorkha in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries provide a richly chronicled example of this. But to write a history that connects these territorial disputes to the cartographic projects of the state requires tedious research that engages materials dispersed over a number of local, regional, national and international archives.

It is clear from a study of these materials that during the first 50 years of colonial rule, officials of the English East India Company increasingly harbored an Icarian vision of clearly demarcated territories that found expression not only in the surveying and mapmaking projects of the state, but also in the routines and practices of everyday governance. For instance during the early years of colonial rule, where in the absence of modern maps, colonial administrators tried to formulate principles that would regulate or dismantle relationships and practices that confounded the establishment of linear boundaries and continuous territories. Thus, Company officials at Calcutta asked their representatives stationed along the Anglo–Gorkha frontier to formulate "fixed principles" to resolve competing territorial claims presented by hill chieftains in the west following the defeat of the Gorkhalis by the British in 1815. Secretary John Adam noted that:

> Without some *fixed principle* for the decision of such questions, it would be extremely embarrassing and difficult if not practicable to undertake the adjustment of the multiplied and conflicting claims of territory arising out of the disturbed state of the country for a long series of years, and the *frequent transition* of particular districts from the authority of one principality to that of another. The period of the Gorkhali invasion is in all respects the most convenient from being of so modern a date as to render evidence easily attainable while with reference to our public declaration and the avowed objects of our interference in the affairs of the Hill Chiefs, namely the restoration of things to the state in which they were at that time, we might be perhaps justly considered to be precluded from taking cognisance of claims originating in the transactions of an antecedent period.[43]

This "fixed principle" of holding a moratorium on all competing territorial claims prior to the Gorkhali invasion was intended to reduce the number and complexity of these claims while simplifying the process of redrawing political boundaries. Another territorial principle Company officials affirmed was a refusal to occupy and govern lands in the hills along the Anglo–Gorkha frontier. This "principle of limitation" was clearly motivated by spatial concerns.[44] First enunciated in 1813, it declared to Gorkhali authorities that "no interference should take place in the proceedings of Nipaul in the hills and on the other hand the Nipaulese authority should on no account be extended below the hills."[45] The aim of this "principle" was to put a halt to the interminable territorial disputes that peppered the political relations between the Gorkhali commanders in the hills and their Indian counterparts in the plains. That is, hill and plain chieftains were asked to renounce all claims on each other's territories and align the political boundaries of their states with the natural separation of the hills from the plains. In this manner, the messy realities of the political boundaries of these states were subordinated to the convenient and arbitrary fiction of a geographic boundary that the Company was increasingly imposing on South Asian kingdoms. In another instance, the competing territorial claims of Sikh chieftains in the area were "frozen" in principle by notifying them that the political status quo between them was to be preserved as it stood in 1805, the year the Company's official Charles Metcalf undertook his preliminary survey of that area.[46] Once again, the administrative exigency of disentangling itself from long-standing territorial disputes

and the need to establish linear boundaries drove Company officials to make such spatial adjustments.[47]

Elsewhere, this territorial vision gradually trickled down to the record-keeping practices of the English East India Company. While the British had always depended on indigenous records to collect information on land revenue, property rights and the administrative geography of its territories, they increasingly realized that this information did not yield images of compact, contiguous and well-bounded administrative divisions. In 1800, colonial surveyors like Francis Buchanan-Hamilton expressed this anxiety in their observations on precolonial taxation surveys in Mysore:

> The principal native officer here says that people are now employed in measuring the lands which belong to all the villages in this lately acquired division of Major Mcleod's district. The measurement, however, will by no means be complete; as large hills and wastes are not included within the boundaries of any village and will not be comprehended in the accompts [*sic*]. Even within the village boundaries it is only the lands that are considered arable, or as capable of being made so, that are actually measured, steep and rocky places are taken by conjecture.[48]

Buchanan-Hamilton's anxiety arose out of his belief that in order for a survey to be *complete* it had to take into account *all* the topographical features, both within and beyond the boundaries of a village. Company officials were quick to notice this "confusion" and "disorganization" in the revenue records. Without the aid of modern maps to orient them, and in a rather ill-coordinated fashion, they called for efforts to bring about a greater alignment between the geographical frame of its territories and practices of record keeping. Consequently, information pertaining to land rights, revenue administration and record keeping became increasingly organized with the intention of creating territorially compact administrative divisions. For instance, in 1773 J. I. Kieghly, the Collector of Tirhut District (along the Anglo–Gorkha frontier) tried to systematize the unwieldy revenue accounts of each *pargana* division under his charge, in order to make the "Purgunnnah as complete as possible."[49] The inability of the Company during the early years of its rule to distill the administrative geography of its territorial possessions might arguably have compromised the work of bodies such as the Amini Commission. Active between 1776 and 1778, the Amini Commission was tasked by the Company to undertake one of the most detailed investigations into the revenue records of its provinces in order to make sense of this data. Its sponsor, Governor-General Warren Hastings, explained that the Commission's mandate was "[t]o collect these different accounts and methodize them for our guidance in forming a new settlement."[50] This was due to the fact that the records of each district "underwent considerable and annual alterations, having in many instances been augmented and in others diminished."[51] However, in 1778, having spent two years gathering a vast corpus of materials, the Commission was disbanded for reasons that are still unclear.[52]

Company officials became increasingly sensitive to the representation of territorial divisions in the revenue records. Efforts were made to systematize these records by ensuring that territorial divisions were insulated from mutations in the revenue records. In 1789, the Board of Revenue instructed Archibald Montgomerie, the Collector of

Saran District in Bihar, to take careful note of administrative divisions and sub-divisions (such as *parganas* and *tappas*) when making revenue settlements.[53] In 1791 the Amended Code of Regulations for the Decennial Settlement of Bengal and Bihar instructed the collector of every district in Bengal and Bihar to establish a fixed arrangement of divisions such as *parganas*, *tarafs*, *taluks* and *kismuts* within each *zamindari*. *Zamindars* and *taluqdars* were also disallowed from making any alterations to these divisions, regarding their extent, designation or disposition. These regulations also stipulated that the revenue accounts were to be systematized according to *parganas*, with the accounts of the internal divisions of a *pargana* being inserted into the account register of that particular *pargana*, and not any other.[54] Similar attempts were made to preserve territorial continuity in record keeping in the North-Western Provinces. In 1815, when the Company decided to allow the reappointment of *patwaris* (village accountants) in these provinces, it added the caveat that these *patwaris* should either be appointed to separate villages or any number of *contiguous* villages.[55] Later, in 1820, it was decided that every *pargana* would have three registers for recording information pertaining to estates (*mahals*), rent-free lands (*lakhiraj*) and villages (*mauzas*).[56] By the 1840s, the arrangement of records witnessed further systematization. In 1840 the Sadr Board of Revenue in the North-Western Provinces issued instructions to its Commissioners of Revenue about the maintenance of records and registration, which can be gleaned from selections in the handbook titled *Circular Orders by the Sudder Board of Revenue, North West Provinces Addressed to Commissioners of Revenue on Records and Registration* (1840):

> In preparation of Reports intended for the Boards Office, or for transmission to Government from your divisions, you are requested to adopt the arrangement of collectorates which is given in the Appendix. This geographical arrangement has been enjoined by orders of government to ensure facility of reference.[57]
>
> The records are to be kept parganawar and mauzawar […] A separate shelf or space is to be set apart for each pergunnah, and the name of the pergunnah is to be clearly and durably written both on the outside of the door or the press and on front of the shelf or shelves on which the records of that pergunnah may be arranged.[58]

Such measures highlight the Company's determination to carefully reiterate the geography of its territories in the organization of its records. Therefore, even prior to the mapping exercises of the nineteenth century, Company officials tried to put a halt – *in the revenue record* – to the back-and-forth movement of villages from one *tappa* or *pargana* to another. They had realized that these records did not allow them to grasp the contours, layout and internal divisions; in a word, the *complete* architecture of the territories they had acquired. It took time for this realization to dawn on them, as the Company's slow progress in this area was marked not by any inherent teleology but by contests, dissonances, contradictions and contingencies. In fact, the insertion of this distinct spatial vision into the Company's revenue records (or those of other indigenous states) constitutes a potential area of study in its own right, which falls outside the scope of this present investigation. Indeed, I would suggest that these exercises must not be quickly dismissed as instances of administrative "rationality" or "reform;" rather,

they announced the casting of a distinct territorial order into the organization and maintenance of governmental records. Such an expression of territory outside the cartographic medium of maps formed part of a process by which a new territorial archive was created in South Asia – whereby the territories of the colonial state came to be viewed as a unified and emboxed whole.[59] Under colonial rule, the patchy, discontinuous, ill-defined and overlapping territories of precolonial states in South Asia would be gradually rearranged in an effort to constitute the continuous and well-defined geographical frame of the modern state – perfectly consistent in all its parts.[60] In doing this, the colonial state created a new grid of intelligibility – of governmentality – whereby state power was exercised through new routines, procedures, instruments, tactics, technologies and vocabularies to control space, populations and resources.[61]

The territorial disputes that led to the Anglo–Gorkha War reveal how struggles over agrarian entitlements and political power informed processes of statemaking and the constitution of territory. We need an expanded notion of cartographic agency that is not confined to the work of mapmakers and surveying institutions but embraces elite and subaltern agents inhabiting times and places that have not always been included within the dominant narratives of nations, states, kingdoms and their surveying departments.[62] It is social agents such as these that co-produced the cultures of governance of the time that in turn produced the disjointed territories and geographies of the early colonial state. The English East India Company, in order to render these territories legible, was forced to initiate an ultimately ill-coordinated and even incomplete project of territorial reordering that would persist well into the twenty-first century, long after the demise of British power in the subcontinent. Consequently, the latter half of this book will then move away from a discussion of the territorial politics of the Anglo–Gorkha frontier to examine the spatial qualities of precolonial territorial divisions and the measures that both the colonial and the Gorkhali state took to reconstitute their territories.

4. The Anglo–Gorkha War (1814–16)

In the second half of the eighteenth century both the English East India Company and the Himalayan state of Gorkha witnessed a period of rapid territorial expansion. By 1814, Gorkha's territorial possessions stretched between the River Tista in the east and the Sutlej in the west. In the process it conquered or reduced to a state of dependency a number of hill kingdoms such as Lamjung, Parbat, Kaski, Tanahu, Makwanpur, Kumaon and Garhwal.[63] In 1765, when the English East India Company acquired the right to collect revenue (*diwani*) from the provinces of Bihar and Bengal, its territorial frontier stretched across the foothills of the Himalayas to nestle alongside Gorkha's Tarai possessions, while including a number of little kingdoms such as Palpa and Bettiah.[64] Following this, there arose numerous territorial disputes along the Anglo–Gorkha frontier that became particularly acrimonious between 1800 and 1814. While the Anglo–Gorkha boundary disputes were varied in their expression, history and duration, this study will only explore the disputes that arose at two places: the Champaran–Tarriani and the Gorakhpur–Butwal sections of the frontier (see Map 1.1).[65] These disputes proved to be particularly intractable despite the series of

Plate 1.1 Gorkhali prime minister Bhim Sen Thapa, 1806–1837 CE

Source: William Wilson Hunter, *Life of Brian Houghton Hodgson, British Resident at the Court of Nepal* (London: John Murray, 1896), 131.

Plate 1.2 Portrait of Sir David Ochterlony (1758–1825 CE), 1818 CE

79 × 72.5 cm. Oil on canvas by Robert Home (1752–1834). Reproduced by permission of the British Library © British Library Board.
Source: Prints & Drawings F1063, India Office Records, Asia, Pacific & Africa Collections, British Library.

investigations and diplomatic efforts undertaken by the two states. Finally, in October 1814, Gorkhali troops launched an attack on the Company's police stations along the Gorakhpur–Butwal frontier, killing a number of its police officers. Shortly after, on 1 November 1814, the English East India Company declared war on Gorkha. After facing some initial setbacks, the Company's forces gradually wrested territories from the Gorkhalis and by April 1815 had ousted them from their western territories of Kumaon and Garhwal. By the end of that year, the Gorkhalis had sued for peace, and the Treaty of Sugauli was concluded in December 1815. However, the failure of the authorities at Kathmandu, led by Prime Minister Bhim Sen Thapa, to ratify this treaty led to a resumption of hostilities in January 1816 (see Plate 1.1). Under the leadership of Major-General David Ochterlony (see Plate 1.2), the Company's forces made rapid advances through Gorkha's Eastern Tarai districts, capturing the forts of Hetauda, Makwanpur and Hariharpur. Alarmed by the sudden advance of the Company's armies on the capital, the Gorkhalis capitulated and hastily ratified the Treaty of Sugauli on 4 March 1816, bringing the war to an end. The Treaty of Sugauli resulted in the loss of Gorkha's western dominions and most of its Tarai lands in the south. The British also established a permanent presence in Nepal through the appointment of a Resident at Kathmandu. Subsequently, and more significantly, they commenced demarcating the Anglo–Gorkha boundary in 1816. For the next five years its officials would painstakingly etch this linear boundary on the ground, marking it with masonry pillars that survive to this day.

Map 1.2 "A Map of the Routes by which General Sir David Ochterlony's Army advanced in Three Divisions towards Mukwanpoor (Nipaul) in February 1816," 1820 CE

By Lt. G. Lindesay. 68.6 × 81.3 cm. Scale = four miles to one inch. Forests are shown in color with important places in red. Reproduced by permission of the British Library © British Library Board. Source: India Office Map Collection X/2983, Indian Office Records, Asia, Pacific & Africa Collections, British Library.

The Anglo–Gorkha War (1814–16) has attracted considerable attention from historians who have studied it largely from military, political and diplomatic perspectives, with a strong focus on narratives of military engagements, diplomatic maneuverings and nationalist sentiments.[66] Most historians of Nepal have viewed the war as the culmination of modern Gorkha's territorial expansion, which came to an end in 1816 with the defeat of Gorkha.[67] However, less stated is the view that the disputes surrounding the Anglo–Gorkha War (1814–16) also offer a unique opportunity to explore questions of statemaking and spatiality. To be fair, potential connections between questions of spatiality and the Anglo–Gorkha War have been suggested, albeit fleetingly, by scholars such as Ludwig Stiller and Mary Des Chene. Stiller briefly discusses the contested notions of political territory that the two states grappled with, and the subsequent attempts of the British to devise linear boundaries.[68] Mary DesChene's cultural history of the "Gurkhas" makes the astute observation that "Neither the idea of connected territory nor the concept of a 'line of frontier' entered into the Gorkhali understanding of

possessions."[69] However, barring these interventions, scant attention has been paid to the spatial dynamics that underwrote the cultures of governance and process of statemaking along the Anglo–Gorkha frontier.

As a first step in that direction, the Anglo–Gorkha War needs to be viewed as a "diagnostic event" – one that reveals the ongoing dismantling and/or creation of structures. Because diagnostic events might be indicators that other more complex and hard-to-discern forces are at work, they will require careful inspection and analysis.[70] Extrapolating from this, I argue, once the rhetoric surrounding the war has been cleared, that the Anglo–Gorkha territorial disputes actually encoded struggles over the geographical construction of the state. Our understanding of the war needs to be liberated from the neat typologies of current military, diplomatic and nationalist histories so that it can yield insights into the production of territory that are framed within a cultural history of statemaking, war and space. Consequently, the Anglo–Gorkha disputes serve as a signpost of deeper territorial dynamics and cultural transformations being worked out during the long arc of British colonial rule on the Indian subcontinent.[71]

In South Asia, the English East India Company's acquisition of the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1765 inaugurated its formal engagement with questions pertaining to the organization and knowledge of its territories. It would take the Company many decades to fully grasp the fact that the precolonial entitlements to land, loyalty, tribute and taxes it had inherited from the Mughals had undeniable consequences for the organization and knowledge of its territories. Company officials increasingly discovered that their territorial possessions were patchy, discontinuous and constantly shifting, with ill-defined boundaries. They perceived a growing need to simplify and make legible these fluid territories using a host of policies and practices that would later include surveying and mapmaking. The Gorkhalis, on their part, asserted their territorial claims not in terms of some fixed unchanging naturalized geographical template for the state, but against a shifting panoply of agrarian entitlements and practices they laid claim to, and that had for a long time organized territory in the South Asian world. The Anglo–Gorkha War provides a unique opportunity to diagnose questions pertaining to the changing geographical construction of states in early colonial South Asia. The war was one of those contentious markers that inaugurated a colonial project of territorial redrawing that has persisted to this day in South Asia. The long-drawn process used the tool of modern surveying to generate a firm geographical framework for the state that was capable of representation on maps. The establishment of the Anglo–Gorkha boundary following the cessation of hostilities in 1816 upheld and enforced this new principle of territorial representation and organization on the subcontinent.

5. Structure of the Book

Statemaking and Territory in South Asia has been arranged into seven chapters including a conclusion. This opening chapter presents the central arguments of the book concerning the cultural constitution of territory, while drawing on disciplines such as history, human geography and cultural anthropology. The premise of the book is that examining the territorial disputes leading to the Anglo–Gorkha War provides a promising entry

point to explore the cultures of governance that produced the entangled territories of the two states. Chapter 2 unpacks the environmental relationships that informed the constitution of territory along the Anglo–Gorkha frontier. More specifically, it explores the relationships between land, labor and agrarian activity, all of which left their imprint on the organization of territory. Chapters 3 and 4 explore how relationships concerning tribute, taxation, landed tenures and other agrarian entitlements produced disjointed and entangled borderlands along the Champaran–Tarriani and the Gorakhpur–Butwal sections of the Anglo–Gorkha frontier. Historically, such relationships had created a multiplicity of claims to patches of land at multiple scales – local, regional and inter-state. Various regional, petty kingdoms and the English East India Company would find themselves entangled within the web of such conflicting claims and rights. Chapter 5 shifts the focus of the narrative away from the Anglo–Gorkha frontier to make broader observations of the variables, operating at many scales, that produced the dispersed bodies and fluid boundaries of South Asian states. These territorial divisions were a composite of various forms of knowledge and practice that did not constitute the coherent continuous geographical envelope that Company officials were so anxious to discern. The colonial state then initiated a long-drawn, ill-coordinated and largely incomplete process of territorial reorganization that would uphold the now-dominant principle that states possessed well defined and immutable geographical frames. Consequently, Chapter 6 shifts gear to focus on the projects of territorial reorganization undertaken by both the colonial state in North India and the Gorkhali (later Nepali) government in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The history of colonial cartography then surfaces not as an overdrawn homogenous metropolitan project-in-the-making that was thrust on a passive, colonized landscape. Rather, the work of surveying departments was complemented, confounded and sometimes even preceded by the work of numerous agents, drawn from a variety of locations, as they co-produced the space of the state. In the end, this book seeks to connect the dots between two narratives: the first about how certain forms of territorial organization precipitated the Anglo–Gorkha War, which in turn fed a second longer narrative about the emergence of a specific colonial vision of territory that would gradually try and overshadow other, older arrangements in South Asia.