SOLDIERS, LABOURERS AND AGRICULTURISTS:THE GURKHAS IN THE NORTHEAST FRONTIER, 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES

Thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled *'SOLDIERS, LABOURERS, AGRICULTURISTS: GURKHAS IN THE NORTHEAST FRONTIER, 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES.'* submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is an original work and has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this university or any other university.

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CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this thesis be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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This as everthing else is dedicated to Baba

Contents

INTRODUCTION

The history of the Gorkhas[1] has received wide spread attention of many military writers in the last 170 years. In the colonial period, it was the military ethnographers and travellers such as Eton Vansittart,[2] Brian Hogdson,[3] Francis Buchanan Hamilton,[4] Perceval Landon,[5] William Brooke Northley etc., who gave extensive accounts of the land and the people of the Gorkha state. These works served as regimental handbooks besides helping in understanding the region. In the post colonial period the nature of the literature has shifted towards regimental histories, such as Chris Bellany's *Gurkhas: Special force,*[6] Byron Farwell's *The Gurkhas,* [7] J.B.R Nicholson's *The Gurkha rifles,*[8] Sir Francis Tuker *Gorkhas, The Story of the Gorkhas of Nepal,*[9] Ian A. Macdonald, Hannah Rought-Brooks, Rebekah Wilson, *Gurkhas the forgotten veterans,*[10] A profusion of documentary films on the Gorkhas have also been made in recent years.[11]

What remains unchanged or common to all these works is the constant image of the Gorkhas as the "brave", "loyal", "school boyish", "cheerful" Gorkha who, under the guidance of the British have been able to achieve greatness in the battlefield.

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[1] Many alternate spellings have been used: Gurkhas, Gorkhas, Goorkha, Goorkhwala The spelling was standardised to "Gurkha" by the British army, which began the practice of doing so after 1857. However, Nepali historians have preferred the spelling "Gorkha", which I, too, employ to avoid confusion.

[2] Eden Vansittart, *Notes on Nepal,* Asian Educational Services, 1896.

[3] Brian Hogdson, *Essays on Language, Literature and Religion of Nepal and Tibet*, Trubner and Co. 1874.

[4] Francis Buchanan Hamilton, *An account of the kingdom of Nepaul,* Asian educational services, 1992.

[5] Perceval Landon, *Nepal*, Asian educational services, 1992.

[6] Chris Bellany, *Gurkhas: Special force,*Hackette, 2011.

[7] Byron Farwell *The Gurkhas,* Norton, 1990.

[8] J.B.R Nicholson, *The Gurkha rifles,* Bloomsbury,1974.

[9]Sir Francis Tuker,.Gorkha: The Story of the Gurkhas of Nepal, Pilgrim publication, 2009

[10]Ian A. Macdonald, Hannah Rought-Brooks, Rebekah Wilson, *Gurkhas the forgotten veterans*, Gurkha Army Ex-Servicemen's Organization for the International Commission of Inquiry on Discrimination against British Gurkhas, 2005.

[11] Documentary films such as BBC's "Gurkhas", Discovery channel's The Bravest of the Brave, Deadliest Warrior, French Foreign Legion V/s the Gurkhas etc.

In academia too, the topic of the Gorkhas has received reinvigorated interest in recent decades due to the growing assertiveness of the Indian Gorkha community and the renewed demand for a separate state of "Gorkhaland". There have been various works by many scholars such as Tanka Bahadur Subba,[12] A.C Sinha,[13] Imdad Hussain[14] Sajal Nag[15] etc. These works mainly deal with the migration and settlement patterns of the Gorkhas in Northeast India and other parts of the country.

While the military historians and the academicians seem to work on two disparate topics, the point where their works converge is with regard to certain assumptions of the British relations with the Gorkhas. To begin with, there is the understanding that the Gorkha was a primordial identity existing prior to the arrival of the British in the reion; from this, the idea of who constituted the Gorkha is assumed to have remained constant. The second assumption is the idea that the British discovered the Gorkhas in the War of 1816 and were highly impressed with them. Most of the writers such as Imdad Hussain,[16] Chris Bellamy[17] has written about the British recognition of the bravery of the Gorkha soldiers in the war and the English desire to induct them in their forces. It is thus mainly the martial qualities of the Gorkha that were highlighted as forming the main emphasis of the colonial writings of the Gorkhas. This in many ways is a simplification of the manner in which the Gorkhas were imagined.

If the thesis had to be summarised in a single line than one would say that, the thesis, in the main, seeks to see why and how the Gorkhas were used to colonise the Northeast frontiers. A simple enquiry perhaps, but there are several issues that the questions raise, namely, who were the Gorkhas? What were the relations between the Gorkhas and the British? What was the condition that existed in the Northeast frontiers that necessiciated control and why and how were the Gorkhas used for this pupose?

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[12] Tanka B. Subba *Living the Nepali Diaspora in India: An Autobiographical*: Zeitschrift für Ethnologie, Bd. 133, H. 2 (2008), pp. 213-232.

[13] A.C Sinha, *Studying the various factors of Nepali migration to India*, A.C Sinha"Nepalis in the Northeast, Indus Publishing house, (2007), pp 31-37.

[14] Imdad Hussain, *Soldiers and Settlers*, in "Nepalis in the Northeast, Indus Publishing house, (2007), pp 54-67.

[15] Sajal Nag, *Fei-sation of the Nepalis of the North east* "Nepalis in the Northeast, Indus Publishing house, (2007), pp 184-190.

[16] Imdad Hussain, op-cit, p 23.

[17] Chris Bellamy, op-cit, p 45.

Broadly, the thesis will attempt to understand the manner in which the people of the Gorkha state migrated from the central Himalayan region to the Northeast frontiers. The creation of the idea of the "Gorkha", how they were employed by the British in various capacities, such as policing the frontier, solving the labour problem, expanding agriculture, dairy farming etc., to help the British in settling and colonizing the otherwise "wild" frontier will be analyzed The thesis will endeavor to go beyond just a plain narrative of the Gorkhas serving the various regiments, settling in the region and the number of Gorkha labourers but will rather attempt to understand the manner in which the idea of the "Gorkha" was constructed by the colonial rulers which the construction of the Gorkhas as an ideal group to to be used in the "wild" and "primitive" frontiers. As Nicholas Dirks [18] writes, the colonial ethnographic understanding of India and its resulting polices was the result of the dominant theories and discourse of of martial race, biological determinism, colonial ethnography etc. Thus it would also be interesting to fit the construction of the Gorkha in the larger colonial understanding of the races and methods of governance and control, and the resultant government policies.

In the following sections, I first give a more elaborate account of the existing historiography as well as the sources that I consult for the thesis. I then go on to give a summary of the chapters that will form the thesis.

Historiography

According to J.L Chapple, there is no other formation of the old Indian army that "has received more printer's ink" than the Gorkhas.[19] Lionel Chaplan further writes that no other British regiment has been written about as much as the Gorkhas. Thus there is no dearth of work on the history of the various Gurkha regiments serving both the Indian army as well as the British army. Some of the important historians of Gorkha history incude Tony Gould's[20], Ian A. Macdonald, Hannah Rought-Brooks and Mike Chappell, Francis Ivan,[21]Scott Leathart,[22] and Edward Bishop.[23] These works usually

[18] Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, Cambridge university Press, 2007, pp 24-25.
[19] J. L. Chapple, *The Battle Honours Awarded to Gurkha Regiments in British Service*, Gurkha Museum, 1978, pp 34-46.
[20] Tony Gould *Imperial warriors, Britain and the Gurkhas,* Oxford, 2000.
[21] Francis Ivan, *Gorkha: The Story of the Gurkhas of Nepal*, Pilgrim publication, 2009

chart the history of the origin of the Gorkha's recruitment in the British army and go on to explain the development of the Gorkha regiments under the British in the 19th and 20th century. The major problem with regimental history is the fact they do not explore the manner in which the idea of the "Gorkha" evolved in the colonial imagination and the impact of various contempory theories on race and biological determinism had an impact on this change. Further, by the very nature of regimental history the works usually only focuses on the military use of the Gorkhas without exploring the other areas where the Gorkhas were used especially in the Northeast frontier as labourers, settlers, agriculturalists etc.

There are no major works on the history of the Gorkha settlement in the Northeast. Most of the works are in the form of articles and compendiums of papers presented at symposiums, seminars and conferences, such as *Indian Nepalis issues and perspectives* edited by T.B Subba, A.C Sinha, G.S Nepal and D.R Nepal[24] and *The Nepalis in the Northeast India A community in search of identity*, edited by A.C Sinha and T.B Subba.[25] A.C Sinha's *Studying the various factors of Nepali migration to India*[26] deals with the the various push and pull factors involved in the intial migration of the Gorkhas from the Nepal to the Northeast frontier of the Britsh India. He further talks about the Gorkhas taking up agriculture dairy farming and their use as labour in the region. He conclude his article by speaking of the dilemma of the Indian Gorkhas in the comtemprary India. Tanka Bahadur Subba's *The Nepalis in the Northeast India, Political aspirations and ethnicity*[27] too talks of the Gurkha migration and focuses on the migration of various groups from Nepal, who, he stresses, did not migrate at the same time and for the same reasons. Imdad Hussain's *Soldiers and Settlers*[28] writes of the use of the Gorkha in the various local police militia in the 19th century and their expanding role in policing the frontier during the

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[22] Scott Leathard, *With the Gurkhas: India, Burma, Singapore, Malaya, Indonesia, 1940-1950,* Pentland press, 1996.

[23] Edward Bishop, *Better to die than to be a coward: The story of the Gurkhas,* New English Library, 1976.

[24] A.C Sinha, T.B.Subba, G.S. Nepal, D.R. Nepal (eds.), *Indian Nepalis, Issues and perspectives,* Concept Publishing House, 2009.

[25] A.C Sinha and T.B. Subba (eds), The Nepalis in the Northeast India, A community in search of identity, Concept Publishing house, 2007.

[26] A.C Sinha, *Studying the various…* pp 31-54.

[27] T.B Subba *Living the Nepali*…,pp 54-67.

[28] Imdad Hussain, op-cit., pp 67-106.

said period. Kishan Lal Pradhan's *Gorkhas of Mizoram*[29] writes of the settlement of the Gorkhas in the Lushai hills in the 19th century and the changing manner in which they were viewed by the local tribes in the 19th and 20th centuries. The major shortcoming of these works are that they are a plain narrative of the Gorkha settlements and migration to the region without exploring the colonial context and the circumstances which led to them being settled there. These works stress on the positive impact of the Gorkha settlement in the region and hence seem to lose a bit of objectivity in understanding, both the reasons for the Gorkha settlement in the region as well as its impact.

Sources:

The main primary documents for the study of the agrarian relations in the Gorkha state were compiled in Mahesh Chandra Regmi's Regmi Research Series, which has over a thousand primary documents on Nepal translated in English. These documents were collected from the various departments of the Nepal Government from the early 1960's till 1990. For the British use of the Gorkhas in their army and for the colonial perception of the Gorkhas the primary documents that are used are the various documents listed under the titles of Political Consultations, Military Consultations, Foreign Political Consultations, Foreign Military Consultations, Foreign Secret Consultations, Home Police Proceedings are those found in the National Archives of India, New Delhi. The Bengal Judicial Proceedings found in the West Bengal State Archives, Kolkota, The Assam Secretariat Records which can be found in the Assam State Archives, Guwahati, the records found in Mizoram State Archives, Aizawl, Manipur State Archives, Imphal, Meghalaya State Archives, Shillong, Nagaland State Archives, Kohima will all be used as primary sources.

The pulished works such as L.W Shakespeare's "*History of the Assam rifles*",[30] Eton Vansittarts "*Notes on Nepal*"[31] B.H Hodgson's *Origins and classification of the*

[29] Kishan Lal Pradhan, The Gorkhas in Mizoram, in A.C Sinha, T.B.Subba, G.S. Nepal, D.R. Nepal (eds.), *Indian Nepalis, Issues and perspectives*, Concept Publishing House, 2009 pp 295-304.

[30] L.W Shakespeare, *History of the Assam rifles*, Asian Publishing House, 1909.
[31] Eton Vansittart, *Notes on Nepal*, Asian Publishing House, 1896.

military tribes of Nepal",[32] Perceval Landons "*Nepal*"[33] will also be used as primary sources.

As stated earlier, the attempt in the thesis is to provide a nuanced understanding of relations between the Gorkhas and the British and the evolution in the manner in which the former was viewed by the later. To this end, I divide the thesis into the following chapters. In chapter 1, the agrarian relations and land revenue structure has been discussed to determine the reasons for the migration of Gorkhas to British India . Here the main argument is that the expansion of the Gorkha state in the central Himalayan region in the late 18th and 19th century brought under their rule a large group of people who had differing ideas of religion, social organization, state structure and land ownership and revenue. The land revenue structure by the state of Gorkha on these people forced the people to move out of the state and migrate to the dominions of the British in India, the Northeast in particular. Chapter 2 will look into the evolution of the idea of the "Gorkha" as an efficient and loyal soldier. The Chapter will argue that the British idea of the "Gorkha" was an evolving one and will look at the colonial conditions and other factors that helped in the creation of this idea. The thesis then goes on to discuss the colonial engagements and employ of the Gorkhas in chapter 3. This is done by looking at the use of the Gorkhas to police the frontier. In chapter 3 the use of the Gorkhas in expanding agriculture and dairy farming, in the Northeast as will their use to solve the labour crisis that the British faced in the region.

Chapterization

CHAPTER 1 - The Exodus: The Gorkha state and the peasant migration , 18th - 19th centuries

In the 18th century, Gorkha was one of the several small states, numbering over fifty, inhabiting the central Himalayan region now known as Nepal. All the states were struggling against one another for control of lands, trade routes and the right to mint coins. The traditional historiography of Nepal has treated the expansion by Prithvinarayan Shah (c.1725-1775) of the Gorkha state as an attempt to unify Nepal

[32] B.H. Hodgson, (1874) Essays on the Languages, Literature and Religion of Nepal and Tibet. Trubner and Co., London, 1874, pp 65-78.
[33] Perceval Landon, *Nepal*, Asian Publishing services, 1982.

and to form a larger Gorkha identity. Historians such as D.R. Regmi have attributed nationalistic tendencies to Prithvinarayan Shah and have suggested that since he was not an outsider, his attempts at unification cannot be regarded as a conquest.[34] Though Regmi's nationalist approach has been criticized by other historians, such as Stiller[35] and Whelpton,[36] his idea of unification of Nepal by the Gorkha state has more or less been accepted by most historians. This concept of "unification" as used by Regmi, Stiller, Vaidya [37] and others presupposes that the central Himalayan region was linguistically, socially or culturally a homogenous region and was simply just politically divided. However, this was not the case as shall be shown in the chapter. Moreover, the idea of unification in the context of the Gorkha state of the 18th century leaves no room for discussion of the conflicts that took place when the state tried to enforce its ideas on socio-political-cultural and land ownership on the subjugated groups.[38]

This chapter will also focus on the land revenue structure of the Gorkha state as well as the conflicts and contradictions within the Gorkha state and the reasons that caused most of them especially the Kirats to move to the British dominions in Darjeeling and further east, to Assam and the hills in the Northeastern frontier.[39]

CHAPTER 2 - THE GORKHAS IMAGINED: The Development of the Colonial Imagination of the Gorkhas through the 19th Century

The objective of this chapter is to understand the manner in which the Gorkha battalions evolved during the period between 1815 and 1861 and the manner in which the idea of a Gorkha as a loyal, brave and an efficient soldier developed in the same period. I do this by first looking at the process of incorporation of the Gorkhas, first as irregulars and then as regulars and then go on to speak about the manner in which they were characterized by the British. Irregulars were essentially lower paid soldiers who were not given the same facilities as the regular soldiers. In the early 18th century they were given a dark green uniform as opposed to the red uniform of the regular

[34] D.R Regmi, *Modern Nepal*, Farmi Publication,(1967), pp 45-60.
[35] Ludwig F Stiller, *Silent cry*, Asian Education Publication, 1980.
[36] John Whelpton, *The History of Nepal*, Asian Education Publication, 1997.
[37] T.R Vaidya, *The Social history of Nepal*, Asian Education Publication, 1991.
[38] Kumar Pradhan, *The Gorkha Conquest: The Process Consequence of the Unification of Nepal, with particular reference to Eastern Nepal*, Calcutta 1991.
[39] K.L Pradhan, Op-cit, pp 45-47.

British infantrymen. Susan Bayly writes that the British in the 18th and 19th centuries maintained a large group of irregular units drawn from traditional armed groups such as the Jats and the Ahirs who supported the regular regiments . The regular regiments were the higher paid soldiers who were given the red coat uniform. In the early 19th century, there were two regular British armies in India, the East India Company's army otherwise known as the Indian army and the King's Regiments. The King's Regiment had mostly European soldiers whereas the the Indian army had mostly Indian sepoys. The pay and priviledges of the the Indian sepoys and the European soldiers were different but was higher than that paid the irregulars

The chapter will try and look at the manner in which the idea of the Gorkha evolved within the British imagination and will also try and explain why and how this idea was not one that was constant through the colonial period. This chapter forms the background to the later chapters as an explanation as to why the Gorkhas were used in the Northeast.

CHAPTER 3: Securing the Northeast Frontier: Changing Dynamics of Colonial Control in the Northeast and the use of the Gorkhas as Military Labour

The establishment of tea plantations in Darjeeling and Assam in the 19th century was an important accomplishment for the British. The success of these plantations would mean that their dependence on China, which had proved to be an unreliable trading partner, at best, would decrease. This, and the discovery of various other resources, such as coal, timber, oil in the Northeast frontier, transformed the region from being a wild borderlands into a strategic frontier.[40]

The Northeast frontier was now to be maintained and governed carefully as it had now become an important part of the commercial network of the British empire in India. The threat to the region, in the 19th century, was perceived by the colonial powers to originate from two sources, the Burmese on the eastern front and the local "wild", "primitive" and "savage" tribes, such as the Angamis, Lushais, Singpos, Khasis etc. The state of Manipur was deemed important by the British to keep the Burmese away from the region and act as a buffer state, while at the same time keeping at bay the local tribes that constantly raided the English settlements and

[40] Lipokmar Dzichvu, Roads and rule. Colonialism and the politics of access in the Naga hills, 1826-1918, M.Phil Dissertation, submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Master of Philosophy, pp 67-71.

plantations[41] and threatened the communication and supply lines to Manipur. The commercial potential of the region meant infrastructure in the region had to be developed so that tea and other resources could be properly extracted and taken to be markets. The infrastructure such as roads, especially in the hills, as Lipokmar Dzuvichu argues,[42] meant that the hills would be more accessible and it would be easier to control the tribes. Developing infrastructure like roads and railways meant employing labour on a large scale. However, unlike other parts of India, there was no readily available labour market in the Northeast. The English tried engaging the local tribes, such as the Nagas to work as labourers, yet this did not seem to work. Many of the groups in the Northeast were not interested in wage labour as their economy was not based on a cash nexus making working for wages unattractive. There were still tribes such as the Angamis and Lushais who continued to oppose the British and finally, even if the tribals agreed to work as labourers they would go back during the harvesting seasons bringing work to a standstill. The next major problem that the British faced in the frontier was the problem of attaining food supply for their troops stationed there. Very few tribes, such as the Angamis, had a concept of surplus food production, most of the tribes would deny selling of their food grains and would often hide it if an expedition was sent against them. Thus, the British continuously struggled to attain food grains to feed their army. Although by the latter half of the 19th century the British had been able to subdue a few tribes who then allied themselves with the British and were supplying them with food grains and labour, it was beginning to be felt that it may be feasible to bring in other groups of labourers from other parts of India who could then settle the region.[43]

The role of the Gurkhas in the policing of the frontier increased over a period of time and it corresponded with the development of the overall idea of the Gorkhas as a fine soldier. Towards the end of the 19th century the army began to oppose the recruitment of the Gorkha in the frontier police and raised the idea of the 'superior' Gorkhas (Magar, Khas, Gurung) and the 'inferior' Gorkha (Bahuns, Rais and Limbus) - an idea that emanated from the idea of biological determinism and martial race theories. By

[41] Yengkhom Jilangamba Singh, Savage Encounters Frontiers of colonialism in the North-East, Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Master of Philosophy, pp 45-49.

[42] Lipokmar Dzuvichu, op-cit, pp 68 67.

[43] Lipokmar Dzichvu, op-cit, pp 46-65.

the end of the 19th century the Gorkhas had become a vital part of the security arrangement of the Northeastern frontier.

CHAPTER 4: Settling the Northeast frontier: The Gorkhas and Nepalis as part of the Colonial settlement strategy

The British, as mentioned before, suffered from the problem of food grain supply and a need for a stable ally in the region. To address this twin problem they initially encouraged the retired Gorkha soldiers to settle in the region and only later began to encourage migration from the state of Gorkha into the Northeast frontier leading to massive migrations in the 19th century The various groups coming from the state of Gorkha first settled in Darjeeling and then moved to the Northeast frontier. An argument could be made that the situation was not very different from the situation created in Britian during the industrial revolution where large groups of people moved from rural areas to the urban to form proletariat labour. Yet the situation was not as easily explained or simple, since the Gorkhas and Nepalis were not used as labour but also as groups to settle and secure the region. Thus from being peasants in a feudal set up they turned into peasants in a colonial set-up. This chapter will see the manner in which the Gorkhas and Nepalis were used as a part of the settlement strategy of the colonial state, a process which pre-dated the Gorkha and Nepali migration into the Northeast. This chapter also will focus on the manner in which the Gorkhas were used to solve the various labour problems that the British faced in the Northeast frontiers. The colonial state engaged in several projects such as road building for which it needed labour and with it also discovered several resources such as coal, which needed a dedicated labour force. Here too, the idea of the Gorkha as a loyal and strong group was an overwhelming reason why the Gorkhas were seen as a group to be used. The relationship however was not a smooth affair between, the Home Department, the Assam State Government and the Military as the latter believed that the Gorkhas were better used in the armed forces for which they were already facing shortages.

The Concluding Chapter will visit some of the issues that were highlighted in the thesis.

Chapter 1

The Exodus: The Gorkha state and the Peasant migration, 18th-19th centuries

"Where shall we go? Where do the wretched of Nepal go to? .... Moglan (India)"

Ani Deurali Runcha ('The weeping for home')[44]

Introduction

The aspect that one needs to explore before one ventures into the "whys" and " hows" of the use of the Gorkhas in the British colonial army and their settlement in Northeast frontiers, is the conditions under which which the people, who later constituted the "Gorkhas", were forced to migrate out of the central Himalayan region which represented the Gorkha state. It is important to remember here that (until the early 19th C before the British created the Gorkha Regiment) the term "Gorkha" only denoted a state and, at most, a dynasty, not as it would later mean under the colonial state - a community. Many of the scholars who have dealt with the migration of the Gorkhas,

[44] Ani Deaurali Runcha is a play written by Ram Prasad Mukhiya, first staged in 1970 in Kathmandu, http://www.myrepublica.com/news/21831/?categoryId=81 accessed on 19th June 2017, 4:15 pm

such as A.C.Sinha[45] have often settled the issue with a simple idea of the push factors, without really elaborating into the matter. A thorough analysis of the state of Gorkha and reasons that caused people to leave, is something that has been missing in their work. We shall, in this chapter, deal with the land revenue system, the taxation structure, agrarian relations and the issues of forced labour and slavery of the peasants in the Gorkha state in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. These issues will be seen as possible reasons for causing disruption in the rural areas, which thus facilitated migration.

A the time when colonialism was beginning to establish its dominance in the sub-continent in the 18th century, the state of Gorkha was also beginning to see an expansion.[46] By the first decade of the 19th century, it became one of the largest states ever to be created in the Himalayan region. During the early half of the 19th century, the people began to migrate out of this state and settle in the colonial dominions of the British in the sub-continent. It was a migration that was not the result of a deliberate act of forced displacement by the Gorkha rulers. If anything, they tried to keep the peasants in the land through laws that outlawed people leaving their lands. Neither were the peasants forcibly taken by the colonial powers to settle and work as labourers as they had done with communities in Africa and other groups.[47] Then, what were the reasons that such large number of people left the Gorkha state and travelled to British dominions of the subcontinent in India. The answer to this question perhaps lies in the various processes, social, political and economic, that took place in both the states, Gorkha and the colonial. Dichotomously, the Gorkha state's polices were at once both a forceful reason for peasant migration while the State at the same time wished to prevent migration too. The British colonial government's policies, on the other hand, created conditions that made their dominions in India, especially the Northeast frontier, an attractive region for these peasants to escape to. This chapter, as mentioned before, will focus primarily on the Gorkha state and its land revenue structure. It must be remembered here that the migration was mostly of the peasants

[45] A.C Sinha, *Studying the various factors of Nepali migration to India*, in "Nepalis in the Northeast, , Indus Publishing house,(2007), pp 31-37.

[46] Bipan Chandra, *Essays on Colonialism*, New Delhi (1999), pp 34-59

[47] Ed.Sabine Damir-Geilsdorf, Ulrike Lindner, Gesine Müller, Oliver Tappe, Michael Zeuske *Bonded Labour: Global and Comparative Perspectives (18th-21st Century, ,)*Global Studies, Bielefeld , 2016, pp. 78-101.

from the region, thus any process or policies that impacted them must be seen in detail, to understand their leaving.

Extension of State control over land c.1768-1814

One of the major aspects that almost always had a direct influence on peasants is the land revenue structure of a state. In the pre-Gorkha expansion (c.1768-1816) period, the peasants of Nepal cultivated land on a customary and hereditary basis, especially in the western hills and the valley. The case of the eastern hills demands a solitary focus, which shall be given later in the chapter.[48] The various pre-Gorkha states maintained their contact and control with the peasants through the traditional headmen, who collected the customary rents and other payments and levies, which was later sent to the local authority, be they nobles or officials of the rulers or to the local priest. There also existed a large number of free hold peasants who paid taxes directly to the rulers without any intermediary involved. In the eastern and northern regions there were a large number of people who held land on communal basis, which was known as the *Kipat*. The number of intermediaries, such as jagirdars and zamindars, were quite low and in the case of eastern hills completely non-existent.[49]

During the early phase of Gorkha expansion (c.1768-1776), the new states were generally reluctant to change the existing land revenue system, social system, or, in some cases even the existing political structure. It simply appropriated the role of the apex political head and chief accumulator of revenue. Their main concern seemed to be timely collection of revenue, directly or indirectly, land grants to different categories of people, and making sure the region was kept under their control.[50] The system of land revenue and tenure in most of the central Himalayan region, with the exception of the *Kipat* system in the east seemed to more or less work in this regard. Most of the western hills had the *Birta* and *Jagir* land grants, and the valley and the *Terai* too had similar structure. Therefore the implementation of the initial objectives could be done through simply following what was already present in the region.

During the first decade of the establishment of the Gorkha state (c.1768-1775), *Birta* and *Jagir* land grants became the main framework within which the Gorkha state

[48] Kumar Pradhan, *The Gorkha Conquest; The Process Consequence of the Unification of Nepal, with particular reference to Eastern Nepal*, Calcutta, (1991), p 56.
[49] D.R Regmi, *Modern Nepal*, M.K Mukhopadya, Calcutta, (1968) p 58.
[50] John Whelpton, *The history of Nepal*, New Delhi, (1980) p 98.

based the administration of their newly formed state. As it was an expansionist state, the size of its army and bureaucracy kept expanding. To accommodate such a large military-bureaucracy, it needed massive resources to sustain and, since the economy was still not monetized, the only way to pay the salaries was through land grants. Hence large areas of lands were given as rewards or emoluments to the ever expanding military-bureaucratic structure. As expansion continued, various measures were taken from time to time to increase the area available to the government for the purpose of accommodating the military bureaucracy. This brought the state in direct collision with certain groups in the eastern region, whose land holdings known as *kipat* came in direct conflict with the objective of the Gorkha state to give out lands as *jagir*. It was not just the eastern hills that suffered, however, the nature of the these forms of lands grants lead to the ruination of the peasantry. Thus below we shall deal with the nature of *Birta* and *Jagir* land grants

Birta land grants

In the pre-expansion period of the Gurkha kingdom, the *birta* land grant system was a fairly common form of land grant that could be found all over the central Himalayan region.[51] The rulers of the various states of the region would grant lands to members of the nobility, civil and military officials and other selected groups in the society on whom they depended for the sustenance and continuance of their authority. *Birta* lands were also given in the form of ritual grants, especially to Brahmans to gain religious merit and ritual legitimacy. The Gorkha state continued the *birta* grants but there was an exponential increase once the Gorkha state took over most of the central Himalayan region. It was a significant change from the earlier period where, especially in the Kathmandu valley, even the members of the Royal family had to wait and mortgage the land from the state, to be granted *birta*. Once the rich plains, known as the *terai* too came under the rule of the Gorkhas they began to give land grants out to members of the nobility as well as local level officials. The *birta* land grant was also used as a method of political control by the Gorkha state - any sense of disloyalty or ineffectiveness were punished with withdrawal of land grants and, similarly,

[51] Cf. Birta land grant to Ran Singh Shah, Ashadh Sudi 2, 1821 (June 1764) Ran Singh was the illegitmate son of Prithvinarayan Shah. Book 21 document 12 of the Regmi Research series. (such docments will now be referred to as (21/12) the number of the book followed by the number of the document)

anyone who displayed both loyalty and efficiency were rewarded with *Birta*.[52] Such land grants were also given to existing nobility of those states that came under the control of the Gorkha state such as Jumla, Doti, Dailekh, Bajlung etc,[53] as a means to placate them and win them over to the new ruler. It was also used as method to win over defectors from enemy states.[54] Yet, not all *Birta* lands had political or even ritualistic means behind them, it was also used to extend agricultural production. These sorts of grants were made to persons who organized land reclamation and settlement projects and functioned as revenue collectors.[55] Hence in eastern *Terai* many of the landowners were promised extra *birta* lands if they were able to reclaim virgin forest lands.[56]

Jagir land grants

A term that seems to come more frequently in the land grant documents, especially after the post-Gorkha expansion is *jagir*. It was used primarily as emoluments to the government employees. There began to be a status and privilege assigned to the *jagir* land grants which made most people yearn for it. Prithvi Narayan Shah (c.1723-1775), the ruler of Gorkha and architect of its expansion had directed that lands should be assigned to army personnel so that they remain free from worries of home.[57] A regulation promulgated by the Kathmandu *Darbar* in 1793 directed the military employees should be given cash salaries only if land was not available for assignments as *jagir*.[58] This was probably due to the fact that the region still did not possess a broad-based monetary system and since the administration and the military machinery was ever expanding, *jagirs* along with *birta* were perhaps the only recourse that could be taken to facilitate the expansion.

An important aspect that one must remember here is that the Gorkha expansion was able to bring, for one of the very rare times in the history of that region, a very large part of the Himalayan region under a single rule. This also meant that a large number of diverse social groups came under the rule of a single state. At the same time, the

[52] Cited in : Government of Nepal " Kagaj Janccho (law on official Documents) Gorakhpatra press, 2012 (Part 2, Section 8), p.52.
[53] Located in present day western Nepal
[54] Mahesh Chandra Regmi, An economic History of Nepal, p 39.
[55] Ibid p 39.
[56] *Itihas Prakash*, Part I, pp,12-13.
[57] Dibya Upadesh, p 22.
[58] Foreign Ministry (Jaisi Kotha) Records, Administrative regulations of the government of Nepal, Falgun Badi, 1849 (Febraury 1793) section 12 (1B / 13).

land grants were only given to a few select groups, namely the Brahmans, Chettris and Thakuris especially from the western hill region who now formed the ruling class of the Gorkha state. Other communities like the Gurungs, Magars, Khambus, Limbus, Newars, Tamangs/Murmis etc., were completely ignored. They suffered gradual encroachments on the lands that they had previously held. In the Kathmandu valley, the Newars lost a majority of their land for the construction of temples and other purposes and were given lands in exchange at places that were fairly isolated and outside the towns.[59] This aspect will form an important determinant for migration which will be discussed later.

Privileges and Obligations of *Birta* and *Jagir* holders

The *birta* and *jagir* land holders were entitled to collect the revenue from all the sources in the area that was covered by the grant. In addition to this, they were also granted the right to dispense justice and exact unpaid labour. The minor officials who were given very small plots of land as *jagir* were allowed the right to exact from their tenants miscellaneous presents such as a portion of the newly harvested paddy, wheat, maize and fuel-wood.[60] When large parts were given as *jagir* such as villages or even divisions, they were allowed to exact payments in the form of not only agricultural products but also forest commodities, cottage industry products, animals etc.[61] In Chharkabhot area of Dolpa district in 1799, a royal prince who was assigned the region as his *jagir* obtained falcons partridges, horses, sheep, blankets, carpets and miscellaneous commodities produced in the high Himalayan region.[62] *Birta* owners too had a similar obligations and rights.

The *Jagir* grants and the *birta* grants, both included the obligation to supply troops and weapons to the government. The high ranking officials and nobles who held important positions and were also the royal advisors were asked to,

> … remain ready for service during war or other emergencies, or whenever you are called upon to render

[59] Acquisition of *Birta* lands in Kathmadu for the construction of Jagannath Temple, Baisakh Badi 1, 1854 (April 1797). (25/541-543)
[60] Tenancy right on *Jagir* lands in Bungmati, karthik Sudi 5 1851 (November 1794) (24/468)
[61] Supply of commodities from *Jagir* lands, of Chautariya Ran Udyot Shah in pokhara and elsewhere, Karthik Badi 30, 1856 (November 1799) (23/ 429)
[62] Supply of commodities from the *Jagir* lands of Chautariya Ran Udyot Shah in Chharka, Kartik Badi 30, 1856 (November 1799) (24/430)

> any service to equip forty persons with muskets and have one cannon ready for use.[63]

There were several other such *jagir* grants that were made for specific military purposes, such as some only for the supply of arrows,[64] or of materials required in gunpowder factories.[65] This was seen mostly before and during the Anglo-Gorkha war in 1814-1816, where *birta* owners and *jagirdars* in the eastern *Tarai* were ordered to supply troops in proportion to the size of their holdings. They were further threatened that if the obligation was not fulfilled then their lands would be confiscated.[66]

If the land grants were near the border with British India, they were asked to collect information on India and transmit it to Kathmandu, construct forts or repair existing ones, equip troops with bows and arrows and, assist in the transportation of arms and ammunition. *Jagirs,* hence were used to promote settlements in strategic areas and organised as a military base.[67]

Transport facilities too had to be provided by *jagir* and *birta* holders. [68] They were required to provide transport facilities through their areas as per government's requirements.[69]

At least one category of *birta* grants was categorised for the services required at the royal palace.[70] The services and goods that *jagir* owners whose lands were meant for

[63] Itihas Prakash, Vol 3 Book 2, p 415, Royal order regarding appointment of Amar Singh Thapa and his son as kajis, Baisakh Badi 9 (April 1810) (39/152)

[64] Cf. *Jagir* land grant to Ran Singh Adhikari for supply of arrows, Bhadra Sudi 30, 1850 (September 1793) (36/17)
[65] *Jagir* land grant to inhabitants of thimi for supply of charcoal and materials to gunpowder factory, Aswin Badi 13, 1854 (September 1797) (40/13)
[66] Order to *Birta* Owners and Jagirdars. In Bara, Parsa and Rautahat to supply recruits, Ashad Badi 12, 1871 (June 1814). (41/ 587); Order to *Birta* owners and *Jagir*dars in Saptari and Mahottari to supply recruits. Kartik Sudi 15, 1871 (November 1814) (41/433)
[67] *Jagir* land grat to Ghanashyam Baniya, Chaitra Sudi 11, 1860, (March 1804) (2/65) *Jagir* land grant to Jagannath Khatri and others, baisakkh Sudi 4, 1861 (Apri 1804) (2/71)
[68] Itihas Prakash , op-cit, vol 2, book 3 p 415
[69] Order to the *Birta* owners in Saptare and Mahottari to provide bullock carts for the transport of royal palace supplies, Marga badi 12, 1863 (November 1806) (5/99)
[70] Order to Bitalab Owners of Dhokshila Regarding Capture of Wild Elephants, Marga Sudi 10, 1849, (December 1792) (25/199)

palace services had to provide were numerous that one *birta* owner preferred to work at the district headquarters rather than at the palace.[71]

Many of the *birta* and *jagir* owners were asked to provide supplies for the certain campaigns. For example, the *birta* owners around Kathmandu were asked to supply food for the campaign against Tibet in 1788.[72] A similar order can be seen during the struggle between the ruler Girvan Juddha Bir Bikram Shah (1797-1816) and his father Ran Bahadur Shah (1775-1806) when the former asked the *birta* owners of certain villages in Nuwakot to,

> Bring one *muri* of rice for every twenty *muri*s of land travelling day and night to Nuwakot. ... equip your porters, tenants and all persons of military castes with weapons and send them to us at Nuwakot.[73]

It must be pointed out here that considering the vast amount of obligations *birta* and *jagir* holders had, they were also given absolute rights over the peasants in their lands and were allowed to adopt any measures necessary to fulfil the obligations that they were given. They were exempt from taxes and levies which were paid by the peasants and common people in their lands. The significance of this will be studied in later chapter by stating analogies of how it forced the peasants to leave.

The taxes paid by the *jagir* holders and *birta* holders were limited to *Darshan Bhet*, a levy which was collected at a rate decided at the time of appointment and annual confirmations and some occasional levies meant to finance special expenditures at the royal palace.[74] The aspects discussed in the next section will show that the extension of state control over lands and the obligations of the *jagir* holders and *birta* owners ultimately fell on the peasants and those living in their lands.

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[71] Order to Udaya Narayan Devkota regarding his refusal to accept Bitalab *Birta* owner status, Poush Sudi 8, 1849 (January 1792) (25/287)

[72] Order to *Birta* owners in eastern Nepal to supply rice under biswamari levy, Shrawan Sudi 7 , 1849 (June 1788) (5/216)

[73] Mahesh Chandra regmi , op-cit, vol 2, p. 10

[74] Instructions regarding collection of *Darshan BHet* levy in Doti, falgun Badi 11, 1854 (February 1795) (23/293)

Peasants and land revenue structure

Almost all the *birta* owners and *jagir* owners depended on tenant labour. It seems that there was a correlation between the size of the holding and the manner in which they were cultivated. If the holding was small, such as that of one *kaith*, then one rarely used tenant labour. However if they were large, such as a village then extensive tenant labour was used.[75]

Under the *birta* and *jagir* system, the members of the nobility, the priestly and military castes, who were mostly Brahmans/Bahuns, Khas/Chettris and Thakuris enjoyed a superior title in the land by virtue of royal sanction. Though their right primarily rested in the land and their ability to cultivate the lands, their social status and professional obligations made this impossible for which tenants had to be employed. The tenants hence had rights, which were fundamentally different and inferior to that of the *jagir* and *birta* owners. The peasants, mostly comprised of communities such as the Thamis, Thakalis, Magars, Gurungs, Khumbhus, Limbus, Tamangs, Sherps, Kami, Damai, Sarki etc., were customary tenants who produced their own food and paid for the privilege of customary holdings through various payments and services. The Gorkha state after expansion had no direct connection with the land. The peasant's sole relation was with the intermediaries, *Birta* and *Jagir* owners who then had judicial, social, economic and various other rights over the peasants.[76] This was unlike the period before the expansion where the rulers had a more direct link with the peasants. It must be mentioned here that prior to the Gorkha conquest there were several free hold cultivators and in many states a form of direct relationship of the peasants with the state existed (cite a source for this). The Gorkha state put an end to this form of free hold cultivators. The super structure of agrarian relations that was now created, was meant to support and facilitate the administrative and military needs of the state. Thus one rarely sees any efforts to regulate the relations between the *birta* owners and *jagir* holders with the peasants. As a matter of fact, in 1794, the officials deputed to collect land taxes in different parts of the country reported that the cultivators had become impoverished and had therefore

[75] Kirk Patrick, op-cit. p 98
[76] Ibid p 99

defaulted payments, the state ruled that officials were to be appointed to seize the defaulters and impound the lands allotted to them and thus recover the arrears.[77]

The various taxes that were paid by the peasants were land and homestead taxes, including special levies imposed from time to time such as transit and market duties, levies on mines, taxes on export of forest produce, levies for the privilege of hunting birds and animals and judicial fines. Yet, it was land revenue that was the highest and the most important.

In all parts of the hill regions including Kathmandu valley, land was usually classified into two categories, *Khet* and *Pakho*, for purposes of revenue assessment. This classification was based on the availability of irrigation facilities, natural or artificial, although formal distinctions are not available. For all practical purposes *khet* was an irrigated land on which paddy and wheat were the main crops. *Pakho* on the other hand, meant un-irrigated highlands or hill sides where only dry crops such as maize and millet were grown. Land revenue in the form of cash was demanded for *pakho* lands although occasionally in-kind assessments in the form of iron, copper or other metals,[78] or homespun clothes[79] were also taken. The method of assessment on the hill side was done by using an ox team to see how much area of land it could plough, which then formed the basic unit.[80] One ox[81] or even smaller holdings[82] were recognized.

In the central region such as the valley of Kathmandu and, the eastern regions, rents under the *khet* lands were collected under the *Adhiya* system. In this system, the cultivator paid half of the harvest to his *birta* or *jagir* owner. Tenants who were cultivating the lands under the *adhiya* system were required to thresh the crop in the presence of the landlord and the revenue officials. The rents were also fixed in

[77] Appointment of peons for collection of *Kut* revenue, Kartik sudi 5, 1851 (November 1794). (24/487)
[78] Itihas Prakash, op-cit, vol.2 book 2, p.34.
[79] Order Regarding Serma taxation at Thadi and other areas in Dolakha, Magh Sudi 4, 1883 (February 1827) (31/326).
[80] Order regarding fiscal and judicial matters in Dullu-Dailekh, Asadh badi 12, 1859 (June 1802) (24/551).
[81] Order regarding serma taxation in palanchok, Falgun Sudi 4, 1850 (March 1794) (40/425).
[82] Order regarding Serma taxation in Dullu-Dailekh, Shrawan Badi 1, 1859 (July 1802) (24/559).

advance at what was approximately half of the average produce.[83] The *adhiya* tenure also involved, along with the land revenue, two payments of two cash levies by the peasants: *Ghiukhane* and *Chardam Theki*. *Ghiukhane* was paid in lieu of the wheat crop which was not traditionally shared between the landlord and the cultivator under the *Adhiya* system.[84] *Chardam Theki* was a fee paid by the cultivator on the renewal of his lease every year.[85]

The general disadvantages faced by the *birta* and *jagir* owners in this system was the fact that they needed cash and they were usually not there when the crops were cultivated and threshed, since they were generally posted far from their land grants. This problem led to the introduction of the *Kut* system. According to this system, the cultivator paid a stipulated quantity of food-grains[86] or other commodities[87] or else a stipulated amount of cash[88] irrespective of the actual harvest. This system was introduced specifically to increase rents. Hence the rents were much higher than the *adhiya*, which itself was quite high, at half the produce.[89] This protected the *jagir* holder but completely left the cultivator to the mercies of the weather and harvest. Soon, the *kut* rents were demanded solely in cash. This meant the cultivator had to make sure the harvest reached the market so that he might get the cash to pay to the *jagir* holder. It should also be remembered that intitially, *adhiya* system was not completely discarded when the *Kut* was introduced. However, in 1812, the *adhiya* system was finally discarded as the basis of rent assessment in favour of *kut* for the *jagir* lands in the areas around the Kathmandu valley and large parts of the hill region.[90] The introduction of the *kut* immensely increased the burden on the peasantry. It was not just the fact that the rents were increased but that the rent was

[83] Confirmation of Adhiya lands of Manikant Upadhaya, Poush badi 7, 1842 (December 1785) (25/12).
[84] Order regarding Ghiukhane Tax in Salyan, Marga Sudi 6, 1866 (December 1809) (40/ 153)
[8585] Ibid.
[86] Allotent of Serna lands in Nuwakot on *Kut* tenure to Bale Padhya, Marga Bad 30 , 1853 (November 1796) (5/ 351) Rent on this allotment was payable in the form of specific quantity of paddy.
[87] Land allotment to *Kut* tenure to Radha Ballabh Ghimire, Kartik.
[88] Land allotment on *Kut* tenure to Sarabjit Karki, Kartik Sudi 5, 1851 (*Kut* rates fixed in cash, the rate per unit of area was generally mentioned. Such rates ranged from Rs 7 to Rs 12 per 20 *Muri*s of land.
[89] Land allotment on *Kut* tenure to Narottam Padhya and Sitaram Thapaliya, Jestha Sudi 8, 1861,(June 1804) (5/ 475) *Kut* grants were made at the rate of Rs 10 per 20 *muri*s of land. Much higher than the half the produce.
[90] Order Regarding rates of *Kut* rents in Bungmati and sunaguthi, Aswin badi 6, 1866 (September 1809) (40/103).

demanded in cash and cash was not easily available. That was to lead to a problem, that of indebtedness, which will be discussed later,

Increasing land revenue and the tenurial insecurity

By the end of the first decade of the 19th century, it became evident that the Gorkha state might enter into a war with the British, the Gorkha administration was required to raise more troops. However, all the cultivated lands were already given out as *jagir* creating a *jagir* crisis of sorts.[91] There were two methods with which this crisis could be dealt with. First was to increase the area under cultivation by reclaiming the wastelands, which was a long term solution but not an immediate one. The second and immediate solution was for the state to simply introduce the *Kut* rent, which demanded land revenue in cash. This allowed the cash inflow to increase, which could then finance the expanding needs of the army. This policy would make it possible for a smaller area of agricultural lands to support a larger military. When war did break out in 1814, large numbers of peasants were recruited in the army hence diverting them from agricultural labour to military labour. The scarcity of agricultural labour reduced many of the cultivated lands to wastelands, however the Gorkha state still needed the rents which caused them to maintain the rents at the high rates or at times even increasing them further,[92] this as can be imagined to have created tremendous pressure on the peasantry.

Until the end of the 18th century there seems to be an attempt by the state to protect the tenants, as can seen by the order promulgated in 1793, whereby the *jagir* holders were prohibited from evicting the tenants after the monsoon had set in, unless a crime was committed.[93] Thus the peasants could only be evicted if the rent was not paid and that too in a particular season. Another order of 1799 at Patan directed the *jagir* holders not to evict the tenants on the grounds that the latter's services were required for the gunpowder factory.[94] In 1804 there was an order to only evict tenants if they defaulted in payments and, gradually, a law came to place which prohibited the tenants from being evicted if they had reclaimed or terraced waste lands. Military

[91] Arrangements regarding land reclaimation in Pallokirat, Jestha Sudi 5, 1862 (June 1805). (5/488).
[92] Order regarding the complaints of oppression in easterm districts, Chaitra Badi,9.1865 (March 1809)
[93] Order Regarding rents and tenancy Rights on *Jagir* Lands, Ashadh Sudi5, 1850 (July 1793)
[94] Order regulating the supply of Grass from Khokana, bhadra Sudi 10, 1856 (September 1799). (23/387)

personnel too could not be evicted. In 1804 again there was an order to the *jagir* holders of Kathmandu where they were directed:

> A royal order has been issued to the inhabitants to pay rents on *Kut* and *Adhiya* basis and other dues in the customary manner…in spite of [such an order] you have now harassed them… As long as [the cultivators] pay their customary dues, they shall not be evicted. [95]

There was a general law that a peasant could only be evicted in favour of another from the same region, which meant that the land could only be given to a person from the same village.

Things changed as the Anglo-Gorkha war (c.1814-1816) took place and changes to land revenue system were introduced such as the *Kut*. The *Kut* did not restrict the rent to any percentage as the *adhiya* had, which meant that rents could be kept quite high. A practice emerged of bidding for rights to cultivate lands which were favourably located by peasants. In 1812, regulations were prescribed that any tenant who refused to pay higher rents on the land s/he was cultivating and if there were others who offered to pay higher rents, the former was to be evicted.[96] The rents kept increasing and in 1816 more regulations came about that lifted the general ban on cultivation of lands by the persons not residing in the village.[97] Thus, even if the peasant paid his entire stipulated rents on time he could still be evicted. The new peasant that took the land in place of the earlier one with promises of rents so high that the chances of him defaulting was equally high too.

The peasants were compelled to sell their produce in order to raise money to meet their fiscal obligations. However, marketing facilities were not always readily available, particularly in the interior hill areas. The peasants who lived at or near the subsistence level were now compelled to sell their crop as soon as they were harvested or even before. The richer peasants, landlords and money lenders came into

[95] Order regarding cultivation of jagir lands and peasant displacement in Panauti, Ashadh Badi,9,1860 (June 1803) (20/73)
[96] Order regarding cultivation of *Jagir* lands in Gulmi on *Kut* tenure Baisakh Sudi 5, 1869 (November 1812) (41/129), arrangements for cultivation of *Jagir* lands of Bhagawatidal company on *Kut* Tenure, Kartik Sudi 13, 1869 (November 1812) (51/140).
[97] Ibid.

play. They bought the produce of the peasants at advantageous terms; there are also references to them holding agricultural products until the prices were higher.[98] Many yet found ways to enrich themselves by acting as money lenders. Thus began the process of peasant indebtedness, which will further be discussed later in detail.

Increasing taxes and fines.

It was not just the land revenue that the peasants had to pay. There were a series of other taxes that were imposed on the peasants, which increased the burden of the peasantry. The royal palace levies formed the largest part of such taxes. These levies were known as *walak* and were collected from every family for the requirements of the royal palace.[99] They were several other categories of taxes and levies but only one of them was collected on a regular basis. The others were collected on special occasions of celebrations or mourning.[100] They seem to have been from a time when there were direct relations between the ruler and the peasants. However, even when the Gorkha state expanded and free cultivators no longer existed, these levies were still expected of the cultivators. The regular *walak* levies were collected twice a year in cash, as the commuted value of goats, boar, ghee or oil, by the *Birta* owners and *jagir* holders and village headman. The rates paid by the common people, as well as of the non-recurring *waalak* levies were 50% higher than those paid by the *jagir* and *birta* owners. Payment of these non-recurring levies was permitted also in kind, but the tax payers were required to bring these commodities personally to the royal palace if they did so.[101] Hence the revenue collectors preferred the taxes in cash, which caused a huge problem for the peasant since, as mentioned before, cash was not readily available.

The other tax that peasants were asked to pay was the *Gadimubarak*, which was only collected at the ascension of a new ruler. The tax was collected from the *jagir* holders depending on the size of their holding and the number of people living within them, and from the traders. The headmen of communities such as blacksmiths, leather

[98] Order directing the landlords not to become moneylenders, in Dudhkoshi-Tista region, Chaitra Badi 4, 1863 (March 1897) (6/809)
[99]Order regarding appropriation of *walak* and other revenues from Lamjung and elsewhere, Ashadh Badi 10, 1848 (June 1791) (23/40).
[100]Order regarding Collection *Walak* Levies in Thech and Elsewhere, Falgun badi 13, 1863 (March 1807) (21/31).
[101]Order regarding imposition of *Walak* levies in different areas, Ashadh Badi 9, 1860.

workers and tailors paid at rates based on their status. The common people paid levy at the rates assessed in such homesteads according to their economic standards.

Chumawan[102] and *Godhuwa* [103] were levies collected to finance the sacred thread investiture and marriage ceremonies of royal princes and princesses respectively. The *godan* was another levy collected to finance the funeral expenses when a reigning king died.[104] In addition, there were several other levies that were collected to meet specific requirements of the palace. In 1805 every household in Kathmandu and 57 adjoining villages were ordered to supply one load of fuel-wood every year, or, in default pay a quarter of rupees as a fine, for religious ceremonies and the preparation of medicines for the royal palace.[105] A cash levy was also imposed in 1804-1806 throughout the dominions to finance the repayment of the debts incurred by ex-ruler Ran Bahadur Shah while during his exile in India.[106]

There were various other levies that were imposed by the village headmen during religious festivals or on ceremonial occasions. At every harvest, a load of grain was usually given to the village headmen.[107] Members of the Majhi, Kumhale, Damai, Danuwar, Newar, Kushle, Tharu, Hayu, Sunuwar, Chepang etc., and certain other communities paid a levy every year to mendicants belonging to different sects,[108] including Muslims. Further there were other levies that was paid to the officials such as Chaudhari, Kanugoye/Qanungo or Mokaddam.[109] The *jagir* holders also taxed any marriages or use of facilities such as forest and sources of water.[110]

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[102]Order regarding Rates of Chuwaman levy in saptari, Aswin Sudi 15, 1837 (September 1790) (5/ 583).
[103]Imposition of Goddhuwa levy in bara and Parsa, Chaitra Badi 2, 1860 (March 1804) (5/462).
[104]Imposition of Godan levy in Saptari and Mahottari, marga sudi 11, 1863 (December 1806) (5/110).
[105]Imposition of fuel-wood levy in Kathmandu, Kartik Sudi 14, 1862 (November 1805) (6/649).
[106]Imposition of Salami levy in Garhwal, Chaitra Badi 8, 1863 (March 1807) (5/151).
[107]Appointment of Mijhars of Sunars and other Communities, Ashadh Sudi 7, 184 (July 1807) (20/503).
[108]Imposition of Jogi Mandali levy on Mahis in eastern Hill region, Poush Badi 14, 1847 (December 1790)
[109]Restoration of Mamulli Levy appropriated by Mandars in Moran, Kartik Badi 5, 1851 (November 1794) (5/291); Order regarding tax assessment rates in Navrangiya and elsewhere in Bora, Bhadra Badi 12, 1848 (August 1791); Order Regarding emoluments of Chaudharis I *Tarai* region of Salyan Chaitra Sudi 5, 1868 (March 1812) (40/413).
[110]Confirmation of 1793 Tax Assessment rates in Mahottari, kartik, Sud 10, 1866 (November 1809).

In addition to all of these, the peasants and cultivators were also required to finance religious ceremonies to propitiate the village god, land settlement operations, and the cost of stationery and furniture used by local administrative offices.[111]

Judical fines, though strictly not in the category of taxes was also a prerogative of the *jagir* holders and *birta* owners. They were given judicial powers and, as such, could collect judicial fines. As a matter of fact, most of the *jagir*s and *birta* owners sought lands with the most population so as to collect fines from judicial matters. As Brian Hogdson writes, "Judicial administration follows revenue administration in Nepal".[112] Fines seem to have been levied arbitrarily. A royal order addressed to the inhabitants in Dolakha in 1807 noted that the local officials collected fines from the people even in the absence of complaints and without obtaining confessions.[113] Such officials in different parts of the country are therefore repeatedly instructed to award punishments only after the accused person were, at the very least, given a hearing.[114]

The Gorkha state, especially in the 19th century, tried to enforce several regulations to regulate the social and religious life of its subjects, as per the Brahmanical norms. The new laws were mainly to deal with caste relations, sexual immorality, cow slaughter etc. Many of the judicial cases and fines were mostly to deal with rulings on these issues. It may not be correct to say that the regulations and fines were mostly imposed and enforced only with the exchequer in mind but the amount that was collected as judicial fines can hardly be ignored. In 1805 an official deputed to Bhadgaun to enforce the ban on cow slaughter was ordered not to make any delay in finalizing measures which would "fetch a revenue of Rs 12,000 or Rs 15,000".[115] On another

[111]ibid
[112] Brian H.Hodgson "On the law and legal practice of Nepal as regards familiar intercourse between a Hindu and an Outcast". The Journal of the royal Asiatic society of Great Britain and Ireland, Vol.I, 1834, p 47.
[113]Order regarding Ex parte Judgments made by local officials in Dolakha, Magh Sudi 2, 1863 (February 1807) (5/129).
[114]Order regarding the disposal of Cases in Thak, Falgun Sudi 2 1863 (March 1807) (5/172); Order regarding Judicial and other matters in Khumbu, Marga sudi 12, 1853 (December 1796) (23/175); Order To *Subba* of Jumla regarding disposal of cases, Magh Badi 3, 1871 (January 1815) (24/638).
[115]Imposition of Chokho Danda fine for Cow slaughter in Solukhumbu, Baisakh Sudi 8, 1863 (May 1806) (6/769.

occasion, the same officials are reprimanded "you only report that you have collected the fines (from the offenders) but you have not remitted the proceeds." [116]

These were as of yet just the various legitimate taxes and levies that the peasants had to pay. There are several evidences that the local administrators made arbitrary collections from people in absence of specific orders regarding the categories and the rates of payment. The collection of unauthorised taxes and levies constituted a chronic problem in all parts of the Gorkha dominions. Complaints regarding the collection of unauthorized levies were received repeatedly. [117] Officials were often deputed to inquire how much had been transmitted to the government, and how much had been misappropriated since the beginning of the Gorkha rule. In 1786, officials had to be deputed to the principalities of Lamjung and Tanahu, to conduct inquiries into the tax collection. [118] The problem was that there was complete dependence on the *jagir* holders and other landlords. The government was interested only in making sure that the revenues reached them. They were not that concerned with the well-being of the peasants. The problem was further aggravated by the replacement of the officials who had functioned under the displaced regimes by new officials from the Gorkha state.

The aspect that has been described above clearly shows that the peasants had to pay more taxes than they ever had. The fact that there were more illegal taxes and levies that were being collected by the *jagir* owners and revenue collectors compounded the matter further. There was another aspect that was discussed above that makes the problem even more severe, the demand for cash as a means of tax payment, this led to the next problems of rural indebtedness.

Rural indebtedness

During this period, it was the common obligation of tenants cultivating *jagir* lands to supply loans to their landlords, [119] which often carried interest at 5% and were eventually adjusted against the value of the share of the crop accruing to the

[116]Instructions to Yagna Nidhi Tiwari and others Regarding Punishment for cow slaughter in Solukhumbu, Aswin Badi 13, 1862 (September 1805) (6/490).
[117]Order regarding complaints of people of Doti, Marga Sudi 3, 1866 (November 1809). (40/145).
[118]Order to Gunanand Padhya and Shridhar Padhya to collect particulars of tax collections in tanahu, Shrawan Sudi, 8,1843 (August 1786).
[119]Such loans had to be provided at rates ranging from Rs. 71/2 to Rs. 15 per *muri*s of land according to the grade. Order regarding advance payments against *Jagir* rents, Aswin Sudi 1, 1867 (September 1810) (39/417); Order to tenants cultivating *Jagir* lands of Simhanath Company, Bhadra Sudi 8, 1868 (September 1811) (40/263).

landlord.[120] Peasants were further forced to find money to meet such obligations even before the crops were harvested. They were at many times forced to advance lump sum loans that too at very short notice, especially when the lands cultivated by them had been assigned to military personnel deputed from them. If peasants refused to give such loans, they would be liable to be evicted from the lands.[121] The landlords on the other hand could meet his expenses through these loans but they imposed additional burden on the peasantry. This, if added with the fact that the peasants already had to pay land revenue and most of the taxes in cash, the average peasants were forced to borrow money from the money lenders. Rural indebtedness in fact appears to have been a chronic and ubiquitous problem among the peasantry.[122]

These difficulties were further exaggerated by the rates of interest that were exorbitant not only because of the general shortage of money, but also because of the lack of security. Since the occupancy rights enjoyed by the peasants on their lands were not unalienable, such rights did not constitute adequate security for loans advanced by money lenders. Even the government paid 30% interest on the loans obtained by it.[123] In several areas in the western hills, interest generally amounted to 25% in cash and 50% in kind and sometimes up to 60%.[124] The government made efforts from time to time to control interest rates but apparently without much success. The ideal rate, as prescribed by the government was 10% in cash and 25% in kind.[125] There were genuine efforts by the government to scale down the rate of interest[126] or loans and even restoring mortgaged lands to the debtors.[127] Yet, there seems to have been no real impact on rural indebtedness or on the actual rates of interest charged and the government themselves only seems to have tried a few times, since there was a

[120]Order to the Tenants cultivating *Jagir* lands of Bhawanibux Company, Aswin badi 11, 1882 (September 1835).
[121]Order regarding advance rent payments to personnel of Hanumandhwaj Company, Kartik Sudi 5, 1864 (November 1807). (6/1055).
[122] Notification regarding the rates of interest, Falgun Badi 11, 1851 (Febraruy 1795)
[123] Order to *Ijara*dar Swarup Pun regarding repayment of loans due to Mahant Jayaram Giri, Baisakh badi 14, 1962 (April 1895) (20/100).
[124] Miscellaneous regulations for Bheri Chaukhute region, Ashadh badi 9, 1860 (20/100).
[125] Judicial regulations for areas east of the Dudhkoshi-Tista region, Chaitra Badi 4, 1866 (November 1809) (40/124) Judicial regulations for Daraundi-Kali and Kali-Bheri regions, Marga Badi 9, 1866 (November 1809) (40/129) Section 3 Instruction regarding functions of Thanis in Humla Shrawan badi 1, 1859 (June 1802) (24/566).
[126] Judicial regulations for Morang, Jestha Sudi 14, 1862 (June 1852) (19/59).
[127] Judicial regulations for areas east of the Duhkoshi, Marga Badi 9, 1866 (November 1809) (40/124).

genuine shortage of money which they needed from the money lenders. Even if the rate of interest was kept at the government prescribed rate, 10%, this would still mean that the peasant had to give loans to the *jagir* holders at 5% interest with the money he borrowed at 10% interest, putting him immediately in debt of 5%, which accumulated annually or monthly. As mentioned above, 10% was the lowest rate of interest, which usually increased to 60%.

The evidence is thus clear that the conditions of the peasantry deteriorated to a considerable extent in the period after the expansion of the Gorkha. The state did try to help the peasantry with regulations from time to time to scale down the rate of interests and giving tenurial security but they were too little and too far in between. Further the interest of the *jagir* holders and money lenders was too aligned with those of the state, for the state to do anything seriously. The measures of the state to protect the cultivators rights seems to be more or less used to reclaim waste lands and make sure that lands did not go to waste. It passed regulations to evict peasant if it meant the expansion of revenue. Lands were confiscated from small *jagir* holders and given to larger revenue holders. Indebtedness caused several peasants to flee the lands and make their way to India. The problem of indebtedness was exaggerated by the fact that it led to the next problem that shall be dealt with below, that of slavery.

Forced labour and Slavery

The aspects that were discussed above were the problems arising out of the increasing taxes and land revenue, both legal and illegal. These had already put the peasantry under a lot of stress, leading to increasing indebtedness. Yet, these were not the only problems that the peasantry were facing at the time. The peasants were also expected to provide labour services, which were for the most part unpaid. Further, there was also slavery prevalent in the region, which only exaggerated after the expansion of the Gorkha state.

As the Gorkha state kept expanding, the need for porters and labour demands kept increasing. The state was, until 1815, in a state of continuous military campaigns, which then necessitated the transportation of military and other supplies over long distances. There was an increase in demand for labour, in the production of munitions, as well as in the construction, repair and maintenance of roads, forts and bridges. In addition to all of this there was also a need of porter services in an increasing scale to

meet the needs of the court for luxuries and other goods, to be transported. The disparity between the supply and demand of labour necessitated methods of compulsion in order to meet military and other needs. The state thus tried to meet its labour demand through exacting compulsory labour from its people.[128]

Forced labour was thus primarily a consequence of the interaction between a high man-land ratio and the increased demand for labour. The economy ,it must be remembered, was still highly demonetised as the state had no other means to pay wages to the labourers. Though the state decreed that labourers were to be given respite in land revenue for the services provided, this rarely happened. The land revenue was controlled by the *jagir* holders who were not willing to give any respite in the land revenue as a means of paying for the labour, nor would *Jagir* holders confirm with such order even when they were asked.

The entire adult population, irrespective of class or community were obliged to provide labour services as per the royal orders.[129] Yet, as all laws, this too was only used to make sure that the maximum burden fell on the lower peasantry, and the nobility and *Jagir* holders were exempt from it. This was done with a clause, in the order that stated that dual obligation could not be imposed on any household. Thus, as most of the nobility was already employed with the state and most of the *Jagir* holders were from the military bureaucracy which is why they were given land grants in the first place, they were all exempted. The rich peasants were exempted since they mostly formed the revenue officials and headmen of villages.[130] Exceptions were also made for those families who had a member fighting war for the state,[131] and temple attendants.[132] Thus the only ones who were obligated to provide the labour were the lower peasants.

[128] Order regarding Jhara labour, directed at all the jagir holder, Poush Badi 14, 1863 (December 1806). (5/119)
[129] Order regarding *Jhara* labour for construction of fort in Chisapani, Poush badi 14, 1863 (December 1806) (5/119).
[130] Order regarding the supply of charcoal from Pharping, Jestha Sudi 8, 1861 (June 1804)
[131] *Jhara* Exemption granted to military personnel deputed to western front, Jestha Sudi 2, 1839 (May 1782) (5/661).
[132] *Jhara* exemptions granted to functionaries of Bhimeshwar temple in Dolakha, Magh Sudi 9, 1859 (February 1803) (5/364).

Every caste and community was assigned tasks suited to its status and occupation. Thus, in 1799, an order issued to local officials in Tanahu to impress *Jhara* labour for the construction of a royal palace at Gorkha stated:

> Every Kumhale (potter) family shall supply 10 earthen pitchers each. Majhis Darais and other castes who customarily carry loads shall come along with spades, axes, knives etc. All other castes shall…perform such work as is assigneed to them by the officials, for the construction of the palace.[133]

Similarly, at Kaleri in Dhading district:

> Brahmans have traditionally been employed in check posts. Newars and others whose caste status permits them to work inside mines shall do so. Other castes shall be employed in stone, earth and woodwork outside mines.[134]

This shows that the Brahmans, at that time, did not enjoy any exemption from the Jhara obligations.[135] In 1803 Jhara obligations were remitted to all Brahmins inhabitants of Parbat district. Subsequently, in 1813, the exemption was granted on a

The Hulak System

This system allowed for the transportation of arms and ammunition and other military supplies. This was where maximum of the *jhara* labour was used. Regulation promulgated in the Doti district in 1799 prescribed that every village should be responsible for the safe transport of the arms and ammunitions within its areas.[136] With the expansionist campaigns of the Gorkha state, it became important to transport good and supplies over very long distances. Since there were no other forms of transportation, such as river transport, horses or even bullock carts, or simple bullocks

[133] Exaction of *Jhara* Labour in Tanahu and elsewhere for construction of Royal palace in Gorkha, Aswin Badi 5, 1856 (September 1799) (23/398-402).
[134] Labour obligations of Brahmans, Newars and other communities in Kallari. Dhabing, Poush Badi 5, 1863 (December 1806) (5/115).
[135] Order to Dware of Dhawa Gorkha, regarding *Jhara* and *Huluk* Services Ashadh Sudi 4, 1843 (June 1786).
[136] Administrative regulations for Doti, Jestha Badi 14, 1856 (May 1799) (25/362).

that were available, human porters were the only way to manage this. *Jhara* porters were used in relay. The *huluk* system meant that porters were not supposed to provide the porter services beyond their village and, as such, they were not required to go beyond their village. This sort of service was used to transport arms,[137] saltpetre[138] and other military supplies. At times they were used also for the transportation of metal[139] or other commodities such as taxes or loads for royal guests.[140] Herbs and drugs for the royal palace[141] and cotton seeds for feeding the royal bulls,[142] were also supplied using the labour.

The expansion of the Gorkha especially in the western borders during the early half of the 19th century, necessitated a large scale use of porter services under the *huluk* system. *Huluk* services between Kathmandu and the western front was established in the 1804[143] for the transportation of mail.[144] In 1809, the scope of such services was extended so as to cover the transportation of arms, ammunition and other military supplies.[145] Outposts were established at intervals of two to three hours journey. A prescribed number of household, not exceeding 24, was assigned to each of these outposts, [146] which functioned under the control and supervision of divisional administrative offices situated at strategic points on the way.[147] These were generally meant to make sure that that there was uninterrupted movement of mail and military supplies over a distance of more than 700 miles.

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[137] Arrangements for transportation of arms from Bijayapur to Kathmandu, Shrawan Badi 10, 1853 (July 1796) (23/93).
[138] Order to inhabitants of Sindhuli and other areas regarding transportation of saltpetre, Baiskah Sudi 15, 1854 (May 1797) (25/362).
[139] Order regarding transportation of metals from Rukum to Kathmandu, Chaitra Sudi 1, 1854 (March 1798) (23/305).
[140] Order regarding transport facilitates or Wakil Puran Bhatta and others , Shrawan Badi 10, 1853 (July 1796) (23/93).
[141] Order regarding transportation of Herbs and drugs from Solukhumbhu, Kartik Sudi 7, 1853 (November 1796) (23/169).
[142] Order regarding the transportation of cotton seed, Jestha Badi 4, 1854 (May 1797) (25/362).
[143] Ithihas Prakash, op-cit, Vol 3 p 386.
[144] *Huluk* regulations for areas from Kathmandu to the Jamuna region Magh Badi 4, 1863 (January 1807).
[145] Hulak regulations for areas from Kathmandu to the Jamuna region Ashadh Sudi 4, 1866 (June 1809).
[146] Ibid section 3.
[147] These offices on the Kathmandu-kumaon route were situated in Pokhara, Pyuthan,Salyan, Accham, Doti, Almora, Srinagar and Dehradun. (Hulak Regulations for areas from Kathmandu and the Jamuna region, Ashadh Sudi 4, 1866 (June 1809). Section 5.

Military and defence uses of Jhara labour.

Jhara included the obligation to serve in the army,[148] troops were recruited under this system whenever there was a war or a rebellion.[149]

This aspect can be seen in the order sent out to all the hill districts, where people were directed thus:

> Join Bhardars at Makwanpur in fulfilment of your *Jhara* obligations and work according to their orders. Persons who can bear arms shall come along with their shields, swords, bows, arrows and guns. Others shall bring spades and axes. Those who work sincerely for us shall be granted honors, rewards and expenses according to their services. Anybody who does not work on *Jhara* basis according to our order shall be severely punished. [150]

The *jhara* labour played a very important part in the munitions industry. The labourers were requisitioned to process salt-peter, supply fuel-wood[151] and make grinding stones.[152] Saltpetre [153] and other materials[154] required by such factories were traditionally transported under the *jhara* system. Even iron workers and other

[148] The Gorkha army consisted of two sections, bhara and *Jhara*, Bhara denoted regular troops who were recompensed through *Jagir* land grants and cash salaries. *Jhara* referred to irregular conscripts who did not receive any remuneration (Dhanabajra Bajracharya and Jnan Mani Nepal, Aitihasik Patra Sangraha) (A collection of historical letters). Kathmandu: Nepal samskritik Parishad, 2014 (1957).

[149] Order regarding recruitment of troops in Richok, Ashadh Sudi 8, 1843 (July 1746).

[150] Order to the inhabitants of Tilpung (East no.2) and other areas, kartik badi 4, 1872 (October 1815). (42/96).

[151] Exaction of *Jhara* labour in Gyalthum and elsewhere for Gunpowder factory, ASwin badi 13,1854 (September 1797). (25/332) *Jhara* exemption for persons employed in gunpowder factory in Kathmandu, Kartik sudi 9, 1856 (November 1799) (23/442).

[152] Exaction of *Jhara* in Tokha and elsewhere for Gunpowder factory, Falgun Badi 11,1854 (February 1798) (23/293) .

[153] Order regarding Transportation of saltpetre, Aswin Badi 13, 1854 (September 1797) (1A/9).

[154] Oder regarding supply of timber from Tamaguru, Dhading, Aswin Badi11, 1853 (September 1796) (23/156).

mechanics were employed in munitions factories without payment in fulfilment of *jhara* obligations.[155]

The *jhara* labour was also used to repair forts by the rulers, especially at specific places.[156] The law was that *huluk* system was to only use people of the nearby areas for the use of the labour but for many of the projects, labour from the local inhabitants were inadequate for such purposes, *jhara* services had to be brought in from nearby areas specially to transport timber, stone and other building materials.[157] Bridges on streams and rivers on main routes were constructed and existing ones repaired. Such groups of *jhara* labourers were organised at different points for the movement of troops, arms and ammunition. The ferrymen who generally belonged to the Majhi community were granted *jagir* lands in compensation for their services.[158] Therefore this specific case could not be called *jhara* in the strict sense but their services were used outside their villages, for which, they had no option but to go.[159]

This form of forced labour was also utilized to reclaim waste lands, which were then allotted for cultivation to local peasants.[160] Officials who were authorised to use and exact forced labour were also allowed to use the same to build irrigation channels[161] and embankments were constructed to protect cultivated areas from floods and erosion.[162] The capture of wild elephants[163] and the supply of fodder to the royal

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[155] Iron worker in Harmi (Gorkha) ordered t wrok at munitions factory in Patan, Poush sudi 2, 1862 (December 1805) (19/435)Instructions to Ditha Bishram Khatri regarding manufacture of cannon balls in Marsyangdi-Pyuthan region, Marga Badi 7, 1862 (November 1805) (6/657).

[156] Order to *Subba* Ranjit Kanwar regarding construction of Forts in Jumla, Bhadri Sudi 11, 1853 (September 1796). (23/99) Order to Subedar Ahiman Bogati and Golya Khawas regarding construction of Forts and Bridges in Doti, Bhadri Sudi 13, 1853 (September 1796) (23/100).

[157] Exaction of *Jhara* labour in Maidi (Dhading) and elsewhere for construction of fort in Makwanpur, marga Bai 11, 1853 (November 1796). (23/176).

[158] Itihas Prakash, op-cit, Vol 2 Book 2, pp.4-5.

[159] Exaction of *Jhara* Labour from Majhis in Benighat for operating ferry services in deoghat, Ashadh badi 3,1862 (June 1805) (5/540).

[160] Order regarding land reclaimation in Jhangajholi (Sindhuli), Marga Sudi 1, 1856 (November 1799) (23/514).

[161] Order regarding land reclaimation and irrigation in Kaski and elsewhere, Asadh Sudi 11, 1853 (July 1796) (23/85) and Marga Sudi 1, 1856 (November 1799) (24/9).

[162] Order to Kalu Padhya and others regarding construction of embankments through *Jhara* labour, Marga Sudi 12,1853 (November 1796) (23/174).

[163] Exaction of *Jhara* labour in Chainpur and elsewhere for capturing wild elephants, Marga Badi 11, 1848 (April 1791) (23/176).

elephants[164] constituted additional fields for the exaction of *Jhara* labour. In addition, people were forced to work in large numbers, without wages, to meet the needs of the royal palace. Crown lands were usually cultivated through *Jhara* labour. Goods procured from different parts of the country or imported from India by the royal palace were transported to Kathmandu using such labour. [165]

This form of labour thus made it possible to obtain a regular supply of fresh mangoes from the *Terai* [166] and ice [167] in the summer months from the hill areas around Kathmandu valley. [168] Moreover, the royal palace requisitioned different types of exotic commodities from time to time, such as the fat of porpoise, the tongue of crocodile, the skin of camel's breast and the slough of snake for preparing a special kind of incense.[169] *Jhara* labour was used not just for the transportation but also for catching and killing crocodiles and the snakes. In 1792, the *jhara* labour was also used to manufacture and supply charcoal for the government requirements in the villages around Nuwakot. [170] As can be seen *Jhara* labour was used for almost anything and any requirements of the government. *Jhara* labourers employed in the construction of Jagannath temple in Kathmandu in 1799 were thus required to grind limestone, supply rope, break stones and transport timber.[171]

The requirements of *jhara* labour was never ending. Its exaction for different purposes over a period of time had therefore to be planned in advance. In 1798, the military commander of a western hill district was instructed:

> We have received reports that a bridge on the Bheri river has been damaged. Employ some of the local

[164] Order regarding supply of fodder for royal elephants from Bhaktapur, Baisakh Badi 11, 1848 (April 1791). (5/399).
[165] Order to inhabitants of Bhirkot and other areas regarding supply of goods required at royal palace, Aswin 11, 1853 (September 1796) (23/130-152).
[166] Order regarding transportation of mangoes from Tirhut, Jestha badi 11, 1861 (May 1804) (2/61)
[167] The supply of ice in this manner involved a verywasteful use of *Jhara* labour, for, by the time the *Jhara* porter reached the royal palace, only 4 or 5 ounces of ice was left in each load.
[168] Order regarding supply of ice from Markhu and other areas, Jestha Sudi 8, 1862(June 1805) (6/22).
[169] Order to *Ijara*dar Shaktiballabh Padhya regarding supply of ingredients for making incense, kartik Sudi 14, 1862 (November 1805) (18/379).
[170] Orders regarding the supply of Babyo Grass for construction of Jagannath Temple in Kathmandu, Bhadra Badi 11, 1853 (August 1796) (23/60).
[171] Exaction of *Jhara* Labour in Patan and elsewhere for construction of Jagannath temple in Kathmandu, Aswin Badi 11, 1853 (September 1796) (23/152).

> inhabitants to repair it. The rest should be employed to dig irrigation channels and reclaim fields….complete these tasks this year. Next year, construct a bridge…[172]

Considering the sheer magnitude with which the *jhara* labourers were being used, one needs to see who these people were. This aspect is very important since one must remember that the *jhara* labourers seem to be used almost throughout the year and for various purposes. The *jhara* labourers were mostly derived from the peasantry. However, considering that most of the labourers seems to be employed for a long period of time, it brings us to the question how does that then hamper the peasantry. The records show that such forced labour adversely impacted the lives of the peasants. Take for example the people who were summoned from Tanahu and Bhirkot to transport timber to Hitaura for the construction of a temple. They were expected to bring food required for their own consumption for a period of five to six months.[173] This has to be remembered in the context of the fact that they were not paid for these services. Considering how high the land revenue was and the fact that there were several taxes and loans that had to be given, the demand for forced labour brought even further misery to the peasant. First of all, it took them away from the fields during the harvest season and then also demanded that they had to bring food with them.

It was not just the fact the labourers were simply unpaid and had a compulsion to come. The term force was quite literal in so much that force was actually used to round up people from whom unpaid labour was required. In 1799, troops were dispatched to Lyanglyang and other villages in the eastern hill region to bring *jhara* labourers for the construction of the Jagannath temple in Kathmandu.[174] This was not the only reference where force was being used to round up *jhara* labourers.[175] Even for routine operations as the repair and maintenance of state owned irrigation

[172] [172] Hulak regulations for areas from Kathmandu to the Jamuna region, Ashadh Sudi 4,1865 (July 1898) (6/1009).section 4.
[173] Order regarding transportation of timber from bhirkot and other areas for construction of Jagannath temple in Kathmandu, Poush Badi 30,1853 (December 1796) (23/219).
[174] Exaction of *Jhara* Labour in Lyanglyang and other areas for construction of jagannath temple in Kathmandu, Marga Sudi 6 1856 (November 1799) (23/514).
[175] Order regarding exactions of *Jhara* Labour in areas west of the Bishnumati, Falgun Sudi 6, 1868 (March 1812) (40/394) .

channels, officials were appointed at the local level for the specific purpose of rounding up unpaid labourers.[176] This shows the manner in which the unpaid *jhara* labour was resented and unpopular.

If *huluki* routes passed through a village that had a very small population then the trouble would only increase for the peasants. Since the supplies had to be sent under any circumstances, the officials were asked to employ children for the purpose. The wording of the document perhaps will bring to light the nature of coercion:

> We have received reports that at places where the number of Hulaki households are small and not enough, porters are available; you seize the daughters and sons of the subjects, beat them and force them to carry loads even when the subjects offer to increase the number of relays…. [177]

The difficulties faced by the people on account of the system of forced labour for the state purposes, were further exaggerated by the fact that the officials tended to use it for their own personal use.[178] The state tried to ensure that the *jhara* would not be used for personal purposes and people were repeatedly directed to transport only government stores, including arms and ammunition,[179] but in reality they had no real protection against anybody who demanded porter and other services from them and were willing to use force to get it. There are evidences of even pilgrims visiting Mansarovar lake in Tibet forcing villagers situated along the way to provide porters without any payment.[180] Such reports of forced and coerced labour can be seen in many villages from all over the state.[181] It seems the entire peasantry especially if they fell along major routes suffered under the system of *jhara* labour. An English official

[176] Order regarding construction of irrigation channels in Marsyangdi-parbat region, chaitra badi 4, 1868 (March 1812) (28/76).
[177] Order regarding Hulak services on east-west routes, Jestha badi 4,1865 (May 1808) (36/81).
[178] Order ti Jimidars of Pipalkot not to provide beggar labour for unauthorised purposes, FAlgun Sudi 8, 1852 (March 1796) (5/311).
[179] Hulak regulations for areas from Kathmandu to the Jamuna region, Ashadh Sudi 4,1865 (July 1898) (6/1009).section 4.
[180] Order regarding taxation and other matters in Humla, falun badi3, 1871 (February 1815) (24/357)
[181] Order to the inhabitant of Phulbari (Kabhrepalachok) Not to provide hulak serices for nongovernmental requirements, Bhadra Sudi 1, 1851 (August 1794) (24/643).

who was visiting Kathmandu in 1793 noted that Chitlang, situated on the Kathmandu-Hitaura road was desolate because of the indiscriminate exploitation of forced and unpaid labour.[182] In Tinpatan Sindhuli, people fled to the jungles to escape oppression at the hands of officials and other influential persons who exacted unpaid labour services from them.[183] Another report from 1799 states that the entire area west of the Bheri had been ruined because of the indiscriminate use of unpaid labour services.[184] Such reports can be found in all parts of the Gorkha dominions.[185] For example in Morang, there were peasants who were prevented from tiling their field because of forced and unpaid labour obligations.[186]

The harassment to which the people were subjected under the forced and unpaid labour system in the eastern *Tarai* districts became so acute during the last decade of the 18th century that the state was compelled to take action to alleviate it. According to an order issued for different areas in Morang district in 1790,

> We have received reports that you have suffered much and are unable even to cultivate your lands properly because of the obligation to provide forced and unpaid labour. From 1790, therefore, all such obligations

[182] Kirkpatrick, op-cit, p 95.
[183] Order regarding exaction of *Jhara* labour in Chitlang, Poosh Sudi 11,1844 January 1788) (5/697)
[184] Ban on exaction of beggar labour for non-governmental requirements, bhadra Sudi, 1856 (August 1799). (23/368) .
[185] Order regarding the remission of *Jhara* obligations in listi (Sindhupalchok), Marga Sudi 10, 1856 (December 1799). (24/8); Order to jimidars of Pipalkot not to provide beggar labour for the unauthorized purposes, falgun Sudi 8,1852 (March 1796) (5/311) Order to inhabitants of Phulbari (Kabhrepalanchok) not to provide hulak services for non-governmental requirements, bhadra Sudi 1, 1851 (August 1794) (24/357) Ban on exaction of Begar labour in Srinagar, Bhadra badi 30,1867 (August 1810) (39/358)).
[186] Abolition of Hulak, Beth and Begar system in Morang, Bhadra badi 5, 1847 (August 1790) (19/462) Another practice which was not part of the *Jhara* but was equally oppressive was the exaction of the free provision from villagers by local or visiting military personnel on eastern routes, : Ban on exaction of free provisions by military personnel on eastern routes. Kartik Badi 10, 1872 (October 1815) (42/89) Order regarding taxation and other matters in humla, Falgun badi 3, 1871 (February 1815) (24/643) Troops generally did so from the inhabitants of villages through which they marched. Kumaon administrative regulations, Baisakh Badi 1, 1861 (April 1804) . (19/174). They were often ordered "Not to loot provisions on the way but to purchase them in the market." Order to Jemidars of Pipalkot not to provide beggar labour for unauthorized purposes Falgun Sudi 8,1852 (March 1796). (5/311) Order regarding transfer of government officer from Gumbhariya to Alau in parsa District (Falgun Sudi 5, 1869 February 1812) (40/394) But there is no reason to believe that the practice thereby came to an end.

> have been remitted. Do not provide forced and unpaid labour to any military or other government employee, or to local officials. Any persons who needs porterage services must pay reasonable wages.[187]

These regulations seem to have come as a result of administrative changes that were brought about as a result of the depopulations that was undergoing due to the excessive use of the unpaid and forced labour. The government issued orders from time to time banning the use of forced labour for non-government uses.[188] Ran Bahadur Shah had banned compulsory and unpaid labour in Nuwakot but the ban was never effectively imposed and had to be renewed in 1803.[189] In 1816, local officials in Doti district had to be warned that they would be declared as traitors if they exacted unpaid labour for purposes other than transportation of arms and ammunition, as well as of sick persons, or collected free provisions from the people.[190]

The Gorkha rulers tried to make sure that the peasants were not alienated due to the growing burden of the *jhara* services. The arrangements were gradually made to provide the *jhara* workers with facilities and privileges of a fiscal and tenurial nature. Prithvinarayan Shah (c. 1723-1775), the ruler of Gorkha who had conquered the valley had passed a law that protected the inhabitants of the village in Patan district who supplied grass on *jhara* basis for the royal elephants, were protected from eviction from their lands and homestead and granted a 50% remission in *walak* levies. Full exemption was provided from other homestead levies as well as the *Ghiukhane* tax on the lands cultivated by them. They were also freed from the obligation to provide compulsory labour services for other purposes.[191] However, their obligations

[187] Abolition of Hulak, Beth and Begar system in Morang, Bhadra Bdi 11, 1852 (April 1795) (40/254) Section 13; orders regarding payment of wages to Begar Porters in Bara, Para and makwanpur, jestha Badi 2, 1864 (May 1807). (20/309).
[188] Order to inhabitants of Phulbari (Kabhrepalanchok) Not to provide Hulak srvices for nongovernment requirements Bhadra Sudi 1, 1851 (August 1794) (24/374) Ban on exaction of Begar labour for nongovernment requirements in Tinpatan, Marga Sudi 5, 1853 (November 1796) (23/201) Inhabitants of Jumla directed not to provide beggar labour for nongovernmental requirements Marga badi 10, 1851 (November 1794) (24/491) regulations for Doti, Jestha Sudi, 1856 (june 1799). (24?711). Section 3.
[189] Confirmation of *Jhara* exemption for Newars and Dhamis in satsaayakhola, Nuwakot, kartik badi 10, 1860 (November 1893) (18/139).
[190] Regulations for Doti, Poush badi 4, 1873 (December 1816) (36/328) Section 6.
[191] Order regarding supply of fodder from Khokana, Bhadra Sudi 10, 1856 (September 1799) (23/387).

to pay rents remained unaffected. The grant of these fiscal and tenurial facilities and privileges was, of course, practically only in respect to regular *jhara* services such as the supply of fodder required for the royal elephants or of charcoal to meet the requirements of munitions factories.[192] Other *jhara* workers, such as those employed on the construction of bridges,[193] were provided no such relief apart from the fact that they were exempted from the compulsory labour obligations elsewhere during their time, which was redundant, since physically, they could not be anywhere else from the place where they were. There were times where even this concession was not offered, as can be seen with the punishment given to the *Jhara* workers employed in the construction of forts.[194] In these circumstances, it was natural that these and other facilities and privileges should have been provided on a systematic basis to *Huluk* porters, for their services were required regularly and permanently. This, however, does not mean that facilities were regular and permanent. Evidences indicate that the government was compelled to institute such arrangements primarily because their resentment caused by the *jhara* labour that left was causing depopulation and revolt in many areas.[195]

There is no evidence to support that *jhara* could be avoided through the payment of fines. Orders that were promulgated for the exaction of *jhara* labour generally only stated that those who did not provide such labour as directed or left without permission would be regarded as having committed a crime.[196] Yet, it seems that occasionally *jhara* obligation was commuted into cash payment, which meant that the *jhara* obligation could be avoided if a fine was paid in its place. These commutations were in exceptional cases, where the people were asked to serve in places that were very far from their places of habitation. In 1798, the inhabitants of areas situated

[192] Order regarding supply of charcoal from Pharping,Jestha Sudi 8, 1861 (June 1804) (19/196) tax. exemption for household supplying clay and charcoal to Beni mini, Ashadh badi 12, 1867 (June 1810) (39/235).
[193] Exaction of *Jhara* labour in Tipung for construction of bridge on Likhu river, marga badi 12, 1863 (November 1806) (6/793).
[194] Exaction of *Jhara* labour in Kathmandu for construction of fort in Shisapani, marga Badi 12, 1863 (November 1806) (6/793).
[195] Such resentments was often expressed in concrete terms. Thus in 1809 Gorkhali commanders in the Jamuna-Sutlej region was unable to transport arms and ammunition to their camps at Nahan, because "the ryots had become uncontrollable" Report on war situation from Nahan, Bhadra Sud 7, 1866 (September 1809) (37/338).
[196] Exaction of *Jhara* labour in Arghau kaski for repair of irrigation channel, marga sudi 5, 1853 (November . 1798)(24/100)

between the Koshi and Teesta rivers in eastern Nepal had been summoned to work in construction of the temple in Kathmandu but were subsequently permitted to pay a special levy in cash in lieu of this obligation on that ground that "…You live very far away and the journey involves more expenses and harassment…."[197]

Commutation was also allowed if the region was sparsely populated or inhabited by unruly communities and was situated close to the borders. The area between the Koshi and Teesta was inhabited by the limbus who still had not yet accepted the Gorkha rule. Hence it made more sense to get cash payments from them rather than force them to serve as *Jhara* labour. In 1810, *jhara* obligation in some of the areas was commuted into a regular homestead levy.[198] This only increased the demand cash payments and tax which meant the burden still increased on the peasants.

The *jhara* labour was not just given to the palaces and the central rule, but also to the *Jagir* holders and revenue officers. In Banke and Bardiya districts in the far western *Tarai*, the chief revenue officer was allowed to exact unpaid labour services from two persons in each village every year. [199] There were many times the state delegated its right to exact forced and unpaid labour to *birta* and *jagir* owners of different categories. [200] The *jhara* was a system that burdened the peasantry beyond what the high taxes already had.

The increasing level of indebtedness leads to the creation of another system which further deteriorated the conditions of the peasantry. The peasants as mentioned before, in order to pay the taxes and levies, as well as the loans demanded by the ruler and the *jagir* holders, caused the peasants to borrow money from the money-lenders, failing to pay back led to bondage and slavery. A debtor was compelled to work for the money lender under this system in fulfilment of his debt obligations[201] in the capacity of a bondsman. The term that was used was *bandha*, which literally meant a bondsman.

[197] Commutation of *Jhara* Labour in Koshi-Teesta region, Shrawan Badi 3, 1855 (July 1798) (23/305).
[198] Beth and Begar obligation included in thek tax in Dasmajhiya (Pallokirat) Shrawan Badi 14, 1867 (July 1810) (19/9).
[199] Confirmation of 1793 tax assessments in Mahottari, Kartik Sudi 10, 1866 (November 1809) (40/112).
[200] Order regarding exaction of *Jhara* labour in choraha mines, Baisakh Sudi 9, 1845 (May 1788) (5/710).
[201] Order regarding enslavement of Bondsmen of Radhakrishna Upadhayay, Jestha badi 5, 1845 (May 1788) (5/716).

Which means a person taken up on mortgage, would be forced to serve his debtor until his loans were paid off. There were many cases where the debtor sold himself and his children in settlement of a loan. There were also numerous cases in which influential persons the village enslaved poor people through the use of force.[202]

The rebellions that occurred in different parts of the country from time to time against the Gorkhali regime were another important factor contributing to slavery.[203] The rebels were lucky if they were enslaved, for capital punishments was usually awarded to all those who were above the age of 12 years.[204] Although the government specifically directed that members of rebel families should not be enslaved.[205] This was often ignored by overzealous local administrators and the slaves regained liberty only when the matter was reported to the government.[206] Often slavery seems to have been due to acute poverty. In Dullu-Dailekh, peasants used to sell their children to purchasers from the plains, as well as from Tibet, and even kidnapped the children of others for such sale.[207]

Brahmanical rules and prohibitions relating to caste and cow slaughter had been introduced in different areas of the Gorkha state and they were rigorously enforced.[208] People who contravened such regulations were heavily fined or else sentenced to enslavement or capital punishment. In 1805, officials deputed to enforce the ban on cow-slaughter in Solukhumbu were directed as follows:

> In case persons guilty of this crime are punished with deaths or enslavement, most of the inhabitants of that area will have to be so punished. Accordingly, the heaviest possible fines should be imposed on persons who committed cow-slaughter

[202] Complaint regarding forcible enslavement in darna, Marga badi 6, 1898 (November 1841) (31/195)
[203] Morang Administrative regulations, Baisakh badi 1, 1853, (April 1796) (19/100).
[204] Jumla administrative regulations, Ashadh Sudi 4, 1853, (June 1796) (5/322) Section 8; Pallokirat .
[205] Ibid.
[206] Order regarding restoration of freedom of rebels enslaved in Jumla estha Badi 9, 1860 (May 1803) (5/275) instruction to Ranjit Kunwar; regarding administration of Jumla Shrawwan Sudi 3, 1851 (September 1802).
[207] Ban on sale of Children in dullu-dailekh, aswin badi 8, 1865 (September 1808) (36/164).
[208] Order regarding te taxation and judicial customs in jumla, Chaitra Badi 6, 1885 (March 1829). (53/189) D.R. Regmi Medieval Nepal, Prt II, p. 538.

> after that area came under our rules, as long as they have wives, sons, daughters and bondsmen available for sale (to pay such fines). However, those who committed this crime after March 1804 should be either beheaded or enslaved. [209]

In addition, a stricter code of sexual morality was imposed on communities and groups which had not been brought within the fold of Hinduism and whose traditional standards in this respect were comparatively lax. Adultery with a woman of higher caste was generally punished with death.[210] However when such offences were committed among persons belonging to such communal groups as Khas, Magar, Gurung, Tamang or Majhi or among such untouchable castes as Damai, punishment was usually in the form of enslavement.[211] the severity of the system was partially mitigated when fines were prescribed in lieu of enslavement even when incest was involved,[212] but default in the payment of such fines itself became another factor contributing to enslavement.

Enslavement was occasionally due to administrative high handedness and oppression. Such reports were received particularly from districts situated at a distance from Kathmandu. Thus in Doti, a royal order issued in 1802 noted that the former local administrator of that district had "enslaved people, indulged in oppression and thus greatly reduced the number of ryots".[213]

Slavery was thus a consequence of factors deeply rooted in the economic and social fabric of the society. It was hardly surprising therefore that large numbers of people were enslaved in different parts of the country. According to an English official who visited Garhwal in 1808,

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[209] Regulations on Cow slaughter in Solukhumbu, marga badi 9, 1862 (November 1805).(6/662) section 1.
[210] Capital punishments to slave in Soluhumbu guilty of sexua intercourse with brahman woman, Falgun 1, 1865 (Febraury 1809) (36/220).
[211] Itihas Prakash, op-cit, Vol 2, book 2, p 26.
[212] Order regarding rates of chak-chakui fines in salyan and other Areas Bhadra Badi 3, 1867 (Ausgus 1810) (39/326); Order regarding social and judicial customs in doti, Ashandh Sudi 1, 1886 (June 1829). (43/633); Order regarding rates of Chok Chokai fines and Ban on Slave traffic in garhwal, Magh Badi 12, 1868 (January 1812) (40/349).
[213] Order to Local officials in Doti regarding tax collections and enslavements kartik Sudi 13, 1859 (November 1802) (24/619).

> At the foot of the pass leading to Har-Ki-Paouri is the Gorkhali post to which slaves are bought down from hills and exposed for sale. Many hundreds of these poor wretches of both sexes from three to thirty years of age, are annually disposed of in the way of traffic. These slaves are brought down from all parts of the interior of the hills and sold at Hardwar at from ten to one hundred and fifty rupees each.[214]

British estimates put the number of persons enslaved in Garhwal during the entire period of Gorkhali rule at 200,000.[215] According to a royal order issued from Kathmandu to local officials in Sirmur three years later,

> We have reviewed reports that ryots are enslaved on charges of adultery and that (miscreants) try to sell and purchase industrious and tax-paying ryots. In Garhwal, lands went out of cultivation and revenue declined because of such malpractices. The ryots who were left suffered.[216]

Several orders were however passed by the court to limit the impact as well as overall slavery.[217] For instance, in 1793, local administrators in Doti were directed not to restore runaway slaves to their owners even if it were possible [218] A more comprehensive step was taken in 1803, when the government promulgated orders directing that " Brahman or Rajput shall be enslaved in our country in the future" the Orders also prescribed that " other ryots too shall be enslaved only with their consent, in the presence of the respectable persons of the village and not through the use of

[214] Edwin T Atchinson, The Himalaya districts of the North western provinces of India, Allahabad: north western and oudh government press 1884, Vol II, p. 620.
[215] Ibid.
[216] Orders regarding Chak Chakri fines and ban on Slave traffic in Garhwal and elsewhere, Poush Sudi 3, 1869 (January 1812) (40/329).
[217] Administrative regulations for Doti, Marga Sudi 3, 1850 (November 1893) (36/37).
[218] Ban on enslavement of brahmans and Rajouts, kartik badi 40, 1860 (October 1893) (36/136).

force."[219] But consent could hardly be regarded as synonymous with willingness; faced by numerous social and economic compulsions, the common people had little choice.

The problem of bondage appears to have been acute particularly among the Magar community in the western hill areas. It appears to have been a common practice for moneylenders to take up Magar boys and girls on bondage in lieu of interest due on loans suppled to their parents. The practice was banned in 1837, but revived in 1846, a few weeks after the beginning of Rana rule, when the affected moneylenders complained that they were getting neither work nor their money back from their Magar debtors.[220] This aspect is very important considering the Magars were considered to be the "best" Gorkhas, as per the British and were sought after, by both the Brtish army and the Assam rifles to be recruited. Thus one can see why Magars would have moved out in large numbers

Orders were promulgated from time to time prescribing the collection of arrears of taxes and fines in cash, but apparently to little-effect.[221] In 1807, the sale of members of the family of tax defaulters n Garhwal was prohibited and revenue officials were directed to recover all arrears in cash.[222] There is no evidence that the order was ever enforced, for it was repeated four years later, in 1812.[223] The 1807 order also directed that all persons enslaved on the ground of default in the payment of taxes and fines should be freed and that the *ryots* should no longer be enslaved for non-payment of taxes.[224] The restoration of liberty of such slaves was, of course, an impossible undertaking. Even if it had been passible to locate them, it is hardly possible to believe that their owners and purchasers would have agreed to such a measure. The sheer desperation of such orders goes on to show the manner in which the government

[219] Ban on enslavement of Brahmans and ajputs, kartik badi, 10. 1860 (October 1893) (19/137).
[220] Ban on enslavement and bondage of Magars, Marga badi 14, 1893 (November 1836). (53/615); Order regarding restoration of pre-1836 customs f Magars, Aswin badi 1, 1903 (September 1846) (33/38).
[221] Order regarding and bondage of Magars, Aswin badi 8, 1876 (Spetember 1812) (43/354).
[222] Order to Chauttriya Bam Shah to Check slams traffic in Garhwal, Ashadh Badi 10, 1864 (June 1807) (20/404).
[223] Order regarding rates of Chak-Chakri fines and ban on slave traffic in Garhwal, Magh Badi 12, 1868 (January 1812) (40/349).
[224] Order to Chautariya Bam Shah to check slave traffic in Garhwal, Ashadh badi 10, 1864 (June 1807) (20/404).

was desperate to stop the enslavement to cause a ruination of the peasantry and the resulting migration.

The *Kipat* Land system

Thus far, we have only discussed the western hills, the Terai and the Kathmandu valley. As mentioned earlier, the eastern hills deserves a solitary treatment and this is what this section will do. The major conflict, it seems, came not so much in the western hills, but in the eastern hills. The eastern hills had a very different socio, economic and political structure as compared to the western hills, the Kathmandu valley and the *Terai,* the major difference being in the nature of the land ownership.

At the time of the conquest of the eastern hills by the Gorkha state the nature of land ownership that existed in the region was that of *kipat*. Iman Singh Chemjong, in his work, "The history of the Kirats," had put forward the following legend about the origin of the *kipat* system.

> "*Kipat* means a place where Kiratis live. It is also called "Tangsing-Khoksing." Formerly, several groups of immigrants reclaimed waste lands and became its customary occupants, or "Khambongba Lungbomba." They acquired occupancy rights, or the earth, with the gods as their witnesses that they may be allowed to live on, from generation to generation. Land which (Kiratis) occupy in accordance with this pledge was called *kipat*. According to legend, a group of Mongols came from China to Tibet. They took off their shoes (*docha*) and prayed to God to let them know where they should settle. They then tied all their shoes in a bundle and threw it into the Arun river, pledging to occupy as *kipat* the place where God would let the bundle stop. Several days later, (the Mongols) found the bundle of the banks of a mountain strewn south of Tibet. They then felt happy, offered sacrifices to the gods and named the places "Hidangna", or "a place shown by the lord after many wanderings." This place is situated in Pallokirat. Different immigrants reclaimed forest-lands in different areas and established their *kipat*. Later, *kipat*-

> holdig chose Hang, who had separated from his brothers, as their kings. The king obtained military assistance also from them." [225]

There are of course no historical sources to back up the arguments of Iman Singh Chemjong. However, leaving this debate aside, the fact still remains that by the time of the 16th century, the *kipat* system was already in place. As per the *kipat* system, land was owned on a communal basis without any legal titles.[226]

The *kipat* was more than just a land ownership system; it also regulated the social structure and organization of the people and was a means of identity since they were several names of the *kipat*s- *Toetlagu* (rhododendron), *Yambhota* (a fruit), *Thegmi* (wicker-worker), *Menyangho* (the unsuccessful one) and *Libong* (archer). The matter relating to the community life was decided by the *Chumlung* or the head of the village, known to the *Terai* states as the *Raya/Rai* . The *kipat* system was an embodiment of the autonomy, both social and political, of the Kirat ethnic groups in the hills.

The *kipat* land system was an embodiment of the Kirat social and political autonomy. Yet all of this was to change when the Gorkha state conquered the region in the late 18th century. This along with the repressive regime of the Gorkha state was to cause a massive migration from the region.

By 1773, the entire eastern Himalayas had fallen to the Gorkhas. Prithvinarayan Shah, the ruler of Gorkha, policy towards the Kirats of the region was one of reconciliation. The foremost reason for this was the fact that the Gorkha state did not want to get engaged in a long war to supress the descendants in these areas, nor did they want these areas to be depopulated since these lands could generate revenue for the state by the way of land revenue. Prithvinarayan's order to the various Kirat leaders issued in the same year expresses these considerations.

> …you are the faithful subject of the Raja of Makwanpur, you ate his salt and you remained true to him till the last hour, now that the Makwanpur principality no longer exist, we have become its sole master and we take you under our protection, as you were

[225] Imam Singh Chemjong, The history of the Kirats.
[226] M.C. Regmi, *A study in Nepali economic history*, New Delhi, 1999, pp 49-52.

> the subjects of the Makwanpur ruler, so today you are our subjects, we have pardoned you for any offences committed in the past, so all of you live in your land without any fears whatsoever, do not have any kind of doubts about your security, we guarantee the same to you and we value your friendship and loyalty. Accordingly, come here with your friends, relatives and kinsmen. We shall grant you succor (Chardasti) in all matters. If you say that you have been relieved from your services because that country has been conquered by us, it is the duty of a servant to render service as long as he takes salt.
>
> We hereby grant you pardon on your life and property for all crimes committed by you against us when we conquered that country. With full assurance, (approach us) through Birabhadra *Rai*. There is no doubt now in any matter. [227]

The document cited above shows the Gorkha state's attempt to placate the local population by guarantying the Kirats their *kipat* land holdings and freedom to continue with their customs and traditions. Yet it clearly mentions that the Gorkhas would protect the Kirats, which firmly placed the latter as subjects under the protection of the new ruling class. During the earlier period the Kirats supplied the Terai states with military manpower and were as good as partners of the state, which was the reason they enjoyed freedom in the hills. However, now that the new rulers did not need them in such a manner, there was no need to give them that freedom and neither was it in the nature of the Gorkha state structure to accord such freedom. This was an important change that took place.

The second document issued in 1774 again reiterates the same aspects. This document too adopts a reconciliatory approach while stressing on the fact that the Kirats are now under the protection and refuge of the Gorkha state, thereby again

[227] Order from King Prithvinarayan Shah, to Dasha Lohorung, Thulusimha Majhiya, Pawa Majhiya, Sangla Majhiya, Helungwa Majhiya, Dhupu Majhiya, Malta Makhiya, Patwa Majhiya and Shobhajit Majhiya, (Baisakh 23 1830) (April 1830) (23/45).

stressing on the subject status of the Kirats.

> We had offered you refuge yesterday. We have today conquered that country by dint of our valor, but you belong to us. We hereby grant protection to your families. Look after the lands which you had been customarily using and continue to make the customary payments. (These arrangements) are not to be applied to the 90,000 *Rai*s, because other kings are to be displaced. Come along with your relatives and Limbu brethren. We grant you refuge.[228]

The stress on "other kings are to be displaced…" was an important one. It clearly defined the absolute intolerance of the Gorkha state for any other contesting forms of authority. Much of this had to do with the structure of the Gorkha state, which was based on a more direct control over its territories. This then also meant establishing local administrations, staffed with officials appointed by the court. Such officials were known as *Bhardars*. The order given below now makes clear the changes that came with the new Gorkha rule in the eastern Himalayas. The wording of the order was still reconciliatory in nature, with Prithvinarayan reiterating the protection offered to the Kirats. Yet, it makes mention of the new officials, (the *bhardars*) of the Gorkha state who were now to be stationed in the eastern Himalaya. The *bhardars* were now to run the administration of the region, thus curbing the autonomy of these groups.

> You are respectable men of that country. Yesterday too, you had acknowledged a King and lived under his authority. We sent you a letter bearing the royal seal after making necessary inquiries, believing that you would like to continue living under a king. We grant protection to Limbuwan, if it exists. We had deputed *bhardars* accordingly with necessary instructions. Today, we have granted you protection. Do not consider it otherwise. We shall grant you rewards and honors. Look after the country in consultation with the Bhardars whom we have deputed there. Construct a bridge on the

[228] Order for the Darbar to the Kirats Baisakh Badi 30, 1831.

> Tamor river. We hereby confirm all your rights and privileges. Look after (the country) with due assurance.[229]

Another order, listed below, was issued to the Limbus. It seeks to create a difference between them and the Khambus. The document suggests that unlike the Khambus, their chiefs would not be dismissed. Yet the underlying aspect remained the same, here too, the Bhardars were to run the administration of the region and the Kirats were now to provide service to these officials.

> We have received your reply to our previous letter. We desire peace and harmony. Our intent is good. We had afforded you refuge previously also. We have conquered your country by dint of our valor. The descendants of Tu Tu Myang Hang Yang were defeated and the country now belongs to us. But you belong to us and we undertake the protection of your kinsmen. We hereby pardon all your crimes and confirm the customs and traditions, rights and privileges of your country. Join our Bhardara and render them assistance. Take care of the lands as you did when it was being ruled over by your own chieftains. Enjoy the land from generation to generation if it remains in existence. You are different from the 900,000 *rai*s, because (their) chieftains are to be displaced, but not you. We fully understand your intent. But since truth remained in your heart, there was conflict between Sikkim and us. We have sent your officials there, and you will understand everything from them. As mentioned above, and privileges and your lands. In case we confiscate your land, may our ancestral gods destroy our kingdom. We hereby inscribe this pledge on a copper plate and issue this royal order and hand it over to our Limbu brethren…[230]

[229] Order from King Prithvinanarayan Shah, To Jang *Rai*, Jamuna *Rai* and all other Limbus and *Rai*s. Friday, Bhadra Badi 5, 1831 (August 1774).

[230] Order from King Prthvinarayan Shah to the Limbus of Pallo-Kirat. Kantipr, Shrawan Sudi 12, 1831 (July 1774).

The document given below, issued in 1790, shows the depopulation of the Kirat areas that had taken place during the first few decades of the Gorkha rule. Further it also demonstrates the Gorkha rulers desire to resettle the population in these regions, which intitially was the major concern of the Gorkha state.

> We have received reports that you are the old *kipat* owners of that area, that it is being depopulated….make different arrangements (for the collection of revenue) every year, and that proper attention is not being paid to Sen (i.e. Crown) lands there. We therefore decree that cultivators (Praja) on *kipat* lands shall not be evicted. Appropriate Rs 40 from both villages every year and make the payment stipulated in the royal order. With due assurance, provide due services on Sen lands.[231]

The next document issued in the same year, listed below, further reiterates the same sentiment. Here too, there is an attempt to get them back from India, though there is still the underlying statement about the expected services that the Kirat are expected to provide to the local Gorkha administration.

> We hereby grant you security of life and property. Escheat property (*Aputali*) may be inherited by a relative within the generations, if any, on payment of ***Jande*** (?). Otherwise, property has been remitted. With due assurance, come back

[231] Confirmation of *kipat* Land in Tallapudi From King Rana Bahadur Shah, to Sukal Thapa, Jagadhar Rana and Dhanaram Mijhar of Upalla-gadi, and Manadhar Thapa and Jaya Rana of Tallapudi. Kartik Badi 4, 1847 (October 1790) (5/21).

> from the Moglan (India) and settle in Bhedaruwa town. Provide royal services to us through the *Subba*.[232]

Throughout the early decades of the Gorkha rule, the state to placate the Kirats kept confirming their *kipat* land holdings. Though they were at the same time subjected to various taxes and had to provide other services such as supplying cows to the local authorities in the region, as can be seen in the document below

> Our father (i.e. King Pratap Simha Shah) had issued a royal order confirming Kaphale-Kharka as the *kipat* holding of the inhabitants (Praja) of Chhahare. We hereby reconfirm this *kipat* holdings and decree that it shall not be confiscated as long as *Kharchari* (i.e. tax on pasture lands) is paid. With due assurance, maintain cattle farms there and supply cows to us.[233]

Despite the Gorkha state's attempt to reconcialiate with the Kirats by confirming their land holdings and promises of allowing them to follow their traditional customs and traditions, discontentment amongst them had risen to such an extent that in the Sino-Gorkha war of 1788-93, the Kirats rose in rebellion. They threatened to overrun large areas but were defeated by the *Suba* (governor) of Vijaypur. However, the state not wanting to get involved in a long rebellion ordered a general amnesty in 1795, calling all Kiratis and guaranteeing them their traditional customs and landholdings, once again. [234]

Discontentment continued amongst the Kirats, no matter how the Gorkha state tried to reconcile with the *kipat* owners and tried to make sure they did not leave the land. The fact was the very presence of the Gorkha administration in their region was resented by the Kirats, since it meant a loss of autonomy. The Gorkha state did

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[232] Appeal to *Rai* Leader to Return to Nepal From King Rana Bahadur Shah, to Agam Singh *Rai*, Ihujit *Rai*, Prithimasti *Rai* and all other *Rai* Jimidars who are staying in the Moglan (India). Kartik Badi 14, 1847 (October 1790) (5/25).

[233] Confirmation of *kipat* Lands in Chhahare From King Rana Bahadur Shah, To Laxmi Narayan Upadhyaya. Marga Sudi 5, 1847 (November 1790) (25/7).

[234] Ibid, p 51.

not seem to understand that for a while. They believed that they were simply supplanting the rule of the Sena rulers of the Terai states with theirs although even if they had understood this, it would have hardly made a difference. They would never have accorded the same level of freedom to the eastern Himalayas, especially since they needed to generate revenue to fund their expansionist policies and accommodate its growing administrative officials.

The Gorkha state having dealt with the Kirat uprising and having settled its dispute with the Chinese (c.1792) now began to take firmer policies in the region. The Gorkha state also required the lands in the eastern Himalayas to be given out as *jagir* .[235]Giving out lands as *jagir* would also give them additional revenues. However, the state, as was seen above, itself had guaranteed the Kirats their *kipat* holdings. To rebuke that, would mean another large scale uprising, which the state was unwilling to do. Thus, the state did not completely take away the *kipat* land holding but, any land that was vacant in the eastern hills, was to be given as *raikar*, a land that was liable for taxation - initially to any one that the *rai*s and *subba*s thought was eligible. Sometimes they even took land within the *kipat* system that was not being used. The holders of the *raikar* did not necessary need to be Kirat. This last point was an important change, the autonomy that the Kirats enjoyed by law had come to an end.

This order, listed below, from Rana Bahadur Shah at the end of the 19th century shows the manner in which the officials appointed by the court could now confiscate land from within the *kipat*s. An important change had occurred from the preceding period, when the state rarely interfered with the *kipat* lands.

> Officials deputed by us have inspected *kipat* lands, confiscated the surplus area and allotted 340 *muri*s of rice fields to you as follows. You shall not be evicted from these lands. Remain ready to provide necessary services to us. Use the lands as your *kipat*.[236]

[235] Royal order to Kipat owner of chainpur, eastern Himalayas regarding convertion of land to jagir, Baisakh Sudi 14, 1862 (May 1795) (5/579)

[236] From King Rana Bahadur Shah, to the Mijhars and Prajas of Miranchigaun. Marga Sudi 5 1848 (March 1791) (26/5).

By the end of the 18th century and the early part of the 19th century what one sees is the encroachment of the state on the lands of the eastern Himalayan region was taking place through two major processes. Firstly, the state was taking lands from the *kipat*s, what it deemed was surplus or unlawful and giving it as *jagir*, not just to the individuals but also to the entire company of the army. The second method was to reclaim lands and put them under cultivation. Giving of lands as *jagir* and reclaiming the lands involved a creation of landed gentry that were not Kirats, but Khas, which would, in time, help the state control the area. The following document gives a hint of that process.

> We hereby promulgate the following regulations for Majhkirat, which have been assigned to companies as Jagir.
>
> 1. Confirm those *Rai*s who have been occupying their positions from ancient times. Collect fees from them at the customary rates. Abolish those *Rai*s who had been appointed later by royal order through *Subba*s. Withdraw the royal orders issued to them and bring these to the palace.[237]

The royal order given below by King Girban Bir Bikram Shah to two Khas men, explains the way reclamation of the lands in the east was attempted.

> We hereby grant you authority to reclaim waste and virgin lands, as well as to construct and operate irrigation channels in the Syamban and adjoining areas across the Arun river. Settle people on the lands thus reclaimed and irrigated. Submit an annual statement of the total area of rice fields thus reclaimed, after an initial period of … years. We hereby decree that such lands shall be utilized subjects to local customs and that eviction shall not be

[237] From King Rana Bahadur Shah, To Subedar Balawant *Rai*ka and Bamsya Khatri. (Baisakh Sudi 14, 1850) (May 1793) (36/3).

> made as long as (rents are paid) on Adhiya basis an in the rest of the country. In case you do not construct irrigation, channels or reclaim rice lands, you shall be held guilty. With due assurance, enjoy the lands after an initial period (of tax exemption).[238]

The increase of the state's presence in the *kipat* areas and the introduction of a new landed class seems to be resented by Kirats, many of them seem to have left the region and migrated elsewhere. The land that was left vacant was given as *raikar* and *birta* to non-Kiratis, leading to a massive migration of outsiders into the hills. The Gorkha state policy, by the end of the 18th century, was to encourage immigration into the eastern Himalayas, from western Nepal, Southern Tibet and Northern India.[239] The new migrants would not get land in the *kipat* system. The change in demography would help the state break the Kirat dominance in the region. They were given the wastelands or new lands that they brought under cultivation. The land that these immigrants would reclaim would have to be given as per the *Raikar* system, which meant more lands under cultivation and hence taxable. The fact that the Kirats resented such immigration, which threatened their positions in the region and made encroachments in their customary rights over wastelands, can be seen from two orders issued to the Kirats:

> Cultivate areas and settlements on your *kipat* lands as your own. We have given the authority to (our officials) to promote settlement on waste and uncultivated lands there. In case you obstruct efforts to make our country populous, you shall be severely punished.[240]

The next order that was issued in 1811 shows in a much clearer picture the manner in which the social tension and clashes were taking place when the state tried to

[238] To Prithvidhar Padhya and Siddhikarna Padhya Ghimire. Poush Sud 5, 1856 (January 1800) (34/6).

[239] Kumar Pradhan, op cit, p 50.

[240] Order from the Darbar to the Kirats . (Baisakh Sudi 14, 1850) (May 1793) (36/3).

encourage more immigration and bring more lands under *Raikar* and Jagir system.

> We have received reports that you refuse to let Khas, Magar, Brahman (and other) people from the hill region settle on your lands. We have sent them to reclaim lands which can be converted into paddy fields... In case any (*kipat* owner) whose holdings contain irrigable lands which can be reclaimed as paddy fields… does not let hill people settle thereon... he shall be awarded severe punishment.[241]

The Aftermath of the Anglo Gorkha war. (1816-1854)

The end of the Anglo-Gorkha war marks an important point. It was after this that large numbers of people from the Gorkha state were recruited by the British in their army, the number of people leaving from the region also increased. The Sugauli treaty of 1816, which terminated hostilities between the Gorkha state and the British resulted in the loss to the British of the eastern districts of Saptari, Mahottari, Bara, Parsa and Rautahat and western *tarai* districts of Sheoraj, Khajahani, Palhi, Majhkhand, Banke, Bardiya, Kailali and Kanchapur in addition to Kumaon, Garhwal and other territories west of the Mahakali river and Darjeeling in the east. The land owners, such as the *birta* and *jagir* in the region formerly appointed by the Gorkha state, were all compensated by the British, who paid them Rs. 200,000 every year to keep them happy and contented so that they did not feel discontented in any way. Though some of territories in the *Terai* were ultimately returned to the Gorkha state, however, the war meant that the possibilities for further expansion ended. Military activity aimed at the expansion of the state had formed the keystone of all the land revenue as well as the system of forced labour. The very nature of Gorkha state was expansionist in nature and every state policy was formed taking into consideration the army and possible conquests. Hence all the major impacts that were talked about, whether the extension of the state control over the land or the rising land revenue demands or the use of forced labour had its basis in the expansionist nature of the state. It should then mean that the defeat of the Gorkha army in the war and the resulting halting of any further expansion of the Gorkha state should then have a very

[241] Ibid, p 52.

major impact on the manner in which all the policies in the Gorkha state were followed. These policies, as mentioned before, were vital to the peasants as they had a direct impact on them. Hence, whether or not preparations for war continued is of vital importance to the study of the peasants and their growing burden and hence exodus to India.

The end of the war was seemingly followed by a long period of peace. but the threat of war loomed large over the state. The defeat in the war had not seemed to impress on a large section of the army and the nobility that they could not match the British in open field, they believed that they had only narrowly lost to the British. It was Bhimsen Thapa, the Prime Minister of the state that seems to have understood that the British could not be beaten and had asked all his local administrators especially near the borders not to indulge in the troubles with the British.[242] He also asked them not to repair any roads that lead to the British dominions unless they were absolutely necessary.[243] Yet, this did not mean that preparations for war were not carried on. They were a large segment of the court as well as that of the army who wanted a war with the British. Preparations continued, so much so that the British resident at the court of Kathmandu reported "preparations to a considerable extent in the manufacture of arms and gunpowder going on in the valley."[244] As a matter of fact, so vigorous were the preparations that the number of the standing army increased form 10,000 in 1816, to 12,000 in 1819 and 15,000 in 1829. These preparations for war with the British continued until the rise of Jung Bahadur Rana in 1846.

One of the major changes that came about during this period was the complete banning of people from travelling to India, unless they had a specific permission from the Bhimsen Thapa himself, which was then impossible.[245] This was also necessitated by the fact that many of the peasants were running away to the British Dominions in India.

[242] Revenue Regulations for saptari and Mahottari, Kartik Sudi 12, 1874 (November 1817) (43/48). Section 1; revenue regulations for Bara, Parsa and Rautahat, Falgun Badi 5, 1874 (Febraury 1818) (43/73) Section 1.
[243] Forest Regulation for aria districts, Poush sudi 9,1885 (January 1829) (43/169) section 7.
[244] Ramakant, Indo-Nepalese Relations, Delhi: 8. Chand and Co, 1968, p.58.
[245] Chittaranjan, Nepali, generl Bhimsen Thapa and contemporary Nepal, op-cit, pp.231-232, Order to Subedar Bhimsen Baniya regarding entry into Kathmandu.

The financial problems of the government appear to have become particularly acute after 1832-33, when the government intensified military preparation for war with the British.[246] The policy continued after the Prime Minister Bhimsen Thapa fell from power in 1837, for his successor Matbar Singh Thapa was even more committed to a policy of war with the British.

The government of Nepal therefore undertook a series of measures to retrench non-military expenditure and increase revenue from different sources. During the period from 1834 to 1838, the salaries of non-military employees were retrenched by 25% and various perquisites customarily enjoyed by them were withdrawn. [247] In 1837, the rates of land tax assessments were further increased throughout the eastern Terai and hills districts. [248] Measures were taken also to check the loss of revenue resulting from land grants and assignments. A survey of different category of land grants and assignments was undertaken throughout the country[249] as part and parcel of these measures. Conversion of *jagir* lands into *birta* was prohibited,[250] since in the 19th century the Birta had taken the form of tax free lands and in April 1838, the government decided not to make any *birta* land grant for a period of 10 years.[251] Fresh land revenue settlement operations were conducted simultaneously. During the period from 1832 to 1837, the revaluation of *bandha* lands, i.e. lands acquired by private individuals on mortgage from the government, first done in 1795-96, was again taken up in the western hill areas.[252] Measures were also taken to increase the area of land under *raikar* tenure, from which the government appropriated revenue. The area of land under *raikar* tenure increased when lands were acquired by the government in

[246] Order regarding reduction of salaries of government employee, ashadh Badi 13 1895 (June 573) (27/573).
[247] Ramakant, op-cit, pp 109-110.
[248] Order regarding *Jagir* land assignments in eastern districts, Chaitra Badi 7, 1893 (March 1837) (35/91).
[249] Land survey regulation, kartik Sudi 1, 1893 (October 1836). Separate regulations for Bhimdunga-Trishuli, Eastern *Tarai*, Western Hill Bhimdunga-Sindhu, Bhimdunga-Patringa, Trishuli –Pyuthan and western hill region upto Mahakali River, 35/40-69,40/571-613.
[250] Prohibitions to Grant *Jagir* Lands As *Birta*, Baisakh Badi 30, 1894 (April 1837) (26/635).
[251] Restrictions On *Birta* grats, Falgun Badi 4, 1895 (Febraury 1839) (2/63).
[252] Order regarding revaluation of Bandha lands in western hill region. Shrawan Sudi 8, 1893 (August 1836) (26/590-621).

settlement of its claims against individual land-owners, confiscation, or outright purchase from individual landowners.[253]

Changes in revenue Collection Systems.

Between 1820 and 1837, a series of experiments were made in the field of revenue administration, which appeared to have a two-fold objective: to assure stable revenue for the government and to protect local functionaries from oppression at the hands of *ijaradars* and other revenue collectors. The system of making revenue farmers and district officials responsible for both general administration and revenue collection was considered unsuitable, primarily because the peasants suffered from undue oppression and extortion at their hands. Moreover, district officials responsible for the collection of revenue "exacted provisions and unpaid labour and collected fines even on baseless charges."[254] Efforts were therefore made, for the first time in the history of revenue administration in Nepal, to separate revenue collection of functions from those relating to general administration. The local administrative authority continued to exercise general supervision over the work of functionaries responsible for the collection of revenue and receive the amounts collected, but he no longer assumed responsibility for the total revenue assessment made in the area under this jurisdiction.

The revenue collection of the *Terai* was restored to the Gorkha state in December 1816. The British had collected revenue in this region while it was under their occupation. In order to avoid compelling the peasant to pay revenue twice,[255] it was necessary to ascertain the amount of arrears due from each person. Officials documents issued during his period contains references to revenue functionaries and peasants,[256] who had absconded, that is to say, collaborated with the British during the war and stayed on in India after its end. These factors necessitated the compilation of fresh records of land revenues. This task was accordingly undertaken on a priority

[253] Order regarding jurisdiction of sadar Company Dadarkhana in land administration, Baisakh Sudi 5, 1889 (April 1841) (31/274).
[254] Thekbandi grant to jagat Padhya for revenue collection on *Jagir* and of Srinath kampu, Baisakh Badi 8, 1890 (April 1833). (26/286); Introduction of Thekbandi system for revenue collection in Dang, Shrawan Badi 4, 1873(July 1816). (28/308).
[255] Regulations for Saptari and Mahottari, Kartik Sudi 11, 1875 (November 1818) (42 /409) Section 4; Regulations for Barar, Parsa and Rautahat Magh Sudi 11, 1875 (November 181). (42/413) section 6.
[256] Order regarding appointment of sardar Balabhanjan Pande for revenue settlements in Saptari and mahottari, Magh Sudi 11, 1873 (January 1817) 936/384).

basis in early 1817 in the entire eastern *Tarai* region,[257] simultaneously with the demarcation of the Gorkha-India boundaries.[258]

Initially, the state decided to rely again on the *ijara* system in the collection of revenue. Officials deputed to revise land tax assessment records in the eastern *Terai* were instructed to appoint reliable local persons as *ijaradars* in consultation with the local officials and ensure that revenue did not go below the pre-war figures.[259] However, no one was willing to assume *ijara*s in the existing chaotic situation. The government had thus no alternative but to introduce the *Amanat* system[260] as an interim arrangement, but the *ijara* system was restored when the survey operations were completed around 1820.

The *ijara* system made the position of local revenue functionaries increasingly precarious. These functionaries could retain their traditional authority at local level only by acting as sub-contractors on behalf of *ijaradars*, but their position was never secure. *Ijaradars* dismissed them whenever they liked and it was not unusual for the same office to change hands over three times in the course of a single year. In 1828, therefore, local revenue functionaries from the entire eastern *Terai* districts approached Kathmandu with the request that they should be appointment as sub-contractors for five years at a time. They promised to make higher payments, reclaim waste lands and keep the peasants happy in case their request was granted. The government, accordingly, sanctioned arrangements for the appointment of such functionaries on a five-year term through the orders of the Prime Minister himself. [261] The original intention of the government was to retain the *ijara* system and appoint

[257] Survey regulations for Saptari and Mahottari, Magh Sudi 13, 1873 (February 1817) 36/386); Regulations for Munsiffi in Morang, Falgun badi 30, 1873 (February 1817). (36/399). Survey regulations for Chitaun, Chaitra badi 4, 1873 (March 1817). (36/414).
[258] Orders regarding Demarcation of Nepal- India boundary, Magh Sudi 11, 1873 (February 1817). (36/394-398).
[259] Survey regulations for Saptari and Mahottari, Magh Sudi 13, 1873 (February 1817). (36/372). Section 2.
[260] Appointment of Gaj Singh Khatr as revenue collector in Morang under Amanat system, Magh Sudi,13 1873 (February 1817). (36/362); Appointment of Sardar Bakhat Singh Basnet for revenue collection in Bara, Parsa and Rautahat under Amanat system, Magh Sudi 11, 1873 (February 1817). (36/386); Survey regulations for Saptari and Mahottari, Magh Sudi 13, 1873 (February 1817). (36/372).
[261] Inrtroduction of Panchsala-Thek system in saptari, mahottari, Bara, Parsa and Rautahat, Aswin Sudi 2, 1885 (September 1818). (43/138); Introduction of Panchsala-thek sytem in Morang, Kartik 7, 1885 (November 1828) (13/140).

local revenue functionaries as sub-contractors for the stipulated five year period.[262] However, it soon realised the possibility of dispensing altogether with the services of sub-contractors and giving the responsibility to *ijara*dars and maintaining direct contact with such functionaries. Accordingly, the *ijara* system at the district level made directly with the local chaudharis for the collection of revenue in areas under their jurisdiction. [263] These contracts appear to have been issued to the highest bidder.[264] The experiment obviously proved satisfactory, for it was continued in 1834 for another five-year term.[265] In 1838, revenue functionaries in the western *Terai* also succeeded in entrenching their position on the same basis as their counterparts in the eastern *Terai*. According to arrangements introduced in that year, chaudharis were made responsible for the payment of a stipulated sum of money. Any gain or shortfall in the amount thus stipulated was shared by each local 'cultivator'.[266] The chaudharis however did not deal directly, with the government or the peasants which appointed a separate official to make collections from them and transmit a stipulated amount to the central treasury.[267] However, the *ijara* proved to be disastrous for the peasants. The rents went astronomically high and large scale migration began to take place from the region.[268]

In the hill regions, including Kathmandu valley, the outward migration had assumed such alarming levels that experiments in the field of revenue administration were undertaken in the course of a series of settlements conducted during the period from 1820 to 1837.[269] These settlements were of two forms: one was the settlements with individual peasants and the other was with settlements with village headmen. The settlement with the village headman was divided into temporary and permanent

[262] Ibid.
[263] Order to Captain birbhadra Kunwar regarding collection of Panchsala-Thek, revenues in Saptari and Mahottari from Chaudharies and other local functionaries, Bhadra Badi 13, 1887 (August 1830) (44/77).
[264] Order regarding contracts for revenue collection in Barzipur, Bara district, Ashadh Badi 11, 1894 (June 1837) (26/659).
[265] Orders regarding extension of Panchsala-Thek system, Kartik Sudi 5, 10 (October 1833). (26/377, 26/426-427). Separate rders for Morang, Bara, Parsa, Rautahat, Mahottari, Saptari and othhe areas.
[266] Order to Chaudhari and other functionaries in *Tarai* areas of Pythun regarding revenue collection under thek-thiti system, marga Badi 3, 19 (November 1838) . (38/74).
[267] Itihas Prakash, op-cit, vol.2, Book 2, pp 182-188.
[268] *Ijara* regarding introduction of Thekbandi system in Chituan, Baisakh Sudi 15, 1884 (May 1827) (43/207).
[269] Order regarding introduction of Thekbandi syste in Chitaun, Ashadh Badi 10,1875 (June 1818) (42/3230).

settlements. In Kathmandu valley and some adjoining areas, settlements were made directly in the name of individual peasants on a contractual basis and provision was made for adjustments.[270] In other hill areas, settlement was made with the appropriate village headmen for the entire village as one unit. The headmen then apportioned to each peasant a share of the total amount assessed in this manner, collected the stipulated amount from each peasant and handed the proceeds over to the chief administrative officer of the district. Since he belonged to the village, he could be expected to ensure that the shares were based on the taxable capacity of each family. Thus, the village headmen dealt directly with the government representative at the district level and enjoyed enhanced status and authority. At the same time, he was held personally liable for the full payment of the stipulated amount.[271] However, this system did not help stem the flow of the peasants. The village headmen who assumed such obligations were later replaced because they were unable to meet losses resulting from depopulation.[272] Moreover, under this system, newly-reclaimed lands were registered and, revenue thereon paid after an initial exemption period in addition to the amount originally assessed.[273] The system introduced in far flung areas in both eastern[274] and western[275] hill regions was basically similar. The only difference was that in these areas newly-reclaimed lands or new homesteads were not subject to tax until the next settlement, nor were village headmen entitled to seek remissions on the ground that the number of homesteads had declined, or that cultivated lands had reverted to waste. In view of the long-term arrangements involved, the stipulated sum was normally double the actual land revenue assessment,[276] so as to enable the government to share in increased revenue collections. Contractual settlements with village headmen under all these systems were generally made for stipulated periods. But the government appears to have favoured permanent settlements in remoter regions in both the eastern and western hills.

[270] Revenue settlements in changu, Gokarmna etc in Kathmandu, separate documents issued for different villages on adifferet dates during 1895-1894 (1836-36). (35/154-257).
[271] Thekbadni grant to Mukhiya Juddabir Thapa in Pyuthan Thapa in Pyuthan, Baisakh Sudi 10, 1895 (May 1838). (35/478).
[272] Abolition of Mukhiyas in Panchthapala, Salyan, Ashadh Badi 11, 1900 (June 1843). (26/544)
[273] Thek settlements with local functionaries, in Sunar and Deukhuri, Falgun Sudi 9 (February 1834). (35/86).
[274] Thekthiti Revenue settlements in Chainpur, JesthaBadi 3, 1904 (May 1847) (35/450).
[275] Thekthiti revenue settlements in Jumla, falgun Sudi 3, 1894 (February 1838) (35/566-601).
[276] Confirmation of Thekthiti revenue settlement in Achham, Chaitra badi 4, 1890 (March 1834) (24/301).

The most important feature of the new revenue collection system in the hill regions, as in the *Terai*, was the direct relationship established between the village headman and the central government. The district administrative authority had no direct role in the collection of revenue, for he was no more than repository of the proceeds of collection. Nor did he have any hand in the appointment and dismissal of local revenue functionaries, who enjoyed a statutory status. It was, therefore, difficult for the district administration to exercise necessary supervision over them and ensure that revenue was collected and transmitted properly. The government also lacked the requisite supervisory machinery to inspect the collection of revenue, or to punish those who defaulted in payment or misappropriated the proceeds. Local functionaries on their part appear to have been unable to take collections properly, possibly because their powers against defaulting cultivators were not refined properly. The result was the heavy arrears accumulated. In areas situated between the Trishuli and Bheri in the western hill region, for instance, five year's arrears had accumulated by 1844. Military officials were therefore deputed directly from the centre to collect the arrears from defaulting cultivators.[277]

A number of measures were initiated, particularly after the 1837 revenue settlements, to regularize matters relating to the administration of *raikar* lands and collection of taxes. At the central level, the *Sadar Kampani Dafdarkhana* office was responsible for different categories, land reclamation and construction of irrigation facilities.[278] Officials called *Mohinaikes*[279] were appointed under this office for Kathmandu valley and the adjoining areas to collect in-kind rent on *Raikar* lands, sell them when prices were high and transmit the proceeds to Kathmandu. These officials were empowered to appoint and dismiss cultivators when necessary, but at the same time were held personally liable in case any tenant defaulted in the payment of rents due from him.[280] Another responsibility of the *Mohinakes* was to locate newly reclaimed or other lands

[277] Order to hawaldar Bakabir khatri to collect rents on *Raikar* lands in trishuli-Bheri region, Baisakh Sudi 4, 1902 (April 1846). (31/28).
[278] Order regarding jurisdiction of sadar company dafdarkhana in land administration, baisakh Sudi 5, 1898 (April 1841). (31/274).
[279] Mohinaikes had been in existence previously also. (Order to Mohinaikes in kaski to collect adhiya rents, rents, kartik Sudi,15 1858 (November 1811) (28/16). They were now appointed on a more systematic basis with specific functions.
[280] Appointment of Bhajiram newar as Mohinaike for revenue collection on *Raikar* lands in Dhulikhel, Ashadh Sudi 3, 1901 (Jun 1847). (31/8); Appointment of Birjut Shahi as Mohinaike in salyan, Chaitra Sudi 10, 1902 (April 1846). (26/84).

which were being cultivated without paying rents.[281] In some areas in the hill districts, another level of authority was created between village headmen and the district administration in order to exercise such supervision and dismiss village headmen when they did not collect revenue satisfactorily or created trouble in the village. [282]

Changes in the Kipat system

By 1830, ceilings began to be imposed on the amount of land that the Kirats could hold within their *kipat*s. The *subedar* of the region oversaw doing so. The surplus land was appropriated and then given out as *Jagir*. The following order was given to two officials, two officials, Dittha Ramnath Upadhyaya and Dittha Ranabit Thapa, who were sent to the eastern hill regions to measure lands and scrutinize documentary evidence of land ownership, demonstrates these processes.

> Impose ceilings on the *kipat* holdings of the following communities also: Hayu, Danuwar, Pahari, Chepang, and Thami. Acquire the surplus area. Measure all rice fields which have been stated as having been reclaimed after 1863 Vikrama (1806 A.D.) and are used as *kipat* and compile records of such lands. Akal Singh and Ishwar Khatri had similarly imposed ceilings on the *kipat* holdings of the following communities in Majhkirata, situated between the Dudhikoshi and Arun rivers: *Rai*, Majhiya, Murmi, and Yakha. Reconfirm the land allotted by him within the ceilings. Measure and compile records of the following categories of lands, submit such records to us and act as ordered.[283]

[281] Order to Mohinakie Jayashankar to find out taxable lands in Bhadgaun, baisakh badi 7, 1902 (April 1846) (31/25).
[282] Appointment of Ravi Singh Khatri as jimmawal in Rukun, magh Sudi 4, 1899 (February 1843). (26/524); Panchshala-Thek grant to Kashiram Dittha for revenue collection in Rising, Falgun Sudi 7, 1890 (February 1834) (25/499).
[283] Order by Subedar Dharmaraj Khatri had imposed a ceiling on *kipat* holdings and acquired the surplus area in the region situated between Sanga-Sindhu in the west and the Dudhkoshi river in the east. Reconfirm lands within the ceilings as allocated to the subjects (praja) by Dharmaraj Khatri. Kartik Sudi 1, 1893 (October 1836).

The Gorkha state's idea of a more direct control of the areas under its control led to another change in the eastern hills. The state now began to confirm the land rights to village headmen known as *Subba*s and *Rai*s, who were traditional headmen. Sena rulers earlier had used the title of '*Raya*" to define a headman or a commander of a certain number of Kirat soldiers but the Gorkhas used the title '*Rai*' to mean a headman in Khumbu villages and in Limbuan it meant a member of the village council. The title *Subba* (not to be confused with the other '*Suba*' who was the governor and military commander of a region in the administrative set up of the Gorkha state) was used to define a village headman in Limbuan. Earlier most of the ordinary members of the *kipat* were known as the '*Karta'*; now the term *Praja* was used. There was a genuine attempt to gain the status of a '*Subba*' or a '*Rai*' amongst the various villagers. The rise to becoming a '*Subba*' or a '*Rai*' was however decided by the Gorkha official. They probably had the same powers that they enjoyed during the earlier period but an important change was that the headmen now derived their power and position from the Gorkha state, thus making them dependent on the Gorkhas.

Thus as can be seen in the debates above, the *kipat* of the Kirats existed in the pre-Gorkha era because of the nature of the state structure of the region. The fact that they were autonomous was a vital reason why the *kipat* system existed. This changed when the Gorkha state came into power. The victory of the Gorkha state was not simply a military victory of one state over another, it was also the victory of a certain idea of state structure, which believed in a much more direct control over its territories. As mentioned above, the new state essentially depended on the military fiscal system where land was granted in lieu of salary, such as the *jagir* and *Birta*. This conflicted directly with the *kipat* system, which it could be argued, was a method of military levy but of a very different kind from the military fiscal system of the Gorkha state and had no place in the new state.

Yet, the process where the *kipat*s were progressively undermined was a gradual one, it could be seen that the Gorkha state did not immediately attack the *kipat*s. They began with confirming these land holdings, only bringing about very small changes, such as new taxes of services. It was however improbable that the *kipat* system would have existed very long, since they were completely in opposition with the Gorkha state structure and with its economic and administrative needs.

Level of rents

Elsewhere in the western hills, Kathmandu valley and the Terai, the trend towards upward revision in the level of rents and commutation of in-kind assessments in cash continued during the post-war period. we have mentioned some of the factors which made the *Adhiya* system increasingly unacceptable to jagirdars. The system kept the level of rents at a specific percentage of crop, so that jagirdars were unable to take advantage of competition among prospective tenants to increase rents. The level of *kut* rents was consequently higher than that of rents assessed under the *adhiya* system and was determined primarily by what could be exacted from tenants. Contractors appointed to collect *kut* rents on *raikar* lands were directed not to seek remission on the ground that they had to allot lands on *adhiya* basis because nobody was willing to pay *kut* rents.[284] In many cases, tenants complained that the level of *kut* rents was too high. The reintroduction of the *Adhiya* system was therefore demanded. The government, on its part, preferred to make minor reductions in *kut* rents instead of reverting to the *adhiya* system.[285] The introduction of the *kut* system, in fact, unleashed a tug-of-war between agirdars and their tenants. Jagirdars complained that the *kut* rents assessed on their *jagir* lands were too low, and that the quality of the land justified higher rents.[286] The government acceded to their demands. Orders were issued permitting jagirdars to increase rents according to the quality of the land and

[284] *Ijara* grant to Ramnarsigh for revenue collection on *Kut* lands, marga Sudi 9, 1890 (December 1833) (26/438).
[285] Reduction in rates of *Kut* rents on *Jagir* lands in Tanahau, Jestha Sudi 5, (May 1886). (27/50).
[286] Permission to Jagirdars of Barakh Company to increase rents on *Jagir* lands, marga badi 12,1883 (november 1826) (31/308).

evict tenants who refused to pay the increased amount. [287] According to one of these orders, issued in 1828:

> Since *Kut* rents on the lands assigned to you as *Jagir* bear no relationship to (productivity) you are hereby authorized to inspect your lads and prescribe rents according to (productivity) Tenants on their part shall agree to pay rents so determined on the basis of (the productivity of) the land. In case they do not so agree, evict them and allot the lands to other people belonging to the same district who agree to pay (the increased rent). Existing tenants shall not be evicted if they agree to pay *Kut* rents (at the enhanced rate).[288]

The order also cancelled all existing *kut* allotments on *jagir* holdings thereby terminating the tenancy rights of the cultivators.[289] This policy was carried forward to what may be regarded as a logical conclusion, when in 1827-28, officials were deputed to different districts in both the eastern and the western hill regions to detect cases in which cultivators had understated the area of *jagir* holdings or were paying lower rents than what the land had yielded previously. In particular, these officials were instructed to increase the area or the rent wherever possible. The existing cultivators were to be given preference if they agreed to pay rents at the enhanced rates. Otherwise, "the land shall be allotted on *Kut* tenure to the person who offers to pay more."[290] But if these arrangements were initially designed to enable *jagir* holders to obtain a higher income from their *jagir* lands, the situation did not continue long in their favour. The enhanced rents which were collected from cultivators as a result of

[287] Order regarding rents and tenancy rights on *Jagir* on Shardul jung company, Bhadra badi 8, 1884 (August1827) (43/282).
[288] Order regarding rents and tenancy rights on *Jagir* lands of employees of Dafdarkhana Kumarichhol, magh badi 12,1884 (January 1828). (27/70).
[289] Ibid.
[290] Order regarding survey of *Jagir* lads in Chepe-Bheri region, Poush Sudi 6, 1885 (December 1828). (43/161) Order regarding survey of *Jagir* lands in Darrundi-Achham region, Kartik Badi 10,1884 (October 1827) (43/244); Order regarding survey of *Jagir* lands in areas between Sunkshi and Bheri rivers, magh badi 12,1884 (Janaury 1828). (43/275).

these arrangements were utilized, at least partially, to compensate for the reduction of the cultivated area as a result of floods or erosion.[291]

The other trend which we mentioned above was towards the commutation of in-kind rent into cash. In-kind assessments whether under the *adhiya* or under the *kut*, created formidable problems for the government as well as the *jagirdars*. In the absence of a market economy and transport facilities, it was difficult to dispose or transport in-kind rent collection over long distances for the *jagir* holders[292]. They were prohibited from using compulsory labour to transport in-kind rents.[293] *Jagir* holders therefore preferred to collect rents in cash rather than in the form of food grains.[294] In circumstances where they were unable to utilize in kind rents for personal consumption. Arrangements were therefore gradually made in several parts of the country to convert in kind rents on both *raikar* lands and *jagir* lands into cash payments at prescribed rates of conversion.[295] It is difficult to ascertain where the commutation rates, fixed by the state and the jagir holders corresponded to the current prices of food grains in the local markets. There seems some ground to presume, however, that the rates were higher than the current price level, thereby indirectly adding to the tax burdens on the peasants, at least in some cases. In 1841, a peasant in Tanahu complained that the rents on a plot of 80 *muris* of *Jagir* land cultivated by him had been forced up through competition among prospective cultivators. This assessment was commuted into cash at Rs 1 per *muri*, thus making a total payment of Rs 80. The government thereupon cancelled the commutation, so that rent was now payable in kind, but, at the same time increased the total assessment to 80 *muri*s. The main difficulty it seems was not due to the fact of land revenue demand but rather because of the commutation of the land revenue into cash.

As the land revenue began to be converted to cash, the general level of taxation seems to have gone up. Peasants had to sell their produce in order to meet their fiscal

[291] Ibid.
[292] The government itself did not relinquish the right to transport in kind rents through compulsory labour, however. Order regarding transportation of rents from Salyan to Kathmandu, Bisakh Sudi 15, 1903 (May 1846) (7/67).
[293] Chittaranjan nepali, General Bhimsen Thapa nd Contemporary Nepal, op-cit, p 195.
[294] Ibid.
[295] Order regarding commutation rates for *Jagir* rents in Accham,Magh Badi 9, 1898 (January 1842). (31/121); Order regarding payments of rents in Handigram, Kathmandu, Baisakh Sudi 8, 1897 (May 1840) (31/148).

obligations which was not just limited to the payment of land revenue but a large number of other taxes and loans. This was further exacerbated by the control of prices by the state to lower the cost of feeding the army. This meant that the peasants got less money for their harvest. In Dullu and Dailekh many of the farmers complained that the rate fixed by the state at 10 pathis per rupee during the six months of winter and 8 pathis during other seasons[296] was too low to pay cash rents due on *jagir* lands. These were the lands assigned to the military personnel. They, thus offered to pay half an anna in excess of the prescribed payment in case the price control was lifted. The state, it seems, accepted the increase but at the same time fixed the price at 8 pathis per rupee all the year round.[297] However this meant that the cultivators had to pay land revenue at a higher rate for the privilege of selling rice at 8 pathis per rupee during the winter as well. Such price control measures existed in Kathmandu and elsewhere.[298]

The large scale replacement of the *adhiya* with *kut* that saw greater intensification of the demand of rents in cash in this period was what caused even more problems for the peasants. Lands were allotted to the persons who offered to pay the highest amount of rent, irrespective of where they actually lived. The custom that was there earlier, where only the local inhabitant was given land was no longer valid. The *jagirdars* were given unrestricted rights to evict their tenants in case they did not agree to pay higher rents.[299] People who could have been cultivating the lands for years could be evicted if someone just offered to pay more and given to someone else who was an outsider.[300] Cultivation thus lacked security of both rent and tenancy rights. In case any person offered the jagirdar a higher rent for the holding, the existing tenant was compelled either to accept such higher rent himself or else

[296] Order regarding taxation and judicial customs in Dullu-dailekh, aswin Sudi 4, 1879 (September 1822) (43/362).
[297] Order regarding prices of foodg*rai*n in Bheri-karnali region, marga sudi 5, 1886 (November 1828 (43/644).
[298] Chittaranjan Nepali, general bhimsen Thapa and contemporary Nepal, o-cit, pp. 329-332.
[299] Order regarding rents and tenancy rights on their *Jagir*s lands of employees of Dafdarkhana kumarichok, Magh badi 12,1884 (January 1828) (24/70) Order regarding rents and tenancy rights on *Jagir* lands of Chardul Jung company, Bhadra Badi 8, 1884 (August 1827) (43/242).
[300] Authority granted to general Bhimsen Thapa to allot Jafuti lands on *Kut* or thek tenures, Pous Badi 3, 1890 (December 1835) (26/445).

relinquish his tenancy rights in favour of the new comer.[301] Tenurial security thus depended upon willingness to pay rents over which no control existed. It was not surprising, therefore, that cultivators felt reluctant to cultivate *jagir* lands on *kut* tenure. In several cases, they relinquished such lands which thus reverted to waste.[302] Often they were prevented from doing so because the government decreed that their tax liability would continue, notwithstanding such relinquishment.[303]

The problem of eviction and competition for rents assumed such a serious form that the government was compelled to reconsider its policy. In 1833, *kut* allotments made to non-resident persons on certain categories of *jagir* lands assigned to the army were cancelled and the Prime minister Bhimsen Thapa was granted the authority to reallot such lands among the local inhabitants. Each allotment was to be of a size capable of being cultivated personally by his family and subletting was prohibited.[304]

The cumulative effect of these developments was to increase considerably the financial burden and tenurial insecurity of the peasantry. In fact the level of rent determined in the course of the 1837 revenue settlements appears to have been the highest ever in the century. Land taxes rates were increased through settlements not only in hill districts[305] but also in the *tarai*.[306] The increase rates were so high that they could only be collected through force, so much so that many *jagirdars* complained that the rates were impossible to collect and was creating mass desertion of the *ryots*. The revenue collectors themselves were arguing for enhanced levels that had to be retracted since they could only be extracted from the peasants through the

[301] Order to Prem Dev Joshi regarding enhancement of rents on his *Jagir* holding in Chiti, Lamjunng, Baisakh badi 8, 1904 *(April 1847) (7/197) Order to Bandana Brahmans regarding enhancement of rents on her *Jagir* holding in bandipur, falgun Sudi 15, 1899 (March 1843) (7/700).
[302] Allotment to waste *Jagir* holding to nahar Singh Rana andothers in Tanahu, Ashadh Sudi 1902 (June 1846) (31/37).
[303] Order regarding cultivation of *Jagir* alnds in areas east of the Bheri river, Jesthaa badi, 1881 (May 1824) (35/13); order to cultivaors on *Jagir* lands of Bhawanibux Company in Tanagu, Ashadh badi 2, 1885 (June 1828). (27/90).
[304] Authority granted to general Bhimsen Thapa to allot Jafati lands on *Kut* or thek tenure, pousch badi 3, 1890 (December 1833) (26/455).
[305] Order regarding land allotments in Itali, Kirtipur, Poush Badi 2, 1894 (December 1837). (26/693)
[306] Order regarding revenue collection on *Jagir* and in eastern *tarai* distrits, Chaitra Badi 7, 1893 (March 1837) (35/91).

use of force.[307] It should be noted here that such settlements was always realized at the cost of the cultivator. There were other methods in which they were used to maximize revenue from the land at the cost of the cultivator, one of which was to combine the good and the unproductive lands together in one allotment. The peasant was thus compelled to meet the loss of unproductive lands with the profit he made on the more productive lands. However, the rate that was used was high for both lands, thus placing the peasants at a disadvantageous position. The peasant who refused to take the land in this manner was evicted from the entire allotments.[308] Increasing debt as well as tenurial insecurity all contributed to the exodus of the peasants from the region.

The end of the Anglo-Gorkha war was followed by a reduced demand for *jhara* labour. In the absence of alternative uses to which such labour could be put, there was an increasing trend towards the commutation of *jhara* obligation into payments in the form of cash or commodities. Accordingly after 1837, most of these obligations were commuted into cash payments in the far-eastern, [309] far western [310] and hill regions[311]. Yet some commutation did not prejudice the right of the government to exact *jhara* labour for the repair of ferries and irrigation channels and road construction, as well as for transport of arms and ammunition in times of war. Elsewhere the exaction of *Jhara* labour for purposes such as the capture of wild elephants, construction and repair of irrigation channels,[312] temples,[313] forts,[314] and market towns[315] continued.

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[307] Order regarding rfusal to pay and accept increased rents on *Jagir* lands in Bheri-Mahakali region, Aswin Sudi 15, 1894 (October 1837). (26/670).
[308] Order regarding collection of Salami levy in Doti, Jetha Sudi 9, 1895 (June 1838)
[309] Commutatino of *Jhara* bligation in different areas in chainpur, chaitra sudi 15, 1884 (April 1828) (31/336-339).
[310] Commutation of *Jhara* obligation in areas east of the Mahakali river, Ashadh badi 11, 1894 (June 1837). (26/656).
[311] Commutation of *Jhara* obligation in Bhorletar and other areas (In Lamung) baisakh Badi 11, 1885 (April 1828).
[312] Exaction of *Jhara* Labour in salyan to capture wild elephants, Aswin Sudi 15, 1890 (October 1833) (26/357).
[313] Exaction of *Jhara* labour for construction of temples in Gorkha, Aswin Sudi 15, 1890 (October 1833) (26/372).
[314] Exaction of *Jhara* labour for construction of Chisapani fort, Poush Badi 8,1890, (December 1833). (6/372).
[315] Exaction of *Jhara* Labour for construction of Butwal town, Kartik Badi 10, 1890 (October 1833) (76/373).

Conclusion

By 1826, the impact of the processes mentioned above, such as increasing rents, demand of rents in cash and the forced labour had caused a large number of peasants deserting or escaping to India. This seems to have been seen as a genuine problem for the Gorkha state. Measures were taken to ameliorate the conditions of the slaves and bondsmen. A proclamation was announced in the year calling out all slaves, bondsmen and debtors who had escaped to India to come back with their families and reclaim the waste lands which had been assigned as *jagir* to the army in Udayapur district in the inner *Tarai*. The proclamation also prohibited owners and creditors from taking physical possession of such returnees although they could reclaim their dues from slaves, bondsmen and creditors after the latter became able to repay.[316] This move also seems to have been necessitated by the fact that the labour demands for the state were rising and that there was widespread displacement of peasants that took place. The proclamation does not seem to have helped much, since the evidence does not suggest that any did come back.

In 1834, large areas of the lands were left desolate and had turned into waste lands as a result of enslavements of the peasantry.[317] There were laws promulgated to stop the enslavement of the people, yet, none of this was able to bring any effective changes to the enslavement thereby leading a number of people to leave the country. In 1826, the Kathmandu *Darbar* announced a general amnesty to all the people who had run away to India,[318] though this did not seem to have worked quite well.

The period after the Anglo-Gorkha war was signified by the growing fiscal burden and tenurial insecurity. The keen competition to outbid other peasants, even just to retain occupation of the holding made sure that the demand for cash was always high, since most of the land revenue was now demanded in cash payments and not kind. This, as mentioned before, coupled with several other taxes that were demanded in cash, caused the peasants to look for a market to sell their harvest as soon as it was

[316] Appeals to Runaway slaves and criminals to reclaim *Jagir* lands in Udayapur, Shrawan badi 4, 1883 (July 1826) (34/44).
[317] Ban on slave traffic in Bheri-Mahakali region, Shrawan Badi 4, 1891 (July 1834) (1/506)
[318] Ibid.

harvested. However, since such markets were not readily available the only other option was to borrow money from the moneylenders, the failure to payback of which often led to enslavement. To escape this enslavement and vicious debt-trap one sees many leave from the region and escape to India.

The method of revenue collection too added to the problems. The revenue collectors were appointed directly from Kathmandu and consequntly, the importance of the district level administrative machinery tended to decline. Local functionaries visited Kathmandu to solicit favours from the administration. They extorted payments from their peasants to finance such journeys. Kathmandu issued orders prohibiting such extortions but did not object to payments made "willingly" by the local people. [319] However, in the chaotic administrative situation then prevailing, it was obviously difficult to define the distinction between the extortion and voluntary payments. Nor were the administrative offices of the government at the local level entirely free from blame in this respect.. Neither in the hill areas nor in the *tarai* did the government offices and courts issue receipts to the people in respect to payments made by them.[320] Local officials were thus free to collect whatever they liked.

The enhanced authority of the village headman enjoyed under the new systems of revenue collections created new harassments for the peasantry. Village headmen demanded milk cows from the ryots, exacted arbitrary taxes, demanded forced and unpaid labour, purchased rice and other provisions at rates below those current in the local markets and denied remissions in the event of crop failure. [321] The enhancement of the powers of the village headman had been made to counter the *jagir* holders hold and harassment of the peasants by them. However, it seems that the ryots were now harassed by the headmen themselves. The state revenue collectors were also more or less happy about the fact that both the revenue was being collected and that they too

[319] Prohibition to *Subba*s and *Rai*s in pallokirat to exact money from ryots to visit Kathmandu, Jestha Badi 7 ,1891 (May 1834). (1/494).
[320] Order to Bichari of Pyuthan Adalat regarding issuance of receipts against payments of fees, Chaitra Badi 12, 1890 (March 1894) (27/503): Order to Amalis and Bicharis of Dulu-Dailaekh regarding issuance of receipts against payments of fees, Jestha Badi 7, 1891 (May 1834) (1/497).
[321] Order regarding complaints of oppression in Achham, Chaitra Badi 4, 1890 (March 1834) (27/301): Order regarding tax remission in Jumla Falgun Badi 6 1890 (February 1834). (26/484)

could collect "...illegal fines and taxes and thus oppress the people."[322] Thus as a result there was a impoverishment of the peasantry, who were soon unable to pay anything.[323] In the *Tarai* districts, higher land revenue assessments and progressive higher demands of revenue collections, specially by the contract revenue collectors made conditions so intolerable for the peasantry who were left with no choice but to migrate.[324]

The period after 1830's right up the end of the 19th century witnessed a large scale exodus of people from several parts of Gorkha state to British Indian dominions especially to the Northeast frontier region. [325] Among the important factors contributing to this exodus were what was discussed above, excessive taxation, unbearable land revenue, taxes and land revenue demanded cash and slavery. [326]

CHAPTER 3

THE GORKHAS IMAGINED

The Colonial Imagination of the "Gorkhas/Gurkhas/Goorkhas" Through the 19th Century

[322] Oder regarding collection of illegal taxes.
[323] Order regarding payments of salaries to Naya Srinath and Ransodal Companies from *Ijara* revenues of Beni Mini, Marga Badi 14, 1890 (November 1833) (1/542).
[324] Order regarding revenue collection on *Jagir* lands in eastern *tarai* districts, Chaitra Badi 7, 1893 (March 1837) (35/91).

[325] Orders regarding complaints of emigration of Ryots from Doti, Bbhadra badi 13, 1895 (August 1838) (27/588); Appea to emigrants to return to Doti ,Magh Sudi 3, 1897 (January 1841) (31/259); Appeals to emigrants to return to Pyuthan-Mahakali region, Aswin Sudi 7, 1897 (October 1840) (31/248).
[326] Appeal to Runaway slaves and criminals to reclaim *Jagir* lands in Udawapur, Shrawan badi 4, 1883 (July 1826). (34/55).

Introduction

"Gurkhas are brave, cheery little men, but they have not the wits of a hog." [327]

This statement by Lieutenant Francis Younghusband (1854-1923), at the end of the 19th century, sums up the colonial imagination of the Gorkha as brave, loyal, cheerful and innocent men but, slow witted and thus bound to the British officers whose guidance they always needed.

Before one duels on the issue of the use of the Gorkhas in Northeast India to settle, secure and build the region, it is first important to discuss the idea of the Gorkha, how it evolved, why it evolved and what the idea in its entirety was, since it was this idea that caused the British to use the Gorkhas in the Northeast.

As has already been noted in earlier chapters, the Gorkhas have for the last 200 years figured largely in the writings of many regimental and military historians who are mainly British.[328] Apart from the regimental historians, and differing from them in terms of focus and the content of their work are the writings of many local academics working on the issues of ethnicity and identity that have recently come up. Some of the defining works on the issue of identity are the edited volumes by T.B Subba, A.C Sinha, G.S Nepal and D.R Nepal [329]. Though the approach of these various writers differs depending on the larger issue they are looking at, the assumption which is common to all is the idea of the "Gorkha" as a martial race, loyal and with a tradition of soldiering. The narrative suggests that the Gorkhas were discovered during the Anglo-Gorkha war of 1814-16, where the British won a pyrrhic victory and were very impressed by the fighting qualities of their adversary. The British then began to recruit the Gorkhas in their army, following which their martial qualities were seen to

[327] Francis Younghusband, *The heart of a Continent*, London, 1896, p.229

[328] e.g. Tony Gould *Imperial warriors, Britain and the Gurkhas*, Oxford, 2000, Ian A. Macdonald, Hannah Rought-Brooks, Rebekah Wilson's, *Gurkhas the forgotten veterans*, Michigan, 2005, Mike Chappell, *The Gurkhas*, Oxford, 1994, Sir Francis Ivan Simms Tuker Gorkhas,*The Story of the Gorkhas of Nepal*, London, 1957, Scott Leathart, *With the Gurkhas*, India, Burma, Malaya, Indonesia 1940-1959,Michigan, 1996, Edward Bishop, *Better to die the story of the Gorkhas*,London, 1976

[329] A.C Sinha, T.B.Subba, G.S. Nepal, D.R. Nepal, *Indian Nepalis, Issues and perspectives*, Concept Publishing House, 2009

have been the main reason why they succeeded in several battles beginning from the campaign against dacoits at Kunja in 1823 and until as recently as the war in Afghanistan (2001-2013).[330]

The idea of a strong bond characterised by mutual respect and admiration between the Gorkha soldiers and the British officers is another aspect that is usually stressed. The great faith that the British have on the Gorkhas was reiterated when Prince Harry of Great Britain was posted with a contingent of Gorkhas in Afghanistan in 2008 and was declared an honorary "Gurkha"[331] and when Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales, was made the Colonel-in-Chief of the "Royal Gurkha rifles" in 1977 and remains so until the present day.[332]

This British narrative has rarely, if ever, been challenged. The Gorkha martiality is considered to be inherent in them and the bond between them and the British is explained by certain shared values and attitude. Hence the other larger questions of how did the idea of the "Gorkha" come about? Was it a pre-existing one or was it one that was constructed? Was the idea of the "Gorkha" in the imagination of the colonial powers a constant one or was it one that was evolving, are usually ignored. Moreover, the notion of which subgroups constituted the "Gorkha" and lastly, was idea of a "Gorkha" as an ethnic group itself a colonial construct, are rarely raised. These questions, that have so far been ignored, shall form the crux of this present chapter.

The chapter will thus begin with a discussion on the various debates surrounding the martial race and the manner in which the martial race itself may have evolved. It will then make an attempt to understand why and how did the colonial idea of the martial "Gorkha" evolve, and what reasons the British had to use the Gorkhas in their army. To this end an attempt will be made to understand the various reasons and conditions in which they were recruited in the early half of the 18th century and the changing manner in which the "Gorkhas" were viewed by the British. Their changing role in the British colonial Indian army will then be discussed. The importance of this chapter in

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[330] Chris Bellamy, *The Gurkhas, Special force*, London, 2011, pp -59-213

[331] http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1082172/Prince-Harry-honorary-Gurkha-fearsome-warriors-served-Afghanistan.html, (Accessed on 14-07-15, time 3:00 p.m)

[332] http://www.princeofwales.gov.uk/news-and-diary/the-prince-of-wales-visits-the-2nd-battalion-royal-gurkha-rifles-and-attends-the, (Accessed on 14-07-15, time 3:00 p.m)

the larger discourse of the "Gorkhas" in the Northeast, which the thesis seeks to address, is the fact that, the evolution of the idea of a "Gorkha", as a martial race, loyal and obedient was a major determinant in the reason why they were used to settle the Northeast frontier.

Martial Races: Theories and Debates

The colonial idea of the Gorkha is almost synonymous with the idea of the martial race. Since the concept of the "martial race" forms such an integral part of the colonial imagination of the "Gorkha", it seems necessary that before any attempt is made to understand the evolution of this idea, it is necessary to understand what the concept of the "martial race" denotes, when it began, what its implications were in the colonial and the post-colonial phase and finally, the various debates surrounding it.

The basis of the theory of "martial races" is often ascribed to a notion that is summarised in a statement by General George Macmunn that ''one of the essential differences between the East and West'' is ''in the East, with certain exceptions, only certain clans and classes can bear arms,'' whereas ''The others have not the physical courage for the warrior".[333] This idea justified the over representation of select communities in the colonial security apparatus, describing them as being "martial". The "martial race" theory was first applied to India after the 1857 Uprising and was later applied to all the parts of the British colonies all over the world.[334]

The idea of the martial races had a profound impact during the colonial period. The groups that were identified as the "martial races" benefitted greatly as they now had an access to a stable colonial government employment, which otherwise would have proved very difficult for the uneducated youth. The salary that was paid to them supplemented their income which otherwise was dependent on agriculture and other traditional forms of employment, such as weaving and pastoralism. From the colonial powers perspective, the groups identified as the martial races provided the crucial support to the colonial government, not just as soldiers in the army but also as

[333] General Sir George Macmunn as cited in Anthony H. M. Kirk-Greene, *Damnosa Hereditas: Ethnic Ranking and the Martial Races Imperative in Africa,*' Ethnic and Racial Studies 3, 4 (1980) pp- 393–414.

[334] Subhasish Ray, *The Nonmartial origins of the "Marital races*: Ethnicity and Military Service in the Ex British colonies, in Armed forces and society, 2012, p 561.

personnel in the police, as both the army as well as the police recruited mostly from the martial races.[335]

In the post-colonial era, many of the former British colonies such as India, Pakistan, Singapore, Kenya etc., continued with limiting the recruitment to the armed forces to the few select groups identified as the "martial races". In Singapore, the Malays continued to dominate in the armed forces, in India the Gorkhas, Rajputs, Sikhs, Punjabis, Marathas, Jats, in Pakistan the Muslim Punjabis and Pathans and in Kenya the Kamba tribe was for a while the dominant group in the army.[336] Thus even in the post-colonial world the idea of the martial races has and continues to have a very strong impact.

There are two dominant debates surrounding the idea of the martial races. One are termed the Primordialists and the other, Constructivists.[337] The primordialists believe that certain groups already had a pre-existing tradition of arms bearing and warfare.[338] The arguments of Sean Walsh in regard to the Malays in the Singapore armed forces is an example[339] as is that of Ritso Marjomaa, who argues that the reason that the Yao tribe were the preferred recruits for the Central African Rifles was because of their pre-existing traditions of arms bearing.[340] In contrast to the primordialists, there are others such as Donald Howalitz who argue that the term "martial race" were designated only to those groups who could supply a steady stream of recruits to the colonial army.[341] Lionel Caplan also argued that the British officer created this idea of the "Gorkha" to further the respect and honour of the regiment.[342] Many, such as

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[335] Peter Ward Fay, *The Forgotten armies: Indian armed struggle for Independence, 1942-1945*, Michigan, 1995 p 24

[336] Subhasish Ray, op-cit, pp 562-563

[337] Subhasish Ray, op-cit, p 561

[338] Ibid, p 562

[339] Sean P. Walsh, *The Roar of the Lion City: Ethnicity, Gender, and Culture in the Singapore Armed Forces*, Armed Forces & Society 33, 2 (2007): 265–85;

[340] Ritso Marjumaa, *The Martial Spirit: Yao Soldiers in British Service in Nyasaland (Malawi), 1895-1939*, The Journal of African History, Vol. 44, No. 3 (2003), pp. 413-432

[341] Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, California,
1985, p 542-562

[342] Lionel Caplan *'Bravest of the Brave': Representations of 'The Gurkha' in British Military Writings* Modern Asian Studies, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Jul., 1991), pp. 571-597

Daniel Ziker, Constantine. P. Danopoulos and Alan Simpson's [343] analysis of post-colonial armies of Uganda and Fiji, argue that, whereas in the Fiji, the army was composed of Fijians who had a pre-colonial warrior tradition of arms bearing, the Nubians who formed the bulk of Uganda's army, especially under the rule of Idi Amin, were a construct of colonial discourse.[344] Thus in Fiji the British simply appropriated the already existing military traditions of Fijians groups, in Uganda they had to construct an ethnic identity that could then provide a steady supply of troops to the colonial army.

Subhasish Roy, in an attempt to provide the rationale behind the martial race doctrine, has used empirical data analysis methodology to derive a pattern to explain why and how certain groups were recognized as a martial race. His two basic hypotheses are:

1. Ethnic groups who had developed state-like structures in the pre-colonial period were underrepresented in the colonial security forces relative to ethnic groups who had been stateless in the pre-colonial period.

2. Ethnic groups who had strongly resisted the expansion of the colonial state were underrepresented in colonial security forces relative to ethnic groups who had weakly resisted or acquiesced to the expansion of the colonial state.[345]

Whether constructivist or primordialists, the certain assumptions in which all agree are the fact that the "martial race" doctrine came about after the 1857 sepoy mutiny, though their pre-colonial and inherent martialness may be a subject of debate. The second aspect that they seem to assume is that all ethnic groups are water tight compartments and all these groups existed before the colonial period. Since it is only when these groups are identified as a fixed community can one ascribe any number of qualities to all members of the group, whether martial or not. There are certain problems with all such assumptions. First of all, the idea that the martial race doctrine came about only after the 1857 uprising is a matter of debate. Scholars such as Susan Bayly have argued that the distinction between the martial and non-martial races was

[343] Daniel Zirker, Constantine P. Danopoulos, and Alan Simpson, *The Military as a Distinct Ethnic or Quasi-Ethnic Identity in Developing Countries,* Armed Forces & Society 34,

[344] Ibid pp 317-337

[345] Subhasish Roy, op-cit, pp 564-565

already made in colonial writing fifty years before it was accepted as a standard recruiting policy for the British Indian army.[346] It can be also seen in Sabyasachi Dasgupta's article where he narrates the accounts of a sepoy, Durgadas Banerjee, that shows us that even before the 1857 mutiny ideas that certain communities were non-martial races and others were more prone to martialness, had already taken root.[347]

The works of Nicholas Dirks and Susan Bayly becomes important thus in understanding how both, ethnic identities evolved in the 18th-19th centuries and, how the idea of certain groups being fit for soldiering evolved before the "martial race" doctrine becomes a standard recruiting policy for the colonial army. As Nicholas Dirks[348] writes, the colonial ethnographic understanding of India and its resulting polices was a result of the dominant theories and discourse of the period such as that of biological determinism, colonial ethnography etc. Susan Bayly argues that theories on race had already begun to capture the consciousness of most of the European officers during the 19th century. Among the British in India, the idea that higher altitudes breed "hard" men who were more marital then the others and the idea that the groups who were not under the influence of the Brahmans made better soldiers, had begun to take root.[349] Thus, while attempting to understand the reasons and manner in which the concept of martial races developed and which groups were identified as a martial race it is also important to keep in mind the colonial mind set and ideas on race that was taking root in the 19th century.

Jos Gommans'[350] and Dirk Kolff's[351] work on a military labour market in India too has to be examined in this context. Both Gommans and Kolff speak of a large population in India that offered its services as soldiers to anyone who could employ them. The British initially had taken advantage of this and had employed a large

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[346] Susan Bayly, *The New Cambridge History of India- Caste, Society and politics in India from the 18th century to the modern age*, Cambridge, 1999,p 112

[347] Sabyasachi Dasgupta, Durgadas: *The Psyche Of A Loyalist in 1857* Indian Literature, Vol. 53, No. 1 (249) (January/February 2009), pp. 200-208

[348] Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, Cambridge university Press, 2007, pp 24-25

[349] Susan Bayly, op-cit, p 111

[350] Jos Gommans, *Indian frontier and highroads to empire*, 1500-1700, London, 2002,

[351] Dirk A. H. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy*: *The Ethnohistory of the military labour market in Hindustan*, 1450-1850, London , 2000,

number of them as sepoys and this had formed the backbone of their army in India. The rise of the "martial race" theory has to be seen in the context of this attempt to create a new military labour market for the British in accordance with the race theories and supposed loyalties of the groups so designated. Unfortunately none who has worked on the martial race theory has taken this aspect of military labour market into account.

The Gorkhas Imagined: The Process of Creating a Martial Race

After the Anglo-Gorkha war of 1814-16, the British raised a few irregular units composed of the surrendered soldiers of the state of Gorkha. Many writers have argued that the British raised these units because they recognized the fighting abilities of the Gorkhas in the war that took place. The implicit assumption is that the martialness of the Gorkhas was immediately established and that the colonial imagination of the Gorkhas was a constant one that it did not change over a period of time. The other assumption is that the idea of who constituted the Gorkhas was also established immediately.

When one analyses the various colonial documents and other British writings, through the 19th century where the Gorkhas have been mentioned, one see's a gradual change of the manner in which the Gorkhas were viewed by the British. Similarly, the British idea of which groups formed the "true" Gorkhas also witnesses a gradual change. The following section, will seek to understand how the "martialness" of the Gorkhas was constructed over the 19th century. An attempt will be made to understand this change in the colonial idea as a result of several political developments, geo-strategic and military needs and the existing ideas on race and anthropology that was popular in Europe at that point in time. The argument is that the colonial idea of the Gorkha was one that was not constant but was rather an evolving one.

The "Discovery" of the Gorkhas

Most of the writers such as Lionel Chaplan, Chris Bellamy, begin with the "discovery" of the Gorkhas in the 1814-16 war. However the British and the Gorkhas had had interactions almost 45 years prior to this war. The first military exchange between the Gorkha state and the English took place in 1767, when the English sent an expedition to help the besieged kings of the valley against the Gorkha state. The English expedition failed and the valley fell to the Gorkha king. Several expeditions were sent later, such as James Logan in 1770, Foxcroft in 1784 and Colonel William

Kirkpatrick in 1793. Kirkpatrick spent considerable time in Kathmandu and wrote extensively on the socio-political, economic and environmental conditions of the valley. In 1802-03 Francis Buchanan Hamilton spent 14 months in the kingdom and complied massive data on the social, cultural and political scenario of the region, adding to Kirkpatricks account and going beyond it.[352] A commercial treaty was signed in 1792 and another treaty of friendship was signed in 1801, which among other things provided for a British resident. However both the treaties were abolished in 1803 and the resident Captain Knox was sent back. Thus, any analysis of the British opinion of the Gorkhas has to begin from this period and, not from the war, which then helps to understand the gradual evolution of the colonial imagination of the Gorkhas[353]

Kirkpatrick, as mentioned before, wrote extensively on the Gorkha kingdom. He mentions that the Newars of the valley are industrious and hardworking though not adept at the art of war. He mentions that the term "Gorkhali" is used to define the descendants of the "Purthi Nerian (Prithvi Narayan) and at other times he used the term to define the kingdom (Goorkha state). He is categorical in writing that there are several groups inhabiting the state with several dialects and there is no single homogenous identity.[354] Francis Buchanan Hamilton, by virtue of staying longer in the Gorkha state was able to observe and write a more detailed account of the kingdom than Kirkpatrick. He too wrote that the "Mountainers" (Magars, Khas, Gurungs and Thakuri who later formed and were believed to be the true "Gorkhas" by the British) were -

> … deceitful and treacherous people, cruel and arrogant towards those who were in power. The Men of rank…by excessive indulgence in pleasure are soon

[352] D.R Regmi, *Modern Nepal*, Calcutta, 1965, pp 58-60

[353] Ibid, p 60

[354] Col. Kirkpatrick, *An account of the kingdom of Nepaul. Being the substance of observation made during A mission to that country in the year 1793*. New Delhi, 2006,

> exhausted…they are, in general, drunkards, joined to a temper uncommonly jealous… [355]

This definition by Hamilton is a far cry from the "bravest of the brave", "kind" and "cheerful" Gorkha as defined by Eton Vansittart in the late 19th century.[356] He, like Kirkpatrick, refers to the term Gorkha to denote the state and the ruling family and like his predecessor stresses on the multitude of groups and dialects that could be found within the kingdom.

The main point that comes up from the above mentioned descriptions of Kirkpatrick and Hamilton is, firstly, there is no idea of a "Gurkha/Goorkha/Goorkwallah" as a separate community with distinctive traits secondly the colonial writers had a very poor opinion of the qualities of the inhabitants of the Gorkha kingdom.

How then, did the British develop this idea of the martial "Gorkha" who were brave, loyal and cheerful? Since when were they used in such large number in the British Indian army? The most common answer that is given by writers such as Tony Gould and A.P Coleman is that it was a result of the 1814-16 Anglo Gorkha war. Thus in the following section we shall discuss the war and the conditions in which the "Gorkhas" were first used by the British .

The 1814-1816 Anglo-Gorkha war

The fact remains that the British did indeed begin to maintain battalions of inhabitants of the Gorkha state during and after the 1814-1816 war. The question that will be explored below, is did the British establish the martialness of the Gorkhas during the course of the war? The answer will be attempted by analysing the war, as it took place, and reviewing the various statements made by the various British officers during this period.

The 1814-16 war was more or less due to the result of the Gorkha expansion in the Himalayan region though not in the same manner as has been mentioned by many British writers such as Perceval Landon writing in the late 19th century.[357] Landon

[355] Francis Buchanan Hamilton, *An account of the Kingdom of Nepaul and the annexed to this dominion by the house of Gorkha,* New Delhi, 1997, p 19

[356] Eton Vansittart, *Notes on Nepal*,Calcutta, 1896, p 10

[357] Perceval Landon, *Nepal*, vol 1, Madras, 1993, p 34

speaks about the was as the consequence of Gorkha raids into the British territories. It was rather due to the British concerns about a growing military power in the Himalayan region that, at one time, was able to control an area that extended from Darjeeling fort in the east to Kangra fort in the west.[358] There had been many British officers and administrators, who had expressed the need to deal with the Gorkha state. Furthermore, the desire to obtain a trade route to Lhasa and further to China was also an important consideration. An opportunity was provided when the soldiers of the Gorkha state raided the village belonging to a protectorate of the East India Company.[359]

On the 1st of November 1814, Francis Rawdon Hastings, Lord of Moira (1754-1926) and the Governor General of India from 1813 to 1823 declared war on the state of Gorkha. The East India Company assembled a large army for this campaign, 30,000 regular troops, 12,000 Indian auxiliaries, 60 guns, 1,113 elephants and 3682 camels. The force was to be divided into 4 columns or divisions. In the centre, Major Generals John Sullivan Wood and Bennet Marley were to attack towards Butwal, which was south of the Gorkha capital at Kathmandu. To the west, Colonel David Ochterlony and Major General Rollo Gillespie attacked Sirmoor, near present day Shimla and Dehra Dun.[360]

It was initially thought that such a large force would be enough to overwhelm the Gorkha army. However, the first phase (1814-1815) of the war ended with several reverses for the British. One of the commanders Major General Rollo Gillespie was killed outside the Nalapani fort, which was also known as the Kalinga fort. Major General Marley was unable to move through the thickly forested and malaria infested Terai region and appears to have suffered a nervous breakdown.[361] It is based on these initial victories of the Gorkha defenders that most of the later writers have claimed that the British were highly impressed with their adversaries. However, the

[358] D.R. Regmi, op-cit, p 23

[359] John Whelpton, *Kings, Soldiers and Priest- Nepali politics and the rise of Jung Bahadur Rana*, New Delhi, 1991, p 24

[360] Chandra. B. Khanduri- *Marching off with Colours: A Re-discovered History of the Gorkhas*, Delhi, 1997, p 90-95

[361] Christopher Bullock, Britiain's Gurkhas, with a Foreward by the Colonel Commandant Brigade of Gurkhas , General Sir David Richards, *KCB, CBE,DSO,ADC, Gen* (Third Millenium, London, 2009)

accounts of some of the British officers of the time seem to prove otherwise, for example, Lieutenant John Shipp, one of the British officers wrote:

> In this paradise of beauty dwelt a cruel and barbarous people, proverbial for their bloody deeds, whose hearts are more callous than the flinty rocks that reared their majestic hearts above the woody mountains, more savage in their nature than the hungry tiger…more cruel than the vulture… [362]

The British, from the very beginning of the war were mooting the idea of recruiting elements from the region who were not the core of the Gorkha army. This was a standard British practice to hire local inhabitants to give them knowledge of both the terrain and the enemy. They could also further serve as auxiliaries to the British. As early as 1st of November 1814, Fagan, the Adjutant General wrote to Ochterlony,

> The commander in chief would think it politic to adopt any measure which had a tendency, particularly at the onset of the contest, to disorganise or break up the enemy force as that of occasionally entertaining detached bodies of it evidently has: but the characteristic treachery of the natives of Goorka proper would render such a measure if pursued to any extent and without using the utmost precaution, extremely hazardous. Could the Goorkas be discriminated from the other various tribes of which the armies of Nepal are composed and many of whom, it is said, serve in them with reluctance, the measure in question might be restored to, whenever recommended, by policy or the circumstances of the moment, without incurring the dangers which seem to attach to the unrestricted grants of service to the troops of Nepal, and still more their employment with ours. The commander in chief understands the Goorka troops, those properly so-called are markedly distinguished by dialect,

[362] John Shipp *Memoirs of the extraordinary Military career of John Shipp, late a lieutenant in HM,s 87th Regiment* , 3 volume, London, 1829, pp 81-82.

> appearance, and other peculiarities, from the natives of other countries of which the Nepaul army is of great degree formed; and those distinguishing features may possibly, in most cases, serve as a discriminating criterion… The commander in chief is sensible how safely it may be left to your judgement and prudence to adopt the measure in question or not.[363]

This statement by the Adjutant General clearly shows that the initial intention of the British had been to recruit anyone who was not a "Gorkha" but rather people from the other groups who were serving the Gorkha army. However, most importantly, the British first clearly identified a Gorkha as a separate ethnic group "… those properly so-called are markedly distinguished by dialect, appearance, and other peculiarities…". This is not something that one sees in the earlier writings of Hamilton, Kirkpatrick or any other British writers. Further, it also shows what the British initially thought of the Gorkhas as being characteristically treacherous.

On 30th November 1814 again, John Adam, the Political Secretary passed on the Governor General's approval to create an irregular Corps, which was to be commanded by Lieutenant Young. The 3305 strong irregular Corps was formed soon after and, as directed, the command was given to Young. It was reported back to the Governor General that the new Corps was created consisting of those groups who were subjugated by the Gorkha state and were not "Gorkhas".[364]

The irregular men under Lieutenant Young had not been soldiers under the Gorkha state. Since the British wanted to recruit "non Gorkhas" and it was impossible to say who was a Gorkha, they ended up recruiting anyone who was not a soldier in the Gorkha army. Those recruited were mostly Kumaonese and Garhwali peasants and the British had hardly given them a month's worth of training. The irregular Corps was sent to the front and on 21st of February 1815 they intercepted a party of a regular Gorkha troops numbering 800. Young's irregular Corp, though outnumbering the Gorkha troops, were still routed in the battle and most, including Young himself

[363] Bengal Secret Letter, 27th December 1814, covering G.H Fagan to Colonel Ochterlony, comd 3 div Fd Army, 21 November 1814 in Chris Bellamy, op-cit, p 45

[364] Ibid p 46

had to flee from the battlefield.[365] It was after this incident, which is mentioned as the "Affair of the 21st" in the documents of the period, that the British command started to use the regular Gorkha soldier who were captured or had surrendered. These Gorkha prisoners initially were not used to fight but rather to instruct the other irregulars on how to build stockades (quickly built structures, using wood as the raw material) which were used to block paths in the hills and were a constant source of irritant for the colonial army during the campaign.[366]

Earlier, on 24 January 1815, Ochterlony, counteracting the orders of the headquarters, had signed and sealed a note offering terms of service for the officers and soldiers of the Gorkha army who were prisoners of the British. The initial pay was Rupees 10 a month, which was much higher than what an ordinary soldier was given by the state of Gorkha. The officers were offered even higher pays. [367] Thus, soon a large number of prisoners were attracted by the higher pay and began to join the British. Though it must be remembered here that the British still did not have a very high opinion of the Gorkhas, as can be seen by the statement of one of the British officers, James Fraser who wrote in March 1815:

> Last night my brother's Goorkha company came in. Such ragamuffins I have seldom seen…They have Chinese faces, sallow complexion, dark shaggy hair, cut short by the ears and very bushy. Upon their heads, they wear a peculiar turban, somewhat like the broad Scottish bonnet. Their garments are filthy. They carry besides a short crooked knife in their cummerbunds.[368]

In April 1815, it was proposed to Governor General Hastings by Colonel Ochterlony that he wished to raise a battalion which would consist entirely of the Gorkha "proper" that would be named "Nusseeree Pulteen". The term Nusseeree was

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[365] Letter from Wlliam Fraser, 24 february 1815, Fraser Papers, cited in A.P. Coleman, A Special Corps, The Beginning of Gorkha Service with the British, Cambridge, 1999, pp 95-96

[366] Chris Bellamy, op-cit, p 48

[367] Full document given in A.P Coleman's " *A Special Corp, The beginning of the Gorkha service with the British*, Cambridge, 1999, pp 60-68

[368] Fraser Papers, vol 8, p 400, cited in, Chris Bellamy, op-cit, p 43

derived from the Hindustani and Arabic word *Nasir* which meant a "helper" or "one who gives victory". He wrote in 1815 that he considered himself the Nusseeree's-

> …Commandant and patron. These trifles have great weight and I must consider myself sanguine in my hope of their not discrediting my favour. [369]

By mid-1815, the British had not made as much progress as they had hoped. Ochterlony seems to have realised that the Indian troops under his command were not used to fighting in the hills and they struggled with this form of fighting were the enemy did not present a front and never took to open field, where British fire power could carry the day. After the failure of the non-Gorkha irregular Corp and especially "the affair of 21st", the Indian soldiers under the British command were not at all taken seriously by the Gorkha soldiers and as Ludwig F Stiller writes, the Gorkha soldiers attacked them no matter how many they were. [370] The Indian soldiers under the British, in return, developed a fear of the enemy and unless backed by regular British soldiers rarely held their ground. It was perhaps this reason why Ochterlony began to consider the recruitment of what he called "proper" Gorkhas. This policy would not just give the British knowledge of the enemy tactics and strategies and hence an idea of how to counter them, but also give them vital information of paths and passes in the region, which in mountain warfare could prove decisive. This was exactly what happened when, a local informer, revealed the weakness of the Kalinga/Nalapani Fort in front of which Major General Gillespie had fallen. The British had suffered tremendous casualties in this siege, 31 officers and 732 soldiers. The weakness had been a water source which when cut off made the defence of the Fort by the Gorkha army impossible. The commander of the fort Bal Bahadur Thapa, along with 70 men slipped away in the night, he had lost 520 men, women and children who had taken refuge inside the fort.[371]

Ochterlony placed the Nusseree Battalion, under the command of Lieutenant Peter Lawtie, the Chief Engineer. Lawtie along with the Nusseree battalion did most of the reconnaissance that lead to Ochterlony's decisive victory over the Gorkha general

[369] A.P. Coleman, op-cit, pp 116-117

[370] Ludwig F.Stiller, *The Rise of the house of the Gorkhas*, Katmandu, 1979, pp 6-10

[371] A.P Coleman, op-cit, p 69

Amar Singh Thapa at Malaun in May 1815 although these soldiers were not used in combat and were not even properly armed. Thus the value of these soldiers was more to do with their knowledge of the terrain and region than anything else.[372] Yet, not all officers were very pleased with raising such irregular corps and especially of arming them. One such officer was Major General Martindell, who took over after the death of Rollo Gillespie. He had been very vocal about his opposition on arming the Nusseeree battalion, whom he did not trust. Here one can see that when we speak of a colonial opinion it is not a single monolithic opinion that all British officers shared, especially in the initial days. It was only later and due to a variety of reasons that one idea came out as the single dominant discourse.

Despite Martindells opposition, William Fraser, another British officer, wrote directly to the Governor General.

> A corps of the description formed by Major General Ochterlony has been found to be of the utmost utility and that officer's experience has shown that the utmost reliance may be placed in their fidelity, while regularly paid and well treated. [373]

After the defeat at Malaun, Amar Singh Thapa, (1761-1820) a high ranking noble and the commander of the Gorkha army in the west, signed an agreement with Ochterlony on 5th May 1815. As per clause 5 of this agreement, apart from the personal bodyguards of Gorkha commanders, all the rest were "at liberty to enter into the service of the British Government, if it is agreeable to themselves and the British." This allowed all the surrendered soldiers of the Gorkha army numbering about 4700-5000 to join the British including 8 Sardars or mid ranking commanders. [374]

By July 1815 there were two Corps of the surrendered Gorkha soldiers with the British, Lieutenant Young's irregulars, 1553 strong and, four battalions under Ochterlony known as Nusseeree, about 2102 strong. The commander in chief ordered

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[372] Indian Office Records, Military Department Records, L/Mil/5/391, f. 275 cited in Coleman, pp 122, 289

[373] Chris Bellamy, op-cit, p 48

[374] A.P. Coleman, Appendix F, p 255

that these men, officers, soldiers and non combatants, be organised into three battalions, 2 Nasiri and 1 Sirmoor.[375]

> Major General Ochterlony will be pleased to form the whole of the Goorkhas, who came over during the late campaign to the westward, both Nusserees and those under Sirmoor Battalions are to be armed musquets[the standard, long, smooth bore weapons of Infantry] until a sufficient number of fusils [shorter carbines carried by lighter troops and cavalry] can be obtained. Each man is maintained and wear his Kookery[Khukhri]. [376]

A fourth battalion was formed of the surrendered soldiers of the Gorkha army at Deonthal and Almora and named the Kumaon Provincial Battalion under Sir Robert Colquhoun.[377]

The war did not end even after the defeat of Amar Singh Thapa in May 1815 and dragged on for another year. The four new battalions were not used to fight against the Gorkha army but were rather kept back to maintain order and defend the newly acquired hill regions of Garhwal and Kumaon.[378]

The war ended in 1816 with the treaty of Seaguli. Many of the British officials were keen to dismiss the newly formed battalions. However Hastings himself assured the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors of the East India Company the need to keep the newly formed battalions and stressed that Ochterlony himself had assured of their loyalty and since they had come over from the enemy they were not likely to go back to them. He further wrote that if they were left then they might join the services of the other rulers such as Ranjit Singh, who already had a few Gorkha soldiers in his army.[379]

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[375] Figures based on returns from Ochterlony and Young, dated 1 July 1815, in Coleman, p 155

[376] Indian Office Record, Military Department Record, L/Mil/ 17/ 2/ 272, ff 141a cited in Coleman pp 158

[377] Chandra B.Khanduri, op-cit, p 223

[378] Chris Bellamy, op-cit, p 49

[379] Ibid, p. 50

When we look at what happened in the 1814-16 war we see that the British initially had wanted to recruit those who were not Gorkha proper, but any other group. As the war progressed, and the British suffered a few reverses, they realised that apart from the British, the Indian troops were ineffective in fighting in the terrain. Further, the British also lacked knowledge of the area and the strategies of the enemies, which was when they enlisted and made an attempt to recruit proper Gorkhas, which at that time meant soldiers of the Gorkha state. It was the military and strategic needs of the British that led to them recruiting the Gorkha soldiers. Did the British have a favourable opinion of the soldiers of the Gorkha state by the end of the war? They did, but they did not think of them as of being at the same level of soldiers as under their command. However, this itself was an evolution of sorts of the colonial opinion from the times of Hamilton and Kirkpatrick, the most important being the development of the idea of a social group called the Gorkhas. This was the most important development of the 1814-16 war.

The Maintenance of the Gorkha Battalions: The Reasons and their Role.

The problem after the war was defining who exactly was a "Gorkha". The British believed that like other parts in India, where it was relatively possible to define a group such as the Marathas, Rajputs, Sikhs etc., the Gorkhas too were such a community. However it was not possible to say who a Gorkha was since such an ethnic category did not quite exist within the Gorkha state. Gorkhas were not a community or even social group as such. The British had assumed that anyone who was in the regular Gorkha army was a Gorkha but many Kumaonese and Garhwalis were also in the Gorkha army. Thus when the surrendered soldiers of the Gorkha army joined the British in 1815, it was found out that almost 1/3rd were people from Garhwal and Kumaon.[380]

The four battalions of irregular soldiers that were raised during the war period were maintained even after the war. The primary reason for this was the defence of the newly acquired territories of Garhwal and Kumaon against a possible invasion of the Gorkha army.[381] As the war had demonstrated, the Indian soldiers were not effective while fighting in the hills and the colonial government did not want to commit any British soldiers for the defence of the region, especially as there were other wars

[380] Ibid, p. 50

[381] Ibid p 51

brewing in the subcontinent such as the one with the Marathas.[382] As Susan Bayly writes, it was a policy of the colonial army to maintain large groups of irregulars for defence of specific regions. These new battalions were irregulars, they wore the green uniform and not red of the regular regiments, and were maintained because of established policies and not because, as many other writers have mentioned, of great admiration that the British had of the "Gorkhas". That British idea of the Gorkha still had to evolve.[383]

Brain Houghton Hodgson, the British resident at Kathmandu during 1830's, had been keeping a close eye on the affairs of the Gorkha state. It was he who was warning the authorities in Calcutta that the Gorkha army, especially under the leadership of the Prime Minister Bhimsen Thapa, was expanding the army once again.[384] He also warned that the Gorkha state was in future going to be another threat to the British interest in the region. He suggested diverting the Gorkha state's military manpower especially the western *jats* (castes) of Magar, Khas and Gurung, who formed the bulk of the soldiers and whom he called 'Gorkhas' into the British service, which would have two benefits; strengthen the Bengal army and weaken the Gorkha state. In other words, appropriate the Gorkha's military labour market. Here we see for the first time, the beginning of the crystallization of the idea of who the Gorkhas were, the delineation of the communities which formed the "Gorkhas". They were the same group from where the state of Gorkha recruited most of their soldiers from. Bhimsen Thapa, the Prime Minister of the Gorkha state, was of course extremely suspicious of this move and tried to make sure this would not happen. Hodgson reports that a typical remark made by the people was [385]

> they say the English is a good service but our Government won't hear of our entering it-nor can we leave the country without permission, obtainable only once in several years under the pretence of pilgrimage…Were we to run away our families would

[382] Ludwig.F.Stiller, op-cit, p 56

[383] Susan Bayly, op-cit, pp 83-84

[384] Sir William Wilson Hunter, *The Life of Brian Houghton Hodgson, British Resident at the court of Nepal*, London, 1896, p 23

[385] Ibid p 34

> answer for the offence, and being the hazard how can we think of attempting it-especially under such an uncertainty of success?[386]

Ranjit Singh (1780-1839), the Sikh ruler of Lahore, who had converted his army from cavalry based one to a French trained infantry based one, was also keen to hire the Gorkhas. In March and April 1816, Ross and MacHargs, commanders of the 1st and 2nd Nasiri Battalion respectively, reported attempts by emissaries from Ranjit Singh to recruit their soldiers at a slightly higher rate of pay. This has also been used to suggest that the bravery and valour of Gorkhas had spread.[387] However, as Dirk Kolff has mentioned that most of the Sikhs considered the fighting on horsebacks as the only honourable form of fighting and looked down on walking as infantry as being the work of lower soldiers.[388] However, the new European methods of warfare gave more importance to infantry than to cavalry.[389] It was probably an attempt to lure the Gorkhas as a possible cheaper recruit for his infantry division. Bal Bahadur Thapa, the defender of Nalapani/Kalinga fort joined Ranjit Singh's army and died in 1823, fighing against the Afghans.[390] Though Kolff makes no mention of the Gorkha soldiers, collaborating the data makes the above made point plausible.

The employment of subjects of the Gorkha state by both the British and the Sikhs caused the beginning of, though not in the same volume as later, the movement of the people of the central Himalayan region outside, which characterised the latter half of the 19th century.

In the first few years after the war, the new battalions were rarely used. The Gorkha state was sufficiently weakened and there was no other threat for the Cis-Sutlej hills. In 1824, the Sirmoor battalion commanded by Young was sent against a band of dacoits led by Kulwa and his brother Boora. The dacoits had a mud fort at Kunja, near Saharanpur in Northern India. The battalion defeated the rebels and stormed the fort.

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[386] Hodgson Papers, vol 10 in British Library, Oriental and Indian office cited in Tony Gould, op-cit, pp 72, 443

[387] A.P.Coleman, op-cit, pp 163-164

[388] Dirk. Kloff, op-cit, p 56

[389] Ibid, p 56

[390] A.P.Coleman, op-cit 164

This campaign against the dacoits was well documented during the period and it was after this that the British first began to consider using the Gorkhas in the plains as well, rather than just using them to defend the hills. Young, the commanding officer also thought it necessary to mention that his soldiers did not molest the women inside, perhaps stressing on the good disciplined conduct of his men. It is no surprise that Young mentioned the good discipline of these soldiers since the other irregulars units were not known for their discipline.[391]

The Impact of the 1st Anglo-Burma War of 1824-1826

Political events through the 19th century were to play a major role in increasing the importance of Gorkha battalions and, along with it, developing the colonial imagination of the Gorkha. The first Burma war of 1824-26 created a crisis of sorts for the British. The East India Company troops, especially those of British Bengal Native Infantry, were sent to Burma. However the high caste soldiers were afraid that seaborne travel would cause them to lose their caste. One of the regiments, the 47th Native Infantry, stationed at Barrackpore mutinied when a rumour reached them that they were to be used for a seaborne assault on Rangoon. This was something that the British could not ignore since they needed their Indian soldiers to help them maintain their interests in Southeast Asia and China, which would frequently require sea travel. [392]

The major problem with the native infantry, it seemed, was their religion, which was creating impediments in the effectiveness of the soldiers. Susan Bayly also writes that being under less influence of the Brahmans was a condition for recruiting soliders. It was during this period that many of the British officials began to stress on the fact that Gorkhas were only nominal Hindus. The officials also stressed on the fact the Gorkhas did not identify with the native troops but rather had the utmost respect for the British. On 29th December 1829, Young, now a Major, wrote.

> [Gorkhas] look down on the regular Native sepoy, to whom they consider themselves superior but they have

[391] Byron Farwell, *The Gurkhas*, London, 1984, pp 35-36

[392] Chris Bellamy, op-cit, p 59

> the highest opinion of the European as soldiers and respect their courage and discipline. [393]

He added that as long as they knew their families at the Base in Dehra Doon would be safe,

> They are ready to undertake any service, however distant.[394]

Further, Captain Kennedy the commanding officer of the Nasiri battalion wrote comparing the time taken by a Gorkha soldier to the, often complained about, long arduous process of meal taking of a high caste Brahmin soldier.

> The absence of all fastidiousness in regard to nature or preparation of their foods adds greatly to the efficiency of the individuals composing the bulk of this corps and enhances their value as soldiers.[395]

This statement by Kennedy also alludes to the idea of Gorkhas being less dominated by Brahmanical ideas of purity. This was also a period, according to Susan Bayly, when the idea that only those who were less Brahmanised made good soldiers, was beginning to take root. Thus this idea that the Gorkhas[396] were just nominal Hindus greatly increased their value as soldiers.

Though the idea of sending the Gorkhas to Burma was mooted and backed by several officers, the new Commander in Chief of the British forces in India, Lieutenant General Edward Paget (1775-1849) blocked it saying-

> Improbable that men accustomed to pure air and temperate climate of the hilly countries in which these people are accustomed to serve would be able to

[393] Young to the Adjutant General, 29 December 1829, cited in Coleman pp 174, 296

[394] Ibid, pp 474, 296

[395] Military letter from Bengal to the Court of Directors, India Office, L/ Mil/ 3/ 32 no 52 of 6 November 1830, cited in Coleman,op-cit, pp 178

[396] Susan Bayly, op-cit, pp 115, 124

> preserve their health and continue to be efficient for a length of time in low and marshy conditions.[397]

Though Paget did not consider the Gorkhas as a viable candidate to fight in Burma, he did want to maintain the battalion's strength as is seen when the Adjutant General told the Political Secretary, George Swinton, that the Commander in Chief, Lieutenant General Edward Paget would support the establishment of a recruiting base at Lohughat in eastern Kumaon just across the border from Nepal. George Swinton stressed on the fact that the Gorkha authorities were to be kept in the dark about the new recruitment base, which indicates to the fact that Gorkha authorities were not happy about the British recruiting soldiers from their dominions. However, a recruitment base was only set up, much later in 1839 in Lohughat.[398]

Initial Methods of recruitment

The British would usually send a serving Gorkha soldier to visit the villages in Nepal, and bring, or at the very least, inform the people of the service in the British Army. A recruitment base was set in Pithoragarh, at the border, in 1830. The Nepal government, especially under Bhimsen Thapa, was not well disposed to the idea of their subjects especially those who were potential recruits for joining the British army. Though an official order banning service in the British army was never issued, the Gorkha state discouraged its people from joining.

The Bharatpur Campaign

Lieutenant General Edward Paget was replaced by Lord Combermere (Sir General Stapleton Cotton, 1773-1865). One of his first major campaigns was to resolve the succession disputes in the state of Bharatpur, where Bulwant Singh (r.1820-1853), who was supported by the British, was not allowed to inherit the throne, by his cousin Durjan Singh, who instead had become the ruler. A large force of 21,000 troops supported by a 100 guns was mobilised for this campaign. The two Battalions of Nasiri and Sirmoor were also attached to the infantry division. Durjan Singh was defeated and Bulwant Singh was placed on the throne. The role of the Gorkha sepoys was again mentioned as follows:

[397] A.P. Coleman, op-cit,p 176

[398] Chris Bellamy, op-cit, p 61

> The Major General (Reynell, commanding the infantry division) impowers him from his own observation to assert that the conduct of the two Companies forming the detachment was calculated…to reflect the highest credit on the regiment to which it belongs, and the Major General has much satisfaction in assuring the two commanding officers, Major Young (Sirmoor battalion) and Captain Kennedy (1st Nasiri Battalion) that the spirited behaviour of the men of both detachments whenever called upon for any particular enterprize or service not only attracted the notice of the Right Hon'rable the commander in chief but left in his excellences mind a most favourable impression of the Goorkha Sepoy.[399]

It has to be remembered that both Gorkha battalions were irregular units. As mentioned earlier, Irregular units were infamous for their lack of discipline and their ineffectiveness as compared to the regular units.Further, the high caste Bengal sepoys were beginning to create a problem for the British, and an alternative source of recruitment was being sought. In such a context, the Gorkhas were beginning to be considered as one possible source. Thus, every time they performed well in a campaign, it was specifically mentioned.

Arguments for the Increase in the Use of the Gorkhas by the British Officials

Ever since the early 19th century, there were many instances where the regular native infantry were creating problems for the British. As mentioned above an alternative was being sought and Gorkhas were being considered to be one of them. The foremost proponent was Brian Houghton Hodgson, the resident in Kathmandu, who had been keeping up a gentle pressure on the British government to acquire the military manpower of the Gorkha state. He kept sending details of the Gorkha states' military build-up to Calcutta. He wrote that the Gorkha forces had a strength of 30,000 out of which 15,000 were regular soldiers. He insisted that

[399] Military Letter from Bengal,6 November 1830, cited in Coleman, op-cit, pp 176-296

> Any insuperable obstacle to our obtaining in form or the other, the services of a large body of these men…they are by far the best soldiers in India…their gallant spirit and unadulterated military habits might be relied upon for fidelity…our good and regular pay and noble pension establishment would serve to counterpoise the influences of nationality… [400]

Though Hodgson stressed on the military qualities of the Gorkhas, his primary focus was, as was mentioned before, to divert the military manpower of the Gorkha state and thereby weaken it. However his inputs were not taken seriously and nothing came out of it. Instead of increasing the number of Gorkha soldiers, their numbers were actually decreased. The 2nd Nasiri battalion was disbanded on 1st February 1830 and men with less than six years of service were discharged while the rest were transferred to the 1st Nasiri battalion or Sirmoor battalion. [401]

However, the Gorkhas continued to gain favour in many of the British reports. Between the months February and May 1832, a Select Committee of the House of Commons, reviewed the affairs of the East India Company, including its armed forces. Holt Mackenzie, the Secretary to the Territorial Department in Bengal was asked to speak on the two Gorkha battalions. He informed the committee that

> [They are] very superior in the point of physical strength and moral courage to any troops we have had to do. They have a strong feeling of patriotism, with a great deal of personal pride and are described, indeed, as equalling any troops in the world in the moral qualities as a soldier.

This statement of Holt Mackenzie, demonstrates the overall view that was now evolving about the Gorkhas. Not just as physically suitable for soldiering but also about their other attributes; patriotism, pride and moral qualities. These attributes

[400] B.H.Hodgson, *On the origins and classification of the military tribes of Bengal, selections from the records of the Government of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1857, pp 657-638

[401] A.P. Coleman, op-cit, p 182-185

were vital to the colonial construction of Gorkhas as it developed later. Though yet there were still some doubts about the overall effectiveness of the Gorkhas, as was demonstrated by the next answer to the question asked by the Board.

> (Questioner) What difficulty is there in having greater numbers of Goorkhas in our service?
>
> (Mackenzie) The chief difficulty that immediately occurs to me is this, that they are hardly fit for general service in the plains.

This assumption that the Gorkhas could not serve in the plains was one of the primary concern for the British at the moment. This concern was shown in Mackenzie's next answer to the Board's query,

> (Questioner) Would they (Gorkhas) not form a cheap substitution for European forces?
>
> (Mackenzie) I should not consider it safe to rest upon them as substitute for Europeans.

Mackenzie's next answer to the Board's query over the question of the Gorkhas being Hindus is particularly interesting.

> (Questioner) Are the Goorkha Hindoos (this was after Mackenzie explained the problems with Hindu troops of Bengal.)
>
> (Mackenzie) Yes, they are all Hindoos.[402]

The lower level commanders who were in close proximity with the soldiers, such as Kennedy and Young, stressed on the fact that the Gorkhas were only nominal Hindus without the ritualistic practices of the Bengali high caste sepoys. on the other hand, the higher officers such as Mackenzie who had a more theoretical understanding of Hinduism and about the soldiers continued to refer to them as Hindus. It was only

[402] Parliamentary paper, House of Commons, 1831-32, xiv,v (Military) Appendix (A) no.55, paras 2265,2268,2278,2282,2283,2284. Cited in Bellamy, op-cit, p 353

when the great anthropological works and manuals were written in the late 19th century that a more uniform idea of the "Gorkha" evolved.

The "Great Game" and the Northwest Frontier, 1838-1849

As mentioned earlier, political events were very important in increasing the importance of the Gorkhas to the colonial army, the next major development in North Western India had a similar effect. The idea of the Gorkha as soldiers effective only in the mountainous terrain was one that was stuck during this period, at least in the minds of the commanding officers. However, this was exactly what led to the Gorkhas being viewed as valuable soldiers and increased their importance when the political development in Afghanistan took place.

The rise of the Russian Empire and their thrust into central Asia lead to a confrontation with the British Empire in Asia. Though an actual war was never fought, throughout the 19th century the Russian and the British Empire supported rival claimants in various political rivalries in the Khanates of Central Asia through which they tried to increase their influence in the region.[403] This rivalry between the two empires came to be known as the "Great Game". Throughout the 19th century, a Russian invasion of India was predicted but it never arrived.

In September 1835, a new Commander in Chief, Sir Henry Fane (1778-1840) arrived in Calcutta. By this time, a Russian threat to North West India was considered an imminent possibility. Fane conducted a detailed tour of the North West territories. He concluded that the Indus in the Northwest was easily crossed and hence the Sutlej was the river to defend. The Sutlej Hills were also vital in his plans for his defensive lines.[404] The responsibility of guarding the hills was given to the two Gorkha battalions, Nasiri and Sirmoor. It was perhaps because of this that Fane asked the Governor General to approve better pension plans for

> Men of the three Goorkha or Hill corps, who came over to the British army from the Nepaul Government in 1815
> [405]

[403] Peter Hopkrik, *The Great Game: On the secret Service in the high Asia*, London, 1990, p 10

[404] A.P. Coleman, op-cit, p 199

[405] Ibid p 199

In March 1836, he also made the argument for the maintenance of regimental schools for the Nasiri battalion and other Gorkha units in the North West saying,

> A number of children of the original soldiers of these Corps are at this time entering the service and replacing their fathers, and, no doubt such will be the continuing practice, so that, should the Government see fit to extend the proposed advantage to them, the benefit will be reaped hereafter.[406]

He was also in agreement with Hodgson, the British Resident at Kathmandu that the Gorkha state would in future prove to be a threat for them, though he doubted their efficiency in the plains.

> One mountainous tribe, the Nepaulese, whose position is dangerous to the neighbouring Bengal because it has been the policy of the former Governments to permit the state to organize, equip and arm a large body of their Goorkha subjects. These people have no cavalry and little efficient field artillery and therefore would not be formidable to contend with on the plains.[407]

However, Fane added, a lot of resources would be tied up in case of any "eruptions from their mountainous country."[408] He kept, in his diary, a meticulous report of the affairs in Nepal sent by Hodgson. In 1838, he transferred the Kumaon battalion from the civil administration to the military department and also moved its base to Lohughat, on the border with Nepal, and also established there a recruiting depot in 1839.[409] Fane, it seems, had taken Hodgson's advice of skimming the cream of the Gorkha state's military manpower and recruiting them in the British army.

The fear of Russian interference in the central Asian region and need to secure the Northwest frontier was to lead to the next development in the "Great Game" and was

[406] Fane Collection, Lincolnshire Archives, 6/6/4, cited in Coleman, pp 200-201, 299

[407] Ibid, pp 202-204, 299.

[408] Ibid, p 204

[409] A.P.Coleman,op-cit, p 205

to have important impact in the manner in which the "Gorkha" became an important part of the British military apparatus.

In 1838, the British sent an envoy to Kabul to form an alliance with the Emir of Afghanistan, Dost Mohammad Barakzai (1793-1863), against Russia. Dost Mohammad asked the British to help him recapture Peshawar which had been captured by Ranjit Singh's army in 1834.[410] The British were not prepared to upset the Sikh ruler and declined. Dost Mohammad instead began to speak to the Russian envoys. In October, 1838, Lord Auckland the Governor General, issued the Simla Manifesto, which said, in order to secure the safety of India, they needed an ally in Afghanistan. They chose Shah Shuja Durrani (1785-1842), the deposed ruler of Afghanistan in 1809. The British attempt to install Shah Shuja led to the 1st Anglo Afghan war.[411]

By 7th of August 1839, the British had reached Kabul and were able to install Shah Shuja Durrani on the throne, though the people in the region were not happy with the new ruler and with the British presence in Kabul. On 28th April 1840, a General Order of the commander in chief called for volunteers from the Nasiri and the Sirmoor battalions of Gorkhas to serve in the 4th Regiment of Infantry, especially raised to be a part of Shah Shuja's force. The two battalions provided 3 havildars, 4 naiks and 6 sepoys. The rest of the force probably consisted of Afghans and the commanding officer was a British, Captain Codrington. The Gorkha soldiers were raised to the next in rank and their role was to train and lead the Afghans. The choice of the Gorkhas, who were still a irregular unit, to stay in Afghanistan and train and instruct the local soldiers, instead of regular soldiers from regular regiments, is an interesting development. The British who considered the Gorkhas to be good in mountainous terrain probably chose them precisely because of the terrain in Afghanistan.[412]

This 4th Infantry, consisting of the Gorkhas, was stationed in Charikar, 64 kms north of Kabul, in the hills. On 14th of November 1841, the unit was overrun by Dost Mohammad's son Mohammad Akbar Khan's (1816-1845) supporters. The British

[410] Peter Hopkirk, op-cit, p 53

[411] Gregory Fremont Barnes, *The Anglo- Afghan war, 1819-1919*, Oxford, 2009, pp 14-44

[412] Field Marshal Sir John Chappe, *The Lineages and Composition of Gorkha Regiments in British service*, Winchester, 1984, p 10

garrison itself was destroyed, Captain Codrington was killed and 150 of his men escaped into the hills and were rescued later.[413] The British had to withdraw from Afghanistan but it was just the beginning of the British involvement in the region and as far as the Gorkhas were concerned it was an important development since their role had evolved into leading and training. They would see much more action in the region.

The British, though humiliated in the Afghan war, still wanted to maintain their defence of the North western borders against a possible attack of the Russians or Russian supported Persians or Afghans. Ranjit Singh had proved to be a good buffer for the British but after his death in 1839 relations with his successors progressively deteriorated. The new Commander-in-Chief General Sir Henry Hardinge (1785-1856) arrived in Calcutta in 1844 and he began to prepare for the war with the Sikh state.[414] The British believed that they had to control Punjab to secure the frontier against the Russian. By November 1845, the Sikh army began to cross the Sutlej and war broke out. The Nasiri and the Sirmoor battalion were sent to reinforce the regular regiments fighting the Sikh army. The two battalions first defeated the Sikh contingent in Ludhiana and then joined in the ferocious battles of Aliwal on 17th January 1846 and Sobraon on 10th February 1846.[415] At Aliwal, Badal Singh Thapa, a havildar in the Nasiri battalion was awarded the Indian Order of Merit (IOM), a bravery medal introduced in 1837 and only one available to Indian soldiers until 1911, when Victoria Cross was also made available to them. Badal Singh Thapa was one of the first recipients of the award and is more surprising because he was from an irregular unit.[416] In the battle of Sobroan, both the battalions of Sirmoor and Nasiri suffered tremendous losses and four more Gorkhas were awarded the Indian Order of Merit. The divisional commander mentioned the two battalions in his despatches

> I must…especially…notice the determined hardihood and bravery with which our two battalions of Goorkhas, the Sirmoor and Nusseree, met the Sikhs whenever they were opposed to them, Soldiers of small stature but

[413] Gregory Fremont Barnes, op-cit, pp 40-44

[414] Chris Bellamy, op-cit, p 76

[415] Byron Farwell, op-cit, p. 38

[416] Ibid, p 39

> indomitable spirit, they vied in ardent charge with the grenadiers of our own nation, and armed with the short weapon of their mountains (khukri) were a terror to the Sikhs throughout the great combat.[417]

The important outcome of the Anglo-Sikh was the fact that Gorkhas were used in the plains for the first time, an important change from the earlier period when they were seen as only being effective in the hills. Further, the Gorkhas were being equated and used as regular line infantry though they continued to be irregular units. The resident of Kathmandu, Sir Henry Lawrence in 1845 had written that the number of Gorkhas in the British army should be increased by 6000-8000 and used as regular Line infantry.[418]

The clamour for the use of Gorkhas must also be viewed in the light of the many mutinies and problems that were coming up in Bengal Infantry regiments. Further, the race theories that said people from higher altitude made better soldiers had already taken root at this time and thus the British were already predisposed to the idea that Gorkhas were better soldiers because of the fact that they were mountain men.[419]

The only problem with recruiting more Gorkhas was the attitude of the Kathmandu court who did not allow the British to recruit from their lands. Though after the coming to power of Jung Bahadur Rana in 1850, the recruitment to the British army was made easier, Jung Bahadur made sure that he put forward every obstacle to the easy recruitment to the British Gorkha regiments.[420]

As with the Afghan situation, a group of Gorkha soldiers were kept to protect the British political agents in Punjab. However, when an incident occurred in 1848 regarding a tax collector where the British political agents were murdered with the Gorkha escort hardly offering any resistance. This incident was interesting rarely

[417] Despatch to the adjutant general of the army, dated 30 January 1846, Viscount Hardinge, The War in India: Despatches of Hardinge and Others, London, 1846, pp 76, 102

[418] Letter dated 25 May 1845, cited in H.B Edwards and H. Merrivale, Life of Sir Henry Lawrence, London, 1870, p 482

[419] Susan Baylay, op-cit, p 45

[420] Chris Bellamy, p 76

mentioned by any of the officers, though it caused the beginning of the 2nd Anglo Sikh war. The two Gorkha battalions did not take part in this war.[421]

General Sir Charles Napier, 1849- 1852

The two Anglo-Sikh wars and the Sind campaign had more or less secured the Western and North Western borders for the British against a perceived Russian threat. On 6th May 1849, Gough was replaced by General Sir Charles Napier (1782-1853), as the commander in chief. Napier was a highly regarded General who had been the commander of the British forces in the earlier Sind campaign.[422]

Though the Punjab was now controlled and a possible frontier secured, trouble for the British was brewing elsewhere. In July 1849, the special allowance paid to the Indian troops in the 2nd Anglo Sikh war was withdrawn in April and, as a result, four Native Infantry regiments, 22nd, 13th, 41st and 32nd refused to accept the reduced pay and a situation bordering on mutiny had developed.[423] Napier handled the situation well and a rebellion was averted yet, he and the Governor General, James Ramsay, 1st Marquis of Dalhousie (1812-1860) agreed that the situation with the Bengal army was getting grimmer. Napier, very importantly, noted that the Gorkhas were receiving much lower pay but had not complained.[424] He advised the Governor General, Lord Dalhousie to 'win the Goorkha hearts' with money and the "Red uniform" of the regular units. He also stressed on the fact that the Gorkha soldiers were cheaper and many officers had expressed the opinion that they were as reliable and efficient as European troops, which earlier in 1832, Mackenzie had said they were not. He went on to say,

> The great advantage of enlisting these hillmen will be that, with 30,000 or 40,000 Goorkhas added to 30,000 Europeans, the possession of India…an army able with ease to overthrow any combination among Hindoos, or Mohammedans, or both together.[425]

[421] Ibid, p 77

[422] A.P Coleman, op-cit, pp 229-230

[423] Chris Bellamy, op-cit, p 80

[424] Lt General W. Napier (Ed.), *Defects Civil and Military of the Indian Government*, pp 28-31

[425] Tony Gould, op-cit, p 110

Dalhousie seems to have agreed to Napier's argument for increasing the number of Gorkhas serving and increasing the pay of the Gorkhas to regular levels. However, before all of this could be implemented, another mutiny broke out, on 25th February 1850, the 66th Native Infantry at Govindpur revolted and threatened to seize the fortress. Napier, on the 27th of February 1850, in a General Order, declared that the 66th Regiment was disbanded and their colours and regimental identity will be given to the Nasiri battalion, thus converting the Nasiri Battalion to a regular regiment.[426] Dalhousie agreed to Napier's decision. On 22nd March 1850, he issued another General Order, which declared

> In recognition of their willingness to perform all duties required of Corps of Native Infantry of the line…the Sirmoor and the Kemaoon Battalions, as well as the new Nusseree Battalion should be given the same pay, allowances and privileges as all the other Native Infantry regiments.[427]

Napier advised the officers of the 66th regiment as well as the other Battalions to associate with the native officers as much as possible and acquire a thorough knowledge of the regiments. Furthermore, he stated that the

> …nationality of the these corps and of the 66th or Goorka regiment, shall be kept up by the careful exclusion of men as recruits, who are not Goorka.[428]

Thus the stress on keeping the regiment exclusively of Gorkha was made, which also shows that an idea of who the "Gorkha" is was getting more and more concretized though it was by no means final.

A new Nasiri Battalion was formed commanded by Major O'Brien since the old Nasiri Battalion was converted to the 66th Regiment. Though the British desperately wanted to get more Gorkhas it was beginning to get very difficult to do so, given the opposition of the Kathmandu court. O'Brien advised that the Khas, Gurung an Magars

[426] A.P Coleman, pp 229-231

[427] Ibid, p 231

[428] Ibid, p 232

still were the best soldiers but a small portion of the children of older Gorkha soldiers and men from the Garhwal and Kumoan hills should also be included. Though it seems unlikely, this advice was followed.[429]

Napier's relation deteriorated with Dalhousie and he finally left India in November 1850, warning of a 'rising in the horizon'. In 1852 he appeared before the Select Committee of the House of Lords and spoke about the Gorkhas

> they are excellent soldiers… everybody says their courage is equal to that of our men, they have no caste, so there is no difference to their food; they mess and do everything without causing any difficulty and they are excessively attached to the European troops, they feel the greatest possible pride in the British uniform. When I turned the Goorkah regiment into the 66th, their delight at wearing a red coat was great.[430]

The conditions in which Napier spoke so vociferously in favour of the Gorkhas has to be remembered. There were several rebellions by the various regiments on the issue of pay and there were several other problems with the Bengal infantry as well. Napier on several occasions made the point that Gorkha soldiers were cheap, they were happy with lower pay and when their salaries were increased to the levels of regular pay, with which the other native infantry was unhappy with, he believed the Gorkha's loyalty was bought. Further the Gorkha Battalions had performed decently in the wars preceding Napier's term. Thus it was because of the situation that was developing with the Bengal army as well as the performance of the Gorkha Battalions that the value of a Gorkha as a soldier was becoming more important for the British and with it the colonial imagination was being shaped.

[429] Ibid, pp 235-237

[430] First Report of the Select Committee of the House of Lords, 1852-3, Parliamentary Papers, 1852-3, p.xxxi

The Uprising of 1857

Throughout the early half of the 19th century, problems between the British and the Indian sepoys had been rising. The British were unhappy because they believed that the local sepoys allowed their religion to get in between effective duty. The sepoys themselves had many problems that had been brewing, throughout the past 50 years. Some of the problems that had been listed by the authors are things such as the pay that they were receiving, the removal of Foreign Service special allowance *Bhatta*, the very poor chances of promotion, the fear of conversions, oppressive land revenue system that impoverished the families of the soldiers, who were peasants in uniform are some of the reasons that have been listed by the authors. The annexation of Awadh and Dalhousie's 'Doctrine of Lapse' and his policy of annexation had alienated the various ruling houses, as well such as that of Jhansi, Poona, Kanpur etc.[431] The immediate cause of the rebellion however was the introduction of the Enfield rifles which replaced the old Brown Bess rifles in January 1857. The new rifles used cartridges whose top had to be bitten off before the ammunition was loaded in the rifles. Rumours spread that the cartridges was greased with beef fat or pork fat, which immediately caused uproar amongst the soldiers. The fact was that the cartridges were greased by some form of tallow which could be made from beef fat or pork fat.[432] It did not matter whether it was actually beef or pork fat, the rumours spread like wild fire. On 29th March 1857, there was an incident with the 34th regiment at Barrackpore which was followed by a serious mutiny at Meerut where a few British officers were murdered. The mutiny then spread rapidly across northern India. [433]

The uprising turned out to be a political event that further augmented the British faith in the Gorkhas. During the initial spread of the mutiny, some of the soldiers of the Gorkha battalions were at Ambala undergoing a small-arms course under the command of Lieutenant Duncan Macintyre. He reported that the Gorkha soldiers could be trusted to remain loyal. He further explained,

> They did not like being mixed up with the kala log ('black folk') as they called the Native Sepoys, whom they

[431] Christopher Hibbert, *The Great Mutiny: India 1857*, London, 1980, p 13

[432] Ibid p 55

[433] Ibid p 57

> reported as showing very bad feelings in their conversations regarding the use of the greased cartridges. At the same time, they requested that these might be served out to them, in order to show the Poorbiahs [Purbiya- men, usually Brahmans and Rajputs from Oudh, Benaras and Behar, where most British sepoys were recruited] that they had no fellow-feeling with them on the cartridge question.[434]

However, many other officers were not convinced of the Gorkha's loyalty. Their fears were almost justified when the new Nasiri Battalion refused to escort the artillery to Ambala since they had not been paid their salaries. Some of the soldiers also helped themselves to the treasury at Kasauli. The news of the Gorkhas joining the rebellion spread to Shimla, where many of European officers were staying. Fears of the Sirmoor, Kumaon and Nasiri Battlalion as well as the 66th Regiment joining the rebellion caused a panic in the town and many fled. The situation was brought under control by issuing a general amnesty for the soldiers of the Nasiri battalion apart from those who had raided the treasury.[435] This was the only case where the Gorkhas had gone against the British. Throughout the Mutiny all the Gorkha units remained loyal to the Empire.

The Siege of Delhi

On 14th of May 1857, the Sirmoor Battalion, under Major Charles Reid, was ordered to go to Meerut to help retake the city. On the way they were attacked by Rebels in the village of Bhola, who they defeated and captured. A court martial was convened and the rebels were sentenced to be killed. The fact that the rebels had been Brahmins and the Gorkhas had no problem in killing them was mentioned specially by Reid to the command in several dispatches. While they were on the way, they were ordered to go to Delhi instead where the mutineers had captured the city on 11th of May 1857. The Sirmoor battalion joined Sir Henry Bernard's relief force. The Battalion were sent to the Hindoo Rao's house on the Badle ki Sarai ridge, just north of the city. Bernard was distrustful of the Gorkhas, who he thought were irregulars and had the battalion's camp under the artillery guns, 'ready' as Reid later wrote, "to pound us if we

[434] Farwell, op-cit, p 41

[435] Chris Bellamy, op-cit, p 86

misbehaved".[436] The other British officers in the 'siege of Delhi' were not convinced of the Gorkha loyalties and questioned Reid several times, who, as he later wrote, replied 'time will show… shooting the Brahmins was a pretty good test', [437] a reiteration of the fact that Gorkhas were less under the influence of the Brahmins.

The Sirmoor battalion held the position along with the British 60th regiment and fought off a total of 26 attacks between 8th June and 14th September. Reid wrote that

> We were under arms for sixteen hours. How fearful: my little fellows behaved splendidly and were cheered by every European Regiment. It was the only Native Regiment with the force, and I may say every eye was upon it. The General was anxious to see what the Goorkhas could do, and if we were to be trusted. They had, doubts about us, but I think they are satisfied. [438]

Reid further wrote in his diary that the mutineers tried very hard to get the Gorkhas to their side, they would often shout out to his men "Come on Goorkhas, we won't fire upon you…we expect you to join us". Reid writes his men would shout back "Oh yes, we are coming", then when they were within range "they closed upon their centre and when within twenty paces they gave the mutineers a well-directed volley, killing some thirty or forty of the scoundrels" Reid further mentioned, the price for a Gorkha head was then kept at Rs 10, by the mutineers, the same as that of the Europeans.[439] These were some of the aspects that seemed very important to mention during this period. The absolute apathy that the Gorkhas had for the sepoys.

James Hare, of the 60th Regiment wrote on 22nd June 1857,

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[436] Major Charles Reid, *1857-1957 Centenary of the siege of Delhi.The Seige of Delhi. The Defence of the main Piquent at the Hindoo Rao's House and other Posts on the Ridge as recorded by Major Reid Commanding the Sirmoor Battalion, 2nd K E VII own Gurkha Rifles(The Sirmoor Rifles).* Extracts from the letters and notes written during the Siege of Delhi in 1857 by General Sir Charles Reid GCB, Winchester, 1957. P. 13

[437] Ibid, p 13

[438] Ibid, p 14

[439] Ibid, p 14

> ... a sepoy had gone into a hut and was shooting out at the door when two little Ghoorkhas set out to catch him. They sneaked up, one on either side of the door, and presently the sepoy put his head to see if the coast was clear, when one grabbed him by the hair and the other whacked off his head with his cookery(khukhri).[440]

This incident seems to have inspired a contemporary painting, which depicts a sepoy being grabbed by the hair by a Gorkha soldier while two British soldiers sit nearby. The above mentioned statements show how the Gorkha was being viewed by the other British soldiers and officers and how the word spread about their efficiency and loyalty. It also has to be remembered that the Gorkhas were the very few soldiers of the Bengal army who remained loyal to the British. Thus such praise was bound to come, if but just to reassure all of the Gorkha's loyalty.

On 9th August, Brigadier General John Nicholson, 'The Lion of Punjab' came with a force of 4000 highly trained soldiers to reprieve the British soldiers in Delhi. He was joined by Pathans, Sikhs and Multanis and was also reinforced with the Kumoan Battalion. The combined force launched a joint attack on Delhi and after a ferocious fighting where both John Nicholson and Reid were shot, the city was retaken.[441]

The Kumoan and Garhwal Hills

The other Gorkha unit, the 66th Regiment, formerly the Nasiri Battalion, too saw action when they confronted a large rebel army at Choorpoorah on 10th February 1858 whose main intention was to drive the British from the Kumoan and Garhwal hills. The rebel army was defeated and the Lieutenant John Tytler, the adjutant of the 66th regiment was awarded the Victoria Cross for his efforts in the battle. Many of the Gorkha soldiers were awarded the Indian Order of Merit.[442]

During the course of the mutiny, the Gorkhas, because of their loyalty and good performance were seen even more favourably by the British. An "Extra Regiment" was formed by Lieutenant MacIntyre in Lohughat and Pithoragarh and the old recruiting depots on 6th August 1857. It was stationed at Almorah, until the war

[440] James Hare to his father, 24th August 1857, cite in Tony Gould, p. 114

[441] Tony Gould, pp 115-116

[442] Chris Bellamy op-cit, p 94

ended. Another infantry Battalion was formed as part of the 25th Regiment of the Punjab Infantry in May 1858. It was known as the Hazara Goorkha Battalion. By October 1858, recruiting parties were searching for more Gorkha recruits in Kumoan.[443]

The Reasons for Gorkhas Remaining Loyal

There are many reasons why the Gorkhas had not taken part in the rebellion and had remained loyal. Unlike the other regiments who were complaining about their pay being reduced the Gorkhas had actually seen a hike, as was mentioned earlier, when Charles Napier had raised the pay of the Gorkha battalions to that of regular units. The Nasiri battalion itself was converted to a regular regiment which meant an increase in status. Thus, the Gorkha soldiers had very little to complain about. Even with the pay of the irregular units, it was still more than what they could get in the Gorkha army, where most of the times they were not even paid.[444]

The Gorkhas had left their villages in Nepal with their families. The families of the Gorkha soldiers were now settled in Dehra Dun in the camps that British had set up for them. Thus, to betray the British would have also meant endangering their families. In any case, if they had rebelled the Gorkha soldiers had no place to go. They could not go back to Nepal since the state would punish them for leaving in the first place. It must also be remembered here that the Gorkha state itself joined the British to defeat the rebels. Jung Bahadur Rana (1816-1877), the defacto ruler of the state, himself led the army and helped in the retaking of Lucknow.[445]

The Gorkhas were mostly Magar, Gurung and Khas. As per Hamilton's account all these tribes, with the exception of the Khas, ate both beef and pork.[446] Though a process of sanskritization was going on in the Gorkha state at that time with special emphasis on the ban on the consumption of beef, there is very little evidence to

[443] Ibid, p 95

[444] John Whelpton, op-cit, p 34

[445] Ludwig F Stiller, op-cit, p 49

[446] Francis Buchanan Hamilton, op-cit, p 54

suggest that the process had impacted the people. In any case, these soldiers were no longer in Nepal, so it is very unlikely that they were impacted by the process. Thus the immediate cause of the rebellion, the greased cartridges was also not a factor for the Gorkhas.

The Impact of the 1857 Uprising

The mutiny had many far reaching changes for the Indian subcontinent. It's impact on the Gorkhas too was profound. The British believed that only a few groups in India could be used as soldiers, which then formed the basis of the "martial race" theory. All the various racial groups were then divided into "martial" and "non-martial: groups. Interestingly, all the groups that had supported the British during the mutiny of 1857, were all categorised as martial races, such as the Gorkhas, Pathans, Punjabis, Sikhs etc. The regiments were now made mono-ethnic units and regiments itself were renamed after the ethnic groups unlike before when they were named after numbers and regions. The Gorkhas were now declared a "martial race" and a part of the very few groups from where the British would now recruit. Further, since the regiments were now monoethnic it would become even more imperative to define who a Gorkha was.[447]

The Gorkha battalions themselves saw a rise in status and pay. Sirmoor battalion was designated a 'rifles' regiment in 1858, in recognition of its efforts in the siege of Delhi.[448] 'Rifles' were long-barrelled firearms with spiralling grooves down the bore to make the bullet spin. They were rarer and were more expensive than the ordinary muskets, though they were slow to load because of the tight fitting bullet. They were therefore used by huntsmen, by frontiersmen in America and by the late 18th century they became popular in European battlefield. Thus, it was a weapon that was only given to a few elite soldiers and the designation of a rifle regiment was also only given to a few elite units, whose job was to skirmish, almost doing the job that modern day sniper units do. The Russians too used such units, using the term *Strelkovy,* to denote a Rifle units as opposed to *pekhota* who were ordinary units.[449] The interesting aspect here was the fact that a Native infantry, that too an irregular one, was given this title. This goes on to show how after the Gorkha had gained

[447] Ibid p 98

[448] Ibid p 98

[449] Ibid p 99

importance after 1857, in the colonial scheme of things. In 1863, they were given a truncheon which was six feet tall instead of a third colour, which now meant they were a regular regiment.

In 1861, the 66th regiment was re-designated as the 1st Goorkha regiment, the Nasiri and Kumoan battalion became the 3rd Goorkha regiment. The 'Extra Regiment' raised by Lieutenant MacIntyre was designated as 4th Goorkha regiment. The Hazara Goorkha Battalion was renamed as the the 5th Goorkha regiment, though it continued to be an irregular unit under the Punjab Irregular Force. The Sirmoor became the 2nd Goorkha Rifles.[450] Thus the mutiny of 1857 had a profound impact on the importance of the Gorkhas to the British.

The "Great Game" and the North West Frontier Province, 1878-1895

Though by the end of 1860, the Gorkha regiments were more or less well established, as was the colonial imagination of them, yet, what kept evolving was the idea of which groups formed the Gorkhas, or as many British writings of the period kept referring to as the "true Gorkhas". The "true Gorkhas", according to the British was composed only of four groups: Magar, Gurung, Khas and Thakuris, groups that had earlier provided the bulk of the military labour to the Gorkha state. The others groups of the state of Gorkha, such as the eastern tribes known as the Rais and Limbus, the lower castes such as the Kami, Damai and Sarki and the Brahmins who in the state of Gorkha were dominant were all referred to as inferior Gorkhas. The Kami who were blacksmiths, Damai who were tailors and musicians and Sarki, who were cobblers were also recruited, but not as fighting men, but to provide other services.

As mentioned before, after the 1857 uprising, the British state had now narrowed down on a few select groups to provide them with military labour. These groups designated as "martial races" now had an improportionate representation in the armed forces as compared to their actual proportion to the population of the subcontinent. A large section of these groups found ready employment with the armed forces. The colonial state even discouraged them from getting into any other profession. The number of Gorkha soldiers joining however was always less than what was desired by

[450] R.J. Marrion and D.S.V. Fosten, *The Traditional Book of the Gurkhas*, London, 1960, pp 8-22

the British, the primary reason for this was the fact that the Gorkha state was not directly under the control of the British unlike other regions such as the Punjab. The British could not control, despite all the negotiations with the rulers of the Gorkha, the inflow of the recruits from the region, especially of those groups that the British considered to be the true Gorkhas.

The Northwest and the Northeast frontiers were both important for the British interests in the subcontinent, though for different reasons. The Northeast frontiers had more economic aspects, whereas the western frontiers were mostly strategic. The series of events that took place on the two turbulent frontiers of the British empire in India towards the end of the 19th century, led to the next major development in the idea of the Gorkha that the British had.

In the Northeast frontier, the use of the Gorkhas to settle and secure the region was an ongoing process throughout the second half of the 19th century. Here unlike the western frontier, the Gorkhas were used to settle down and bring land under agriculture. Further, the Assam rifles a para military unit was also exclusively recruiting the Gorkhas. This section will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. Here we shall concentrate on the Northwest frontier

The importance of the Northwest frontier increased through the 19th century, as the "Great Game" intensified. Afghanistan was one of the theatres where the great game was most intensely played ever since the early 19th century. In 1878 the son of Mohammed Akbar Khan, Sher Ali (1825-1879) had become the new ruler of Afghanistan. However, the fact that he had been courting the Russians for a while made the British very uncomfortable.[451] In November 1878, using the pretext of the British envoy, Major Pierre Louis Cavagnari, being denied entry into Afghanistan, the British launched an invasion into the country which came to be known as the 2nd Anglo Afghan war. [452]

All the five Gorkha regiments were involved in the campaign, and were distributed amongst the five columns that led the invasion into Afghanistan. The 5th Goorkha regiment served under Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Roberts, who later on became

[451] Brian Robson, *The Road to Kabul: The Second Afghan War, 1878-1881,* Staplehurt, 2003, p 45

[452] Fremont Barnes, *The Anglo- Afghan Wars,* London, 2003, pp 43-48

the commander in chief of the Indian armed forces and who was the foremost proponent of the "martial race" theory.[453] The Gorkha regiments were involved in various important battles such as that of the Peiwar Kotal, Karez Mir, Chardeh valley, Takht-i-Shah and the final victory of Roberts over Ayub Khan at Khilat-i-Gilzai. In a war that had led to tremendous losses for the British, the comparative good performance of the Gorkha regiments was specifically mentioned. The treaty of Gandamak had brought large areas of the Tribal lands under the British, which led to incessant warfare between these tribes and the British. The Gorkhas in general and the 4th Goorkha regiment in particular was now based in Abbotabad on the border with the Afghan country. The Gorkhas, it was believed, were vital to the security of the Northwest frontier. In view of this, the High Command decided that the number of Gorkha soldiers that they presently had, was to be doubled, by raising second battalions for every Gorkha regiment. However, the main problem that they faced was the fact that the Kathmandu Darbar was very suspicious about the British state, especially after the invasion of Afghanistan.[454] They still tried and stalled any attempt by the British to recruit any of their subjects. Here one has to remember that the number of the Gorkhas in the British army had doubled since the pre mutiny period and this had only been possible because of the large scale migration that was taking place from Nepal. However, the groups that were moving into Northeast frontier in general were the eastern groups, known as the Rai and Limbu, not the groups that were defined as the "true Gorkhas" such as Magar, Gurungs and Khas.

In 1884-5, the army had managed to recruit only 657 Gorkhas, a mere 10% of what would be needed to create five new battalions. The political events that took place in Nepal were to help the British. Jang Bahadur Rana died in 1877 and his brother Ranodip Singh too was assassinated in November 1885, the new Prime Minister and *de facto* ruler Bir Shamsher Rana (1852-1901) needed British support to stay in power and he did not oppose his subjects joining the British army.[455] At this time many officers began to state that the eastern groups of Nepal could also form a very valuable recruiting material. Captain C.A. Mercer of the 4th Goorkha regiment argued,

[453] Brian Robson, op-cit, p 56

[454] Brevet Major, E.R Elles, RA, *Report on Nepal*, Calcutta ,1884 pp 44-45

[455] Purushottam Banskota, *The Gurkha Connection: A History of the Gurkha regiment in the British Indian Army*, Jaipur, 1994, p 76

> We may yet find that we have as good fighting material among the tribes of eastern Nepal, and should this prove to be the case, we shall have a large additional area upon which to draw for recruits.[456]

Towards the end of the 19th century Rais and the Limbus were also accepted as "true Gorkhas" and the 6th,7th and 8th Gurkha (spelling changed to "Gurkha" after the 2nd Anglo Afghan war) regiment were raised in the Northeast frontiers from the Rais and Limbus.[457]

Thus once the Rais and Limbus were also accepted as true Gorkhas, by September 1886, second battalions were raised for most of the 1st, 2nd and 4th Gurkha but not 3rd and 5th regiments. The 3rd Gurkha regiment also got a second battalion in 1887 and when Bir Shamsher Rana started allowing the British to send recruiting parties in 1888 the number of Gorkha serving in the British regiments further increased.[458]

As Nicholas Dirks writes, in the 19th century the British Empire, began to turn into an ethnographic state, as the administration began to feel that to rule India efficiently it needed to understand its people better. Large ethnographic ventures were carried out and ethnography replaced history as the colonial obsession.[459] In 1880, after the 2nd Anglo Afghan war Eden Vansittart, wrote the *Gurkha Manual*,[460] an ethnographic work, which in many ways created the grand narrative of the "Gorkha" and the way they began to be understood. The idea of the Martiality of the Gorkhas and reasons for them being efficient soldiers were clearly given in the work. Eden Vansittarts work also defined who and what constituted a Gorkha and what communities could be called such.

Conclusion and Looking Ahead

In conclusion, it seems that the idea of martial races was one that was developed to locate and establish a viable military labour market for the colonial powers in the 19th century. The groups that were identified as the martial races were picked according to

[456] Recruitment report of C.A Mercer, July August 1886, cited in Tony Gould, p 131.

[457] Purushottam Banskota, op-cit, p 77

[458] Ibid p 89

[459] Nicholas Dirks , op-cit, p 45

[460] Eden Vansittart, *GurkhManual, Notes Nepal*, Calcutta, 1896.

several reasons, one of the primary reason being loyalty in the 1857 uprising. The other conditions that seemed necessary such as minimal influence of Brahmanism, higher altitude, diet etc., were ideas that began to take root since the beginning of the 19th century among the British.

The idea of the Gorkha was not one that was created immediately as is believed by so many authors dealing with the Gorkha question, nor was the idea of which groups constituted the "Gorkhas" immediately established. It evolved due to a variety of reasons, political events and military necessities being the foremost reason. To begin with, the problems that the British had with regular native infantry soldiers of Bengal, which they attributed to them being far too Brahmanized was also a contributing factor. Throughout this period the fact that Gorkhas were not under the influence of the Brahmanical doctrines and were only nominal Hindus was stressed upon several times by the British officials. This, along with the various race theories that was going around during this period also contributed significantly to the reasons there was a growing demand for the greater use of them since the early half of the 19th century. Yet, it was only when the various political events such as the Burmese wars (1852-1853) . the Anglo-Sikh war (1838-1842), Anglo-Afghan wars (1839-1842 and 1878-1880)), the 1857 uprising and the crises that they created that steadily led to the use of the Gorkhas in larger numbers.

The rising importance of the Northwest and Northeast frontier provinces contributed significantly to the rising importance for the Gorkhas. Though their role in both areas were different form one another, in the northwest they were kept as army units to secure the region, however in the northeast their role was far deeper. The ethnographic obsession of the colonial state finally led to creating of a grand narrative of who the "Gorkha" was and what were their attributes by the end of the 19th century through several ethnographic works on the Gorkhas, such as that of Eton Vansittart.

Finally, how does this chapter contribute to the larger understanding of the Gorkhas being used in the Northeast frontier which the thesis seeks to answer? The answer to this is that the Gorkhas being settled in the Northeast was not a mere accident of history. They were used specifically by the British as instruments of colonialism in the region, which was primarily due to the British imagination of the "Gorkha". Yet having said this, it would be wrong to suggest that the British created this idea and

then settled them in the Northeast frontiers. Rather, the region itself had a hand in creating this idea of the "Gorkha". This aspect will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

Securing the Northeast Frontier

Changing Dynamics of Colonial Control in the Northeast and the Use of the Gorkhas as Military Labour

Introduction

To most Indians, the idea of the Northeast in the contemporary period is still only conveyed only by its presence on the map of modern India. The region is veiwed as an isolated chunk of Indian territory connected to the larger Indian landmass by a thin strip of land via the Siliguri Corridor, also referred to as the "Chicken's Neck" in popular jargon. Such an image of the area depicts it to be a fringe frontier of the Indian mainland, where the region is seen as being divorced from the rest of the country. Further, the political instability and various militant uprisings have created an image of the Northeast as being under a situation of turmoil and socio-political upheavals. In such an imagination, James C Scott's concept of the "Zomia" or rather the "shatter zone",[461] where the state is unable to penetrate and is characterized by a more egalitarian social structure, is perhaps the best definition of the Northeast.

The Northeastern region was never an isolated region, as it is wont to be imagined. The socio-political formations of the region were highly influenced by various political and social dynamics taking place in Nepal, Burma, Tibet and Bengal. . It has to be remembered that the idea of the Northeast as an isolated region, inhabited by barbaric and uncontrollable tribes was one that was created by the British.[462] This colonial concept of the Northeast as an isolated region was in itself a change from an earlier colonial perspective of the region, which was seen in terms of its trade routes to Burma and possible one to Chins. This change in perception of the Northeast represented a certain change in the international and regional, political and economic scenarios. The implications of this new colonial concept of the Northeast and their

[461] James C. Scott *The Art of Not being Governed: The Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. Yale University Press, 2014.pp 13-14

[462] [462]YengkhomJilagamba Singh *Savage encounters colonialism frontiers in the North-East,*Mphil dissertation submitted to JNU, 2005

attempts to bring this region under control were what led them to use the Gorkhas in the region. This chapter will try and understand the manner in which the Gorkhas were incorporated and filtered into these regions for the larger purpose of colonization and the settlement of the Northeast frontiers.

Changing Dynamics of Colonial Control.

The extensive use of the Gorkhas in the Northeast frontier as military labour, wage labour and as a part of the British settlement strategy cannot be viewed in isolation. It has to be understood in the context of the larger socio-economic and political factors that took place in the 18th – 19th centuries in the Indian subcontinent. Some of the key factors were, namely, the rise of the Gorkha state and its impact and its impact on peasant migration from the the Gorkha migration the evolution of the "marital race" theory as a recruiting policy for the British army and, the changing nature of the British spatial understanding of the Northeast frontier. These factors had the consequence of bringing about changes in the demographics, political and economic relations and interests in the region. The socio-political events that took place in the latter half of the 19th century in the central Himalayan region and what comprises the modern nation state of Nepal today as well as the evolution of the idea of the "martial" Gorkhas in the colonial imagination has already been discussed in the previous two chapters. This chapter hence shall focus on the manner in which the colonial control of the Northeast frontier itself evolved from the latter half of the 18th century to the 19th century when territoriality as a form of power began to take root in the colonial perspective of the region, resulting in the need for a greater number of military labour to keep control over it and the manner in which the Gorkhas increasingly filled in this demand.

The nature of political and economic control and interests of the British in the Northeast frontier, as well as their spatial imagination of the region did not remain static throughout the colonial period. It changed from the late 18th century to the 19th century due to a variety of reasons. One such factor was the nature of administrative organization and economic exploitation that the colonial power was engaged in, an aspect that is best described by Bipan Chandra as 'the stages of colonialism.'[463] The

[463]Bipan Chandra, *The Stages of Colonialism* in Essays on Colonialism, Orient Longman, 2005, New Delhi, pp 34-36

other factor was, the nature of threat perceived especially from the Burmese and finally, the nature of economic exploitations of the region depending on which commodities were produced and exported from the region.[464] Subjected to these various considerations, the colonial power either needed to expand their area of control or remain confined to the control of a few strategic areas, such as market towns, ghats, river- routes and mines.[465] When the control of strategic areas was all that the colonial power strived for, the need for military labour as well as economic labour was limited. This is not to say that such a need did not exist. However, the numbers required could always be filled from existing sources. By the end of the Burmese war in 1826, to a certain extent, and even during the war ,one notices that the number of soldiers required to fight and to control the new areas that were under the control of the East India Company (EIC) in the frontier dramatically increased. It is during this period that the first proposal of using the Gorkhas as military labour in the region was made.[466] As the political and economic control of the colonial power expanded beyond the hills, towns, markets and rivers and into a larger territorial region, the number of Gorkhas used as military labour continued to increase. In the sections that follow below, the manner in which the political and military control and networks of the East India Company (EIC) evolved and how that created conditions in which the Gorkhas came to be used will be discussed.

The First Phase of Colonial Control in the Northeast Frontier: Monopoly of Trade and Indirect control.

The entry of the British in the Northeast frontier, or rather the creation of a "frontier"[467] itself began with the Diwani grant of 1765 to the East India Company by the Mughal emperor Shah Alam II.[468] The Mughal administrative town of Sylhet in Northeast Bengal also came under the control of the EIC during this period.[469] Though there may be a tendency to view the region beyond the Sylhet as an

[464] Gunnel Cederlof, *Founding an Empire on India's Northeastern Frontier 1790-1840,* Oxford University Press, 2014, pp 1-4

[465] Ibid pp 5-10

[466] Ibid pp 68-70

[467] Since even the concept of the frontier itself is a relative term, depending on the perspective in which a region is viewed

[468] Gunnel Cederlof, op-cit , p 1

[469] Ibid pp 2-5

unchartered and wild territory, and the town as the final frontier between the dominions of the Mughals and the Nawabs of Bengal and the wild hills, this may not be entirely accurate, historically. The Mughals and officials of the Nawabs had claimed control of the limestone mines in the Khasi hills and even claimed the monopoly over its trade. Lands around the town were also given to various Zamindars in hope of reclaiming the land. However, there was always a constant struggle with the weather conditions and agriculture remained difficult as a result.[470]

For centuries, before the advent of colonial power in the region, foreign merchants such as the Armenians, Afghans, Shans and Europeans had been drawn into Northeast Bengal, Assam and the surrounding mountainous regions. They traded with the Bengalis, Khasis, Cacharis, Manipuris and others. Trade was mostly in iron ore, limestone, gold, elephant tusks, pepper, lacquer, hardwoods, cotton etc. Trade routes entered eastern Bengal after crossing Yunnan, Burma, Manipur and Cachar.[471] Thus, as can be seen, the region was anything but isolated and a thriving regional, trading network already existed. It was in such a pre-existing economic network that the British entered the region and joined the economic and trade network.

The British during this period, from 1765 to about the beginning of the Burmese war in 1824, operated as an early modern mercantile corporation, an economic and political system that has been termed as the first stage of colonialism by Bipan Chandra.[472] Bipan Chandra explains that the main objectives of colonialism was the monopoly of trade and the direct appropriation of the trade and agricultural surplus through the use of political power. They acted in this period, not as industrial capitalists but as merchant usurpers. The employees themselves appropriated a large part of the surplus by extortion, corruption and high salaries.[473] Politically, apart from the new source of power that was the EIC, they did not interfere in the administrative set up, judicial system, transport and communication and methods of agricultural and

[470] Ibid pp 5-10

[471] Ibid p 11-15

[472]Bipan Chandra, op-cit, pp 34-36

[473] Ibid pp 35-36

industrial output.[474] The British role in the Northeast frontier during the latter half of the 18thcentury followed this pattern almost to a letter.

The British did not alter the revenue system of the region and tried to continue the system that was prevalent earlier. In the pre-colonial period, the Nawabs had given an extensive area as tax free to many Muslim landholders in the hope that the forests could be reclaimed and brought under cultivation.[475] The British officials had a hard time countering the claims of revenue free lands by these zamindars and also mediating the conflict between the zamindars and the ethnic groups of the region, such as the Khasis. The Collectors and other officials who were posted in Sylhet were however more interested in the private trade rather than securing a steady form of land revenue for the government.[476] These are aspects of colonial governance that stands in accordance with Bipan Chandra's concept of the first stage of colonialism.[477]

The report of the surveyor General James Rendell in the1760's very clearly brings out the aims and objectives of the EIC in the region. He writes that,

> Naturally the most convenient for trade within itself of any country in the world… for its rivers divide into just a number of branches (doesn't make sense) that people have the water carriage to and from every principal[478]

Further, Rennell observed that the distance from Sylhet to Calcutta was the same as the distance between the frontier town to the Chinese border. The aspiration that the Northeast frontier was the gateway to the Chinese markets was one that excited many of the British officials in the early days of the British presence in the region.[479] As a matter of fact, even as late as the late 19th century, the possibility of a trade route to the China was still being considered. The region was viewed as a boundless, virgin territory and with skillful reorganization it could be a breeding ground for

[474] Gunnel Cederlof, op-cit,pp 6-8
[475] Ibid pp 4-7
[476] Ibid p 5
[477]Bipan Chandra, op-cit, pp 34-36
[478] James Rennell, *A Bengal Atlas: Containing Maps of the War and Commerce on That side of Hindoostan. London The Honourable Court of Directors for the Affairs of the East India Company,* in GennelCederlof, op-cit. p 22
[479] Ibid p 11

entrepreneurship and commerce. Though the water ways was seen as an essential means of communication, it was also seen as an impediment to governance and to military operations.[480]

The company officials of the early period were more of merchants than proper administrators and they engaged in massive private trade often against the interest of the colonial government. The example of Robert Lindsay, the first resident collector of Sylhet is a case in point; he monopolized the purchase and sale of cowries in the region. Cowries or small shells were used as coins around the Indian Ocean, South East Asia and Africa. In Sylhet, cowrie was the only medium of exchange in the late 18thcentury.[481] Coins of gold and silver were only used for ritual purposes and copper rupee was only minted in the hills for use in the southern parts of the Northeast frontier. Lindsay's monopoly of the cowrie trade gave him the leverage to arm-twist the Armenians, Greek, "Low" Europeans to gain control of the limestone trade.[482]He made sure the limestone and other commodities brought by the hill tribes were all ferried in his own ships and was marketed by his own agents. The government in Calcutta was not happy with the sole monopoly taken by Lindsay and Hence they tried, and succeeded, in breaking the monopoly of Lindsay, though the trade was more or less in the lands of the EIC or its merchant officials.[483] Robert Lindsay was not the only collector to make massive profit in the region by using his position in the administration. John Mills, the second collector traded in elephant tusks. Henry Lodge, the sixth collector tried to establish a regional monopoly in tusks, wax cane and bamboos by blockading the route between Sylhet and Cachar. [484]

Most of the states beyond the British frontier such as Manipur, Cachar, Tripura, and tribes such as Khasi, Garos etc were part of a large regional economic network that engaged in trade. Manipur fell on one of the major trade routes to Burma, from where salt, silk, wax, ivory, cotton and ponies were brought. The Garos traded in cotton, salt, artworks, iron, brass and precious metals. The Khasis specialized in iron mining and smelting and produced tools to be sold at the markets along with gold,

[480] Ibid 13-14
[481] Gunnel Cederlof, op-cit, p 45
[482] Ibid p 45
[483] Ibid p 46-47
[484] Ibid p 46

silver, copper and various other ornaments. As a matter of fact from all over the hills surrounding the Assam valley, various crops and forest produce such as areca nuts, betel vines, turmeric, honey, wax, gum, ivory, medicinal plants, fruits etc., were brought to the lowland markets.[485] An extensive economic unit with established economic and social relations was already in place even before the British came to the region. The British, in the initial period simply joined this economic system without disrupting it. They participated in the existing trade network without bringing in new labour or new forms of control since a trade system with existing forms of labour and other economic roles already existed. The main conflict in this region of trade was the control of these networks of trade. Thus, in the pre-colonial period, the Rajas and tribes often clashed over the ghats, which were the guarded access to trade routes, market places, areas of ritual significance and, importantly, for the control of rivers.[486]

The EIC came to this existing geo politics of the region where the control of routes were more important than the guarding of boundaries. In the 18th century, the EIC in the Northeast frontier aimed to control strongholds for the benefits of military, fiscal and commercial interests. The manner in which the cartography was done in the period is also reflective of the interest and priorities of the British as well as their spatial understanding of the region. The maps of the period are more like lines drawn across a plain paper. The spaces or blanks are not important and the only thing that is important is the knowledge of the routes. The various surveys that were sent out during this period were carried on to look for alternative routes and also to ascertain the number of soldiers who would pass through it.[487]

The several wars that the British fought in the Northeast frontier during this period, such as the war with Jaintiyas in 1770, Khasi in 1789, or the conflict with Tripura was a result of the attempt to control key points in the trading network. The war with Khasis in 1789 was more or less due to the conflict arising out of the need to control the market town of Pandua, located at the base of the hills and on the route that led

[485] Ibid p 48

[486] Ibid p 47

[487] Ibid pp 47-48

from the Khasi hills to the Surma river, from where the limestone and other commodities were sent downstream. Robert Lindsay attacked the Khasi villages and burned them. One very important change that the British brought about in this war for the Khasis was the end of the old age of free movement, they were now dependent on the British and they were not allowed in the town of Sylhet.[488] The private European traders were not allowed in the hills and hence the British managed to secure their monopoly here as well. The war with Jaintiya in 1770 was because of the fact that the Jaintiya raja controlled the river Surma and collected taxes. The free passage was vital for the limestone trade. William Thackeray, collector of Sylhet attacked Jaintiya and secured the river. The EIC and Tripura clashed over Ghats that controlled trade and communication between the hills and plains. Here too, the British were able to slowly establish their domination. Cachar another state on the frontier was at the crossroads of important trades and hence after the war in 1820, Cachar too was brought under their control. [489]

The EIC's expansion in the region was based on aggressive commerce, though the networks and the system of the regional trade did not change they used their military force to replace the other interested trading parties in the region and become the largest appropriator of the profits. They were however faced with armed confrontation at every point whereby the other players in the region were vehemently opposed to them.[490] Yet, in what comes out of the description given above of the EIC's role and strategic interests in the region is that the main attempt was to gain control of specific spots of the trading network which would then allow them to monopolise trade in the region, their main focus however was not to control territory as such.

Gunnel Cederlof has put it very aptly when she compared the British method of political and economic control of the Northeast with that of a spider controlling its web.[491] As the spider controls the entire web by controlling the centre where the threads cross the redials, the British managed its control by controlling the strategic points in the riverine system such as the key Ghats, markets, mines and rivers. The

[488] Ibid p 50
[489] Ibid pp 60--70
[490] Ibid pp 107-108
[491] Ibid p 120

important aspect that comes out of such a control is the fact that the number of military labour and economic labour was limited. Control, as mentioned above, was limited to certain strategic points on the map not as it later becomes in the 19th century over the entire terrain. Thus even with a limited military presence the British were able to secure their interests in the region. It is interesting to note that the number of soldiers required for the Khasi campaign was only 180 men[492] as compared to over 1000 men later used in the several Naga campaigns.[493] Economic labour was also limited since the British simply appropriated the existing networks and relations, which had already been established. Thus mines were operated by the Khasis and Bengalis though the trade was increasingly controlled by the British. The labour was often provided by the sub-contractors, such as the Khasis or the Garos or others, the British never really needed massive amount of labour anywhere. Though even with this limited amount of men that they required, there always seemed to be a shortage and they continuously faced a lack of soldiers and men, though the numbers needed was never very great.[494]

The various labour relations and trade systems, be they the labour needed to mine, people who would provide the goods, the boats owners and other services, the various middle men, were already in place since the system itself had existed for over past 200 years Northeast frontiers. The British joined the existing system and became the major appropriator of the profit through political and military intervention they never damaged it, at least not until the early decades of the 19th century.[495]

The Second Phase of Colonial Control of the Northeast frontier: Territoriality, Investment Capital, Tea Plantations, Coal Mines and Direct Control

The major blow to this trading network came in the early decades of the 19th century when the Burmese invaded the region. The Burmese invasion was nothing new: they had claimed suzerainty over the region and most of the states there such as Tripura, Cachar, Manipur and Ahom state in Assam. The Burmese had never shied away from using military force to establish that claim, especially during the latter half of the 18th

[492] Ibid p 65

[493]Lipokmar Dzuvichu, *Opening up of the hills?The politics of access along the Northeastern frontier of British India. 1866-1942,*Phd Thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru university, 2010 ,p 45

[494] Gunnel Cederlof op-cit, p 60

[495] Ibid p 67

century. At the wake of every invasion the Burmese often left behind a depopulated state and a damaged economy, though the trading networks somehow continued.[496]

The war between the British and the Burmese in 1824-26 was a confrontation between two expanding empires both of which viewed the region as a part of their political and economic interests. When the Burmese began their aggression into the region in the 1820's, the British could no longer afford to ignore it.[497] Neither just for the fact that they had large economic interests in the region, which were quite substantial, nor for the fact that they had political interests in the region. But the most important concern for the British during this period was that their position in Bengal was threatened. The British responded to the Burmese aggression by going on an all-out war against them. [498] Unlike earlier when the British were content with only fighting for certain strategic points and indulging in limited aggression, this war for the first time required the British to spread over a large territory since they had to deal with a relatively large Burmese army fighting on an extended front. The British and the Burmese had another threat to contend with; a threat that claimed far more lives than each other's weapons, that of the terrain and the climate and other local conditions. The war was bloody and long and both suffered casualties. The British also began to realise that their armies who were used to fighting in open fields where their artilleries could dominate and drilled infantries could form long formations struggled in the thickly forested and swampy terrain. During the Anglo-Gorkha War of 1816, ten years before the Burmese conflict, the British had faced similar difficulties, until they had resorted to recruiting soldiers of the Gorkha army during that war.[499] It was perhaps because of this that a proposal of using Gorkhas in the region was made during this period.

In 1825, the proposal that the Gorkhas could possibly make for a viable recruiting source was made, when the Chief Secretary in Calcutta told the Adjutant General that the Governor General in Council, Lord Amherst was

> …fully impressed with the advantage which would arise to the service from increasing the number and strength of the Goorkha battalions

[496] Ibid p 34
[497] Ibid p 56
[498] Ibid p 56
[499] Chris Bellamy, *Gurkhas Special force*, john Murray, London 2011, pp 45-48

> provided they be employed in the defence of our Eastern Frontier or generally in the plains and if necessary on foreign service" .[500]

However Bengal's Commander in Chief Lieutenant General Edward Paget was not convinced that the Gorkhas could be employed in unhealthy Assam. Hence the proposal never actually materialized into actual policy.[501]

The war ended with the EIC victorious and the signing of the Yandaboo treaty. The treaty allowed the British to control large territorial areas in the region, Jaintia, Cachar and parts of Assam. The Burmese conflict also had another impact; the loss of life and monetary expenses caused a review of the EIC's policies in India by the Crown in Britain. As a result, a limitation to their activities was set by the Crown. It was clear that the early method of administration by merchant officials was not possible anymore, especially as large territories had to be governed. Officers and surveyors were made superintendents and commissioners, who tried to establish bureaucratic control in the region. The company expanded on all fronts and new administrative initiatives began to gel into the policies of the larger geo administrative regions. [502] It now gave way to consolidated policies of the EIC where territory as a form of power also known as territoriality as an idea began to take root.

The diary of Captain Francis Jenkins, a company official on his way from Dacca to Surma valley, demonstrates some of the changes in the British spatial understanding of the region. His writings also reflect some of the anxieties, misconceptions and premature solutions that the officials of the period harboured. He wrote that the people looked poor and miserable, impoverished and an "unenergetic" race.[503] The last point was important because it showed the manner in which the local populace was viewed by the British. To control the region, the new forms of spatial control would require a larger force and a good supply of all forms of labour, be it agriculture and military, but the labour could not be provided by a race which was considered to be "unenergetic" and this forms the basis of the migration and settlement of groups from outside the region who were brought in during this period.

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[500] Foreign Secret Consultation, 14 January 1825, no 22-23

[501] Chris Bellamy, op-cit, p 28

[502] Gunnel Cederlof, op-cit, p 57

[503] Ibid pp 34-35

Officers with botanical, geological and commercial experience surveyed the region. By 1838, a comprehensive cartographic image of the "Northeast" was created and it replaced the old route based maps. This change in the cartographic image of the region was also indicative of change in the manner in which the British began to view the region or rather in the manner in which British viewed "space" in the region. They no longer saw the routes as the most important strategic, economic and political aspect of the region. The white spaces of the earlier maps, where only black lines denoting routes had existed, were now getting filled up.[504] The territories rather than routes were now important. This new shift in the perspective would require the British to change the manner in which they would control the region. The political and military strategies that they used would have to be altered for they were no longer spiders controlling a web; rather, they had become wolves guarding their territories.

The shift in economic and geo-strategic priorities of the British in the region, however, did not mean that they had abandoned the regional trade. Limestone and such trade routes continued to dominate economic activities though the Bengal judicial department began to investigate the manner in which the trade was being conducted so as to break monopolies and bring about "free trade" in the region. Limestone quarrying had major problems - water filled up in the mines during winters, fire wood that was needed for the mining process was not available and quicklime damaged the boats.[505] The other problem of this trade was that some of the tribes who had participated in the trade had been forced to leave the region and head into the Naga Hills during the Anglo-Burmese war. The Nagas were definitely displeased about this situation and had begun to react violently to the new migrations by imposing taxes on them and attacking the plains. The conflict between the tribes began to increase and the trade suffered as a result. The various British attempts to revitalize it were unsuccessful.[506] Thus in the 1820's there was both reluctance and expectation in reports from the Northeast Frontiers, east of Sylhet. While there were many who believed that even though the regional trade had suffered, the land was still capable of giving enough remuneration since the region was highly fertile. Many others expressed doubts about the impact of water, the unpredictability of nature and

[504] Ibid p 105
[505] Ibid p 110
[506] Ibid p 125

the general unwillingness to shift from primitive livelihoods to entrepreneurial activities.[507] This last point was important, since, if trade was no longer the dominant economic concern and land was to be used and territory was becoming important, then the British would require several forms of labour to control and gain economic benefits from it. Yet, the labour they needed, the primitive tribes of the region, in their opinion, were not capable of providing.

The "Discovery" of Tea, Coal Mines and Petroleum Wells and the Changing British Spatial Understanding of the Region

By the charter act of 1833, the EIC was divested of most of its commercial functions and of its monopoly of the China trade and, with it, the exceptionally profitable tea trade over which it had a firm monopoly, was over.[508] The company's dominions in India were made a part of the British governance under the authority of the Board of control where a member of the Cabinet and Privy Council also held a membership.[509] This meant that the EIC had to look for other lucrative forms of revenue and it was in this background that the surveyors were sent up the Irrawaddy in search for tea growing areas.

Tea was discovered in the region and that was when the next phase of the changing spatial concept of the Northeast in the British perspective took place. The discovery of tea is said to have transformed the Northeast frontier from an "isolated periphery" to a "strategic space" It also marked the integration of the region into an expanding global capitalist system. While using the term "Isolated periphery",[510] as Dzuvichu does, one has to be careful that an impression is not created of a region that was completely devoid of colonial economic interest in the earlier period. As we have seen in the sections above, a thriving regional trade existed. Yet none of the goods that were traded in and from the region had any impact on the larger global economy. Tea was going to change all that. The discovery of tea in the region meant that a commodity produced in the region was in demand in the global economy and hence the importance of the region was going to increase manifolds.

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[507] Ibid p 125

[508] Ibid p 128

[509] Ibid p 129

[510] LipokmarDzuvichu, *Roads and rule, colonialism and politics of access in the Naga hills*, M.Phil dissertation submitted to JNU, 2005, pp 3-4

There were several attempts at growing tea plants in most of the colonies, especially since the company's main source of profit, its sole monopoly of the tea trade with China was now no longer there. In 1832, Dr N.Wallich, the imperial botanist in Bengal, reported failed attempts at cultivating tea in Penang, Java, St Helena, Brazil and many other places. There were attempts at cultivating tea in India but most failed. It was in such a scenario that stories about discovery of wild tea began to come in from India's Northeast frontier.[511] The business and political class in Calcutta were rightly enthralled by various stories of how wild bushes of tea were found growing in the region. Their excitement has to be seen in the context that tea, as mentioned before was the main source of income for the EIC. The revenue generated by tea during the period 1823-1830 for the company was 30 million British Sterling Pounds. On 24th December 1834, the Tea committee announced that a discovery had been made and that it was [512]

> The most important and valuable…on matters connected with agriculturalist or commercial resources of this empire…[513]

Soon, many more confirmed reports of tea started to come in such as by Major Robert Bruce's finding of 1823.[514] E.R Grange, the Assistant Commissioner of Nowgong who in the Naga Hills also confirmed finding tea plants with the diameter of 15-50 feet high and later in 1845, Major Browne-Woode, Sub-assistant Commissioner of Nowgong, mentioned finding tea plants of 20 feet high and 4 to 5 inches thick in diameter. Until this discovery it was believed that China was the only native place of tea in the world.[515]

In 1836, the process of producing tea in the region began with the help of Chinese specialists and in two years, in 1838 the tea from the region was sent to London and experts gave it a "cautiously positive" verdict.[516]

There were now attempts by many to prove that tea, *Camella Sinesis*, was an indigenous plant of the Northeast frontier. English entrepreneurs now set out to prove

[511] Ibid p 10
[512] Ibid 11
[513] Ibid p 12
[514] Ibid p 11
[515] Ibid p 13
[516] Ibid p 14-15

that India was the original birthplace of tea, which was important considering how they needed to sell Indian tea instead of Chinese tea. By 1839, the Assam Tea Company was founded and its investigative team claimed to have conclusively proved that "the genuine plant of China" was indeed indigenous to Assam.[517] Throughout the next few years there were several narratives such as that of William Robinson, who claimed that tea was a well-known beverage of several tribes in the region such as Singphos. By the mid 1840's it was quite fairly established that tea was an indigenous plant and further exploration to the unknown regions in the frontier was made so that more could be known about the plant in the region.[518]

Yet, it was not just tea. In 1836, W Griffith, Assistant Surgeon of the Madras Establishment, on a journey from upper Assam to Ava came across several "petroleum wells" in the vicinity of the Naga Hills. Two years later, in 1838, Captain H. Vetch, the political Agent of upper Assam claimed to have discovered coal beds all along the northern banks of Brahmaputra.[519] In 1841, extensive coal bearing tract extending from Singpho hills, Naga hills, Cachar hills, Jaintia hills and springs of wells of petroleum were found in the vicinity of the earlier coal fields.[520] These discoveries of petroleum wells and coal beds were equally important as the discovery of tea, especially since the industrial revolution in England and the introduction of railways in India, coal had become a very vital commodity in the new era. The fact that three commodities, tea, coal and petroleum, all of which had a global market had been found in the region, only accelerated the colonial enterprise of securing and regulating the territories and the sites of further resources. The process of territoriality that had begun with the Anglo-Burmese war was now accelerated due to the existence of these commodities.

The earlier hope of establishing a route to southern China and Burmese market was revived again. In 1846, the company officials argued for an open policy for the development of routes to China. Further, it was also hoped that a triangular highway could be made that could connect Assam, Burma and China. Many British officials expected that tea cultivation was to be set up stretching from Assam plains to Manipur

[517] Ibid p 13
[518] Ibid p 15
[519] Ibid p 23
[520] Ibid p 23

in the south to the east of the Patkoi range and the borders of Burma and China. Then the highways would take their commodities to the two markets.[521]

As Jayeeta Sharma writes, tea before becoming a global commodity for the industrialised world was cultivated by peasant families in their limited lands. They were usually assisted by a specialist. Wealthy peasants usually hired help of skilled artisans to process the final harvest. More substantial peasants rented land and managed the process with skilled and semi skilled labour.[522] This was completely different from the manner in which the British cultivated and produced tea. The British endeavours included massive plantations which was almost an industrial process. For this, jungles had to be cleared so as to allow "free circulation of air and the cleared soil could be well ventilated and treated with wind and rain. Thus cultivating the area literally meant the control of vast territories and the subjugation of wild nature. [523]If the Burmese war started a process where spatial understanding changed and territoriality as a form of power began to be accepted, the establishment of tea gardens completely confirmed it.

Violence as a Method of Colonial Control

Yengkhom Jilagamba Singh has written about the violence that was used by the colonial state as a method of control especially in the frontiers. Such violence, he writes, is always most manifested when it is confronted with "wild" and "warlike" people, who were outside the ambit of civilization.[524] This form of control was a constant feature of the colonial rule in the Northeast frontier in the 19th century. Use of violence as a method of control was not new in the Northeast frontier; the British had used it to become the dominant economic power in the region by the end of the

[521] Ibid p 24

[522]Jayeeta Sharma *Lazy Natives, Coolie Labour and the Assam Tea industry*. Modern Asian Studies 43/6, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp 1289-1290

[523]LipokmarDzuvichu Roads and rule…, op-cit, p 20

[524] YengkhomJilagamba Singh *Savage encounters colonialism frontiers in the Northeast,*Mphil dissertation submitted to JNU, 2005, p 20

18th century.[525] The examples of the Khasi expedition of Robert Lindsay and the Pandua war can be cited to validate this point. The EIC had used threat of violence to keep the Khasis in check even after the war. However in the mid-19th century, once territoriality became important with the establishment of the tea estates in the region as well as the coal mines, the colonial use of violence became even more organised and larger in magnitude than the earlier period.[526] Colonial state violence in the 19th century was justified by citing the example of tribal raids in response to which the violence had to be used.

Once the vast capital was invested in the tea gardens and coal mines in the region, especially with the foundation of the Assam Company with a capital of 500,000 pounds, the stakes were high. The investment had to be protected from the raids that the tribes were conducting. It was believed that the tribes were violent by nature since they were "savages" and hence violence was the only way the state could respond. It was not just the fact that the lower lands where the plantations and mines were located had to be protected from raids. By 1831 there was a need to open up communications with Manipur and the hills themselves had to be controlled for which the British got intp more conflicts with the tribes in the hills. From 1840 there were almost annual military expeditions in the hills so that the British could secure the region and in 1846 a permanent base was built in the hills.[527] As a matter of fact even though Jilagamba divides the period between periods of absolute non-interference and a period where the hills were absorbed, colonial violence never stopped, only the method on the ground changed.[528]

The use of violence as a mode of control has to be understood as per the two colonial ideas of the frontier as a "vulnerable" and troublesome" and the perception of the people of the region as "savages" who were predisposed to violence. Thus the only way to control the region and people was to impress on the "warlike" people of the "wild" frontier the symbols of superiority of the British power through a show of

[525] Ibid p 21

[526] Gunnel Cederlof, op-cit, p 35

[527] Lipokmar, *Roads and Rule*…p 22

[528] Yengkhom Jilagamba Singh, op-cit, p 23

strength, since the British believed that the "savages" were too ignorant to understand the power of the British in any other manner.[529]

Though the colonial justification was often argued on the lines that they were responses to raids conducted by the tribes, as Jilagamba has shown, most of these expeditions were a pre-emptive strike to discourage the tribes from attacking them in the first place. Thus most were just predatory raids to burn villages in hope that they could weaken them. As the two colonial officials of the period, H. Luttman-Johnson and C.U Aitchison had written.

> The savages upon this part of the frontier have been taught, almost for the first time, that outrages and murder can be amply and speedily avenged. The idea that, when injured, we content ourselves with writing dispatches, that we are only fit for riding horses and elephants, and cannot penetrate their hills, is exploded.[530]

This show of strength was often shown through an expedition into the hills and territories considered to be hostile. As Jilagamba argues, in the Northeast frontier, hegemony was over-shadowed by coercion as a tool of power, spectacle occupies a central stage. Thus the expedition was not just merely a military one, in so much as that it was not just meant to occupy a certain location or to deal with a threat it was also to display the might of the colonial power and to ingrain the experience in the minds of the savage populace.

> Thus the colonial rule in the Northeast frontier was based on the acceptance of the difference between the "savages" and the other more civilized natives. Since the primitives savages were outside the domain of the civilization "European conception" (some lines missing here), violence and other forms of coercion which would otherwise be considered barbaric elsewhere.[531]

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[529] Ibid, p 25

[530] Foreign Political, December 1875, no. 91, A, National Archives of India. Jilagamba writes "there was a constant allusion being made by the officials that the hill tribes thought the British to be incapable of entering their territory. Whether this is a fact hold true by the hill tribes will perhaps never be known, but what is interesting is how the British officials thought that they were being not respected for their courage, fearlessness and might." In Ibid p 32

[531] Ibid p 32

A question that arises here is what were the purpose of these raids, since such raids were not so much of a concern during the earlier period of colonial presence in the region. The 1828 Anglo-Burmese war had completely disrupted the regional trade that existed in the region and had caused widespread dislocation of the people from the region into the hills, where they thought they were safe.[532] The entry of new people caused more conflict with the local people who were already there. Large groups like the Angami imposed taxes on the new groups and often raided the lowlands below.[533] Progressively, through the 19th century, the British introduced new economic activity and began to control the region in a controlled manner. Through what Lipokmar Dzuvichu calls the "control of traditional routes or the anti-route",[534] the British completely destroyed the earlier regional trading network leaving the tribes very little in way of economic activity. As the tea estates were established in the plains and the hills were also considered to be potential sites of tea growing, the colonial powers continued to push forward inside the hills the conflicts continued to rise. Thus, in many ways the British themselves created conditions in which the raids began to take place. As the case maybe, it was quite obvious that the colonial state used violence to protect their economic interests in the region, as well as to maintain political dominance.

The rise of local Infantry Units and the Question of Military Labour

Many authors such as Jilagamba and Dzuvichu have stressed on the use of violence by the colonial power to control the region in the Northeast increasingly through the 19th century. However, a very important fact that perhaps does not get questioned as much is, how did the colonial power exert this violence? The years following the Anglo-Burmese war, the British seem to have struggled to come to terms with the suddenly increased demands of controlling large territories. A realization seems to have set in that they needed more and more troops to maintain this form of control which relied so heavily on violence. Yet, throughout the 19th century the British were involved in several campaigns elsewhere in the sub-continent, be it the two Anglo-Afghan wars, Anglo-Sikh war, the various sepoy mutinies finally culminating in the uprising of 1857, the great game with Russia in the North Western frontier, and

[532] Gunnel Cederlof, op-cit, p 65

[533] Ibid p 67

[534] Lipokmar Dzuvichu, *Opening up the hills*…, p 45

others.[535] The colonial army was not an inexhaustible and a limitless resource. It too could not be stretched and had its limits. To exert the kind of violence and to control such a large territory in the face of a hostile local populace would require a relatively large force but the army could not afford to spare so many of their troops in the Northeast, not when there were wars and threats elsewhere.

The answer to this problem seemed relatively simple, which was to increase the number of troops in the existing local units or raise completely new units. In the earlier period, local corps had existed, who were used for the defense and police duties of the region. They usually had few English officers and generally recruited from the area where they were located. Before the Anglo-Burmese war there was 16 such corps in the region and another category called the provincial battalions also existed. The corps were small and with very little of the discipline and the training that a soldier of regular infantry units had or even that of irregular units.[536] As mentioned before the First Anglo Burmese war was the first time that the British had to take part in a protracted campaign in the region. It was during this period that the Cuttack infantry, formed in 1817 by Captain Simon Fraser, was brought to Rangpur in the frontier. It was amalgamated with the Sylhet Provincial Battalion and renamed as Rangpur light infantry and it took part in the Burmese campaign. After the war it was asked to stay behind, [537] though it was still not decided whether it was to be stationed here permanently or not. The Sylhet Light Infantry was also formed around the same time and was also involved in the Burmese campaign. The Sylhet light Infantry began to be increasingly manned by the local tribes from the region whom the colonial government relied on for gaining their military labour - groups such as the Manipuris and Singhpos,[538] groups that the British were decently familiar with. Rangpur lLght Infantry was still made up by the traditional military labour of India, the men from Orissa, Bihar and Bengal, who were also known as Hindustanis since it was a force that was still not permanently meant for the region. The rest of the local corps were

[535] Chris Bellamy, op-cit, pp 34-45

[536] F.G Cardew, *A Stetch of the Services of the Bengal Native Infantry,* Calcutta, 1903, p.139

[537]Foreign Political Consultation National Archives of India, New Delhi, 9 April 1822. No 56

[538] Military Consultations, National Archives of India, 19 February Nos. 28/38, General Orders No. 64, 19 February 1824

assimilated or converted into Light Infantries, which had more training and better weapons.[539]

The problem with the Hindustani serving in the Rangpur Light Infantry was that they were not very keen on settling in Assam and the hills surrounding it. These soldiers often sought discharge early in their careers and a perpetual problem of finding new recruit who could replace the old ones remained.[540] The British realised that they needed men either from the local tribes and groups who would agree to serve for a protracted period of time. Thus they began to recruit a large number of Manipuris, Jharuas of lower Assam, Rabhas, Kacharis, and Hajongs etc.[541]

Yet the local groups were not considered to be adequate enough to serve the British, as can be seen in the statement made by David Scott to the Bengal's Chief Secretary George Swinton

> Assamese and Cachares are unfortunately too timid and effeminate a character that the defense of those countries however necessary for the security of our own territory must be provided for in great measure by extraneous means…the Nagas, the Singphos, the Khamtis and other tribes are too little advanced in the arts of civilization and of government to be able to make any effectual resistance to the numerous armies of the Burmese.[542]

The above statement by David Scott explains how they were forced to depend on the local military labour and the kind of dilemma the British were in as far as Military Labour market in the Northeast was concerned and the reasons why they had to looks for recruits from outside.

The Gorkhas as Potential Military Labour

Though the idea of using the Gorkhas as military labour was mooted during the war, their actual use only started in 1828. Since the British were facing threats elsewhere, such as the threat in the North West frontier it was decided that the regular regiments of the army would be withdrawn from the region. Yet, as was discussed before, the

[539] Foreign Secret Consultations, 20 February 1824:No.28

[540] Military Consultations, 1824:No.28

[541] Military Concultations 13 September 1828:Nos 21-22.

[542] Foreign Secret Consultations 26 November 1824: No. 11

British were now in control of larger territory than before and they needed military manpower to maintain that control. It was in this context that it was decided that the irregular local units such as the Rangpur Light Infantry be expanded by adding two additional battalions. As was mentioned in the paragraph above, unlike the other regiment, Rangpur Light Infantry still had to recruit men from outside the region.[543] Captain John Bryan Neufville, the Commanding Officer and Political Agent for Upper Assam, asked for Gorkhas to fill up the posts

> Proverbially brave, active and capable of enduring fatigue both in the hills and jungles and free from the prejudices which the Hindus of the Regular troops were invariably accustomed.[544]

David Scott, the Agent to the Governor General for the Northeast Frontier too supported Captain Neufville's idea to employ more Gorkhas. Consequently, two additional companies of Gorkhas were enlisted from the Champaran and Dinajpur battalion, for the Rangpur Light Infantry, who was now permanently based in Assam and whose name was now changed to Assam Light Infantry.[545] This was the beginning of the use of the Gorkhas in the various irregular and regular units in the Northeast frontier, which would only increase as the 19th century progressed.

The assassination of Raja Govind Chandra of Cachar in 1830, where the Manipuri ruler, Raja Gambhir Singh was suspected to be involved, led to a situation where the Manipuri soldiers in the Syllet Light Infantry lost the trust of the British officers.[546] The Commanding officer of the SLI, Captain Lister proposed replacing his Manipuri soldiers with 200 Gorkhas.[547] It should be remembered here that Gorkhas were already serving in the Assam Light Infantry. The Government agreed with Lister's proposal, who further stressed the need to introduce more Gorkhas at the expense of Manipuris in all battalions in the region.

In 1832, the Sylhet Light Infantry was in charge of Kachar and Khasi hills, where possible coal mines and tea plantations could come up. However, the British command soon realised that the battalion was too stretched and did not have the men

[543] Ibid

[544] Foreign Secret Consultations 10 November 1826: nos 21-22

[545] Foreign Secret Consultations 27 June 1828: No 119; 31 October 1828: Nos 1-2

[546] Military Consultations 14th October 1830: No 133

[547] Military Consultations 14th October 1830: No 133

and resources to conduct their duties adequately. Discussions were held in Fort William in Calcutta to increase the number of companies. This was then agreed and it was also agreed that the new recruits would be predominantly Gorkhas. The Governor General Lord Bentick, recorded a Minute in 1832:

> I confess, however. I am partial to what are called Local Corps, a partiality I account for partly from the favourable specimen which the hill or Goorkha Corps are, partly from their being cheap description of force and partly from their serving in their department as a counterpoise to the regulars, whilst too they garrison well the districts where they are placed, and they are available for service in the neighbouring province.[548]

Bentick thus raised two companies of Gorkhas for the Sylhet Light Infantry. They are "brave and energetic" he added and the "the most eligible to form the new companies and I would gladly see them composed exclusively of Goorkhas". The commissioned and non-commissioned ranks were drawn from the Nasiri and Sirmoor Battalions.[549]After the annexation of Cachar in 1832 and the subjugation of the Khasi hills uprising in 1834, the number of the Gurkhas recruited to these battalions began to increase further. [550]

The Manipuris continued to lose the confidence of the British who now developed a very low opinion of the military capabilities of the Manipuri soldier. The officers of the Sylhet Light Infantry took every opportunity of deaths and discharges of Manipuri soldiers to replace them with Gorkhas. Jenkins and Pemberton came to the conclusion in their report that

> Munnipoories, that generally speaking they would prove indifferent soldiers under the strict routine of drill and discipline to which they have a great aversion; for the description of guerilla warfare they are constantly exposed in their own country they are admirably adapted and inferior to no troops…the finest classes of men infinitely prefer the military service of their own Prince with tis comparatively lax discipline to ours and the Knowledge that they were distrusted by their

[548] Military Consultations, August 1832, No 13

[549] Military Consultations, 1832, No 15

[550] Foreign Political Consultations 27th August 1832: No 87

> immediate superiors has tended to deteriorate the standard not only of those classes who would have entered into our service but to wound the spirit of those who are already in it.[551]

In 1833, the number of Manipuri soldiers in this unit dwindled to 96. By 1834-35, Assam Light Infantry had twelve companies, 1080 soldiers in all, out of which 1/3rd were Gorkhas. Captain George Westmacott,[552] an officer in the Assam light Infantry wrote about the Gorkhas in stark contrast to the Manipuris.

> …the Gorkhas are a noble set of fellows distinguished by some of the virtues and stained also by a few of the vices peculiar to the Europeans. Unlike the natives of Hindustan they do not yield themselves up to the demoralizing custom of Assam, of taking large quantities of opium and maintaining on the establishment a plurality of women.[553]

An important point that one can take from Westmacotts statement was the fact that the Gorkhas were viewed as a group of people who identified more with the British and had more in common with them than the natives. This aspect of the British understanding of the Gorkhas was one of the most important reasons which persuaded them to settle them in the region and use them as an ally.

The Investments in Tea Plantations and the Changing Security Concern for the British

The discovery of tea and the incoming of massive investment through the formation of the Assam company meant that the region had to be secured even further especially with raids of the hill tribes around the Brahmaputra valley.[554] From 1830 onwards, in an attempt to draw a border and to delineate a territorial area of control the British initiated a system of frontier outposts. These outposts were usually manned by irregular corps of 120 men, usually drawn from the Jharuas and the Burmese prisoners

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[551] Foreign Political Consultations 1832: No 87

[552] George Edward Westmacott "*Notes on the History of Assam ",* AUL, Ms.2217, Special collections, King college, university of Aberdeen. See D.R Syiemlieh "Westmacotts" History of Assam" Proceedings of hthe Northeast india History Association, Seventh Session, Shillong, 1997, pp 94-98

[553] ibid

[554]Imdad Hussain, *Soldiers and Settlers: Recruitment of Gorkhas*, in *The Nepalis in the Northeastern India.* A community in search of Identity, Ed A.C.Sinha and T.B Subba, Indus publishing company, 2007 New Delhi, pp 74-75

of war. The system of Border outpost required a large number of soldiers and even though both the Assam light Infantry and Sylhet Light infantry were being increased, it was still felt that the numbers were too small. It was decided that it was maybe time to raise two new units reiterating the point made earlier about the increasing need for soldiers to secure the region. Thus in 1835 the Cachar Levy and the Assam Sebundy Corps were raised. [555]

The Assam Sebundy Corps was organized with men recruited from Jharua and Kachar, to control lower Assam.[556] The Kachari or "Cachari" were a tribe living in the eastern part of North Cachar and were considered appropriate. Francis Jenkins, in contrast to David Scott, defined them as a "robust and a manly race acclimatized to the hills and could subsist as they were accustomed to the produce of the region. [557]At the close of the decade the raising of new corps manned by local tribes was extended to upper Assam. The corps was also used to control the newly discovered tracts with the potential for growing tea. The recruits to this Corp were mostly from Doanneah, Kamptis and Mataks. It was believed that they could be instrumental in protecting the tea garden labour and would swiftly move about in the country.[558] Yet 1/4th of both Sebundy Corps were to be Hindustanis and Gorkhas.[559]

A few years after the formation of the Second Sebundy Corps, the Donneah, Khamptis and Mataks were considered to be inefficient soldiers as per the requirements of the British standards, thus within a year their recruitment was discontinued. In any case most of them would simply run away into the hills after some clash in the lowlands and offer their services to the tribes.[560] Its commandant Thomas Fisher found the Jharuas to be little attached to the service and within a year 105 of them were discharged from service, 40 had been court martialed and 74 had deserted.[561] The British wanted to increase the number of Gorkhas and Hindustanis in this Corps to make up for the depleting numbers. Unfortunately, not many were inclined on joining it. The problem it seems was that the Gorkhas and Hindustanis of

[555] Ibid

[556] Military consultations 13 April 1835: no 155

[557] Military consultations, 1835, no 43

[558] Foreign political Consultations 31 July 1839, No. 75

[559] Ibid no 67

[560] Foreign political Consultations 31 July 1846: No 35

[561] Ibid. Thomas Fisher to Captain Jenkins, 6th July 1846

these Corps did not enjoy furlong privileges. Thus, this meant that once in the regiment they had little chance of revisiting their homes. Thus, by 1836 their strength dwindled to 94 sepoys and 26 native officers from 183, a year ago. In 1843, the furlong privileges were extended to the Sebundy Corps to attract more Gorkhas and Hindustanis sepoys.[562] However, after the Singhpo Uprising of 1843, the Sebundy Corps completely broke down. The Gorkha and Hindustani soldiers of this regiment were distributed among the various police militia. [563]

The Annual Expeditions into the Naga Hills and the Increase in the Number of Gorkhas in the Local Regiments, 1840-1851

By the 1840's the British began to incorporate a large part of the land in the region into what was known as the "managed spaces". The process of "making room for tea" involved taking over grazing lands and other lands that was used as jhum lands or lands used for shifting cultivation of some of the tribes living in the region.[564] The British had a single minded objective that of gaining more lands to use for plantations. Thus, as plantations kept expanding into the hills they began to come in conflict with the frontier tribes. These led to further raids on the tea plantations and the other valley settlements.[565] The "hardening" of the borders along the region increased with the policing and regulating the borders, which then meant the number of frontier outposts had to be increased and possible expeditions had to be sent into the region with the intention of crushing the tribes and discouraging them from thinking of any raids. Further, by 1840's there were rumours of an impending Burmese invasion of the region, which had to be secured, considering tea gardens and the "excellent coal, iron ore and petroleum".[566] Settling the frontier thus became an enduring colonial project and, as Dzuvichu says, it was to both augment profit and to colonize the frontier. The colonial method of using violence was only further justified by the raids that the tribes used in response.[567]

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[562] Foreign Political Consultations 5 August 1843:No 132

[563] Military consultations, 1836, no 34

[564]LipokmarDzuvichu, Opening Up the hills… pp 34-40

[565] Ibid p 42

[566] Ibid p 23

[567] Ibid p 24

The British policy in the 1840's and 1850's with regard to the hills and the tribes in the region was to maintain a strong defensive line on the frontier through frontier outposts and an offensive strategy through annual expeditions into the hills.[568] Though the entire region was seen as potential tea plantations and also with endless reservoirs of coal and petroleum, the direct annexation of the region was not attempted since the British were already engaged in other conflicts such as the Anglo Sikh war, the Sind war which caused extreme financial stringency. [569] The expeditions it must be remembered was almost entirely taken by the irregular regiments of the region with the most being done by the Assam Light Infantry. [570] The number of Gorkhas serving in these Assam Light infantry during this period from the 1840's to the 1850's, also kept increasing.[571]

When the tenth military expedition to the Naga hills concluded in 1851, the British were no closer to controlling the region as they had been 10 years ago. The raids still had not come close to securing the region, the raids by tribes, especially the Angamis had not decreased at all. Further, the lack of rice and other supplies required in an expedition was one problem that kept haunting the British.[572] The regiments kept suffering tremendous casualties. As a British official of the period remarked, we "suffered serious loss without being able to injure the enemy"[573] There were serious questions on the efficiency of these raids. In 1851, captain John Butler of the Assam Light Infantry wrote of the fact that he was resigned to the fact that he could not penetrate into the hills.[574] It was not just the fact that the British were unable to subdue the tribes it was also a problem that they were not able to stop the raids from happening. The tribes were able to dodge the military outposts and were able to hit the British plantations and settlements. In 1851, F. Halliday, the Secretary to the Government of India directed for immediate withdrawal of the expeditions and rather focussed on the defenses of the region.[575] This defensive tactic of the British meant a

[568] Ibid p 34
[569] Ibid p 45
[570] Ibid pp34-35
[571]Imdadhussian op-cit, p 80
[572]LipokmarDzuvichu, *Roads and rule*…p 37
[573]Butler, *Travels and Adventures.*p. 200.
[574]Foreign Political Consultations. 7 February 1851. Nos. 192-207
[575]Foreign and Political consultations. 7 February 1851. No 192

further multiplication of the frontier outposts. By 1850, this led to a growth and rising importance of new units known as the police militia. In this context, Francis Jenkins informed the Political Secretary to the Government of India in May 1852, the reasons why the men of the various Light Infantries could not be used and why an entirely new unit had to be raised.

> With so many totally barbarious (tribes) on the border hills one must maintain small detached military posts along the hills to give confidence to the villages but to employ on this duty the men of the Light Infantry is very detrimental to their discipline and accompanied by much inconvenience in providing for them supplies which sepoys of that class expect; it would seem therefore better that all the small outposts should be garrisoned by local corps.[576]

The Gorkhas of the two Sebundy Corps, which were by now more or less disbanded, were moved to Naga hills border to be distributed among the various police militias. The Magistrate of the Nowgong in the Naga hills, Captain Henry Bigge, considered the Gorkhas most suitable group to form the new militia and requested that he be allowed to raise two companies exclusively of Gorkhas. Though Bigges proposal was not passed, the Gorkhas formed a very important part of the Nowgong Police Militia, Sibsagar Police Militia, Lakhimpur police Militia etc. Captian Charles Holyrod increased the pay of his men from Rs 4 per month to Rs 5 per month to attract more Gorkhas.[577]

In 1855, the Gorkhas were the predominant group in the Sylhet Light Infantry. In the 2nd Assam Light Infantry, there were 110 Gorkhas, 117 Hindustanis and about 867 Jharuas, Manipuris, Sylhetis and other Bengalis. The 1st Assam Light Infantry on the other hand had 250 Gorkhas, 600 Hindustanis and 260 Manipuris, Jharuas [578]This rise in the increase of the number of the Gorkhas in the region while being linked to the increasing security and political dynamics of the Northeast frontier cannot be seen in isolation of the various events taking place elsewhere. The Gorkhas regiments such as the Sirmoor and the Nasiri battalion in the 1830's and 1840's were already being seen as equivalent to the regular regiments of the British army and one of them was also

[576] Foreign Political Consultations, 1 June 1852, :No 98 Jenkins to Allen 18 May

[577] Bengal Judicial proceedings, 12 April 1855, No. 160

[578] Military Proceedings, November 1862, No 792

raised to the status of a regular regiment known as the 66th regiment. The Gorkhas themselves were being considered as efficient soldiers and very good quality of military labour and, as Lord Napier famously argued, if combined with the English soldiers could be enough to control India.[579] This, together with the fact that there was now a large scale immigration taking place from the Gorkha state in central Himalayan region to the various British holdings in India , which meant the possibility of recruiting more Gorkhas.

Gorkhas in the Local Regiments Post 1857

During the 1857 uprising, there were a few cases reported of "plotting" happening among the Hindustani troops of the Assam Light Infantry. To quell this, two company of Gorkhas were brought from Sadiya district and Dibrugarh. This shows the manner in which the Gorkhas were viewed by the British during the uprising. One British sergeant wrote in his diary

> Purbutteas (Gorkhas) have overawed the bad spirits in the corps and the station…the only loyal troops in Assam [were] the few Gorkhas.[580]

The post 1857 era had brought about tremendous changes in the manner in which the British understood and used the military labour in India. The ideas that had been gaining ground since the early half of the 19th century of who made a good soldier in India, was now constituted as official recruiting policy for the army now known as martial race theory.[581] Most of the groups who remained loyal to the British during the uprising were put in this category, and the Gorkhas were one of them. Most of the Gorkha Regiments were now converted to regular regiments with increased pay. Meanwhile, in the Gorkha state, the state had by 1860 established its social order through a legal document known as the *Mulki Ain*, which imposed the religious and social ideas of the ruling class on a multitude of its subjects who had very differing views on both the social structure and religious ideas, this coupled with the increased

[579] Chris Bellamy, op-cit, p 56

[580] *Diary of Sergent Major George Carter Ms Eur E 262*, The British Library, in ImdadHussian, Op-cit, p 97

[581] Chris Bellamy, op-cit, p 102

taxation caused an even bigger exodus from the region.[582] The increased role and the number of the Gorkhas in the post 1857 frontier military units in the region has to be understood in this context.

In the Northeast frontier, though it had remained largely undisturbed by the events of 1857, things had begun to change. There were increasing investments in the region, now that several Companies other than the Assam Company and started to invest in the region. The Assam petroleum company was also established. From 1860 onwards, there seems to have been an almost "mad scramble for lands in the region" especially if the land was found suitable for tea production. By the 1860's and 1870's the number of plantations and coal mines started mushrooming in the region. These investments and resources had to be secured by ensuring order along the rich but "unstable" frontier.[583]

The earlier form of expeditions into the hills had not worked and they had little effect on the raiding capabilities of the tribes. As mentioned before, the expeditions were called off at the end of the 10th expedition. Yet, this did not mean that the British abandoned the hills, or adopted a new policy of engaging with the tribes that were not involved in violence. The colonial government seems to have realised that the only way to establish complete control over the hills was through permanent bases and strongholds. Road-building projects began in the region as a method of controlling the space by improving the infrastructure and methods of communication by opening up the region to faster and more effective military penetration.[584]

After the 1857 uprising, the British government in India agreed that sweeping changes was required in the organisation of the police and army. The police commission was established in 1860 to recommend the changes in the police organisation. It was suggested that the military structure in the region depending on irregular units and militia was also not adequate to provide the services it was meant in a scenario where the investments in the region kept expanding. Thus, a series of changes were initiated and the various police militia were abolished and the men absorbed as per the new

[582]Andras Hofer, Mulki Ain, p 56

[583]LipokmarDzuvichu, *Roads and Rule*…p 65

[584] Ibid p 70

constabulary.[585] The Nowlong Police militia became the Nowlong Cachar police and in 1866 when the Naga Hill district was created it became the Naga Hills Police. In the same year, the Garo Hill Police was also raised after the occupation of the region by the British.[586] The three local crops, 1st Assam Light Infantry, 2nd Assam Light Infantry and Syllet Light Infantry were delocalized and converted into regular regiments of the army. The 1st Assam Light Infantry was now known as 42nd Infantry, 2nd Assam Light Infantry became the 43rd Infantry and the Sylhet Light Infantry became the 44th Infantry.[587] These regiments were placed in the "General Mixture" category, thus most of the regiments had a mixture of groups in the company levels except the Gorkhas and Hindustanis who were placed in exclusive companies.

By early 1864 Gorkhas were the predominant group in the 44th regiment. The enlistment of the Hindustanis had been discontinued, especially now that the idea of the martial race theory was taking root.[588] The 43rd regiment too was chiefly composed of Gorkhas along with some local tribes and Hindustanis. After the Anglo-Bhutan war in 1865, and the disastrous performance of some of the units, the local tribes were weeded out and were replaced by the Gorkhas.[589] The Commanding Officer of the 42nd regiment, Thomas Rattray reorganized his regiment on ethnic and social lines and created companies exclusively of single social groups. He wanted at least one of his companies to be composed of Sikhs and, for this purpose sent his junior officer, Lieutenant J.W Alexander to Punjab. Yet the Gorkhas continued to be the majority group in the regiment. Of the 8 companies of the regiment, 4 were Gorkhas and the rest were Sikhs, Hindustanis. [590]

ETHNIC GROUP	NO. OF OFFICERS	NO. OF SOLDIERS
Goorkhas	41	365
Nagas	1	5

[585]ImdadHussian, op cit, p 77

[586]Ibid p 77

[587] Ibid p 78

[588] Ibid p 80

[589] D.G.P Ryan, *Historical Records of the 6thGurkha rifles*, p 23

[590] Military Consultations, 1865, no 12

Kukis	4	50
Garos	5	95
Kamptis	1	0
Khasis	5	34
Bhutias	0	3
Mikirs	0	19
Total	57	571

In 1868 a general order was passed that all the Hindustanis be replaced by Gorkhas. Sir William Fraser Tytler, Assam's GOC wanted the military units in Assam to have more Gorkha soldiers. The manner in which he attained this was related by the commissioner of Assam Colonel Henry Hopkinson

> I was present myself on one occasion at a conversation between the Brigadier general and a commanding officer whose Nepalese (Gorkhas) were at the time drawn as rice eaters. The General wanted more Nepalese enlisted, wanted, in fact as I understood him, the entire regiment to be Goorkha. The commanding Officer objected that the pay was not high enough to be attractive(for the Gorkhas) and was then was told to calculate his compensation as for atta (the money saved, as a result of rice being cheaper would be used to increase the pay for the Gorkhas).[591]

It seems that the distrust of the Hindustani troops after 1857 and the evolution of the idea of the "martial" Gorkhas had resulted in a situation where, by 1860, the Gorkhas

[591] Military Political Consultations , 1867 Nos. 22-225

were the only group that was thought of as being capable of performing the duties in the region.[592]

Increasing Conflicts: The Lushai Campaign and the Angami War

By 1870s, the number of plantations and coalmines kept on increasing all along the foot hills, and as a result, the number of investments kept on increasing with investors buying shares in the holdings. These expanding plantations and coalmines brought in clashes with the lands of the various tribes and conflicts never ceased. The massive investment in the region put pressure on the colonial government to bring the turbulent hills and their "savage tribes" under control. [593] The British had experimented with ruthless violence through annual expeditions into the hills in the 1840s but that did not lead to any success. The next experiment of creating well-organised border police with frontier outposts, with the hope that a defensive tactic would help, at the very least, stop the raid. However, this too did not seem to work with the various tribes easily able to outflank the outposts and raid the plantations and settlements with ease. There was also the problem of immense weapons' trade that was allowing the tribes to easily arm themselves with guns and ammunitions. All the British efforts to block this illegal trade in arms were unsuccessful, while the casualties went up as did the raids on the plantations.[594] Colonel Hopkins, the Chief Commissioner of Assam remarked regarding the cost of policing the frontier that it "cost five times more than it did eighteen years ago, while disturbances are more frequent than then."[595]

In 1871, there was a series of raids by the Lushais in which a six year old British girl Mary Winchester was seized when a fortified tea plantation was attacked.[596] In July 1871, Viceroy and Governor General in Council asked for a full-fledged invasion of the Lushai hills with the intention to rescue and demotivate the Lushais from engaging in such activities again. Two regular Gorkha regiments were brought in the 2nd Gurkha Rifles and the 4th Gurkha regiment for the expedition. The Gorkha dominated local units of the 42nd, (formerly, the Sylhet Light Infantry), 43rd (formerly, the Assam Light

[592]ImdadHussian, op cit, p 77

[593]LipokmarDzuvichu, *Roads and Rule*... P 67

[594]Lipokmar Dzuvichu, *Opening up the hills*… p 54

[595] Ibid p 25

[596] Ian Heath and Michael Perry, *The Northeast frontier 1837-1901*, Osprey, Oxford, 1999, pp 8-15

Infantry), 44th Assam Regiment of Bengal Native Light Infantry were also used in the expedition.[597] This shows the manner in which the Gorkhas were given prime importance in the frontier. An example of the manner in which the Gorkhas were seen in the Northeast frontier can be gauged by the statement of Lieutenant Thrope of the Engineers of the Topographical Survey Department of India:

> Arrived at the halting place. All the troops went to work cutting down branches of tress and bamboos, collecting leaves, grass and c. In this work the active little Goorkhas of the 44th Native Infantry were much more at home than their up country breathren in arms, who at first used to look helplessly on, while the former, springing into trees like monkeys, lopped off branches, collected bamboos etc., and had quickly constructed comfortable ranges of cantos, with a low raised bamboo floor as a sleeping place, before the others had made up their minds what to do.
>
> All the sepoys had been supplied with Kookries, a peculiar kind of native knife, most effective in cutting jungle when successfully used. The Goorkhas, as a rule, were possessed of their own, but those supplied by government were soon useless, often breaking after the first few blows, efficiency having sacrificed to economy.[598]

This shows the reasons why the Gorkhas were used so extensively in the region. The idea that they were well suited for such terrain and jungle work was a predominant view. This reason seems more important in context to what was said about the Hindustanis, and Punjabi soldiers who were stationed in the region. The Punjab Native Infantry was also used in the Lushai expedition and they had a majority of Hindustani and Punjabi soldiers.[599] However, the officials found the Hindustani and Punjabi troops to be ineffective in the terrain and the units were withdrawn. It was said that, "Neither the Hindustani nor the Punjabis thrive in the clime nor are they well adapted for Jungle work"[600]

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[597] R.G. Woodthrope Lieutenant Royal Engineers, *The Lushai Expedition 1871, 1872*, Hurst and Blackett Publishers, London/republished by Naval Ad Military press, London) 2004, pp 134-135

[598] Ibid p 143

[599] Ibid p 39-41

[600] Ibid p 145

The Lushai village of Lalnoogra was surrounded by 4th January 1872, and soon, the expedition came to an end with the rescuing of Mary Winchester and, the burning of over 20 Lushai villages. The well suitability of the Gorkha soldiers in the campaign was reiterated over and over again.

> But they [Lushais] were baffled by the Goorkha, who in the words of one of the staff officers present, 'extending rapidly where the ground allowed, retired through their support as if on parade' The troops were admirably lead by Colonel Nuthall and Captain Robertson"[601]

This further expresses the reasons why the Gorkhas were so favored in various military units in the region. Given the context that such raids and conflicts were not going to end anytime soon.

The Inner Line Regulation

In early 1872, a creation of a line was mooted which would allow no British subject of a certain class of foreign residents or tribes to cross without a license.

As the officiating Deputy Commissioner of Sibsagar district explained to the Chief Commissioner of Assam

> …the object of the Inner Line is to fix a limit by confining a person within which Government may, in well segregating its subject from those of." This includes mountains, deserts, legal structures, boundaries borders, and tariffs etc… adjoining foreign countries, avoid the complications that frequently arises from incautious enterprise of its people amongst less civilized races. [602] (Please re-check the whole quote)

As Dzuvichu explains, "Unregulated movement of people and commodities often keep the frontier porous, blurring the state's authority and territoriality." [603] The

[601] Ibid p 143

[602] Alexander Mackenzie, *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the Northeast Frontier of Bengal* (Calcutta: Home Department Press, 1884), pp. 55 - 56.

[603] LipokmarDzuvichu, *Opening up the hills*…, p 26

colonial state thus always attempted to create a "harder" frontier, what Mahnaz Ispahani called the "anti-route".[604]

A series of explorations and surveys were set out to define where the inner line on the ground would be and in 1875, it was delineated. This policy of creating a line or a fixed border would give the British policy planners a method to fence off the highly lucrative plantations and coalmines and in many ways saved the investments of the capitalist classes. Thus Dzuvichu is absolutely correct in suspecting the role of capitalist classes in influencing the creation of such a policy.[605]

The important thing that has to be remembered here is that the Line was not static. It was highly flexible and it proved to be fluid. The inner line continuously pressed outwards into the hills and when it was found convenient for the colonial state they brought new territories under it depending on whether there were lucrative resources or, if it was conducive for tea plantations. The difference between this period and the 1840's-1850's was the fact that British now were able to stay on in the hills. As Jilangambam writes, the colonial state believed that violence against the tribes who occupy, what until then was thought of, as inaccessible terrain, was the only means of assuring permanent tranquility in the region.[606]

Date (i.e., date when party reports on its way to the plains). Tribe to which party belongs.
Village from which party come.
Name of the head of party.
Number of persons composing party.
Place to which going.
Object of Journey.
If Angami Nagas number of pass given at Kohima and copy of particulars given in it. If hill people from North Cachar number of passes given by head constable.
Date of Return of Homeward journey

[604]. Mahnaz Z Ispahani, *Roads and Rivals: The political uses of access in the Borderlands of Asia, New York, Cornell University Press, 1989, p 2*

[605]LipokmarDzuvichu*Opening up the hills*… p 27

[606]YengkhomJilagambani Singh, Savage encounter…. P 45

[607]Table 1. Sample of an inner line permit

By 1879, it pushed inwards the Naga Hills as it was further pushed to include the Lakhimpur district to bring in the rich coal bearing tracks, especially as the Assam Railway Trading company was increasing its presence in the region.[608] This advance brought them further in conflict with the local groups, which in the end resulted in the Anglo-Angami war also known as the Angami rebellion in 1879/1880. In this war too the Gorkha units were extensively used, especially those of the local battalions. The 43rd regiment was stationed in Kohima when it was attacked by 6000 Angamis on 14th October 1879 and held it under siege. However, they were repulsed after a while.[609] A year, and massive mobilization of resources later, the war was finally over and the Angamis were defeated.

The frontier police and other colonial military units deployed on the border were ordered to detain any suspicious Nagas or any other tribes from crossing over. The only way anyone could cross the line was, if they had a special pass. Every group was given a specific pass with specific reasons why they were allowed to cross over. This system not only helped the colonial state stop the raids but would also help them in enforcing the blockade. The inner line was a massive project, 50 new frontier outposts were constructed and the outposts themselves became "fort like" structures. Outposts were conceptualized as pushing the administration deeper into the hills, patrol paths were constructed between the chains to ensure mobility between the outposts.[610] Further, it required a large force to effectively enforce the system. Thus, the existing police units and the local battalion were expanded and more Gorkhas were recruited. In 1876, the Manipuris, were being removed due to the increasing instances of them selling caps and cartridges to the hill tribes.[611]

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[607]LipokmarDzuvichu, opening of the hills, p 31

[608]LipokmarDzuvichu Opening up the hills…p 30

[609] Heath and Perry, The Northeast frontier…pp 8-9

[610]LipokmarDzuvichu Opening up the hills…p 30

[611] Ibid, p 32

Various local levies were raised such as the Manipur Levy, Kachari Levy and the Doanneah Levy. The number of men in the frontier police increased from 2400 to 3300. In 1883, out of the various groups who were manning the outposts such as Kacharis, Rabhas, Garos, Kamptis, Khasis, Nagas, Kukis, Mikirs, Bhutias and Gorkhas, the Gorkhas formed the overwhelming majority in both the soldiers as well as lower officers, with 72% of the total lower officers and 64% of the rank and file. Though the British clearly preferred the Gorkhas, the numbers required could never be fulfilled and hence the local tribes were continued to be used as military labour. However, desertions by tribes were common and they would often take their weapons and ammunitions with them to the hills and join the tribes to raid the British settlements. Thus, the British made every attempt to exclude them from the frontier police.[612]

By 1880 the news of a French intrigue in Upper Burma began to make the British colonial government very uncomfortable in the region. A Franco-Burmese treaty was signed on 15th January 1885 and a "secret agreement by which France was to supply arms to Ava through Tongking created further ripples."[613] It was decided that the frontier police would be reorganized in a much more military system. Thus the new Naga Hills Military police Battalion, Lakhimpur and Surma valley Battalion came in existence.[614] These new Battalions again had a majority of Gorkhas.

The Conversion of the Local Regiments into Complete Gorkha Units

The local regiments of the Northeast frontier, 42nd, 43rd and 44th had become so predominantly Gorkha that their names were changed in 1886 from 42nd Regiment of Light Infantry to 42nd Regiment of Gorkha Light Infantry and similarly the 43rd regiment of Bengal Light Infantry became, the 43rd Gorkha Light Infantry. In the context of the militarization of the local regiments in the Northeast frontier in 1903, the 42nd Gorkha Light Infantry became the 6th Gurkha Rifles, a full-fledged regular army regiment with the prestigious title of "rifles". The 43rd Gurkha Regiment became the 7th Gurkha rifles in 1903, again another full-fledged army unit, though in 1907 its

[612] Ibid, p 34

[613] *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India,* Vol 5(Shimla: Government Monotype Press, 1907), pp.
113 - 126

[614] L. W. Shakespeare, *History of Upper Assam, Upper Burma and the Northeastern Frontier* (London: MacMillan &Co ltd., 1914), pp 55-57

name was changed to 8th Gurkha rifles. A separate 7th Gurkha rifles was raised in 1902 in the Northeast frontier and its name was reaffirmed in 1907 after a brief period of confusion since 43rd was also renamed as 7th Gurkha rifles. The 9th regiment of the Bengal Infantry in 1894 was given the title of 9th Gurkha rifles in 1901and stationed in the Northeast frontier. The 10th regiment of the Madras Infantry based in the Northeast frontier was also given the title of "Gurkha" and renamed as the 10th Gurkha rifles.[615] These new army regiments were based exclusively in the Northeast frontier and were meant to protect the British interests in the region. A process that began with a few Gorkha soldiers in the local levies in the 1830's culminated by the end of the century where the British were dependent on the security of the entire Northeast frontier on the military labour provided by the Gorkhas in the Military police or in the various Gorkha regiments

Problems of Recruitment

The main recruits for the three regiments were obtained entirely from Darjeeling. They were mostly Rais and Limbus, unlike the army who recruited mostly Magars, Gurungs and Khas.[616] Though the Assam regiments made their request for the Magars and Gurungs clear, the army, especially under Lord Roberts, the Commander in Chief of the Army in India opposed the recruitment of Magars and Gurungs to any unit other than the army. However, a small number of Magars and Gurungs continued to join the Assam regiments. [617]

The Government of Nepal, under the prime minister ship of Sir Randip Singh opposed the recruitment of soldiers to the British army from his country. This caused a minor crisis of obtaining Gurkha recruits for the army, who then opposed the recruitment of all Gurkhas to the Frontier Police. The situation was resolved when Ranodip Singh, in 1885, was replaced by Bir Shamsher Rana who had friendly relations with the British.[618]

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[615] R.J Marrion and and D.S.V Fosten, *The traditional book of the Gurkhas* Belmont-maitland, London. 1960's pp 26-37

[616]PurshottamBanskota, *TheGorkha Connection. A History of the Gorkha recruitment in the British Indian Army*, Jaipur, 1944, pp 30ff

[617] Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour, An account of the Indian Army its officers and men*, Harmondsworth 1974, p 347

[618] Imdad Hussain, op.cit, p 88

In 1882, the army themselves were keen on improving the Frontier Police so that the army could be relieved of the frontier duty in the region. Sir Charles Elliot, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, reorganised the Frontier Police into four battalions drilled and disciplined on regimental lines. Elliot insisted that at least 50% of the totals strength of the Police must be composed of Gurkhas. He further wrote

> …we cannot get for the police as good a class of Gorkhas as the military can obtain, but I am informed that we have for the last two or three years succeed in enlisting a very fair number of Nepalese of good physique and fighting traditions.[619]

As the number of Gurkhas in the Frontier Police increased, the army began to voice their opposition. The army in response to an inquiry by Lieutenant Colonel H.W.G Cole of the Surma Valley Military Police Battalion, in 1890 responded

> Magars and Gurungs are too scarce and valuable to be wasted in Police corps, for which inferior classes of Goorkhas are believed to answer well enough. The restriction was intended to be a permanent one and the reply in the Assam Government should to be that effect. [620]

Sir Mortimer Durand of the Home Department had written to the Chief Commissioner of Assam and Burma in 1887 that,

> …it seems desirable to prevent the enlistment of the best fighting material for the Assam Police Battalions. Assam wants good police frontier, but the fighting line ought to have the best pick.[621]

The recruiting depot at Gorakhpur, where Magars and Gurungs were available, was made exclusive for the army. The Darjeeling depot, where Kirats and Limbus enlisted, was made available for the police in Assam.[622]

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[619] Home Police A proceedings, October 1884, no 25-27
[620] Home Police A Proceedings October 1894:Nos 56-57
[621] Home Police A Proceedings, December 1887, Nos 84-86.
[622] Imdadhussian, op-cit, p 82

In 1894, the British were further involved in Lushai and Naga Hills and the Inspector General of Police of Assam, sought to recruit from Gorakhpur.

> No doubt (we) get fairly good recruit through the Purnea Depot, but it is a known fact that the men recruited in Gorakhpur are far superior both in physique and faithfulness than those recruited in Darjeeling. It is an unquestionable fact that the work of our borders which was, prior to 1882-83, performed by the native regiments maintained at a large cost, has been well performed by the Military Police maintained at a moderate cost and as this cheap military renders Government the maximum amount of valuable work at a minimum amount of cost on account of maintenance, its spirit de corps ought to be kept up by continued enlistment of Gorakhpur Gurkhas. The army was not moved by this plea and drew the attention of the Inspector General to the performance of the recruits from the Darjeeling depot, whom he himself had "spoken in the highest of terms of the good work done by these classes in the Sikkim and Chin Lushai hills.[623]

The Gurkha Regiments in the Early 20th Century

The Simla convention of 1914, which resulted in the drawing of the McMohan line between British India and Tibet brought a large part of northern hills within the control of the British. A fourth battalion known as the Darrang battalion was raised to look after the security of the new region. As the army continued to oppose the recruitment of the Gorkhas, for the police, only 50% of the Darrang battalion was composed of Gorkhas, the rest being Jharuas and Dogras. Though the Assam government kept requesting for an increase in the number of Gorkhas for recruitment in the battalion it was not granted. On the outbreak of the First World War the Assam Military Police had to supply 3000 Gorkhas to the army decreasing the number of Gorkhas in the police.[624]

In the first decade of the 20th century as troubles began in Bengal with the Swadeshi movement as well as the anti-partition of Bengal movement, it was further decided that the a few regiments of the Gorkhas should be kept in Dacca as well. This report by C.J. Stevenson Moore, Director of Criminal Intelligence makes this point

[623] Home Police A Proceedings, October 1894, no 56-57.
[624] ImdadHussian, op-cit, p 84

> …The people do not know the difference between regulars and military police, whereas they have already learnt to entertain a very lively respect for the Gurkha…I do not think the Gurkha military police can be improved upon as an agency for producing moral effect and doing effective service of the kind to be necessary in Eastern Bengal and Assam, and if any increase is required it might be in this force.[625]

The Military Police in Assam was renamed as the Assam Rifles in 1917. The officers of the new regiment put forward a proposal to raise two new companies of Gorkhas, which was again rejected by the Government of India due to the opposition of the army. This period had seen large number of migration from Nepal to settle in Sikkim, Darjeeling, Assam and the hills around it. Assam government assured the army and the central government that the new companies would be raised from the Gorkha residents of Assam as opposed to the Gorkhas from Nepal, where the army could recruit. The central government agreed to the raising of two new companies of Gorkhas provided they be raised from the Gorkha residents of Assam and not from Nepal. [626]

By 1920, so dominant was the number of Gorkhas in every military unit in the Northeast frontier, that there were serious concerns raised by several British officials, who were concerned about the overly dependence on the Gorkhas for the defence of the region. This aspect was bestexpressed when Sir Nicholas Beatson Bell, the Chief Commissioner of Assam stated he did not "…think it is right that Assam should depend so largely on Nepal for its garrison when it has so much promising material in its own hills"[627]

It was further reiterated by another official of the Home Department, H.W. Craix , when he wrote to the Chief Secretary of Assam that,

> "he government of Assam agree to refrain from any form to recruiting outside Nepal territory, and undertake that no demobilized Gurkhas or other Nepali subjects who visit Assam in search of employment shall be recruited for the Assam Rifles. They also agree not be recruited in

[625] F. External B.P, June 1909, Nos 6-7

[626] Ibid p 85

[627] Home Police A proceedings 1920, No 220 , 7 August 1919;

> Bhutan without prior concurrence of the Government of India. Nothing in the agreement affects the recruitment of Nepalese subjects and the descendants who are permanently settled in Assam. [628]

Conclusion

The above discussion shows that as long as the British were concerned with the control of the limited space in the Northeast frontier, the demand for military labour remained. The demand for military labour was initially filled by local groups and by the traditional military labour that the British relied on during this period: the Hindustanis. This period, as mentioned before, co-existed with what Bipan Chandra has called the first phase of colonialism, where monopoly in trade and indirect control were the main features. The regional trading network in which the British entered into had existed since the last 200 years, thus the British did not need to bring in any new labour or any other changes since the economic relations and systems already existed. The conflicts were fought over limited regions therefore a limited number of troops were required to secure the land.

This changed after the Burmese war of 1824-26, when large territories began to come under the control of the British. This period was also concomitant with larger changes taking place elsewhere. The industrial revolution was in full force in the colonial metropolis and hence the economic interests of the British also changed. The idea of an ideal soldier also began to change in this period. The formation of the Gorkha regiments and the idea of who was a Gorkha, as well as the idea of the Gorkha as a good military labour was constructed in this period. These new ideas can be seen behind the famous declaration by Lord Napier that Gorkhas and British soldiers together would be enough to hold India. The use of the Gorkhas in the Northeast has to be seen in these contexts.

The beginning of the tea plantations and the coal mines in the region made sure that the process of territoriality that began with the Burmese war was now consolidated in the region. The massive investments that took place with the formation of Assam Company meant that the raids of the tribes could no longer be tolerated. The colonial power resorted to violence to control the region. However, the problem was who was going to exert that violence for which the British resorted to raising

[628] Home Police A Proceedings August 1920; No 220H.W Craix to the Chief Secretary

local battalions. The Battalions needed military labour and, in the post 1857, when the Gorkhas were seen as one of the martial races, they were one of the choices. Other martial races were seen as incompetent to survive in the region because of which the number of Gorkhas kept on increasing throughout the 19th century and by the end of the period the entire local units were converted to Gorkha regiments. By the 20th century so massive was the number of Gorkhas that many officials began to express concern that the over-dependence on the Gorkhas for the control of the Northeast frontier may not be a wise policy.

The massive increase in the number of the Gorkhas also has to be seen in the context of the massive migration from the Gorkha state. The various policies of the Gorkha state has led to the mass exodus from the region especially of the eastern tribes who were now pushed into Darjeeling and then into the Northeast. The large numbers of eastern tribes such as Rais and Limbus in the various regiments of the Northeast frontier has to be understood in this manner.

However, having mentioned the role of the Gorkhas in the various local regiments it should not lead us to think that this was the only role that the Gorkhas played in the region. The British, along with wars and violence also used settlement of Gorkhas as a strategy to control territory. As the territorial control of the British increased in these regions more groups who were considered to be loyal to the British were made to settle there. The next chapter will deal with the manner in which the Gorkhas were used to settle the Northeast frontier by settling down in the "troubled" regions.

. Chapter 4

Settling the Frontier

The Gorkhas and Nepalis as a part of the Colonial settlement strategy in North East India

Introduction

> It is known that these are many Gorkhas who for one reason or another, are not inclined to return to Nepal and that some men of this category are among those who find the way to Assam in search of temporary employment. If such employment is lucrative and agreeable to them it influences them, if not to settle in Assam, at least not to return to Nepal.[629]

By the early 20th century, so large was the Gorkha and Nepali settlement in the North-east that several British officials began to express concerns about the number of Gorkhas and Nepalis in the region. A statement by an official makes note:

> That there has been a great infiltration of Nepalis eastwards from Nepal is very true and very noticeable. It is impossible for any body who has lived in Assam, as I have for the last 16 years, not to have noticed the remarkable number of Nepali that one sees all over the privoince and particularly the Assam valley, the hill districts and the frontier tracts[630]

The last three chapters have attempted to give a fair understanding of the various socio political and economic aspects that were at play in the central Himalayan region, North East frontier and the colonial state at large. The manner in which each of these social, political and economic aspects played out in the 19th century

[629] H.W Craix to the Home secretary, Home Police A proceedings, Assam 30 January 1922.
[630] Report no. 61/24 April 1946 of the Central Intelligence Office, Government of Assam.

all contributed to the manner in which the Gorkhas and Nepalis were settled in the northeast. The preceeding chapters told this story and formed a background to this chapter.

This chapter will thus try and explain the various conditions in which the Gorkhas and the Nepalis, were used to settle the region. The use of the terms "Gorkha" and "Nepali" as two different terms is deliberate, since they both denoted two different groups. It would be appropriate to say that the terms "Nepali" and "Gorkha" both evoked different imaginations for the colonial powers, an imagination that has even to this day survived. The difference between the two concepts is important to remember, it is subtle yet very real. The term Gorkha was used for very specific groups who were denoted as the martial race and used for recruitment in the army. The groups were namely Khas, Magar, Gurung and Thakuri. They were so designated as true "Gorkhas" and towards the end of the 19th century the Rais and Limbus were also included. The term Nepali was used as a generic term for all people and groups who came from Nepal, such as the Bahuns, Tamangs, Kami, Damai and Sarki and also those considered Gorkhas. Thus while all all Gorkhas are Nepalis, not all Nepalis are Gorkhas. This difference became important because while the term "Gorkhas" was used for the former soldiers settling down, the term Nepali was used for new settlers coming in from the dominions of the Gorkha state by the colonial state[631] The census of the period used both the terms Gorkhas and Nepalis as two distinct groups[632]

The strategy of the colonial power during this period was to gain control of territory by military force which was then followed by strategies such as settlement policies where the British settled groups they considered as loyal to them and who could help them with their needs of labour and domesticating the landscape.[633] They had used groups such as the Kuki and Manipuris earlier.[634] The use of the Gorkhas and Nepalis was of course much larger in volume than any other group.

[631] W.W Hunter, *The Statistical Account of Bengal* , Vol x Districts of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri and the state of Kuch Behar, London 1876- pp 34
[632] Ibid p 37
[633] Gunnel Cederlof *Founding an Empire on India's North-eastern Frontier 1790-1840,* Oxford University Press 2014, pp 5-6
[634] Lipokmar Dzuvichu, *Opening up of the hills?The politics of access along the Northeastern frontier of British India. 1866-1942,*Phd Thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru university, 2010 ,p 45

However before we go on to discuss the various settlements of the Gorkhas and Nepalis in the Northeast frontiers, we must look at certain aspects; the larger socio-political reasons that allowed for the settlement of the Gorkhas and Nepalis in the region. The socio-political and economic conditions that evolved in the mid Himalayan region in the 18th-19th century and the Northeast frontiers in the 19th century where there was a definite change in the colonial policies in the region and territoriality had become important form of colonial control created a certain historical conditions that allowed for the massive migration from the Gorkha dominions to come .Thus a certain background will be given below.

The following section will deal with the various conditions in the central Himalayan region, which caused the various groups in the region to move into the British dominions in North Bengal hills and from there to the Northeast. The chapter will then go on to understand the various conditions which evolved in the Northeast frontier which caused the British to use outsiders to come and settle in the region. Here the concepts of the "savage" will be dealt with as will the issue of where the Gorkhas fitted in this civilizational hierarchy as imagined by the British. The way in which space itself began to be seen and the increasing use of territoriality in the region will also be dealt with. The chapter will then deal with the idea of the ethnic policing or settlement strategies, which involved the use of settling of the various groups considered loyal to the British in the region. The settling of the Gorkhas and Nepalis in the various hills and plains and different political conditions and objectives with which they were settled will also be looked into. Finally, the various changes that the Gorkhas and the Nepalis brought about in the region that they migrated into will be discussed.

The changing dynamics of the Northeast

As we have seen in the last chapter the idea of the Northeast frontier was never a static or even a well-defined concept. It was rather a fluid concept that kept changing through the 19th century with shifting boundaries, as did its economic dynamics. Depending on the nature of economic dynamics, the nature of political control too kept changing, an aspect that has been discussed in the last chapter. The need for a certain kind of political control and economic exploitation resulted in a need for

control of territory, hence the concept of territory as a form of power and control, otherwise known as territoriality evolved as a part of the colonial strategy.[635] Once territoriality became important, new forms of tactics and strategies had to be used such as ethnic policing, settlement strategies and social engineering. These policies were already used much before the Gorkha migration even began.[636]

In the earlier period, from about 1765 to about the 1840's, one notices that the British were more keen in maintaining control of specific strategic spaces such as a town, a route or a mine.[637] These were more important since the British profits in the area depended on the thriving trade network that already existed. The maps of the period, (c.1765-1840) show the manner in which the British viewed the region, in other words the manner in which they spatially imagined the region.[638] The consequence of this sort of spatial imagination and the networks of the trade was the fact that the British merely appropriated themselves in this trade without changing too many things. The routes had existed almost two hundred years prior to the British entry into the region, the forms of trade relations were already established. The regions that needed to be controlled were also very small as can be demonstrated by the maps where the large parts of the region are left as blank white spaces.[639] Need for migrant labour was hardly required since there was already a pre-existing structures.. Hence we hardly see any new migrant labourers being brought in during this period. This aspect is brought out in the works of both, Gunnel Cederlof[640] and Sangamitra Misra. Though the focus of their works is very different in terms of areas of focus they are they dealing with, both stress on the changes that comes in the mid 19th century. Sangamitra Misra[641] talks of the immense migration that begins in the 19th century in the region of Goalpara. As a consequence, Goalpara unlike its eastern counterparts, in Assam hills, had a process of sedentarization of its population in the earlier period.[642] The migration

[635] Gunnel Cederlof, op-cit, pp 23-25

[636] Yengkhom Jilagamba Singh *Territorialities and identities North eastern frontier of the British Empire* , PhD thesis submitted to JNU, 2010, p 39
[637] Gunnel Cederlog, op-cit, p 10-13
[638] Ibid p 20
[639] Ibid p 23
[640] Ibid
[641] Sanghamitra Misra, *Becoming a Borderland: The Politics of Space and Identity in Colonial Northeastern India*. New Delhi: Routledge, 2011,
[642] Ibid p 10-30

was mostly from East Bengal region where availability of lands had saturated during this period and there was an attempt of further agrarian expansion in Goalpara region during the mid-19th century. This expansion of agriculture is directly related to the change in the economic dynamics of the region. Here, one has to remember that Goalpara is much west of the region where Gunnel Cederlof has focused her research on, the Khasi hills, Jaintia hills, Cachar, Tripura and Manipur and parts of the eastern Brahmaputra valley.[643] Hence the areas that she focuses on are understandably very different. Here, unlike Goalpara there is no prior cultivation, at least not in the same scale as that of the afore-mentioned region.[644] Here, the focus of the British was more on the trading network, which has been discussed in the last chapter. Here, too, Gunnel Cederlof brings in the argument about the changing dynamics of political control in the region that one see after the Burmese war, though the process in itself was something that was taking place from an earlier period.[645] An aspect that perhaps both Gunnel Cederlof and Sanghamitra Misra has ignored is the changing nature of colonialism in itself. The manner in which colonialism itself undergoes a change in the period, an aspect that has been discussed by Bipan Chandra in his work Essays on Colonialism, as stages of colonialism.[646] Perhaps if both Cederlof and Misra would have looked into this matter they would have had a perhaps more concrete answer to the question of why, in Misra's case migration suddenly increases in the 19th century and in Cederlof's case why political control changes in the 19th century.

Lipokmar Dzuvichu's works on the colonial projects, despite being a detailed account of road building ventures of the colonial state in the Naga hills and its impact on the people as well as the changing spatial understanding of the region. However he has not discussed the reasons why the state takes part in these projects only in the mid-19th century and fails to discuss why this projects doesn't take place in the early half of the colonial presence in the region (again a very long sentence; break it up).[647] The reasons why the roads are built, an aspect that Dzuvicbu himself has stressed on are the fact that the British needed the hills to

[643] Gunnel Cederlof, op-cit, pp 22
[644] Sangmitra Misra, op-cit p 37
[645] Gunnel Cederlof, op-cit, p 42
[646] Bipan Chandra, *The Stages of Colonialism*, Essays on Colonialism, Orient Longman, 2005, New Delhi, pp 34-36
[647] Lipokmar Dzuvichu, op-cit, p 45

open up for colonial rule and presence. Yet, the fact still remained that the British had been in the region for quite some time, what made the conditions in which they had to now build roadway and other colonial projects in the region? This change in policy is something that is not discussed at all. There is a sense that these projects suddenly came into existence without a corresponding dealing with the process that was happening earlier.

The works of Dzuvichu and to a certain extent Sangamitra Misra's deal with the impact of what happened after the change from an earlier form of colonial control to the later form. The latter half of colonialism, as was discussed in the last chapter witnessed not just the change of political control but also that of economic control.[648] This was the period when territoriality as a form of colonial power came about, which was a direct result of two aspects,[649] one was when Burmese threat even after the 1st Anglo Burmese war, was still considered a grave threat, and these changed the security paradigm of the Northeast frontier for the British.[650] Earlier, the main security concern was control of strategic spaces. Now the idea was control of larger regions. The blank spaces in the maps now began to be filled up and the forests and wastelands that were earlier not of concern began to come to the fore.[651] The next change came with tea being discovered in the region, first was the fact that tea now made the Northeast a part of the global trading network; the second was the fact that the tea industry was a completely new form of an economic structure.[652] Since it was an industry, it needed labour throughout the year, which meant a labour detached from agriculture.[653] This last fact was important as the British had to look for new forms of labour from elsewhere. This need for labour and a corresponding need to control the new lands then caused the British to get new groups to come and settle in the region.

The Gorkha state and out migration

Due to the factors mentioned in Chapter 1, the exodus out of the Gorkha state had assumed alarming levels. An order issued by Prime Minister Jang Bahadur Rana to

[648] Gunnel Cederlof, op-cit, p 48
[649] Jilangamba Yengkhom Singh, op-cit, p 76
[650] Gunnel Cederlof, op-cit, p 24
[651] Ibid, p 31
[652] Jayeeta Sharma Lazy Natives, Coolie Labour and the Assam Tea industry. Modern Asian Studies Journal 43/6,
Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp 1289-1310
[653] Ibid, p 1290

Colonel Krishnadhwaj Kunwar in June 1860 regarding emigration from the Eastern Hill region' says enables us to gauge the intensity of the situation:

> 'We have received reports that you are leaving your Kipat [communally owned] lands and going abroad because of the pressure of money lenders and the oppression of amalis [court officials], revenue collectors and government officials . . . '.

To summarize the arguments in chapter one, the sudden and exorbitant demands for revenue, gradual takeover of communal lands, imposition of rent or *raika*r by the state, and its imposition of corvee known as the *jhara* to fill labour requirements increased in the second half of the 19th century. This led to the impoverishmet of an poor peasantry and downgraded their economic position. In some households agricultural production declined owing to a shortage of labour. The policy of the Gorkha state giving land grants, *birta* and *jagir*, to the high castes continued in the late 19th century, which deprived the kirats of the lands. Importantly, it led to the emergence of a class of high-caste landlords who employed members of the same ethnic groups to cultivate their lands. The landlords appropriated higher rents and larger shares of production, causing a disparity in access to resources and overall depletion of the land and forest resources, which in turn encouraged the Gurungs and the Magars to seek opportunities elsewhere.[654] Many of the Khas and Thakuri who owned very small holdings or no holdings at all also looked to the British army. But under the Ranas (hereditary prime ministers who ruled Nepal from 1846 to 1951), the majority of the land revenue was appropriated for the upkeep of an over indulgent appropriating exploiting class. Landlords also became insecure as they held lands at the discretion of the central government, which could renew or confiscate the grants at will. Such was the resentment that, for most part of its early rule, the Gorkha state was in a continuous state of social and political uprising

[654] Jayeeta Sharma, op-cit, pp 35-38

Darjeeling and its role as the first destination of the migrants from the Gorkha state

Hooker, a contemporary observer of the nineteenth century noted on his way from the Gorkha kingdom to Darjeeling, the British administrative town in the eastern Himalayan region,

> Many Limbus enlist at the Dorjiling, which the Lepchas never do; and the rajah of Nepal employs them in his army, where, however, they seldom obtain promotion, this being reserved for soldiers of Hindoo tribes. Latterly Jung Bahadur levied a force of 6000. Who were cantoned at katmandoo, where the cholera breaking out, carried off some hundreds, causing many families who dreaded conscription to flock to Dorjiling.[655]

This statement by Hooker shows the various manner and dynamics that caused migrations to take place.

The importance of Darjeeling in this westward migration to the Northeast frontiers cannot be stressed enough. It formed a midway point between the Gorkha territories and the Northeast for the migrating groups from the former regions. Dorjiling (abode of the thunder God, Dorji-ling) fort was once the capital of the Chogyal ruler of Sikkim and a stronghold of the dynasty against the turbulent Lepcha tribes of the region. When the Gorkha army invaded the Sikkim territories in the late 18th century, the Dorjiling fort was overrun. Since then, the fort and another fort known as Nagari formed the stronghold of the Gorkha rule in the region. In the aftermath of the 1814-1816, Anglo Gorkhas as per the treaty of Titilia,1816, the region was restored to the Sikkim ruler. In 1835, the British looking for a summer retreat and a sanatorium from the heat and humidity of Bengal plains asked for the 'gift' of the Dorjiling and its surrounding regions, which was about 88,320 acres with a populations of 100 houses. Yet, in about 10 years it was reported that

> 10,000 houses had settled there. People from all over country flocked here. It having become a great market, the slaves and

[655] .S.S. O Malley Bengal District Gazetteer : Darjeeling, Logos press, 1975, pp 34-45

> menial classes of Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal - all took refuge here. The Sikkim people, not being aware of or used to the slaves and kidnap them and take them back from Darjeeling to Nepal. And the criminals from Darjeeling sought refuge in Sikkim. These things brought about an ill-will….[656]

The British then began to refer to the Darjeeling hills as the 'British Sikkim' and with the additional territories from Sikkim in 1866, the region assumed the status of an administrative districts. When it was discovered that tea could be grown here in Darjeeling, the plantations and factories began to be established here in the 1850s. The tea industry as it did in the Northeast required massive labour, which again the local population of various Lepchas were considered to be unfit. Migration to Darjeeling began to increase in the region from eastern parts of the Gorkha territories. This order issued by the Gorkha darbar in October 1868, to the local administrators in the region read

> After the separation of lands from the control of Kipat in Khambuan and Limbuan, taxes are being paid (by you) as the Khasa Brahmans (Brahmans and Chetris) pay on the basis of plough and homestead in the raikar land instead of the flat Rs 6.8 annas (per kipat homestead)…. As the laws and customs have not been well put together there, the tenants of different villages leave their families for Dorjeeling (Darjeeling) in Muglan (India) and if you Subbas and Rais come to know about this, make arrangements for the settlements of those cultivated plots left by them with other tenants and pay revenue. Do not leave the lands vacant and pay revenues and do not ask for remission on the plea that tenants have fled. If it is proved that any of you Subbas and Rais have helped tenants escape to Dorjeling Muglan, you will be fined as per rules and laws."[657]

[656] Thubot Namgyal and Yeshe Drolma, *The History of Sikkim*, Translated from the Tibetan by Kazi Dawa Samdup. , M. S 1908. P 12
[657] Royal order issued on October 1868, by the Gorkha Darbar, Regmi Research Series No. 12

As can be thus seen the people leaving the lands was already becoming a serious problem especially in the eastern parts where the Kirats were leaving for better prospects in the British held territories. In 1869, the Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling noted about "the increasing immigration of Nepalese". The first regular census of Darjeeling was taken in 1871-72 under C.F Magrath, [658] though the Bengal Census report then admitted its limitation when it stated that the task of taking census was difficult in Darjeeling because of the absence of regular villages, scattered population and illiteracy. Though W.W. Hunter remarked

> "with regard to the accuracy of the census, the Deputy Commissioner is of the opinion that the returns are fairly accurate for the old hill territory of Darjeeling, but they are incorrect for the terai Sub Division and for the Damsang tract (Kalimpong) to the east of the Tista."[659]

C.F Magrath's district Compilation of Darjeeling states that the total population of the district in 1872 was 94,712. The interesting aspect was that the census had divided the population into 'ethnical division' of the population, the 'Nepalis' under 41 different heads numbered 25,781. Interestingly the Tamangs/Murmis who numbered around 6570 were kept in a separate unit, and termed as aboriginal tribes. This was probably because the Tamangs/Murmis had migrated a lot earlier. Hunter though remarked that "including the number of Murmis…the number of Nepalis in Darjeeling would be raised to 32,338. The other sub groups of the Murmis such as the Synagden, Moktan and others almost numbering 12 were shown separately, and if they are also added to the group compromising the groups coming from the Gorkha dominions, it makes the figure 32,350, which was about 34 percent of the district.[660] The Kirats formed about 12 % of the population termed as "Nepali" in the Darjeeling district. This number was followed by the Tamangs and Magars. By 1901, the number of Kirats had risen to about 20% of all Nepalis of Darjeeling. Hooker noted in this diary that the Kirats overwhelming formed the Darjeeling Sebundy Corps of Sapper and Miners "entirely composed of

[658] W. W Hunter, Op-cit, p 65
[659] As found in W.W Hunter,A Statistical Account of Darjeeling, 1872, op-cit, p 67
[660] Ibid p 69

Nepalis", thus performing the same role that they did in the Northeast frontier, here too the local groups were considered to be too unfit for such tasks.[661]

Map Source
www.mapsofindia.com › North-East India Maps

In the census of 1891, 88,000 persons on Darjeeling were recorded to have been born in Nepal, where the total population was said to have born in Nepal, a huge jump from what the figures mentioned in 1872. The total population of the district in 1891 was said to have been 2,23,037. As a matter of fact the total number of all Nepalis within British India in 1891 was 2,63,391, which in 20 years rose to 2,80,246. The migration from the Gorkha dominions during this period was phenomenal.[662] This created further problems with the Gorkha state since a perpetual shortage of man power was beginning to felt as large parts of Jagir and Raikar lands were left uncultivated. Village headmen began to get prosecuted for the loss of population.[663] The other aspect of this migration was that it was not seasonal but a permanent migration. This was because of the fact that people who left Nepal were criminals to the Gorkha state. As they began to persecute the families of the people who had left, a second form of migration began to take place where the people

[661] Ibid p 68
[662] Captain J.G Hathorn A handbook of Darjeeling, Calcutta 1863, p. 85 ff
[663] Royal Order to the Subba of Morang, January 1871,Regmi Research series, No 21

who left the villages left with their entire families.[664] Thus there were villages in eastern parts of the Gorkha dominion that were completely abandoned. There could be an argument to suggest that the various groups moved from the feudal set up in the Gorkha state where they were peasants and moved into Darjeeling as industrial proletariat in the tea industry and further into the Northeast as proletariat in the mining industry. This form of settlements they came to establish is what shall be discussed in the next section.

The Migration to the Frontier

Though migration has always been a feature of human existence, especially in the Indian subcontinent, the colonial period witnessed what can only be described as the greatest human movement and settlement of people resulting in the transfer and re-distribution of diverse groups throughout the region. The commercialization and industrialization of the economy by the colonial state especially during the latter half of the 19th century further fed into this phenomenal movement of the people.[665] After the British controlled large parts of Assam, the colonial government, as in the other parts of its empire, caused a redistribution of the population and it was in this redistribution of population primarily due to the colonial needs that a large number of Gorkhas and Nepalese migrated to this region.

As has been mentioned before, territoriality became a standard form of control in the Northeast especially in the latter half of the 19th century, hence there was a need to control the regions.[666] Further as explained earlier, the colonial state resorted to ethnic policing, which was a policy meant to settle down groups that they believed were their allies and further who could also provide labour for the new industrial ventures that were sprouting in the region.The depopulation during the period of civil wars and Burmese invasions left 'vast tracts of waste land throughout the province.' This can be seen in a report by an official:

> Every encouragement should be given to the immigrants to come and settle in the province. In an industry-less country, Assam has no other option rather than to

[664] Report from the Subba of Vijaypur to the Gorkha Darbar in Kathmandu, in June 1867. Regmi Research Series, no 21 And the Royal orders of Gorkha Darbar issued on August 1867. Regmi Research Series no 21
[665] Jilamgambani Yengkhom Singh, op-cit, p 45
[666] Ibid, p 12

> increase in land revenue. Lands were leased out to the people in favourable terms.[667]

As this joint report on Assam by captain Francis Jenkins and Lieutenant Robert Pemberton in August of 1820 also makes clear,

> An increase in our cultivation and villages is beyond all doubt of the greatest importance to the present as well as future prosperity of this barren province and might be accomplished by admitting monied speculating foriegners to hold lands on a long lease and encouraging Manipuries and Gorkhas and others who may feel inclined to colonise.[668]

Apart from the various expeditions of the colonial government against the 'wild tribes' of Northeast India, large-scale lumbering and clearing of forestlands for settlement, agriculture and plantation required hardy, pliant labourers. The discovery of tea (and later coal and oil) in Assam created avenues for capitalist enterprise, which were largely dependent on manual labour. Gorkhas perfectly fitted this labour need, and they were attracted in large numbers to the forests, road construction sites, mines, fields, plantations and so forth The local people were considered neither as hardy nor as pliant as the Nepali labourers, and were not ready to take advantage of the opportunities that the British rule created in the region.[669] Thus, the colonial government soon came to rely on these hardy labourers from Nepal who were willing to do anything for a living and for any small dispensations. In the later part of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the Nepalis worked as labourers in the tea gardens throughout the province and in the oil refineries at, what is now known as, Margherita and Digboi and in the coalmines and sawmills in Upper Assam and Meghalaya. The continuing migration of the Nepalis into the region can perhaps be best explained by Massey's theory of migration networks, which was earlier called 'chain migration' and has

[667] Foreign political Consultation June 1831: No 09, National Archives of India
[668] Foreign Secret Consultation October 1832, no 114, forming the baisis of the Pembertons Report on the eastern frontier of British Lushai, Calcutta 1835
[669] Jilamgamba Singh Yengkhom,op-cit, p 68

recently been called 'social capital' Migration networks are defined as sets of impersonal relations that link migrants with relatives, friends or fellow compatriots at home. [670]They share information, provide financial and personal assistance, and facilitate employment and so forth to the incoming people from their villages. Such networks not only reduce the cost of settling down and the uncertainty of migration but also encourage others to migrate. Social capital refers to 'the connections needed to migrate safely and cost effectively. The main concern of the British during this period was two. One was to try and maintain control of the regions and ensure the "raids" of the tribes could be contained and ensure that all forms of labour that the various colonial projects in the region demanded could be fulfilled.[671]

There were also other reasons why the British needed new settlements in the region, one of which was to clear the large lands that were needed for the tea plantations that were always expanding. This was why grazing began to be encouraged in a large way. These new changes caused new settlements to take place.[672] Later, however, the British also insisted in commercializing other forms of activities that had so far remained untaxed. Hence, grazing which was free from time immemorial in Assam was taxed.[673]

With this idea of encouraging both settlements and land reclamation, the East India Company introduced the Wasteland Rules on 6th March, 1838.[674] According to this rule, one-fourth of a land grant was to remain revenue-free in perpetuity. The remaining portion of the grant, too, was to remain revenue-free for initial five to twenty years, the period according to the nature of the waste land concerned. In the initial period of the Gorkhas being used in the Northeast one hears of several officials talking about the benefits of having the retired Gorkha soldiers settle in the region.

> They would bring superior energy, arts and industry into the hills and secure perfect tranquillity to the country and confidence to future colonists. The known fidelity, bravery,

[670] L.S.S. O Malley Bengal District Gazetteer : Darjeeling, Logos press, 1975, pp 34-45.
[671] Lipokmar Dzuivichu, op-cit, p 90
[672] Jayeeta Sharma, op-cit, p 1299
[673] T.B. Subba, op-cit, p 35
[674] Political Consultation, 1838, No 16, National Archives of India

> intelligence and labourers habits of this people would prepare the way for Europen settlers in the only extensive tract of country in India where a fine climate is combined with unbounded fertility, a great diversity of situation and proximity of markets.[675]

However, this actually never could be done in a major way as the number of Gorkhas and Nepalis were always short of the actual demand that was there for them, an aspect that has been discussed in the last few chapters.[676] The 'Large scale' immigration of Nepali and Gorkha into the Northeast frontier began only at the end of the 19th century, when the various conditions of the Gorkha state caused the people to move out and was further buttressed by the fact that the British colonial state created the conditions in which the need for migrant population became important. The British official view toward the people of the Assam plains were that they are 'lazy', 'opium addicted' and 'indolent' and of those in the hills were "savage", "warlike" and "uncivilized" [677] which was then contrasted with the Gorkhas who were "hardworking", "loyal", "disciplined" and something that is perhaps not as stressed but the fact that they were not seen as savages. This contrast was the main reason that encouraged the surplus Nepali and Gorkha population to immigrate to the Northeast frontier.[678]

This demand for Gorkhas and Nepalis is something we see increasing through the 19th and 20th centuries. As the various projects and degrees of control kept increasing,[679] the nature of colonial governance kept getting complex, which then required them to maintain a labour force for all and sundry work, from clearing forests to lumbering to domestic help, which was effectively provided by the 'loyal' and 'disciplined' Nepali. The recruitment of groups who traditionally provided the traditional military labour force in police and military brought the Magars, Gurungs, Thakurs and Khas and later the Rai and

[675] H.K Barjpujari, Francis Jenkins Report on the North East frontiers Guwahati, 1995, pp 154-55
[676] Foreign political Consulttions28 February 1846: No 142
[677] Foreign Political Consultations, 1 june 1852, no 98
[678] Military Consultations, 13 September, 1828, nos. 4-9
[679] W.W.Hunter, A statistical Account of Assam, 1880 p 67

Limbus, known as the Gorkhas to the region.[680] However, the promise of vast expanse of greenery, dense forests and hills, abundance of wastelands which was full of lush green vegetation, which provided a very good stable salary brought the other groups known as the Nepalis into the region. This was one of the important migratory movements took place in the subcontinent during the 19th and 20th centuries.

Further, the Gorkhas who were brought to Northeast frontier, in different regiments were settled by British after their retirement so that it would be easier for the British to recruit their sons tp the army.

ASSAM.

In Assam, the retired Gorkha soldiers as well as new immigrants from Nepal settled in the region in the latter half of 19th century. The first Gorkha settlement is believed to be Burachapori, which was set up in 1860. The colonial government in Assam encouraged the Gorkhas and the Nepalis to settle in the heavily forested regions so that it may be cleared for the ever-extending tea plantation. In 1890 there was massive Gorkha settlement in the districts of Darrang, Sibsagar, Kamrup, Nowgong and Lakhimpur.[681] The Gorkhas in this region however did not cultivate rice, as they did in the Lushai and Khasi hills, but cultivated sugarcane. This part is important since one has to remember that the new tea gardens needed the land to be cleared of forests so as to allow the land had to be cleared and usedused for.[682] Thus, the need to settle down the new immigrants in this new area would serve two purposes. The first was to use them to secure the region and to prepare the region for the ever-expanding tea industry in the region.[683] The reason for the choosing sugarcane farming was probably because of the fact that there was already an existing food grain surplus production in the region; producing a cash crop was perhaps more lucrative than it was growing food grains. There are no documents in the period that adds any clarity to this issue, but the assumption

[680] Kumar Pradhan, op-cit, p 221
[681] Assam Secretariat Records, Police Proceedings, June 1886, nos. 15-20 Assam state Archives
[682] Assam Secretariat Records Finiancial A Proceedings, February 1890, No 45-46Assam state Archives
[683] Jayeeta Sharma, Op-cit, p 1297

that it was probably because it was more lucrative does seem a plausible explanation.

As mentioned earlier, the number of migration from the Gorkha dominions began in the latter half of the 19th century, which probably explains why the settlements begin to come up from the 1860s onwards. Interestingly, the groups that are settled here are described as Nepali settlements and not as Gorkha,[684]

The number of the Nepalis is given by W.W Hunter who writes that by 1872 the number of people defined as Nepali speaking in the Brahmaputra was as follows[685]

Name of the district	Number of Nepalis settlers
1) Sibsagar	476
2) Lakhimpur	260
3) Kamrup	125
4) Darrang	87
5) Goalpara	37
6) Nowgong	1
Total	98

[684] W.W. Hunter. A statistical account of Assam…p 78
[685] Ibid p 79

	3

This figure when compared with the numbers in Darjeeling in the same period is obviously small. As mentioned earlier Darjeeling district in the same period had over 20,000 Nepali speaking population.[686] This was probably owing to the proximity of Darjeeling to the Gorkha state. As the number of people in the Darjeeling kept on increasing the people migrated further east from there, where there was an abundance of land. The British documents attest to the fact that the incoming Nepalis were coming via Darjeeling.

The number of Nepali speaking people settled in Brahmaputra valley increased almost threefold in the 1881as shown by the figures below:[687]

Name of the Place	Number of Nepalis
1) Brahmaputra valley	2521
2) Surma Valley	499
3) Hill tracts	1465
Total	448

The numbers increased dramatically after twenty years, in 1901. [688]

Brahmaputra valley	13391
Surma valley	694
Manipur	658

[686] W.W Hunter A statistical Account of Darjeeing…p 67
[687] Alexannder Mackenzie, The North East frontier of india
[688] Census of India, 1901, Vol II

Hill tracts (Lushai hills, North Cachar hills, the Naga hills,, Garo Hills and the Khasi Jaintia Hills)	5450
Total	20193

The reasons for the phenomenal rise of the Nepali settlers in the region was also to do with the fact that by 1901, the British direct administration of various regions had increased and settlement as a strategic policy of maintaining control was being used.[689]

The chief commissioner of Assam reported in 1886:

> To settle the wastelands in Assam with people and increase the revenue collection of the province, the Government had been making serious efforts to encourage immigration to Assam from the neighbouring districts of Bengal. As far as the Nepali were concerned, besides grant of waste lands on favourable terms, the Nepali immigrants were reported to have been given pecuniary assistance for their onward journey to upper Assam."[690]

At Lakhimpur, Darrang and Sibsagar, sugarcane cultivation had undergone considerable expansion due to the Nepali settlers. The Nepalis were given land in the middle of the jungle and, usually on the bank of the river, which they cleared and grew sugarcane.[691] After a few years they would move to a new location leaving the old site, cleared and ready for extension of the tea plantations. The jaggery that they produced was in high demand, so much so that in 1886, 10 sugar mill workers were imported to Assam from Sahabad (district of Bihar) to train the cultivators in improved methods of sugar manufacture. Soon, mills were established and the sugarcane was almost

[689] Gunnel Cederlog, op-cit, p 67
[690] Assam Secretariat, Financial A Proceedings, July 1886, No 114, Assam state archives
[691] Assam Secretariat Financial A Proceedings, 1889, No 123, Assam state archives

entirely grown by the Nepalis who, then, supplied to the mills and soon became a very important industry.[692]

Towards the end of the 19th century, there was a global increase in the demand of rubber. As was the case with tea, oil, and coal, another commodity that was in demand in the global markets was found in the region further adding to the large scale interest in the region. Rubber industry became very popular in the region with the Marwaris acting as the middlemen who usually bought the rubber lac from the tribes who operated beyond the inner line. The Nepalis were preferred as a reliable source of labour for the rubber extraction.[693] Soon there were more Nepalis who were extracting rubber than most of the other groups. This was also largely due to the fact that the Nepalis were crossing the inner line easily, which became a major reason for complaint amongst them.[694] As the rubber extraction began to get popular, some of the Nepalis began to extract and sell the lac themselves to firms in Calcutta, bypassing the Marwaris and establishing the trade themselves.[695] It seems they were quite successful in the trade, which caused more Nepalis to migrate from Darjeeling in the hope of taking part in the lucrative trade

The occupational structure of the settled Gorkhas and the Nepalis in the Assam plains seems to have not just remained confined to agriculture but also expanded into grazing. The vast expanse of green dense forests and hills, abundance of land and the 'Chars' of the Brahmaputra, and the need of the plantations to have forests cleared gave grazing a new push as one of the primary means of occupation for the Gorkhas and Nepalis exceeding that of agriculture and even service in the armed forces. Though grazing in the pre-colonial and the early part of the colonial government seems to have been a tax free occupation, in the latter half of the 19th century so large were the number of the Gorkha and Nepali grazers that the colonial British government imposed a tax on grazing. Accordingly, in 1886 the tax of 4 annas per buffalo was imposed as a grazing tax, which was raised to 8 annas in 1888 in Lakhimpur

[692] Assam Secretariat Financial A Proceedings, 1890, No 125, Assam state archives
[693] Report on the Forest Administration in the province of Assam, 1892-1893
[694] Home police A Proceedings October 1887, no 103-105,
[695] Assam State Secretariat Financial A Proceeding s June 1898, nos 23-26

district.[696] In 1890 definite instructions were issued to a levy of grazing fee at the rate of 8 annas per buffalo and 4 annas for other horned cattle.[697] The continuous Nepali migration in the province as a grazier, increased the grazing fee from time to time. In 1907 grazing tax was raised to Re. 1 per buffalo.[698] This rate of grazing fee was again raised to Rs. 3 per head per buffalo and 6 annas for other horned cattle in the some provinces. The majority of these graziers in the province were Nepali. According to A. Guha, "the overwhelming bulk of these cattle, excepting a few hundred, all were Nepali professional graziers." [699]

Henry Cotton, the Chief Commissioner in Assam, noted in 1898 that many of the retired Gorkha soldiers were fond of settling down in Assam, and preferred cattle grazing to cultivation. In the un-classed forest, the ryots were allowed unlimited grazing, free of payment for their cattle but the Gorkhas who reared cattle for dairy were charged for the grazing privilege. In the year 1892-93 grazing fees amounting to Rs 6772 was realized almost entirely from the Gorkhas. However, in an attempt to stop forest fires a part of the reserved forest was left open for the Gorkha graziers. For example in Goalpara division of Assam, 105 sq. metres of reserved forests were left open. Apart from the ex-soldiers a large number of Gorkhas migrated directly from Nepal to Assam. The Nepali migration to this region continued through the 19th century and by the end of the 1895, there was about 21,000 Gorkhas settled in Assam.[700]

The Chapori belt of the Brahmaputra, which is an alluvial formation, was most suitable as a grazing area and the Burha Chapari of Tezpur was declared a professional grazing reserve as early as in 1881. The grazing areas of the Nepali community spread across large areas and were owned by leading moneylenders or powerful Nepalis of the area. In the Goalpara division of Assam, the Nepalis were left with 105 square metres of reserved forests open for grazing their cattle in return for their assistance with fire protection.[701] The

[696] Report on the Administration of Assam, 1889-1890, p 24
[697] Report on the Administration of Assam , 1890-1891, p 12
[698] Report on the Administration of Assam, 1907-1908

[699] Amalendu Guha, *Planter Raj to Swaraj*, new Delhi, pp 91-90
[700]Foreign Political consultation, 1899, no 21
[701] Report on the Administraion of Assam, 1881-1882, p 34

Nepalis also settled in the char areas.[702] [703] These were names such as Forse Tapu, Rani Tapu, Shordar Tapu. The name 'Forse' in Nepali means 'pumpkin' or 'mitha lao' in Assamese. An officer of the Forest Department mentioned that there were large pumpkin plantations there.[704] Another explanation offered was that the char was named after a popular and rich milkman or khutiwallah, whose name was Forse. In other words, the name Forse Tapu stood for Forse Khutiwallah's Char. Similar explanations are offered for the other names. What emerges from these are the Khuntiwallahs, the Nepali milkmen.[705] A 1943 special report by the Assam government sets out its assessment of three major groups of professional grazing reserves in the whole of Assam: the Kallang or the Kopili basin, the Brahmaputra Char and Chapori reserves, and the submontane grazing reserves. Although these reserves accommodated Assamese graziers. Considerably large numbers of Nepali graziers settled there too. In the other states of Northeast India too, the Nepali herders and graziers emerged as an important economic group. [706]

In the early 1920s, A. W. Botham, Chief Secretary to the Governor Sir William Marris noted, '

> The attraction in Assam for the Nepalis are buffalo grazing and timber work, and when so many Nepalis are visiting Assam for these purposes, it is most unlikely that the recruitment of 300 for the Assam Rifles is going to make any difference one way or another' [707]

In 1922, A. W. Botham received advice that:

> " It is rather farfetched to suggest that the prospect of employment in the Assam Rifles has anything to do with the advent of the Gorkhas into Assam for either temporary settlement, in search of work, or to make their homes in the province. The majority of those, who come here seeking

[702] Report of Forest Administration, 1895 – 1896, p. 13
[703] Sajal Nag, *Fie-salization of Nepalis in the Northeast*, in A.C Sinha, op-cit, pp. 184 – 93.
[704] Ibid, p 35
[705] Ibid, p 36
[706] Report on the Administration of Assam,1943-1944, p 13
[707] Assam secretariat Records, home A proceedings, 1920 no 16,

> employment come primarily to work as Gwalas (milkmen), others are imported by sawing contractors. It is interesting to see which groups usually take up the occupation of the Gwala, it is usually not the groups that are designated as the Gorkhas, rather they are mostly those groups that are called the Nepalis." [708]

Nepali herders and marginal farmers continued to trickle down to Assam in the last quarter of the 19th century and first quarter of the twentieth centuries. Some had taken to cultivation also. A. C. Sinha more recently observed, 'As far as the plains from the Bengal Duars to the Barak Valley are concerned, in terms of Nepali settlement, a distinct trend may be noted. The less skilful and marginal farmers and pastoralists turned to pastoral grazing on the hilly and forested tracts of the region' [709]

In a report to the Foreign Secretary of the Government of Assam dated 13 May 1930, the Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam advised,

> The greater numbers of numerous Nepali graziers in Assam are Jaisis and Upadhyay Brahmins or Chettris of non-martial classes.[710]

In the 19th and 20th centuries, religious as well as economic reasons forced the Brahmins and Chhetris to be more dependent on livestock and dairy farming than on other possible income sources. The Brahmins especially the Upadhyaya Brahmins in particular received gifts of cows in funerary ceremonies. The Nepalis believed that if they gifted a cow to a priest the dead person could cross the Baitarani (a river) by holding its tail and reach heaven.[711] It is no wonder, then, to find that among the Nepalis, the Bahuns engaged very strongly in dairy farming. The Gurungs and Magars, who belonged to a different social category, were mostly recruited in the army, but took up dairy farming in Northeast India after retirement from service. Since they had a tradition of pastoralism, it was easy for them to fall back. One of the

[708] Assam Secretariat records Home A Proceedings, 1922, no 15
[709] A.C Sinha, op-cit, p 45
[710] Assam Secreterait records Foreign A Proceedings, 1930, No 22,
[711] A.C Sinha, op-cit, p 46

main features of army service was that Magars, Gurungs, Rais and Limbus were recruited, but not Brahmins and Chhetris. Hence Magars, Gurungs, Rais and Limbues were Gorkhas but Chettris and Bahuns were Nepali. During the Rana regime, members of these ethnic groups joined the army in India to jettison their low economic positions and life of discrimination inside Nepal, for high ranking military positions. [712].

As early as 1916, Mr Arbuthnot, officiating as the enquiry officer on the question of grazing in Assam, filed a report on the distribution of milk and milk produce, advising, 'Dahi harias (curd potters) and other middlemen made large profits out of their contract rates for milk. Paikari (middlemen) milkmen and villagers profit by bringing ghee from the khutis to Nalbari and Rangia station. Villagers generally buy milk and dahi (curd) cheap for their feasts and ceremonies and rely largely on the graziers for their plough cattle'[713] In the same report, he mentioned that 'Milk is sold wherever there is ready demand for it; in thickly populated Assamese areas it is sold in the form of dahi at hats and bazaars (open air village markets). In khutis situated in remoter parts, milk is mostly converted into ghee (clarified butter)'[714] Besides supplying milk and milk produce, the graziers also supplied draught animals for the plough and the cart. The special officer in charge of examining professional grazing reserves in Assam in 1943 recognized these activities in his observation that, 'When one sees the villages drained away of all spare cattle for the army, one can consider the Assamese cultivators lucky enough in having the graziers animals near him as a standby. And if these animals were to play their part well they must have reasonable facilities for full and healthy growth'[715]. The report also indicated that cattle grazing provided supplementary income to a number of people engaged in the distribution of milk, milk produce and draught animals, claiming that, 'Trade in milk and milk produce gives employment to an appreciable number of Assamese people'. The Nepalis were therefore allowed to colonize the vast wastelands and jungle plains and function as dairy herders and graziers. The Nepali herders and graziers settled initially in the wastelands

[712] Kumar Pradhan, op-cit, p 47
[713] Report of the Special Officer Appointed for the Examination of the Professional Grazing Reserves in the Assam Valley, 1944, p. 2.
[714] Ibid p 4
[715] Ibid p 5

near the river Brahmaputra, where fodder and water are available more easily than elsewhere. The areas to the north of the river consisted of large areas of grasslands more suitable for cattle than buffaloes. [716]

Massey also suggested that migration networks be seen as a form of social capital, in so far as they are social relations that permit access to other goods of economic significance, such as employment or higher wages.[717] Many of these migrants move because others with whom they are connected have migrated before. Further, these networks have a multiplier effect, as the presence of a brother or uncle acts as an anchor, a dependent factor in the host country. The migrant population tends to grow larger and denser, as every move constitutes a resource for those who stay back and facilitate further moves, which in turn widens the networks. These social networks also explain the continuation of migration independently from the cause that led to the initial movement.[718] The presence of a large population of Nepalis in different parts of the region employed in the Assam Rifles in Shillong, Indian Oil Corporations in Duliajan and the Assam Oil Corporation in Digboi, in trade and business all over the region, and in particular as agriculturists and dairy farmers, encouraged new migrants into the region..[719]

By the end of the 19th century, as the British control extended over the Lushai hills, Naga hills, Khasi hills and the Manipur the settlements of retired Gorkhas practising dairy farming also emerged in all these places.[720] The Gorkhas settlements were set up for the same reasons as they were put up in Assam.

Manipur

The origins of Gorkha and Nepali settlement dates back to the reign of Maharaja Chandrakirti (1850-1885) and his attempts at the improvement of the Imphal-Mao road, making it fit for bullock cart. Good diplomatic relations with the British was important as there were reciprocal co-operation in the matter of military assistance

[716] Ibid p 7
[717]Massey, D.M., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A. and Taylor, J.E. (1998)
Worlds in motion: understandinginternational migration at the end of the millennium
(Oxford, Clarendon Press, p 23
[718] Ibid p 35
[719] Lopinant
[720] Jilagambani Yengkhom Sing, op-cit, pp 120-130

with the British.[721] It said that the Gorkhas were settled there during this period although evidences of a large scale settlement is very rare. As a matter of fact, any sort of actual migration is actually hard to see. There are varying accounts of a "Nepali village" settled in north side of Korengei 9 kms, North of Imphal on the northern side of Imphal somewhere in 1881. Yet, the first documented accounts of Gorkha settlement of the Gorkhas comes in during the palace revolt when the 43rd, 42nd, 44th regiments of the Assam Corps which were composed of entirely Gorkhas were brought to Manipur.[722] The Gorkha and Nepali settlements comes up during this period with the British encouraging them the former Gorkha soldiers to settle them down. There were several Gorkha settlements that came up during this period, Chingmeirong, Mantripukhri, New Checkon, Pangei Kanglatombi and Kangpokpi were the ones that were established by 1900.[723] There were further settlements that came up in Kekmai and most of them in the initial period were mostly engaged in agriculture and then by the early 20th century they had almost entirely shifted to grazing of cattle. As in Assam, grazing which was until now a non-regulated and outside the preview of the state was now a taxable profession. Towards the end of the 19th century the President of Manipur state Durbar (Hill office) demarcated Kanglatombi- Kangpokpi as a grazing reserve for the Gorkhas and Nepalis. It spread 15 miles in length and 12 miles in breadth and as many 200 goths were established in the region[724]

In 1919 a ground in Irang valley extending about 12 miles was given to the graziers to establish cattle farms. It is believed there were about 165 goths in the region. By the early 20th century the number of Nepalis and Gorkhas in the region had steadily increased.[725]

In 1919, F. F. Pearson as President of the Manipur State Durbar (Hill Office) in Manipur issued an order for an area of 140 square miles to be carved out as the Kanglatombi – Kangpokpi Gorkha Reserve, to concentrate cowsheds and Gurkha settlers in one place.[726] This move was preceded by an increase in taxes. As tax collection was the primary concern of the British administration

[721] R.K JHaljit Singh, A short History of Manipuri, 1965, p 73
[722] A History of Manipuri police, (1891-1992) Manipur state Archives
[723] Manipur Administrative report for the year 1900
[724] Order issued from the president, Manipur state Durbar, standing Order no. 2
[725] Order regarding the graziers at the Head of irang 23-4-1919
[726] Manipur Administrative Report, 1933, p 23

in the hill areas of the state, the good amounts of tax collected from Nepali settlements encouraged the British administration. Consequently, British political agents and the Durbar of Manipur legalized Nepali settlements and the establishment of goths (cowsheds). In 1920, Gorkha settlements and graziers' goths (165) were legalized in the Irang valley.[727] In May 1933, C. Gimson, Political Agent in Manipur and President of the Manipur State Durbar, permitted settlement of 19 Gorkha families at Maram. And in 1946, a government order decreed that the above-mentioned Kanglatombi – Kangpokpi reserve could no longer be used for grazing, and opened this land to settlement and colonization. All Gorkha graziers had to move to Irang Valley, which was declared a professional grazing reserve for Nepali settlers.

In the Khasi Hills of Meghalaya, the Nepali herders were allowed grazing rights by the Syiems, or chiefs, who derived additional revenue from the grazing fees they collected from the Nepali herders. Similar situations prevailed in almost all the states of Northeast India.[728]

The Gorkhas were encouraged to engage in cultivation in the frontier. It has been argued that it was the Gorkhas who introduced terraced farming in the region. If one looks at the settlement pattern, then one sees that the Gorkhas were usually settled wherever there is a lack of surplus cultivation. Thus one sees a lot of Gurkha settlement in the Lushai hills, Khasi hills and parts of the Naga hills.[729]

Lushai Hills

As mentioned in the last chapter, the British expansion and control of territories continuously brought them in further conflict with the various groups. The Lushais intensified their raids into the plains of Cachar, Manipur and Chittagong and consequently the British had sent several expeditions such as Lister's expedition of 1849, Nuthall's expedition of 1869, two columns of expedition in 1871-72, Chin-Lushai expedition of 1889-90 and the campaign against Kairuma in 1895. These expeditions were usually dispatched as punitive measures against the offending groups. The objective of the 1871-72 expedition was more of a rescue expedition. The one in 1889-90 was a concentrated effort to bring the Lushai hills under their

[727] Manipur Administrative Report, 1936, p 24
[728] Manipuri Administrative Report, 1936, p 25
[729] Kishan Lal Pradhan, Gorkhas of Mizoram, in *Nepalis in Northeast*, Indus publishing house pp298

control and end the raids once and for all, much as they did with the Naga hills. The expedition was lead by 2/2 Gorkha Rifles under Brigadier Tregear who entered into Lunglei via Demagiri. From the North Surma Valley Military Police (SVMP) of the 2nd regiment and 3rd regiment under Superintendent Daly, Lt G.H Cole and Captain Loch moved northwards. After the campaign, the British established a permanent post at Aizawl in the North Lushai hills in 1890. The fort was garrisoned with 200 armed personnel drawn mostly from the Gorkhas and was named as the Lushai Hills Assam Rifles. In the South Brigadier Tragear built a fortified stockade in mid March at Lunglei, which too had mostly Gorkhas in them.[730]

After the establishment of these forts, the expansion and development of various colonial projects began to take place. It was decided by the colonial government that the Gorkhas be settled in the region and be encouraged to engage in agriculture. As per the records, wet rice cultivation was introduced in the region by the Gorkhas, The Gorkhas were settled in areas allotted to them and the organization of such settlements was organized on the basis of the Lushai villages. Apart from supplying the government post with food grains, the Gorkhas from these settlements also provided manpower to serve as dak-runners, chowkidars, peons, cart-drivers, traders, masons etc. for the post.[731] The Chin Hills Regulation Act of 1896 prohibited the residence of foreigners in the region, except for the Gorkhas.[732] As a result, by the end of the 19th century several Gorkha settlements sprang up in the region such as at Sairang, Lunglei, Demagiri, Champhai, Vanlaiphai, Bualpui Kolasib, Sialsuk, Thenzawl etc. Many of the Gorkhas were awarded powers and privilege at par with the Lushai chiefs, such as Dhojbir Rai who was awarded the whole Survey Tilla, Sriman Rai, the whole of Sriman Tillah, Singbir Rai had holdings in Chawnchhin, Lasing Lama was given Hrangmual and Joy Bahadur was given Tuisenhar Leilet.[733] Which gives an example of the manner of both social structure as well as nature of land rights, which it seems was modeled on the traditional Lushai village structure

[730] North and North Eastern Frontier Tribes of India Complied by the Army Headquarters, new Delhi, 1983, p p232-240
[731] Mizoram state Archive Record No. 72 Diary of the commandant Frontier poice Battliion
[732] K.S Singh People of India Mizoram Vol XXXII Calcutta, 1995 , pp 54-56
[733] Mizoram state archives record, 1895-96 nos 89-94, record on the names and settlements in the Lushai hills

The pattern of settlement here resembles what can be seen as a policy of ethnic policing. The need initially was of course to control the region, hence we see the pattern where a migrant population is immediately settled and are placed as a buffer between the turbulent tribes and the English. As Col. Lewin writes

> The country where the (Gorkha) villages were located had previously been uninhabited through fear of marauding Lushais and my idea had been to establish there good stockade villages of courageous, stiff-necked people like Gorkhas who would serve as buffer.[734]

The idea of the Nepalis and Gorkhas as a group who were strong and loyal with the aspect of being semi-civilized, who could provide the labour for the various works that the British needed in their newly established centers in the Lushai hills had been planted.

Here one notices that most of the Gorkhas and Nepalis that were settled in the region engaged in growing food grains and most of the settlements seems to have supplied the British encampments with the food grains. This makes perfect sense since there seems to be a genuine lack of production of surplus food grains.

Intially, the Gorkhas were not allowed to settle in areas outside the allotted areas, yet many Lushai chiefs were eager to have them settle in their villages. This was probably because of the knowledge of certain forms of agriculture that the Gorkhas had, and the Lushais seems to have been keen to attain its knowledge. The superintendent of Lushai hills was approached by Lushais seeking the Gorkhas to settle in their villages. The administration was at first a bit reluctant but later allowed a few Gorkhas to settle in the Lushai villages.[735]

Khasi hills

After the transfer of the headquarters of the British government in Assam, from Cherrapunjee to Shillong in 1867, most of the military units too moved their headquarters to Shillong. The Gorkhas in these regiments were also encouraged to settle in the Khasi hills and given lands to practice agriculture.[736] By the end of the

[734] Mizoram State Archive record, 1893, No 23, Report of Colonel Lewin
[735] The Superintendent of the Lushai hills order no 31.
[736] Political Consultation, 1 Jan 1901, No 38

19th century, there were 1722 domicile Gorkhas living in the region. As in the Lushai hills, here too several Gorkha settlements emerged such as at Mawprem, Jhalupara and Barapathar in Shillong and Nongstoin, Nongspung and Nongkhlaw in the Khasi hills outside Shillong.[737]

With the transfer of the capital to Shillong in 1867 the various Gorkha units also shifted. The Gorkhas who retired also stayed back in Shillong, who made up the initial Gorkha settlements in the region.[738] They were followed in large numbers by the Gorkhas and Nepalis and others when the mass migration began to take place. Most of the Gorkha settlements came up around the regimental centres and the rest of the Nepalis who came later also set themselves up there. In 1901 there were about 1722 Gorkhas and Nepalis living in the Khasi hills.[739] The Syiems or the chiefs of the region wanted more Nepalis and Gorkhas in the region. A British official reported that

> The immigration of these graziers is, I am informed encouraged by the Syiems who levy a grazing tax on immigrants, a tax which they cannot levy on their own subjects and the immigration of Nepali graziers is thus a source of considerable profit to them. [740]

Gorkhas as the Labour force

The discovery of rare resources in the Northeast was one reason why the region developed into a strategic frontier. The first discovery of coal in Assam was by Lieutenant Wilcox, the revenue-surveyor at Sadiya in 1825. In 1867 the coalmines were opened for private operation. However, the problem of labour was an important problem that most of the coal mine operators faced. Initially the local labourers and Naga tribes were sought to be engaged as labourers but both were not interested in working as mining labour force. The Nagas were particularly afraid of tunneling or mining. Hence, mine workers from the Bengal field were imported. In the early years the colliery labour force not only included men from the then undivided United Provinces, Bihar and Central Provinces, Makranis and Peshwaris but also Chinese.

[737] Nira Devi, History of Nepali settlement in Assam, in Indian Nepalis, concept publishing house, 2009. Pp 249-250
[738] Assam state Records No 46, 1846
[739] Assam state records, no 34, the Documents concerning the Khasi hills, 1901
[740] Assam state Records, no 19, the report of the progress of the roads in the Khasi hills, 1901

But the overworked, unhealthy and deplorable conditions in which the labourers worked became a concern.[741] A committee was set up in 1894 to look into the conditions of the colliery labourers which not only recommended improvement in the working conditions but also that only certain classes of people should be recruited in these coal mines as others were not 'racially' suitable for the hard work that colliery required. The committee recommended not to recruit coolies from up-country, i.e., north western region of India as they were unsuitable for the hard work required in coal fields and restrict labour recruitment to the tribal areas of eastern and central India. The communities found suitable for such hard work were mainly tribes like the Santhal, Borah, Bourni and Dhanger from eastern and central India. It was in this context that the Company thought of recruiting the hardy Gorkhas as colliery labour force.[742]

Gorkhas as Colliery Labour Force

Once it was decided by the committee for reasons noted above to try out 'martial' Gorkhas as colliery labourers, efforts to recruit them started. Initially, the Assam Railways and Trading Company recruited Gurkha labourers for the coal mines from Darjeeling [743] but were officially prohibited by the Bengal government vide notification [No. 3293-TC of 1st November, 1907]. These labourers were not placed under any contract. On putting in about 300 days of work the cost of the journey home was paid by the Company. When the Company found that recruiting from Darjeeling was no longer possible, from 1912 the Gurkha coolies were recruited by the Company through the Tea Districts Labour Association, Gorakhpur[744] in the United Provinces. But recruiting from Gorakhpur did not suit the Company for it could be done only between January and March, whereas labour was really needed in June and July. In December 1913 the Company was able to recruit only 284 through the sub-agency at Basti, 50 kilometres from Gorakhpur. [745]To attract labourers, favourable terms were offered. The recruitment was on 'short-term' agreements not exceeding 12 months and the Company undertook to repatriate the men at the end of the term for which they were recruited. Since 1916, the coolies recruited had to be put before the Gorkha

[741] Tejiman Gurung, Gorkhas as Coolliers, Labour recruitment and racial discourse in the coal mines of Assam, in Indian Nepalis Issues and prepectives, ed, T.B Subba, pp 265-266
[742] Ibid p 266
[743] Extract from Agent to General Manager, Assam Railways and trading company, letter no N-5-3830 dated 12th September 1912. In the National Archives of India New Delhi
[744] Letter no. 292 dated the 20th January, 1913, ibid p 32
[745] Ibid p 34

Recruiting Officer, Gorakhpur, to prevent recruitment of men of the military castes (Magars, Gurungs Khas, Thakuris, Rais and Limbus). [746]

The recruitment of Gorkhas as coolies was preferred over the recruitment groups such as the Makranis [from Makran and Peshwar in present Pakistan] and Bengali labourers. As G.C. Webster, the Colliery Suprintendent, remarked in 1913 'they [Nepalis] will do any kind of work they are put on to do, whereas this cannot be said of any other class of labour'. Also, 'they are far more tractable to reason… make most trustworthy and capable men inside the colliery.'[747] Besides, large numbers of Nepali subjects entered Assam through other than regular recruiting agencies. Many of them were enticed by the *sardars* to the coalmines. Recruitment of labour was thus both through official and private channels.

During the First World War the recruitment of Gorkhas for other than military purposes was stopped. In 1918 the Gorakhpur Depot was temporarily closed.[748] In 1919, under arrangements made by the Government of India, with the Government of Nepal, the recruitment of Gorkhas for industrial purposes in the forests, tea gardens and coalmines was resumed for temporary employment during the dry and winter months.[749] The orders of the Government of India issued on 9th April, 1919 stated specifically that "The recruiting of Nepalese subjects for temporary employment during the dry and winter months in tea gardens, forests and coal mines may be resumed provided that no attempt is made to recruit inside Nepal territory. The Government of India also considers it advisable that the employment of Nepalese of the fighting classes who are of military age should be discouraged as far as possible."[750] The orders did not define what period was intended by the "dry and winter months". The impression created among the Company was simply that the recruitment of Gorkhas on earlier basis might be resumed. In 1919 the Gorakhpur depot was reopened for recruiting them. Large numbers of them were recruited and contracts were entered into with Nepali coolies on terms inconsistent with the conditions agreed upon by the Government of India and the Nepal Government. [751]

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[746] Tejiman Gurung Op cit, pp269
[747] Vide Government of India, Commerce and Industry, letter no。 2119，dated 22nd April 1918
[748] Assam secretariat Proceeding , no 1687, dated 9th April, 1919, in Tejiman Gurungs, op cit, p268
[749] Demi official letter from Major Northley to Lt Col WFT O Connor. 1924
[750] Political Consultations, no 12, Document no 23 1920 pp 23-24
[751]Political Consultations, no 13, document no 24, 1920, pp24-25

Mode of recruitment

The system of recruitment of Gorkhas as coolies in the coalmines of Assam was known as the Short Term Contract System. Under this system the labourers were recruited temporarily for a period not exceeding one year within which they were to be repatriated at their employers' expenses. The European employers were given strict instructions to scrupulously follow the system. The District Labour Association was provided with the instruction that the coolies were required for a year and they were to be told that they would be employed for ten months and then repatriated. The other two months were to be used as journey time between Nepal and India. The short time contract provided for the repatriation of the coolie within the period of contract.[752] The recruitment was done through *sardars, chowkidars* and contractors of Nepali origin who were recruited by mining companies like the Assam Railway and Trading Company. A Gurkha *sardar* when required for recruiting purposes was given a license in the Ledo Labour Office by the Assistant Labour Superintendant. A questionnaire was then filled in for the *sardar* in the Ledo Labour Office. The *sardar* took his license in triplicate to the Dibrugarh Court where it was countersigned by the District Magistrate, one copy being kept in the Court at Dibrugarh. The *sardar* then proceeded to Gorakhpur, at Indo-Nepal border point, where the recruitment would take place. On arrival there he appeared before the Tea District Labour Association Depot and from there he was sent to the District Magistrate who lent approval of his license. [753]The *sardars* then commenced recruiting and gathered them at Gorakhpur Tea Districts Labour Association Depot. The recruits were examined there by the Civil Surgeon, who was paid 8 annas per head, and provided a fitness certificate. The recruits were then sent to the Military Recruiting Officer who then selected from the gathering some for the army and left the rest for the coal mines. The officer issued a certificate stating that he had examined the recruits and explained to them that they were going to the coal mines and ascertained that they were willing to proceed there. The Tea District Labour Association's local agent at Gorakhpur then forwarded them on after he had made certain that the men understood where they were going and the rate of payment. They were then inoculated and vaccinated and given a full clothing outfit

[752] Tejiman Gurung, op cit, ppp 267-268
[753] Ibibd 268-269

and put[754] on the journey. On arrival at Ledo, they were examined again. They were supplied with a full weeks' ration and then channeled to their respective *sardars*.

> The coolies thus recruited were managed entirely, except for work in the colliery by Gurkha staff recruited for the purpose. The colliery labour, except fitters, were paid a day's wage and received their wages fortnightly on a fixed day. Most of the coal filling was done on *ticca,* or a contract payment and this was the chief work on which the Gorkhas were employed. The contract was taken by a head *sardar*. Labourers were generally paid individually. In case of a contract for filing containers with excavated coal, the Company paid each person Re. 1 per day out of the contractor's money and the contractor then paid his people the extra they had earned above the Re. 1 per day. Coal cutting was either on *ticca* or day's work and the coal cutters drew their own wages. The contractors were paid a commission on the number of tubs filled or on the number of *hazrees* or attendance. The coolies worked officially for a nine-hour shift expecting *ticca* coal cutters who usually had a six-hour shift.

It is evident that the entire procedure was based on a lot of formalities and institutionalized bureaucratic procedures. It had an inbuilt potential for corruption and mis-utilisation which the *sardars,* European officers, and recruiting officers freely indulged in. It was this rampant corruption of the *sardars* in alliance with the European owners, which often resulted in mal-treatment of the recruits. On enquiry, it was found that the sardars were interested in keeping the labour in the colliery, as they drew a commission on the number of days each coolie worked, and in many cases concealed from the Europeans that they wanted to leave the mines and go home. Sometimes, the coolies were recruited for a term of six months by the recruiting *sardars,* though their instructions were not to take less than a term of one year and the Company understood that they had agreed to work for a year. This was a fraud perpetuated on the recruits quite often. A large number of Gorkhas actually agreed for six months during the dry winter season and returned home by the advent of rains when they could go back to farming. But, once they completed the six months they

[754] Ibid pp 270-272

were told that the contract was for one full year and they could not be allowed to go back.[755]

Opposition to Gurkha Recruitment in Coalmines:

There was a murmur of opposition to the recruitment of Gorkhas in the collieries of Assam from the very beginning. It was not just from the Royal Government of Nepal which protested the ill-treatment of its subjects in the coal mines by European miners but also by British army officers who felt that such recruitment of martial Gorkhas in trivial jobs like the coalmines was wasteful of human resources. The issue was reopened in December 1922 when in a demi-official letter to the British envoy at the Court of Nepal, the recruiting officer for the Gorkhas, Gorakhpur, Major Brook Northey informed that the Tea District Labour Association was busy recruiting 2000 coolies for the coal mines in Assam. The classes comprised all the best fighting castes like Magar, Gurung, Thakur, Chettri, etc.[756] The concern of the military was that such recruitment would lead to a drain of the manpower and the physique of Nepal from where it recruited its fighting men. This would affect recruitment by cutting into the supply of Gorkhas into the colonial armed forces. In February 1923 Captain Lal Dhoj, an officer of the Nepal Government, and while on a visit to Kamakhya, Guwahati happened to hear about a large number of Nepalis who had been enticed to work in the mines. After a trip to Ledo where he made private enquiries *incognito*, he submitted a petition in March 1923, to the Governor of Assam which highlighted that many Nepalis including ex-sepoys and military castes were working in the coal mines of Makum viz., Ledo, Tilak, Golai, Rangring (Namdang), Lekhapani and Margherita in very harsh conditions. Many of these coolies had been lured by false inducements and forcibly kept. The point emphasized was that the Nepali labour was not doing well in the coalmines and was anxious to get back to their homes. Lal Dhoj's memorandum highlighted for the first time the fraudulent practices in Gurkha recruitment as well as their plight in the coal mines in Assam.

> I then went to Ledo coal mine and there to my great surprise found even pensioned soldiers working as ordinary coolies. I heard from them and other Nepalis working in the coal mines that they were

[755] secret political consultations, No, 12, 1919 p89
[756] Ibid p 99

> persuaded to come there on the assurances given by Nepali contractors working under the Company that they would be employed as Commissariat Officers, soldiers and policemen etc on handsome salaries with free clothing and good ration and that they would have never come to coal mines had they known it before hand. I also found several persons of position and means having their homes in Nepal actually working as coolies. As he was a new comer and did not know much about Railway travelling some contractor's men got hold of him telling him that he will be taken to Gaya where they were also going brought him to Ledo. There are several instances like this….I also heard long stories of cruelty ad ill treatment which shocked me very much…the condition in which I found the Nepalis was indeed very miserable. They were poorly clad and they all seemed to be in very poor health. I also understand that being unable to endure their lot large numbers escape from the coal mines from time to time. [757]

The memorandum created quite a stir in the British government as it was bound by an agreement with the Government of Nepal on the issue of recruitment of Nepalis in India. It therefore instituted an enquiry into the allegation made by Lal Dhoj. In March 1923, the Nepal Durbar moved the Government of India directly on the above issue. The complaints made by the Nepal Durbar were:

1) Fraudulent recruitment of the Nepalis.
2) Forcible detention of the labour and compulsion to work under bad conditions.
3) Forcible prevention of attempts to escape and punishments of such attempts by corporal punishment or otherwise cruelly treated.
4) Heavy death rate among the coolies.
5) Inability of the coolies to find anyone to whom they can make the complaints.
6) Employment of Gorkhalis of the fighting classes as coolies.
7) Enticement of boys for employment as coolies.[758]

In the early period of 1923 issue of Gurkha recruitment in the coalmines in Assam became a subject of governmental enquiry in Assam.[759] On the basis of

[757] Captain Lal Dhoj to his Excellency the governor of Assam dated 11 March 1923, in Tejiman Gurung opcit, p 270
[758] Ibid

the complaints of the Nepal Government of fraudulent recruitment and ill-treatment, the Government of India directed the Assam Government to institute an enquiry into the matter. The enquiry was aimed primarily to check the recruitment of certain sections of the Gorkhas whom the colonial state represented as 'martial castes' for commercial or industrial purposes. This would be detrimental for the colonial state which sought to protect its interest as evidenced by the enquiry conducted for the purpose. The enquiry brought into light several aspects relating to the process and terms of recruitment of Nepali labour to the coalmines as well as the condition of labour therein.

Accordingly, under instructions from the Government of India, in April 1923, H.C. Barnes, the officiating Commissioner of Assam Valley Division, was ordered by the Assam Government to hold an enquiry into the question of recruitment of Gorkhas of the military classes in the coalmines. The enquiry revealed that the recruitment procedure of the Assam Bengal and Railway Trading Company was in contravention of the provisions laid down in 1919 and highlighted the forcible condition under which the labour was retained at the collieries. The labour had been recruited on false pretences and large number of Gorkhas of the fighting castes and of ex-sepoys was also employed in the mines. The coolies though recruited for a year on the express condition of repatriation within the period of contract were not repatriated, though anxious to leave. The coolies, though technically free, were in reality treated as indentured labour. The total Gurkha labour force in the mines in 1921, 1922 and 1923 numbered 1357, 1368 and 1906 respectively. The Company's books showed that in these first two years the numbers of coolies running away from the mines were 305 and 247. In 1922 the Company had repatriated 164 Nepali coolies. The Company, on its part, pleaded that it misunderstood the resumption of recruitment in 1919, as meaning the earlier practice of recruitment for a year and that the Labour Association was engaging the men for this period. The Company alleged that the true reason for the sudden depletion of a 'well cared for and contended labour force' was because the Nepal Durbar considers it derogatory to the state and to the Gurkha or a Nepali to serve as a coolie in the tea gardens and coal mines.

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[759] H. C Barnes officiating commissioner Assam valley division to the Chief secretary to the government of Assam dated 5th May 1923.

The outcome of the enquiry was that hundreds of Gorkhas working in the colliers had to be repatriated by the Company. The Gurkha labour formed the bulk of the labour force of the Company in the mines.[760] The Agent of the Company admitted that the tea industry, oil industry, shipping, Gauhati Waterworks, mills, and mining industries of the province would be ruined at least for the season. Under orders from the Assam Government 598 coolies out of total 1900 were repatriated in the month of May 1923 itself. The remainders were to be sent in subsequent batches every month. *The Times of Assam,* in its issue dated 19th May, 1923, gave vent to the fears that such a sudden exodus of such a large number of men would not only directly entail a reduction in the output of coal but lead to a rise in the price of coal and affect all the factories and mills depending upon Assam coal. The Assam Government beyond making arrangements for repatriation of all Gurkha coolies did not consider it necessary to undertake a special enquiry into the conditions of labour in the mines.[761] It was felt that it would further unsettle the labour already seriously disturbed by the enquiries and by the repatriation of a large number of Gorkhas labourers. The Tea Districts Labour Supply Association was to be impressed upon by the Assam government that Gorkhas of fighting classes were not required for recruitment to the coal mines in Assam. Besides the condition relating to temporary employment, no further restrictions were imposed on recruitment for the coal mines of other categories of non-martial Gorkhas. In a demi-official letter to the British Envoy dated 20th December, 1923, the Chairman, Assam Labour Board cautioned against the closure of the recruiting depot at Gorakhpur stating 'nothing but evil can result from doing away with the only agency which recruits in a legal and regular manner and does not attempt to recruit within Nepalese territories' unlike other illegal recruitment carried on at several places contravening government order.

Labour in railway and road constructions.

The establishment of the Assam railways and trading company in 1881 and subsequent construction of several rail lines throughout the region as well as the construction of roads in the Khasi, Naga and Lushai hills increased the demand for labour. The British had tried to use the local tribes as labour but it was quite

[760] Tejiman Gurung op-cit, pp 267-268
[761] Ibid p 271

apparent that they could not fulfill the tremendous demand. Gorkhas were brought in large numbers to work in the construction sites along with other groups. However by 1920 there was a growing opposition, especially from the army In 1923 there was government inquiry regarding the use of the fighting men among the Gorkhas (Magar, Gurung, Rai, Limbu, Chettri and Thakur) in mines and railways constructions.[762] It was found that the Gorkhas were used in tea gardens in Assam but not in large numbers as they were in Darjeeling.

Conclusion

It would be fair to say that, had it not been for the specific conditions that were created in the middle of the 19th century in both the central Himalayan region as well as in the Northeast frontiers of British India, there would not have been any form of migration from the central Himalayan region. The colonial power's main objective was to control the territory especially in the northeast frontier. The use of settlement strategies well predated the advent of the Gorkhas and Nepalis in the region. The British had already began to identify certain groups, who they believe could be used to further agriculture and provide all forms of labour in the region. The Kukis and the Manupuris are examples of such groups. From the very beginning the group that was really preferred was the Gorkhas. However, initially the numbers that could be got was rarely enough for the military units let alone for the settlements.

The 2nd half of the 19th century saw a large number of people migrating outside of the Gorkha state which then soon turned a massive exodus of people, much to the shock of the Gorkha state. This mass outmigration soon were tapped by the newly established administrative town of Darjeeling and from there to the northeast. Soon the numbers moving to the Northeast frontiers were huge. The Gorkha state kept complaining about the number of men that was leaving their region but they just could not stem the out migration. The new migrants coming in from the region were mostly from eastern Nepal who were not as yet defined as the Gorkhas, a term was applied to them known as the Nepalis.

The British main policy was to use the Gorkhas and Nepalis as a part of their settlement strategy. They used them to settle and secure areas from the areas that

[762] Foreign political consultation, dated 1923, no 23 p 23

were vulnerable from raids from the tribes. The other policy, which was equally important was to clear the thickly forested areas and keep them ready for the extension for the plantations that were ever growing. The policy of giving lands for grazing too was based on the same idea of clearing the lands for tea plantation. The fact that it was taxed added another means of revenue for the colonial government. The settlers also provided all forms of labour, for the various colonial governance, be it military or traditional forms of labour.

The initial settlement was based in Assam and whenever the colonial government established it hold in the various regions such as the Lushai hills, Khasi hills, Naga hills and finally Manipur the Gorkha and Nepali settlements followed the pattern as was in Assam.

The idea of the hardy Gorkha played a part in the decision to use them as a solution to the labour problem in the Northeast region. It can be seen that the similar ethnographic reasons such as strong limbs and other such ideas, that caused the British to use them in securing the Northeast was also the same reason why they were used in the labour force.

Conclusion

It may seem that the four chapters of the thesis have portrayed four varied topics; the first chapter looked at the economic situation of the erstwhile state of Gorkha in the 18th-19th centuries, especially the land revenue structure. The second chapter dealt with the manner in which the peasants of the Gorkha state began to be recruited in British colonial army and the construction of the idea of the "Gorkha" by the British. The third chapter studied the changing nature of control in the northeast India. It further looked at the concept of territoriality and how the "Gorkhas" were seen as an important group to both control and settle in the Northeast. The last chapter then talks about various settlement patterns in which the Gorkhas were used to settle the Northeast and provide essential labour and services.

As was mentioned in the introduction, the thesis wants to see the reason and methods in which Gorkhas came to be used to settle in the Northeast frontiers. The questions that follow are who were the Gorkhas? Where did they come from? And, more importantly, why did they come? Why did the British want the Gorkhas to settle in the Northeast? What were the ideas the British had of the Gorkhas and how it came into being? Second, when we say "Settle the Northeast frontiers" we need to understand changing security dynamics and economic relations in the Northeast that necessitate the new security arrangements and need for newer forms of labour and agricultural practices. Third and lastly, the methods with which the control of the Northeast was achieved by using the Gorkhas.

The first chapter hence looked at the conditions of the Gorkha state, the changes that it bought about in the land revenue system and nature of the state and its impact on the lives of the people. The term "Nepal" was used only for the valley of Kathmandu and it was for all purposes a geographical term. The Nepal which we see today did not exist prior to the late 18th and 19th centuries, neither as a political unit nor as a geographical entity. The region was more prone to fragmentation than it was to consolidation. There were probably only three large states that were formed in the entire history of the region, Prithvi Malla's Khas Malla state centred in Semja and Jumla, which at its height controlled present day far western Nepal, parts of south

western Tibet, and Garhwal and Kumoan. The second state was that of Mukunda Sena's Makwanpur state, and the third was that of Jayasthithi Malla's and Jayayaksha Malla's Kathmandu state. Later after the death of these rulers, all of these states broke apart and disintegrated into smaller states. In any case they all dwarfed in comparison to Gorkha state in sheer size and number. It is here that a few things need to be cleared out. First, the term Gorkha referred only to a state and a town, at times to the ruling dynasty and later to an official, at no point did it refer to a community or a group of people or an ethnicity or a language, that was to happen much later. Secondly, the phenomenon that took place after Prithvinarayan Shah conquered Kathmandu and Makwanpur and his successors expanded in not a unification of Nepal but rather the expansion of the Gorkha state. Why is this important- expansion vs unification? It is important because once it is a unification, then there are no questions of conflicts. It is coming together of the long divided united under a same banner. The concept of unification is what most historians of Nepal, beginning with D R Regmi have written about.

Thus the political unit that came about in the late 19th century and early 20th century was not a product of unification of Nepal but that of expansion of the Gorkha state. What is the significance? If it is the unification, then people just came together without much conflict, at least that is what the historians of Nepal, such as D.R Regmi, John Whelpton and Stiller seem to believe. Contrary to this, if it was the Gorkha expansion then a particular state, its ruling class, language, ideas on social structure, religions and economy becomes dominant. And that is what happened in the Gorkha expansion too. Certain ruling class's ideas, cultures, and socioeconomic and political structures became dominant. The ones who were conquered were then oppressed, exploited and their religion, culture, language slowly eroded.

The Gorkha state was an expansionist state, in so much that it was it was always involved in wars in all fronts- east, west north and south. This lead to a situation where the Gorkha state needed larger armies and more administrators. To support the ever expanding military-bureaucracy apparatus, the Gorkha state needed tremendous resources especially money. However since the region was not monetised, which means money was not available nor was a large network of market where money could be used. In such a situation the only way to support such a large army and bureaucracy was to give out land grants, known as Jagirs as payments to its nobles,

generals, soldiers and priests. The people who got these jagirs were invariably, Bahuns, Khas and group of people with the title Shahs, who later began to be known as Thakuri. Magars, who had held important positions in period before the Gorkha expansion, were systematically removed from the positions of power and land. Gurungs, apart from a few were also removed and there were very few, if any, who are given any land. Tamangs, Sherpas, and other groups who were called Bhotiyas too lost their lands and were forced into being tenants in large or small jagirs. Newars suffered because the Shah dynasty moved its capital from Gorkha to Kathmandu, and caused a displacement of its elite, they too lost most of their lands.

The people in the eastern hills, known to the Gorkha rulers as Kirats were the most affected. Kirat was a vague Sanskrit term used for an amalgamation of various tribes living in the eastern hills, it is very unlikely that they referred to themselves as Kirats, perhaps preferring term, Khambus and Limbus. What was common among them was the fact that they all held land in the communal basis known as Kipat. Kipat was more than just a form of land ownership for them. It was a system of belonging for them, an idea of common origins and shared beliefs based on religion and spirits who owed allegiance to their Hung(Leader). However the Kipat was contrary to everything that the Gorkha state needed, which was lands to give out as jagir. Though the Gorkha state had promised the Kirats, that their Kipats would be respected and they would be allowed to continue with their traditional beiefs. As more and more jagir land grants were given there was a shortage of lands, which is when the Gorkha state began to take kipat lands and give them out as jagirs to the Bahuns, Thakuris and Khas/Chettris. This forced the Khambu and the Limbus to become tenants in the lands owned by the Bahuns, Thakuris and Khas/Chettris. The Kirats rose in rebellion and were put down simultaneously several times after which brutal punishments followed. This was when the first group of people from the erstwhile Gorkha state first fled to Darjeeling (which was at that time under the Chogyals). The Chogyals had kinship relations with the Rongs and Tsongs there. There were several uprisings that followed especially because Gorkha state now began to pass laws on social relations interfering with the customs and religion of the Kirats. However each uprising crushed by the Gorkha state, forcing the Limbus to move eastwards to the Chogyals dominions, which is now the Darjeeling hills and the state of Sikkim.

Meanwhile the situation deteriorated for the rest of the peasants like Gurungs, Magars, Sherpas, Tamangs, etc. The *jagir* owners and *birta* owners, demanded that the land revenue be given in cash, and demanded revenue as high as 3/4th of the harvest. As mentioned before there were very few markets in which to sell the harvest and get cash, as the economy was not cash based). If the land revenue being demanded in cash was not enough, there was a huge amount of taxes that was to be paid. The burden was high enough, but the jagir owners and land began to demand that peasants give loans to their jagir owners which would later be adjusted in the land revenue at a rate of 5%. To find the money, the peasants were forced to go to the money lenders called Sahukar in the village who usually was the Jagirdar himself. They gave loans at an exorbitant amount beginning at 25%. If the peasants were asked to pay the loans at 5% with the money s/he has borrowed at 25%, it means immediately s/he was in debt of 20% accumulating monthly or annually. Failure to payback meant slavery or bonded labour, many a times the peasants were forced to sell their children to pay back loans. The number of Magar children who were sold into slavery was so high that the Kathmandu durbar had to pass laws to prevent it.

Almost everyone was expected to provide forced labour for the state, though Bahuns were exempted from it. The Jhara labour was used primarily for the transportation of arms and ammunitions during wars and campaigns but was used mostly for the benefits of the Jagir owners. Jhara apart from being forced was also unpaid, where even provisions such food and water was not provided. Jhara was also used to recruit soldiers, which meant that many of the foot soldiers, who were invariably Magars and Gurungs, were unpaid. While the peasants were forced to provide such labour whenever demanded they could, at times, pay a fine and escape it. But since money was so scarce with so many taxes as revenue, they could not afford it. However, providing Jhara labour meant that they would be away from harvest for a long period, which would then affect harvest and if the harvest was affected the jagir owners would in not consider any delays or lower revenue and taxes. The peasants were soon all caught in a debt trap and forced into extreme poverty, slavery or bonded labour. There were reports that villages disappeared with the peasants escaping into British dominions in India to escape the clutches of the Sahukars, Sarkar and Jagirdars. The jagir holders were given strict orders that they must not let any of the peasants leave

the land and if someone ran to India, then his family were to be punished, which caused another phenomenon where the whole families escaped to India.

It must be remembered that the term "Gorkha" in the Gorkha state until the 19th century was not used for an ethnic or a linguistic group. It simply meant a town, a state, a ruling dynastic and at times, in some parts for an official of the state. Then who are the "Gorkhas" that the British used so generously in the western and eastern frontiers? It is this that 2nd chapter aspired to understand. The manner in which the British created an idea of the Gorkha can be seen through the period of the 19th century. The idea of the "Gorkha" was not a static and a constant idea rather it evolved over a period of time. Many of the authors have focused on the fact that the British were impressed with the Gorkhas the moment they met them in battle during the Anglo-Gorkha war of 1814-16 after which they decided that they would use them in their (British) armies. The first aspect that one realises is that there was no community that was called the Gorkha and it was the British who during the war used the term "Gorkhas" to define an ethnic group However if one looks carefully then one realises that this wasn't exactly the case. The British had initially very poor opinion of the soldiers of the Gorkha army often describing them as shabby and dirty. The only reasons the deserters of the Gorkha were used were for the knowledge of the routes and weakness of forts. They were never used in actual combat purposes. They were retained after the culmination of the war in a hope to raise a corps of irregular troops who could be used to control the newly acquired hill tracts. This was a tradition of the colonial army of that time. As per Susan Bayly who writes that the British army used the irregular troops derived from the same region to control it. At this point anyone from the Gorkha army who had deserted were called "Gurkhas/Goorkhas/Gorkhawalas". In 1820, the Kumaoni and Garhwalis were removed from the Gorkhas which was the beginning of the crystallization of the idea of the "Gorkha". Through the early half of the 19th century, the Gorkhas the role of the Gorkhas continuously increased. One of the reasons was the idea of the men of high altitude making good soldiers. As was the British idea that Susan Bayly speaks of, the concept of the less Brahmanized people making good soldiers. The belief was that the Gorkhas were less Brahmanized. Their role in the success in every conflict, from the Afghan war to the Sikh war were highlighted. It must be remembered here that there were already problems (issues of payment as well as religious ones) that the

British were facing with the Bengal army soldiers. Thus the colonial power was already looking for a different source of military labour and the continuous promotion of the Gorkhas must also be seen in this context. Napier, disbandment of the 66th regiment of the Bengal army and transferring their colours and standards to the 2nd Nasiri battalion of Gorkhas, must also be seen in this context. The "Gorkhas" were seen generally as Magars, Gurungs, Khas and Thakuris, of which Magars were beginning to be seen as the 'best' group. It must be remembered here that the idea of the Gorkha was still not as of yet crystallized.

The uprising of the 1857 was an important land mark in the manner in which the British recruited military labour for the colonial army in India. The Bengal army that had been dissatisfied since the early half of the 19th century now came out in open rebellion. The various Gorkha battalions and the one Gorkha regiment remained loyal to the British. Throughout the conflict the British reiterated the fact that the Gorkhas had nothing in common with the north Indians especially those of the Bengal regiments. The fact that they were not under the influence of the Brahamans and hence they had no problem with the cartilage was an aspect that was stressed on. After the conclusion of the uprising, all the irregular Gorkhas were converted into regular regiments and in accordance with the changes that the British brought about in their army. They changed the name of the regiments from the region to the name of the ethnic groups, which marked an important change because now the these groups had to be more properly defined. Though it has been said that the 1857 uprising was the beginning of the martial race theory, one need's to remember that these ideas that formed the basis of the martial race theory was already in existence since the beginning of the 19th century. The post 1857 period only made these the basis of recruitment for the Colonial Indian army.

The latter half of 19th century, the British were obsessed with ethnography and it replaced history as a colonial obsession. The desire to know the "natives" better in order to rule them in an effective manner allowed for massive ethnographical works that were written during this period. This was when the idea of the Gorkha was finally crystalized and can be seen in the work of Eden Vansittart. There were various aspects and conditions that lead to the both construction of the idea of who the Gorkhas were and their increasing role within the colonial British army. The Magars, Gurungs, Khas, Thakuris, Rai and Limbus were seen as the perfect stock for recruitment and

later the Tamangs were also included in it. The Magars were seen as the best of the lot and emphasis was paid to their recruitment. This meant that those groups who were the peasants in the Gorkha state were the ones who were being recruited by the British. As mentioned in the first chapter, the conditions of the peasantry was poor and was deteriorating, at the same time the British offered pay with food and shelter and were recruiting the same peasants. This explains the massive migration that took place during the period, despite the fact that the Gorkha state tried its best to stop the peasants from moving out.

The general perception is that the British had made their presence in the Northeast only after the Anglo Burmese war in the early 19th century. However the British were already in the region since the late 18th century. The aspect that changed was the nature of economic interests in the region as well as the security doctrine which altered its military strategy..

The main British economic interest in Northeast region in the 18th century was the limestone trade, where many British official were also merchants. Due to the nature of economy in the region, the main political control in the region was expressed through the control of the routes, ghats, markets rivers etc. The main political powers in the region, Manipur, Cachar, Tripura etc., fought over the control of such places. The British joined the political struggle as just one more contender without changing the basics of the political and economic structure of the region. The result of this was that, one, the economic relations such as labour, middle men and markets already existed and, two, the regions that needed to be controlled were just certain strategic points and routes. An aspect that is demonstrated best when one sees the British maps of the region during that period where the maps are lines on a blank paper. The amount of military presence was therefore quite limited in the region and the British did not need any strategy to control the region.

The conclusion of Anglo Burmese war was an important landmark. The British realised that it needed to spread out and control the larger regions. The beginning of the concept of territoriality was introduced in the Northeast region. This was also the period when the first suggestions of using Gorkhas in the Northeast frontier was made. However, it was turned down as it was believed that they were ill suited for the region. The introduction of tea then consolidated the concept of territoriality for the

Northeast frontiers. After that the British needed to control larger parts of the region as tea plantations required large territories. This meant that the number of troops that were required to control the region suddenly were to increase.

The British kept encroaching on the valleys and hills hoping to convert them to plantations, thus bring them in constant conflict with the inhabitants of the regions, who then responded by attacking the plantations. These people were soon designated as the "wild and turbulent savages" and for several decades the British were in constant conflict with them.

The British to sustain a large force needed a military labour market from where they could recruit. Initially, most of the troops were derived from the traditional military labour market of northern Indian. It was soon decided by the British that the Hindustani troops were not suited for the region and looked to seek a military labour market in the region itself. Several groups were tried, Manipurs, Karbis, Cacharis etc., where one of the groups that were also tried was the Gorkhas. Most of the groups were soon considered unsuitable or not up to the mark. As we discussed in chapter 2, the role of the Gorkhas in the British colonial army continued to expand, correspondingly in the Northeast frontiers, the Gorkhas were being increasingly. The Manipuri soldiers were soon replaced by Gorkhas and attempts were made to hire more Gorkhas for the Frontier regiments. However the number of Gorkhas in the region was still small.

In the mid to the latter half of 19th century the British were in continuous wars and military expedition in the region ranging from the Naga hills to the Lushai hills to Manipur, Burma etc. The period coincided the conversion of the Gorkhas into regular regiments and the beginning of the concept of the martial race theory as a basis for military recruitment and organisation. The number of Gorkha soldiers being used in the region began to dramatically increase. As chapter 1 discussed the agrarian conditions in the Gorkha became unbearable and the conditions of the peasantry declined, hence a large number of them began to migrate to the Northeast India. Hence there was always large group from where they could be recruited from. As a matter of fact there was barely an expedition in the Northeast frontier where the Gorkhas were not used. The only problem with recruitment of Gorkhas was the fact that most of the communities/castes/ethnic groups from the Gorkhas state in the

Northeast, were from the eastern hills Rais and Limbus and not Magars, Gurungs, Khas and Thakuris who were considered to be Gorkhas. The British colonial army made sure that the frontier regiments did not get these communities since the they wanted them in the army. It was because of this that the Rai and Limbus were in the 1880 considered to be "Gorkhas" and two regiments were raised in the north east composing of these communities.

The number of Gorkhas in the security arrangements of the Northeast frontiers kept increasing throughout the 19th century. The evolution of the idea of the Gorkha and the conditions of the Gorkha state, both had a large part to play. The number of Gorkhas in the frontier regiments were so high that in the early 20th century many officials expressed unease that it was a concern to have the security of the Northeast frontiers completely in the hands of the Gorkhas.

Security was only one aspect that the Gorkhas were used for in the Northeast. Later, the Gorkhas were also settled in the Northeast to bring the region completely under the control. British believed that the land had to be controlled through the settling of groups and communities that were termed loyal to the British. This reason to control the land was mainly due to the reasons discussed in chapter 3, that the nature of control had dramatically changed from the late 18th century to the early 19th century. The blank pages in the map, that once only had long lines were now filled.

The British in most of their expeditions realised that finding food supplies were very difficult and constantly faced difficult in procuring them especially in the Naga hills. In the post 1857 period, the British doctrine of military approach in the Naga hills considerably change, instead of annual expedition. This required, apart from military presence, a large logistics of food supplies, civilian staff and other forms of administration and its separate logistics. Depending on food supplies from the Brahmaputra valley would be risky since that would stretch the supply lines and the British would be at constant risk of being cut off. It would be much better to have food procured locally. This was a problem since the local population did not have surplus agriculture that could be used to supply the military administrative apparatus of the colonial government in the hill region. The first reference to bringing in Gorkha settlements were made as early as 1830's. The British official asked that bringing in

the “monied” individuals such as Gorkhas could then help bring the region under some form of economic control.

The Gorkhas in the region were used for a variety of reasons. In the plains of the Brahmaputra valley they were used for cutting down the forests then grazing it so the land was open enough for tea plantations. In the hills, they were used to provide a plethora of services that the administration required. They were used to introduce terrace farming in the region so that the British administrative centres could be supplied, especially in the hills. They were also used to form buffer settlements in the region between the British and the “wild, marauding” tribes. The idea was that the Gorkhas were both loyal and tough to be settled in the region. The idea of the Gorkha as a tough group with “broad limbs” was also the prime reason for them being employed as elite coolies and labourers for various colonial projects in the region.

Thus, the thesis concludes that, the Gorkha state that came about in the 18th-19th centuries, due to its corrupt policies caused a large group of its peasants to escape to British India. Furthermore, the British with their ideas on ethnography, martial races and a need to create a new labour market created an idea of the “Gorkha”. This very constructed idea of “Gorkha” was the main reason for their recruitment in the frontier regiments. Lastly, following the aforementioned two reasons one can see the historical trajectories of the “Gorkhas” escaping the Gorkha state as peasants and later settling down in North-eastern region of British India.

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