UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Race, Caste, and Modern Imaginaries of the Himalayas

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy in History

by

Nivedita Nath

2022

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2022

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Race, Caste, and Modern Imaginaries of the Himalayas

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Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2022

Professor Vinay Lal, Chair

The Central Himalayas are among the most ecologically abundant and historically venerated landscapes of South Asia. This dissertation studies the cultural politics of place-making in the Central Himalayan regions of Kumaun and Garhwal from the late eighteenth to the middle of the twentieth century. After the region was annexed by the East India Company in 1815, the mountain landscape was recursively mapped, surveilled, demarcated, and appropriated for colonial revenue and resource extraction. Unequal relations between the mountains and the subcontinental plains intensified as a consequence, at the expense of historic trade relations across the Central and trans-Himalayas. From the nineteenth century onwards, an ever-widening number of travelers, officials, timber merchants, sportsmen, pilgrims, Ayurvedic medical practitioners, and settlers from both the colony and the metropole were also drawn to the Central Himalayas. I examine the complementary and conflicting ways in which mountain landscapes were framed, refashioned,

represented, and brought into cultural circulation by English travelers and officials, as well as by Indian elites who attempted to subvert colonial hegemony.

Drawing upon Sanskrit, Hindi, and English sources from archives in Delhi, Uttarakhand, and London, I chart the ways in which the Himalayas loomed over the geographical imagination of India under colonial rule. I argue that modern imaginaries of the Central Himalayas as an ideal site for improvement, pilgrimage, and healing reinforced 'upper' caste hegemony, racial regimes of property, and the bureaucratic elision of caste and gender specific labor from the mountain 'commons.' In the nineteenth century, just as racial logics of the sublime legitimated colonial authority over the people and places of the Himalayas, secular conceptions of agency as the absence of pain undergirded infrastructural 'improvements' that routinized class and caste-based hierarchies in Himalayan pilgrimages. While the Central Himalayan landscape had been shaped by agrarian slavery and unequal access to land prior to colonial rule, the late colonial enclosure of the mountain commons exacerbated systems of social exclusion. I follow the unexpected trajectories of colonial spatial enclosures as they were reworked by anti-caste activists and actively adopted by Indian elites who commodified associations between the Himalayas and healing in the early twentieth century.

The dissertation of Nivedita Nath is approved.

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Acknowledgments

This dissertation rests upon the labor and love of the elders, children, and women of Uttarakhand. Working with and speaking to the veteran environmental activists of Siliyara and the eager students of Baheri Government School in Tehri Garhwal taught me to read the landscape differently. My archival work in Dehradun was enabled by the warmth and hospitality of my friend Meera ji, who schooled me in countless things. Though formally illiterate, she is an artist and intellectual in all that she does. 'Write ten pages everyday with love,' she would summarily advise me, as she continued with her busy schedule- skillfully balancing farming her hard won plot of land, tending to the grandchildren of her five children who she had once delivered herself, nursing her long ailing husband, and caring for the many guests at the home I was lodged in. Indeed, the magnificent generosity and unaffected humility of Meera ji, Rawat ji, Mehar ji, Prem Das ji, and the many other elders I met and befriended during my stays in the mountains breathed life into this project.

Several teachers made it possible for me to study history: Satish Jayarajan, Anjana Banerji, and Maria Matthias in Bangalore, Sivasankar Menon, Sanjukta Dutta, and Naina Dayal in Delhi, and James Green, Vazira Zamindar, and Patricia Ruberton in Providence, among others. At UCLA, I have learned much from Andrew Apter, Allen Roberts, Saloni Mathur, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Mary Terrall, Purnima Mankekar, and Sarah Stein. Most of all, the members of my committee- Akhil Gupta, Nile Green, Robin Derby, and Vinay Lal- helped me shape the contours of this dissertation. Gupta's canonical works on the post-colonial bureaucracy and space informed my approach to these topics within the colonial context. Green's precise attentiveness to sources, and his insightful studies of the relationship between place and vernacular texts, encouraged me to carefully assemble and analyze my archival material. Derby's brilliantly creative approaches to

the discipline of history enkindled my interests in questions of phenomenology, affect, and the nonhuman. The courses and conversations I have had with her have been indispensable to my research and I am truly grateful for her mentorship, suggestions, and encouragement. I could not have hoped for a better advisor than Vinay Lal, the chair of my committee. Lal constantly challenged me with his incisive critiques, unfailingly supported me through various applications, and persistently enjoined me to foreground the stakes of research and find ways to craft histories that speak to the future. Indeed, his effortless ability to decipher the politics and the humor in all sorts of situations and histories will surely continue to inspire me, long after the doctoral process and far beyond my academic pursuits.

I am also indebted to the assistance I received from the staff at the Uttarakhand State Archives, British Library, Nainital Regional Archives, and the National Archives of India. Chapter Two is a version of my article for *Environmental History* [Nath, Nivedita, 'Imperial Hunting and the Sublime: Race, Caste, and Aesthetics in the Central Himalayas,' *Environmental History* 26 (2021): 301-323]. Archival images in this dissertation have been used by permission of the British Library.

At UCLA, I have been fortunate to work within an outstanding collective of comrades, friends, and students. I am particularly thankful for the support and solidarity of Madina Thiam, Thabisile Griffin, Janice Levi, Juan Pablo Garza, Nana Osei-Opare, Vipin Krishna, Xiang Chi, Ayantu Ayana, Tanya Matthan, Gabriel Suchodolski, Hannah Carlan, Scottie Hale Buehler, Sonali Abraham, and Jananie Kalyanaraman. Lastly, none of my work would be possible without my family. My parents, aunts, and siblings have nurtured, sheltered, and journeyed with me throughout graduate school. Mukul Kumar, my intellectual and life partner, not only carried me across the writing process but continues to widen the visions of just futures which guide the pages to follow.

And the quiet transgressions of my grandmothers- Susheela and Sushila- paved the way for my pursuits.

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Preface

'Who cannot be enamored by the Himalayas?,' asks Rahul Sankrityayan in the opening lines of *Himalaya Parichaya: Garhwal*.[1] For the Hindi scholar and author, writing was merely a means to get better acquainted with geographies that had called to him for decades. By the time Sankrityayan's introduction to the people and places of the Central Himalayas was published in 1953, scores of travelogues, gazetteers, pilgrim's guidebooks, mountaineering accounts, sportsman's journals, and botanical reports had already sought to capture the mountain landscape in multiple languages for readers from the subcontinent and beyond. Indeed, by the first decade of the twentieth century, the cartographic literature about the Himalayas alone was so vast that the Survey of India was compelled to compile a comprehensive *Sketch of the Geography and Geology of the Himalaya Mountains and Tibet* so as to counter the 'danger of losing our way in a maze of unclassified detail.'[2] Since the inception of colonial rule in the early nineteenth century, the snowy peaks, oak forests, delicate meadows, terraced valleys, and dense jungles of Garhwal and Kumaun had begun to attract a hitherto unparalleled number of pilgrims, travelers, and settlers. Imagining, describing, and acting upon the mountains in different ways, these varied groups of actors, from both the colony and the metropole, scripted a fresh chapter in the spatial history of the region. This dissertation traces the complementary and conflicting ways in which the Central Himalayas were

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[1] Rahul Sankrityayan, *Himalaya Parichaya 1: Garhwal* (Allahabad: Allahabad Law Journal Press, 1953), 5.

[2] Colonel S. G. Burrard and H. H. Hayden, *A Sketch of the Geography and Geology of the Himalaya Mountains and Tibet* (Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1933), iii.

framed, refashioned, represented, and brought into cultural circulation by English travelers and officials, as well as by Indian elites who attempted to subvert colonial hegemony.

Just as the Himalayas were being fetishized as a transnational 'territory of desire' through texts and images, the mountain environment was being transformed by racial regimes of property, capitalist processes of extraction, and the spatial entrenchment of 'upper' caste hegemony.[3] Proceeding from the assumption that cultural conceptions of landscape have deep material implications, I examine the role played by affect, narrative, and aesthetics in remaking the social and ecological worlds of Kumaun and Garhwal from the late eighteenth to the middle of the twentieth century. How have contingent systems of social exclusion been articulated and naturalized through ideas about 'nature' in the colonial Central Himalayas? And to what extent did the construction of social differences enable projects of spatial enclosure in the mountains? By raising these questions, I trace the social histories sedimented in the representational and material landscapes of the Central Himalayas.

'Every landscape is an accumulation,' of past and present, story and memory, culture and nature, as well as human history and natural history.[4] Furthermore, landscapes collapse matter and metaphor in ways that muddy the lines between past and present, story and memory, and nature and culture. As Simon Schama writes, 'once a certain idea of the landscape, a myth, a vision establishes itself in an actual place, it has a peculiar way of muddling categories, of making

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[3] Ananya Jahanara Kabir, *Territory of Desire: Representing the Valley of Kashmir* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

[4] Donald Meining quoted in Lauret Savoy, *Trace: Memory, History, Race, and the American Landscape* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2015), i.

metaphors more real than their referents; of becoming in fact part of the scenery.'[5] As cultural artefacts, landscapes bear traces of past exclusions and 'embody generations of socio-spatial relations.'[6] The way in which a landscape is framed can simultaneously reveal and conceal the values attached to a place, and as Raymond Williams famously noted in his critique of landscape aesthetics, 'a working country is hardly ever a landscape.'[7] As I travelled across archives in the present-day state of Uttarakhand, the jagged mountain landscape appeared to expose itself as an archive of past and present social struggles.

Dehradun, September 2017: The Uttarakhand State Archives were established three years after the mountainous regions of Kumaun and Garhwal were carved out of the sprawling North Indian state of Uttar Pradesh and stitched into the new state of Uttarakhand in 2000. The archives are situated a forty-minute rickety bus ride away from the crowds of the new state's capital, Dehradun. Housed in a large, and largely empty, imposing white building, the archives loom over fields and pasture lands on the fringes of the Thano forest. Towering timber trees of *sal, sheesham,* and *khair* flank the Thano Road connecting Dehradun with the State Archives. A relic of colonial histories of scientific forestry, the Thano forest now shelters elephants, mongoose, wild boars, and deer. So, the archives are a relatively younger encroacher upon a landscape marked by deeper, entangled histories of re-settlement.

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[5] Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London: Vintage, 1995), 61.

[6] Laura Pulido, 'Rethinking Environmental Racism,' *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* Vol. 90, No. 1 (2000), 16.

[7] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 120.

On most days, the archive librarian, Rizwana, the groundskeeper, Sunil, and I are the sole occupants of the archive's reading room where we sit at our respective tables scanning newspapers, filing through boxes, and taking notes.

> Notes from files related to the transfer of the Survey of India headquarters from Calcutta to Dehradun in 1904: *The price of land in Dehradun was rising. British officers scrambled for bungalows in the city center, while natives were pushed to the city's outskirts. The Head of the Geological Survey would have preferred real estate in the neighboring hill station of Mussoorie, but land in Mussoorie was even more difficult to come by.*
>
> *He expressed his fears of the climate of Dehradun in a letter addressed to the Secretary of the Municipal Board: 'What are the hottest months of the year? Or perhaps I should say, the most trying months of the year?'*[8]

The colonial boundaries of Dehradun have been outstripped by the city's massive expansion in the decades following its designation as the capital of Uttarakhand. Dehradun's expansion parallels the story of increasing outmigration from the mountains. Every year, thousands of young people from villages across Kumaun and Garhwal flock to the foothills and the plains to pursue degrees and jobs. For mountain-dwellers, Dehradun has become a symbol of the continued neglect of the hills (*pahar*) by the plains (*maidan*). The denizens of the hills (*paharis*), who struggled for a new state of Uttarakhand, had hoped that their movement would bring employment, healthcare, and education to the mountains, but the wealth of the new state instead seems to have been captured by the capital. To some extent, the Uttarakhand State Archives appear to symbolize the betrayals of the Himalayan state. Plans are currently afoot to clear the Thano forest- the lungs of an increasingly congested Dehradun- to make room for a revamped regional airport, making the

[8] 'Transfer of the Head Quarters of the Survey of India from Calcutta to Dehradun,' 18th October – 19th December 1904, File No. 135, Box 53, Uttarakhand State Archives, Dehradun.

archives appear as a herald of a familiar script of destruction masquerading as development for *paharis*.[9]

Mussoorie, April 2018: Throughout the nineteenth century, Dehradun was dwarfed by the hill station of Mussoorie, located an hour's drive to the north of the city. There is perhaps no more fitting synecdoche for British colonial rule in India than the image of the *sahib* leisurely surveilling the torrid plains from the cool heights of the 'hill station,' and among all hill stations, Mussoorie was deemed to have the best view. 'Perched upon the summit of the inner circle of a leviathan amphitheater,' Northam's *Guide to Masuri* (1884) proclaims, Mussoorie offers unparalleled views. Northam describes the view of the industriously 'improved' landscape of the foothills for his readers:

> 'Looking due south the eye rests upon Dehra itself, with its white houses peeping out of the ample foliage. A little to the west of Dehra may be seen a cluster of tea gardens, with their white walls reflecting the strong light of the sun…To the right front, the sacred Jamna can be seen, like a broad silver line….[while] to the left front the broad bosom of the holy Ganges is traceable to the verge of the horizon, as it takes its initial course plain-wards to the Sandarbands.'[10]

Today, this view has become hidden by a gray pall of smog that persistently shrouds Dehradun. Occasionally, when the pollution is dispersed by mountain storms, you can get a taste of the

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[9] The proposed expansion of the Jolly Grant Airport could lead to the loss of some 10,000 trees in the Thano Reserved Forest. As of January 2021, the Uttarakhand High Court has issued a stay order on the project. Saumya Chaudhari, 'Decade of Biodiversity saved from Bio-travsesty?,' *Mongabay* February 9th, 2021, https://india.mongabay.com/2021/02/commentary-decade-of-biodiversity-saved-from-bio-travesty/

[10] John Northam, *Guide to Masuri, Landaur, Dehra Dun, and the Hills North of Dehra including Routes to the Snows and Other places of Note* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1884), 40-41.

spectacle of sunlight, shade, and greenery evoked in the pages of Northam's guide. Every year a heady mixture of industrial and agricultural pollution coalesces to create what has been described as the 'great smog of India.'[11] The great smog then drifts up to the heights of the Himalayas where it deposits additional layers of dust on the glaciers of Garhwal, thereby accelerating the already rapid rate of melting due to climate change.



Beyond Mana Village.
[Source: Photograph taken by the author, June 2019]

Mana Village, June 2019: 'Apple trees can now grow in Mana,' exclaims Jagdish, the director of the 'Rong Pa World' museum as we discuss the effects of climate change in the icy altitudes of 'India's last village.'[12] Mana is situated near the source of the Alakananda River in Eastern Garhwal. Until the formal closure of the border between India and Tibet after the 1962 Indo-Chinese War, Mana had served as an entrepot for trans-Himalayan trade. The ebb and flow of glaciers had kept rhythm for the livelihoods of the residents of the town who call themselves the

[11] Siddharth Singh, *The Great Smog of India* (New Delhi: Randomhouse, 2018).

[12] Jagdish Bhotiya, in conversation with the author, June 1st, 2019.

'Rong Pa' or 'denizens of the steep valley.' Jagdish, a Rong Pa resident of Mana, collected weaving tools and artefacts from village elders before opening Rong Pa World. He recounts the remembered history of Mana and relates how at one point of time, Mana residents constructed only single storied houses as they feared that the movements of the glaciers would damage taller buildings.



Samuel Bourne's Photograph of the Gangotri Glacier in 1866.
[© British Library Board, Visual Arts, Photo 11 (119)
'Ice Cave in the Glacier,' 1866, British Library, London.]

Pilgrims from the neighboring pilgrim town of Badrinath stream past Rong Pa World. They seem to prefer haggling with the elderly women weavers of the town, while unabashedly passing racist comments about their appearance. The women of Mana have historically controlled property and produced handicrafts woven from wool imported from Tibet. An older Central Himalayan name for Tibet, *hundes*, is believed to refer to the wool or *un* traded by communities traveling across the mountains, such as the Rong Pa. In the nineteenth century, these trans-Himalayan

trading communities were grouped together and categorized using the racialized label 'Bhotiya.' Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, trade across the mountains declined and after the border closed, the economy of Mana was forced to undergo a transformation. Today, the women of Mana sell a few caps and sweaters along with medicinal herbs collected among the fresh grass which blankets the fringes of the glaciers every summer. They hide the herbs at the slightest rumor of approaching forest officials, who control the collection of herbs through contracts. While the post-colonial geography of Mana has changed dramatically, Jagdish's Rong Pa World museum archives remembered geographies where the trans-Himalayas occupied the center, not the margins.

Gopeshwar, May 2019: Just thirty-kilometers to the south of the glacial source of the Alakananda River at Mana, construction for the Vishnuprayag Hydroelectric Project is underway. Activists and villagers from neighboring towns, like Gopeshwar, organized protests against the hydroelectric dam, but unfortunately to no avail. Chandi Prasad Bhatt, a Gopeshwar resident and veteran leader of the renowned Chipko *andolan* against deforestation, warns that the dam on the upper course of the river will not bode well for the mountains.[13] He recalls devastating floods on the Alakananda in the 1970s, when he traveled on foot to remote villages to distribute rations for victims. Bhatt found that the villagers had already diagnosed the man-made causes of ecological disasters in the Central Himalayas. In the 1970s, deforestation by timber companies and the unplanned construction of motorways on the earthquake prone MCT (the main central thrust of the Himalayas), had left the mountains vulnerable to landslides while dense volumes of silt

[13] Chandi Prasad Bhatt in conversation with the author, 18th May 2019.

exacerbated the impact of floods. As Bhatt reflected on the condition of Uttarakhand today, he used the Garhwali word *pyanku* to summarize peasant understandings of the sensitive Himalayan terrain. 'The mountains might appear gigantic,' he explained, 'but they are delicate and like a child will wail when they are abused.'



A *chappar* (shepherd's hut) on the *Gurso Bugyal* (meadow) in Chamoli, Garhwal.
Situated some ten miles away from Joshimath.
[Source: Photograph taken by the author, May 2019]

Bhatt's long career with the Dashauli Gram Swarajya Mandal (DGSM) was devoted to revitalizing rural economies and reviving customary restrictions on landscape usage. For example, Bhatt relates how before the Nanda Devi fair, peasants from villages across the Central Himalayas refrained from cutting medicinal herbs from meadows. The DGSM played a key role in the Chipko *andolan* against environmental extraction in Garhwal. While the story of fearless *pahari* women

hugging trees in defiance of loggers is widely celebrated, comparatively little has been noted about the restorative aspects of the Chipko Movement. In the early 1970s, local students from Srinagar and Nainital pioneered grassroots reforestation drives. The 'elephant hill,' just outside the pilgrim town of Joshimath, had been stripped bare by the town's expanding population. Consequently, the student led reforestation drive in Joshimath not only averted the risk of landslides and floods, but further united youths across lines of caste and literacy in common manual labor. Even the son of the priest (*Rawal*) of the powerful temple of Badrinath allegedly defied his father's censure by joining in tree planting and dining communally with companions from 'lower' castes.[14]

Decades after Chipko, the prospects of the river valleys of Garhwal seem far less optimistic. In the summer of 2018, the scientist and spiritual activist Swami Sanand died in what turned out to be a futile fast to alert the Modi government about the plight of the Ganga in her upper reaches, where dams on the fringes of glaciers have choked the river's flow.[15] A month before I spoke with Bhatt, Jitendra, a twenty-one year old Dalit carpenter was lynched for sitting on a chair and dining in the presence of 'upper' castes in the village of Kot in Tehri District of Garhwal.[16] The need for collective, ecological politics bridging hierarchies of gender and caste seems more pertinent now than ever.

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[14] Anupam Mishra, *Chipko* (Gopeshwar: Chandi Prasad Bhatt Paryavaran Evam Vikas Kendra, 2018), 78.

[15] On the G. D. Agrawal's (Swami Sanand) death and activism, see Purnima S. Tripathi, 'Death of a Ganga Activist,' *Frontline,* November 9th, 2018, https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/article25307436.ece

[16] Sakshi Dayal, 'Dalit Youth Beaten to Death, ' *The Indian Express,* May 11th, 2019, https://indianexpress.com/article/india/uttarakhand-tehri-dalit-man-killed-family-5722290/

This dissertation is animated by the assumption that the key to understanding and resolving contemporary social and ecological crises in the Central Himalayas lies in the spatial history of the region under colonial rule. Each chapter traces the historical roots of enduring organizations of the Central Himalayan landscape. I demonstrate how the contemporary description of the mountains as a sublime wilderness cannot be severed from colonial logics of taste, race, and space. The present-day construction of 'all-weather highways' to link the sacred shrines of Gangotri, Yamunotri, Badrinath, and Kedarnath, at the sources of the Ganga and Yamuna Rivers, similarly must be situated within the nineteenth-century attenuation of unruly landscapes of pilgrimage into a single 'pilgrim road.' As colonial officials and 'upper' caste elites worked to cater to the constructed figure of the 'respectable Hindu,' the ecology and ethos of Himalayan pilgrimages were dramatically redefined. To map the making, unmaking, and remaking of spatial enclosures, I survey the space of imperial gazetteers from the perspective of colonial officials, native intermediaries, and marginalized peasants. Examining the construction of colonial spatial knowledge about the 'commons' allows us to decipher and critique historiographical debates about Himalayan environmental history. Lastly, I show how ongoing attempts to package Kumaun and Garhwal as destinations for medical tourism by the Uttarakhand government harken back to the commodification of longstanding relationships between the Himalayas and healing by Indian elites in the early twentieth century.

In tracing hegemonic organizations of the mountain landscape as a site for pilgrimage, healing, and improvement, I adopt a relational approach to place and personhood that defies binaries of colonized and colonizer as well as essentialist understandings of race and caste. The relational approach to place and personhood suggests how contingent social hierarchies have unfolded through spatial exclusions. To analyze the ways in which the 'meanings we attribute to

the environment are grounded in history, race, gender, and culture,' I draw upon methods from feminist geography, the environmental humanities, and modern South Asian historiography.[17] I thereby argue that the cultural politics of place-making in the colonial Central Himalayas was shaped by racialized understandings of nature and the body as well as by pre-colonial practices of caste-based segregation. By mapping historical entanglements of ideas about nature, material processes of place-making, and power laden social dynamics, I hope that we might be better positioned to relate to each other, and to the nonhuman Earth, in more socially and ecologically just ways. Indeed, as Keith Basso writes, 'we *are*, in a sense, the place-worlds we imagine.'[18] The next chapter elaborates upon the frameworks, sources, and stakes of this dissertation.

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[17] Carolyn Finney, *Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 3.

[18] Keith Basso, *Wisdom sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 7.

Chapter 1

An Introduction to Geographical Imaginaries and Spatial History

In 1928, the Chief Secretary of the Princely State of Tehri Garhwal in the Indian Central Himalayas issued a report on the 'Position of Sanctuaries and Game Reserves' in the state. The Chief Secretary's sketch of the topography of Tehri Garhwal enfolded claims about the allegedly ancient roots of conservation in the mountains. 'From very ancient times, dating as far back as the Vedic period, this small tract of country cradled in the Himalayas, forming the connecting link between the perpetual snow-belt of the latter and the sand dunes of the plains, and covering nearly, 4,500 square miles, had been a land of Hindu saints and sages,' he noted.[1] As a consequence of the historic sanctity of the mountains, the Chief Secretary argued, the forests of Tehri Garhwal had long been closed to shooting and fishing. More recently, the Tehri Durbar formally demarcated 'definite sanctuaries in this tract' and reserved 1,500 square miles of alpine and sub-alpine forest as protected areas under the jurisdiction of the Forest Department.

The Princely State's report was commissioned in response to an inquiry dispatched to the Government of India by the metropolitan Society for the Preservation of the Fauna of the Empire. Established by a leading figure in the Commons Preservation Society, an organization that had resisted enclosures in England and rallied for the conversion of green areas such as Epping Forest into public open space, the Society for the Preservation of the Fauna of the Empire had been paradoxically campaigning for enclosed game reserves in Britain's colonies in Africa and Asia

[1] 'Position of Sanctuaries and Game Reserves in the Tehri-Garhwal State,' 1928, Tehri Garhwal, Punjab States Agency, File No. G-14-37, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

since 1903.[2] Such contradictions were similarly mirrored in the Durbar's claims to champion conservation. The fetishization of the 'wonderful natural beauty' of mountain forests in the report on the 'Position of Sanctuaries and Game Reserves' concealed the dispossession, surveillance, and peasant resistance entailed in the violent foundation of protected areas. Just two years after the Tehri Government's report was issued, these concealments were spectacularly exposed by the Durbar's brutal repression of peasant protests in the state. In 1930, the Rawain *dhandak,* a popular uprising against forest enclosures and the criminalization of peasant subsistence practices, was met by police shootings that claimed over seventeen lives.[3] The Rawain uprising not only exposes the elisions of the Princely State's imagination of the Central Himalayas as a land of 'wonderful natural beauty' and 'non-violent spirituality,' but further suggests how hegemonic organizations of space were historically challenged by conflicting geographical imaginaries.

Geographical imaginaries may be defined as ways of seeing, sensing, dreaming of, and acting upon landscapes. If place is understood as a dynamic web of relations between humans, nonhumans, landscapes, and gods, then geographical imaginaries orient shifting processes of place-making. Geographical imaginaries thus encompass co-constitutive entanglements between nature and culture, representation and reality, as well as place and the body. As Kathryn Yusoff

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[2] David Prendergast and William Adams, 'Colonial wildlife conservation and the origins of the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire,' *Oryx* Vol. 37, No. 2 (2003): 251-260.

[3] In Garhwal, the *dhandak* was a traditional form of protest in which peasants sought an audience with the king to resolve disputes. During *dhandaks*, villagers would reject revenue demands by moving their livestock and families to the high mountains or they would march to the capital to capture the attention of the court. See Shekhar Pathak, *The Chipko Movement: A People's History* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2021), 64.

and Jennifer Gabrys write, imaginations of the environment are sites of 'interplay *between* material and perceptual worlds, where concepts cohere, forces pull and attract, and things, discourses, subjects, and objects are framed, contested, and brought into being.'[4] Following Yusoff and Gabrys, we can critique the Tehri Government's report as more than a geographical representation. Instead, the report worked to inscribe ideals of 'pristine nature' onto mountain landscapes which had long been shaped by interspecies relatedness across patchworks of field and forest. Alongside an ensemble of institutions, such as the Forest Department, and forms of knowledge, such as scientific forestry, the report participated in wider changes to the material environment of the mountains that had been unfolding from the late nineteenth century onwards. In this context, the Rawain *dhandak* marked the limits of official geographical imaginaries and signaled competing visions of the mountains in which peasants were the primary stewards of the land. The report on the 'Position of Sanctuaries and Game Reserves' therefore demonstrates how geographical imaginaries are simultaneously artefacts and agents of history.

This dissertation traces the trajectory of geographical imaginaries of the Central Himalayas as a site for improvement, pilgrimage, and healing from the late eighteenth to the middle of the twentieth century. I examine the complementary and conflicting ways in which mountain landscapes were framed, refashioned, represented, and brought into cultural circulation by English travelers and officials, as well as by Indian elites who attempted to subvert colonial hegemony. Refracted through racialized understandings of the body, agency, and value, pre-modern imaginaries of the Central Himalayas as a place of pilgrimage and renunciation were reinvented

[4] Kathryn Yusoff and Jennifer Gabrys, 'Climate Change and the Imagination,' *WIRES Climate Change Vol 2.* (2011): 517.

in the colonial context. At the same time, colonial processes of place-making were shaped by pre-colonial systems of land holding and caste segregation in the mountains. Borne out of conjunctures between high Hindu 'traditions' and colonial epistemologies, modern imaginaries of the Central Himalayas had striking ecological and social consequences. Indeed, I argue that the cultural politics of place-making under colonial rule resulted in the spatial reproduction of race and caste-based hierarchies in the Central Himalayas.

The Cultural Politics of Place-Making

Historical studies of the Indian Himalayas largely perpetuate analytical distinctions between aesthetic representations of landscape and material changes to the environment, as well as spatial distinctions between the colonial 'hill station' and the mountain hinterland. A rich body of scholarship draws upon discourse analysis and visual studies to trace the 'Victorian landscaping' of the mountains. David Arnold's *Tropics and the Traveling Gaze* examines the accounts of botanists and explorers in the Eastern Himalayas. Arnold observes a burgeoning British attraction to the Himalayas across the nineteenth century because of the region's Alpine vegetation and 'salubrious' climate.[5] Studies of hill stations further track how British officials, missionaries, and planters deployed the aesthetics of the picturesque to domesticate mountain landscapes and recreate pockets of England, or 'little *vilayets,*' in the Himalayan foothills.[6] A second broad

[5] David Arnold, The Tropics and the Traveling Gaze: India, Landscape, and Science 1800–1856, (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2005).

[6] See Pamela Kanwar, *Imperial Simla: The Political Culture of the Raj* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007); and Dane Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains: Hill Stations and the British Raj*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996).

category of scholarship examines the economic and social worlds of mountain peasants under colonial rule. While Aniket Alam and Chetan Singh survey the 'natural premises' of peasant life in the mountains, Ramachandra Guha and Ajay Rawat foreground peasant opposition to scientific forestry.[7] The historiography of the Indian Himalayas is thus split between the analysis of hill stations as 'racial enclaves' and the study of peasant resistance to forest enclosures. Consequently, the spatial implications of exchanges between colonial forms of knowledge and power laden Indian relationships with the landscape have been largely overlooked. To trace how the mountains were framed, refashioned, represented, and brought into cultural circulation through encounters between colonial and Indian elites from the late eighteenth to the middle of the twentieth century, I set out to investigate the cultural politics of place-making in the colonial Central Himalayas.

This chapter introduces the frameworks, sources, and stakes involved in the historical study of the cultural politics of place-making. I begin by defining the main analytical categories and subjects of inquiry used in this dissertation. Part 1 then introduces the model of spatial history through a survey of the limits and consequences of colonial constructions of locality in the mountains. Part 2 revisits the case of the Rawain peasant uprising against scientific forestry in Tehri Garhwal. The Rawain uprising pervades scholarship on South Asian environmental history, as well as the regional history of the Central Himalayas, as a symbol of environmental resistance

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[7] See Ramchandra Guha, *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989); Ajay Rawat, *Forest Management in Kumaun Himalaya: Struggle of the Marginalized People* (New Delhi: Indus, 1999); Chetan Singh, *Natural Premises: Ecology and Peasant Life in the Western Himalaya 1800-1950* (Delhi: OUP, 1998); Aniket Alam, *Becoming India: Western Himalayas under British Rule* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

and anti-feudal consciousness respectively. By revisiting the uprising through the analytic of the geographical imaginary, I propose that the case of Rawain further reveals how conflicts over land entailed conflicts over the meanings and ontology of land. Additionally, the example of Rawain demonstrates how geographical imaginaries participate in the articulation and naturalization of social differences. The entanglements of geographical imaginaries, conceptions of nature, and constructions of social difference is a central theme in the chapters to follow. Lastly, I explain how archival sources have been collected and analyzed in this dissertation.

The Central Himalayas

In 1815, when the densely forested and mineral rich mountains between the Sarada and Alakananda Rivers were annexed to the expanding territories of the East India Company after the Anglo-Gurkha War, the former Raja of Garhwal was also reinstated under the paramount authority of the British Government. After decades of Gurkha rule, the early-nineteenth-century delineation of Kumaun, British Garhwal, Dehra Dun, and Tehri Garhwal was one among a series of colonial administrative changes that reconstituted the Central Himalayas. When officials of the East India Company were first dispatched to survey the mountains, the practices of peasants, traders, pilgrims, and feudal rulers had already shaped the Central Himalayas into an ecologically intertwined and richly storied region.[8] The forested foothills, terraced river valleys, and high altitude meadows of the mountains had been interconnected through peasant practices of pastoral nomadism and agro-forestry. The mountain economy, historian Vasudha Pande notes, 'was the product of a long historical process, which not only knit different altitudinal zones into an

[8] Lieutenant W. S. Webb, *Survey of a Tour to Discover the Sources of the River Ganges Performed in the Months of April, May, and June 1808*, IOR/X/9132, India Office Records, British Library, London.

integrated economic unit but also accommodated various kinds of lifestyles and a variegated use of natural resources.'[9]

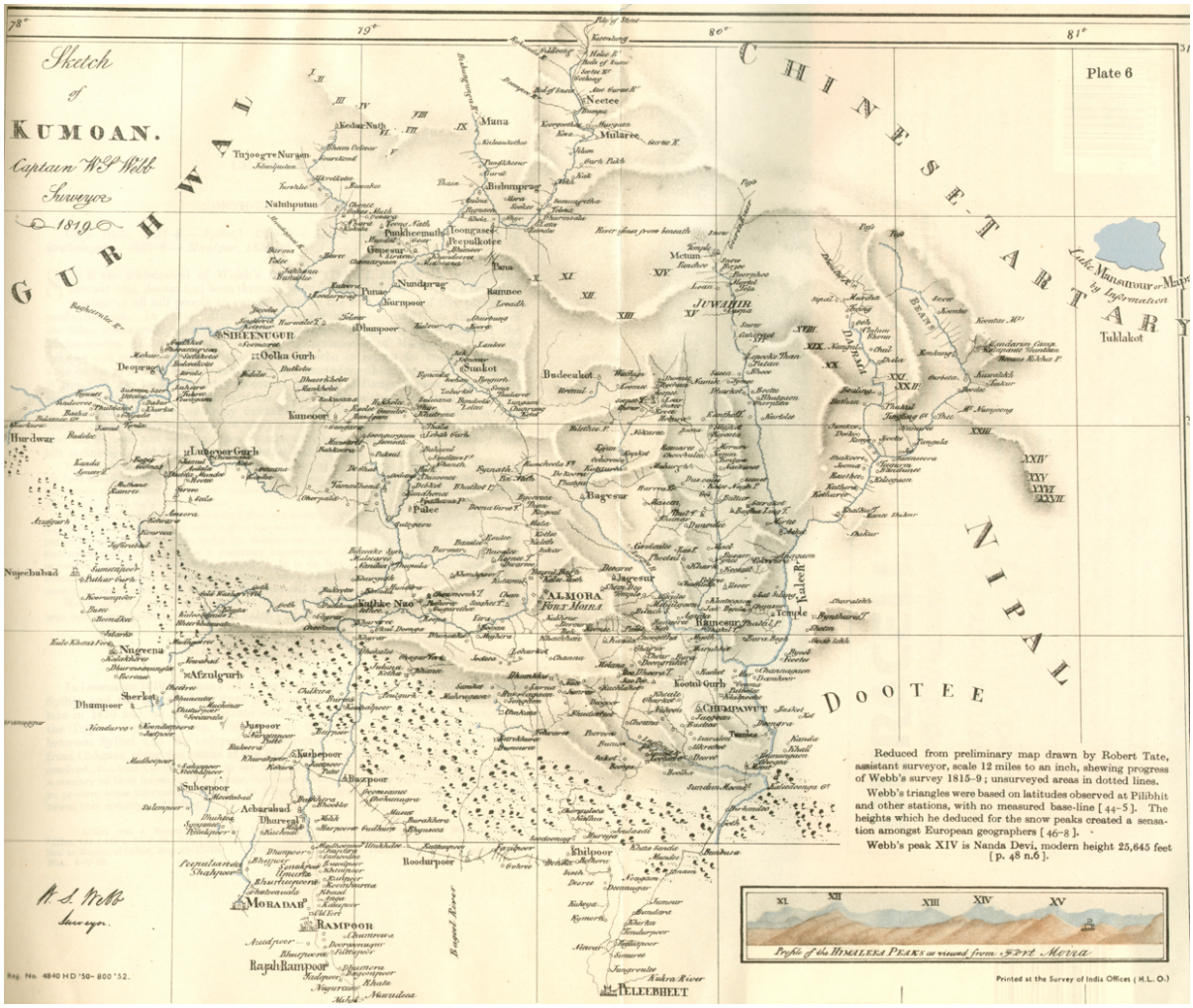

Fig 1. Map resulting from Webb's second survey of Kumaun (1815-9)
[Source: PAHAR open access]

Presiding over the regions of Garhwal and Kumaun from their respective capitals in Srinagar and Almora, the eighteenth-century rulers of the Central Himalayas upheld feudal social relations which included forms of agrarian slavery. Simultaneously, communities of Shauka, Jadh,

[9] Vasudha Pande, 'Anthropogenic Landscape of the Central Himalayas,' *Seminar, special issue on Nature and History No. 673* (2015): 3.

and Marchha trafficked in borax, wool, and salt traversing mountain passes and ferrying stories, as well as goods, from the Tibetan plateau across the Himalayas. The Gurkha conquest of Kumaun, in 1790, and Garhwal, in 1804, subsequently incorporated the Central Himalayas into a geographical imagination centered in Nepal. Nepali folk songs signified newly annexed Gurkha territories through food products, associating Kumaun with black millet.[10] Colonial rule heralded new modes demarcating, describing, measuring, and controlling these intricately interwoven landscapes of the Central Himalayas (*fig. 1*).

Following the annexation of Kumaun and Garhwal to the territories of the East India Company, and the parallel installation of a Princely State in Tehri Garhwal, the mountains steadily attracted a range of travelers, officials, sportsmen, settlers, pilgrims, and ascetics from across the subcontinental plains and the imperial metropole. Elite Indian and European travelers were equipped with their own aesthetic sensibilities, concepts of 'nature,' and judgments about proper ways to appreciate mountain landscapes. Through sanitary regulations, administrative gazetteers, spatial enclosures, forms of forced labor, printed guidebooks, and legal disputes over land, 'upper' caste elites, from the mountains and the plains, as well as colonial officials and travelers, were able to curate the mountains in ways that consolidated their hegemonic geographical imaginaries.

Under colonial rule, then, geographical imaginaries of the Central Himalayas manifested through material processes of place-making which altered sensorial experiences of mountain landscapes, with at times life-shortening consequences for humans and nonhumans alike. The

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[10] Vasudha Pande, 'Divergent Historiographical Traditions: A Comparative Study of Gorkha Rule in Kumaun and Far Western Nepal with particular reference to Jumla and Doti,' in *Before the Emergence of Nation States*, ed. M P Joshi, S Thapa, and R Shah (Almora: Almora Book Depot, 2014), 3.

chapters to follow demonstrate how associations between the aesthetics of the sublime and the body of the white male legitimated colonial authority over mountain landscapes and fueled the near extirpation of the *moonal* pheasant from the glacial valleys of the Ganga in the mid-nineteenth century. Late-nineteenth-century enclosures naturalized imagined boundaries between forest and field, thereby eliding caste and gender specific labor from the mountain 'commons' and deepening the impact of famines on marginalized groups. Similarly, the inscription of bourgeois 'Hindu' tastes in pilgrimages to Garhwal over the course of the nineteenth century not only shifted the locus of the sacred away from pilgrims' ecological immersion into mountain landscapes and towards the precincts of shrines, but it also led to the conscription of Dalits as manual scavengers in journeys from which they were largely excluded. Thus, hegemonic geographical imaginaries of the Central Himalayas, which were scripted through colonial encounters, had marked social and ecological implications.

Geographical Imaginaries

By drawing upon the analytic of the geographical imaginary to trace the history of the Central Himalayas, I attempt to expand evaluations of the spatial implications of colonialism and alert environmental historians to the ways in which they frame their subjects of study. A rich body of scholarship has critiqued colonialism as a 'spatial event' that radically reconfigured the space of the colony through the mapping of borders, regimes of private property, and the establishment of racially exclusive enclaves. Works by Ranajit Guha, Matthew Edney, David Arnold, and Manu Goswami have been foundational in examining specific disciplines, such as cartography, as well as laws, such as the Permanent Settlement of Bengal, through which British colonial rule

transformed the geography of South Asia.[11] The analytic of the geographical imaginary complements such studies of the spatial implications of colonialism by foregrounding the cultural and embodied dimensions of place-making.

The notion of the geographical imaginary is premised on the understanding that there is no space 'ontologically prior to the cultural and semiotic codes through which its existence is expressed.'[12] This centrality of 'cultural and semiotic codes' in both mapping and making place informs Edward Said's conception of imaginative geography. In *Orientalism,* Said uses the concept of imaginative geography to critique the West's staging of the 'orient' as an imagined terrain of alterity. The West's imaginative geography of the orient acted as a 'corporate institution' for describing, teaching, settling, restructuring, and ruling over the orient, Said argues.[13] Yet, in *Culture and Imperialism,* Said cautions that the 'struggle over geography' implicates both the colonizer and the colonized as imaginative geographies are also fields of contestation. The struggle over geography is 'complex and interesting,' he explains, 'because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings.'[14] Said's framework of

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[11] Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), Ranajit Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal: An Essay on the Idea of Permanent Settlement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1963), Matthew Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

[12] Raymond B. Craib, *Cartographic Mexico: A History of State Fixations and Fugitive Landscapes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 5.

[13] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, Vintage Books, 1979), 3.

[14] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993): 7.

imaginative geography reinserts questions of history and politics into the purportedly 'objective' space of geography. Furthermore, it alerts us to the ways in which colonialism involves contestations over not only physical but also epistemic terrain.

While scholars such as Matthew Edney have observed that Said's critique of the colonial use of geography as an instrument of rule is monolithic and overstated, subsequent studies draw upon the framework of the geographical imaginary to examine more specific sites of colonial control.[15] Notably, Neeladri Bhattacharya's *The Great Agrarian Conquest* argues that a peculiarly colonial 'agrarian imaginary' paved the way for the 'deep conquest' of rural India. Bhattacharya 'traces the processes through which- in colonial India- the agrarian was naturalized as the universal rural, and the landscape of settled peasant agriculture was projected as normative.'[16] In using the analytic of the imaginary to assess the material re-shaping of rural worlds under colonialism, Bhattacharya cautions that 'imaginaries are neither ideas, nor come into being simply at the level

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[15] Other scholars have underlined contradictions within Said's work. As Rosalind O'Hanlon and David Washbrook write, 'Said recommends that we abandon totalization and systematization in favor of the off-center and marginal. But what view could have been more centrally focused and systematizing than that which he presented in *Orientalism*? What gave the latter its power was precisely its ability to reinterpret, within a single analytical framework, core elements in the European intellectual and political tradition for a very long period and, indeed, to reinterpret them in ways that obscured internal relations of contestation and resistance in Western cultures.' See Rosalind O'Hanlon and David Washbrook, 'After Orientalism: Culture, Criticism and Politics in the Third World,' in *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial,* ed. Vinayak Chaturvedi (London: Verso, 2012), 206.

[16] Neeladri Bhattacharya, *The Great Agrarian Conquest* (New York: SUNY Press, 2019), 1.

of ideas' but are instead 'formed through material processes and embodied in material things.'[17] To trace the social and ecological implications of the colonial naturalization of the agrarian as the 'universal rural,' he draws upon the writings of utilitarian officials, administrative debates, cadastral maps, property acts, codes of custom, irrigation schemes, information on crop patterns, forest records, and rules of inheritance. Bhattacharya thereby cautions that there were several contradictions and inconsistencies within the overarching agrarian imaginary across the nineteenth century and among different provinces of British India.

Bhattacharya's work challenges the ways in which agrarian historians have conventionally approached the subcontinental past. He argues that historians have erroneously narrated India's rural history as the telos of agrarian expansion because of their uncritical acceptance of the colonial agrarian imaginary. 'Keen on tracking the transitions within settled peasant agriculture, historians ignored the non-agrarian within this rural realm,' he writes, adding that, 'it was as if forest dwellers and pastoralists were fading figures within a bygone past and thus, ironically, not worth the while of historians- who needed to focus on trajectories that presaged the future.'[18] Bhattacharya's work suggests how the historical study of geographical imaginaries can help correct taken-for-granted historiographical assumptions about the environment. In the case of the Central Himalayas, I argue that colonial spatial categories deployed in bureaucratic gazetteers continue to inform environmental histories in ways that elide gender and caste-based labor from the mountain commons.

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[17] Ibid., 2.

[18] Ibid., 8.

Geographical imaginaries further call attention to the role of sensation, affect, and aesthetics in material processes of place-making. Established studies of cultural representations of landscape often analyze places as texts, or as geography made meaningful by overlaid narratives or images.[19] Yet, more than storied landscapes, places are also sensory-fields.[20] Drawing upon Moira Gatens' feminist theory of the imaginary, Astrida Neimanis, Cecilia Asberg, and Johan Hedren define imaginaries as 'explorative, yet somewhat restricted, sense-making fields, wherein humans cultivate and negotiate relations with the material world, both emotionally and rationally, while also creating identities for themselves.'[21] Analyzing the cultural politics of place-making through the lens of the geographical imaginary thus allows us to map co-constitutive entanglements of body and place, as well as space and subjectivity.

Race, Caste, and Space

The cultural politics of place-making in the colonial Central Himalayas was central to the making, unmaking, and remaking of contingent social hierarchies because of the mutual construction of space and subjectivity. Doreen Massey draws upon the concept of articulation to analyze this relational construction of place and personhood. The notion of articulation cautions

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[19] Dennis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels, ed. *The Iconography of Landscape* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1988); W. J. T. Mitchell, *Landscape and Power* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002).

[20] On 'sensory fields' see Brad Weiss, 'Making Pigs Local: Discerning the Sensory Character of Place,' *Cultural Anthropology Vol. 26, No. 3* (2011): 438-461.

[21] Astrida Neimanis, Cecilia Asberg, Johan Hedren, 'Four Problems, Four Directions for Environmental Humanities', *Ethics & the Environment* Vol. 20, No. 1 (Spring 2015): 81.

against essentialisms and instead exposes how subjects are constituted at points of intersection. Massey argues that place encompasses a 'double articulation' as the spatial organization of society 'is integral to the production of the social, and not merely its result.'[22] Places are thus social relations 'stretched out' and the spatial serves as a crucial window onto the study of the social. Moreover, the notion of articulation precludes trans-historical definitions of social categories, such as race and caste, as 'deterministic natures.' As Stuart Hall suggests, the concept of articulation draws attention away from questions about 'whether men-in-general make perceptual distinctions between groups with different racial or ethnic characteristics.'[23] Instead, Hall argues that we must investigate the 'specific conditions' which make forms of distinction 'pertinent, historically active.'[24] Following Massey and Hall, I ask how modern geographical imaginaries of the Central Himalayas transfigured people's sensorial relationships with landscapes in ways that made race and caste-based forms of distinction historically active.

In analyzing race, caste, and space together, I refrain from explaining caste in terms of race or simplistically collapsing these categories. While it is important to consider how race and caste-based exclusions have unfolded spatially, neither race nor caste can be assumed to have self-explanatory power in historical accounts. It is precisely this treatment of race and caste as self-

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[22] Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 8.; Doreen Massey, 'Double Articulation: A Place in the World,' in *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 110–21.

[23] Stuart Hall, 'Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance,' In *Essential Essays,* edited by David Morley (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 212.

[24] Ibid.

explanatory categories, or deterministic natures, which characterizes Indological scholarship, Ronald Inden argues. 'European discourses appear to separate their Self from the Indian Other- the essence of Western thought is practical reason, that of India a dreamy imagination, or the essence of Western society is the free (but selfish) individual, that of India an imprisoning (but all providing) caste system,' Inden writes.[25] Through the lens of such essentialisms, caste emerges as the 'substantialized agent of Indian society' in terms of which all of South Asia's past can be understood. Rather than rehearsing orientalist treatments of race and caste as deterministic natures, I ask how these systems of unequal social relations were articulated and naturalized through ideas about nature in the colonial Central Himalayas. 'Imagined as an ontological foundation, nature has served as the generative terrain from which assertions of essence emerge,' Jake Kosek, Donald Moore, and Anand Pandian assert.[26] Following Kosek, Moore, and Pandian, I set out to examine how the construction of racial difference participated in colonial projects of spatial enclosure across nineteenth-century Kumaun and Garhwal.

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[25] Ronald B. Inden, *Imagining India* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 2000), 3. Within shared colonial assumptions about caste, Inden notes some differences between the empiricist and romantic view. The empiricist view emphasized *jati* as the material manifestation of caste whereas the idealist view proposed a favorable evaluation of the *varna* system as an imaginative template. Inden finds the Indological equation of caste as the core essence of Indian civilization reflected in Louis Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus.*

[26] Donald S. Moore, Jake Kosek, and Anand Pandian, 'Introduction: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nature,' in *Race, Nature and the Politics of Difference*, ed. Donald S. Moore, Jake Kosek, and Anand Pandian (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 3.

Environmental historians of South Asia have for long overlooked the role played by caste exclusions in fragmenting access to and experiences of the environment. Instead, canonical works in the environmental history of India have portrayed caste-based divisions of labor as having served a positive ecological role. As Mukul Sharma observes in his critique of Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha's *This Fissured Land*, the 'eco-casteist' narratives of environmental historians have elided the violence of caste exclusion by presenting the caste system as a form of 'conservation from below.' As Sharma notes, Guha and Gadgil describe caste as 'a 'remarkable system of ecological adaptation,' and 'high level specialization,' where caste groups 'in a web of mutually supportive relationships' helped resource conservation.'[27] Before Sharma's wide-ranging critique of the 'eco-casteism' of Indian environmental narratives, D. R. Nagaraj argued that competing ideas of nature have undermined solidarities between the anti-caste and environmental movements in South Asia as well. While the Dalit movement has fought for equal land ownership by staking a claim to the commons, the ecological movement has called for the preservation of village common lands. Nagaraj insightfully identified the limitations of both approaches. While the Dalit movement 'is yet to work out the ramifications of accepting the notion of a total village as being among the crucial positive categories of praxis,' the ecological movement romanticizes the village as the locus of consensus without questioning the fragmentation caused by caste

[27] Mukul Sharma, *Caste and Nature: Dalits and Environmental Politics* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2017), xx.

oppression.[28] Nagaraj and Sharma thus caution against an ecological romanticism that obscures the fact that 'nature itself has a social history that is anything but pure.'[29] To depart from the 'eco-casteism' of conventional South Asian environmental histories, I foreground questions of difference in histories of place-making.

Land and labor were central to the reproduction of caste-based hierarchies in the colonial Central Himalayas. Agrarian slavery unfolded along caste lines well into the 1840s and persisted as forms of unfree labor.[30] Even in the early twentieth century, the Commissioner of Garhwal noted that ninety-five percent of landholders and tenant farmers in Garhwal were 'upper' caste.[31] As

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[28] D. R. Nagaraj, *The Flaming Feet* (Ranikhet, Permanent Black, 2010), 134. Recent movements for the reclamation of the commons and for collective control over land, led by organizations such as the Dalit Land Rights Federation of Tamil Nadu, appear to resolve these tensions.

[29] Jake Kosek, 'Purity and Pollution: Racial Degradation and Environmental Anxieties,' in *Liberation Ecologies: Environment, Development, Social Movements*, ed. Richard Peet and Michael Watts (New York: Routledge, 2004), 153.

[30] Morley Smith's 1836 report on 'slavery in Kumaun' noted that agrarian slaves were 'invariably doms or outcastes, belonging with their children and effects to the lord of the soil.' While the sale and purchase of agrarian slaves was outlawed in 1843, the *haliya* system of bondage continued well into the twentieth century. As V. A. Stowell observed during his tenure as Commissioner of Garhwal in the early twentieth century, the *haliya* 'entirely tills and reaps as much land as one man is capable of cultivating, all instruments, etc., being supplied by his master and all the produce going to him.' V. A. Stowell, *A Manual of the Land Tenures of the Kumaun Division* (Allahabad: Superintendent of Printing and Stationary, 1907), 8.

[31] Ibid., 8.

Malini Ranganathan writes, 'if property can be defined as a bundle of social and legal relations that confer the right to exclude, then caste is centrally one of those relations.'[32] Examining these relations between caste and space arguably precludes trans-historical definitions of the caste system as a 'sacral order' founded upon a 'purity-pollution opposition' that subsumes politics. This approach to caste is most notably associated with the widely critiqued work of Louis Dumont.[33] As Anupama Rao argues, Dumont's notion that ideas of individualism and equality were missing in hierarchical societies elides the intellectual contributions of anti-caste radicals. Anti-caste radicals foregrounded the 'existential aspects of caste subalternity' by focusing 'on questions of the caste body, violence, language, and experience.'[34] Following this anti-caste intellectual tradition, Gopal Guru insightfully analyzes the spatial grounds of the caste system. Guru locates the 'civilizational violence' of caste in the enforced absence and presence of 'lower' castes in 'upper' caste spaces, through the mechanisms of segregation and humiliation respectively.[35] Similarly, the chapters to follow demonstrate how anti-caste activists in late colonial Kumaun, such as Hari Tamta, foregrounded the violence of caste-based spatial segregation to make a case for Dalit land rights. Examining the historically intermeshed dynamics

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[32] Malini Ranganathan, 'Caste, Racialization, and the Making of Environmental Unfreedoms in Urban India,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (2021), 6.

[33] Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications,* English ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). As Dilip Menon writes in his critique of *Homo Hierarchicus*, 'Dumont's structuralist reading privileges an ossified grammar of caste ideology over its individual, contextual enunciations.' See Menon, *The Blindness of Insight* (Delhi: Navayana, 2011), xi.

[34] Anupama Rao, *The Caste Question* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: UC Press, 2009), 12.

[35] Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarukkai, *The Cracked Mirror* (Delhi: OUP, 2017), 87.

of caste, land, and labor can therefore inform our understanding of the ways in which inequalities of caste became 'historically active' in colonial Kumaun and Garhwal.

The cultural politics of place-making in the colonial Central Himalayas thus calls attention to the role played by power laden geographical imaginaries in the construction of physical environments. Tracing the shifting historical construction of landscapes further calls attention to the 'dynamic webs' of social relations which constitute and reconstitute place.[36] This dissertation specifically considers the extent to which the modern remaking of mountain landscapes reinforced contingent hierarchies of race, caste, and gender. Thus, I draw upon scholarship in environmental history, feminist geography, modern South Asian history, as well as interdisciplinary studies of race and space, to foreground questions of difference in histories of place-making. Furthermore, I deploy the model of spatial history to evaluate how mountain landscapes were constructed, contested, and naturalized. Spatial history takes the taken-for-granted scene of historical narratives as a point of departure. As William Cronon puts it, 'if the way a narrator constructs a scene is directly related to the story that narrator tells, then this has deep implications for environmental history, which after all takes scenes of past nature as its primary object of study.'[37] The following section introduces the model of spatial history by mapping the limits and consequences of colonial constructions of locality in the mountains.

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[36] For a reading of place as a dynamic web of social relations, see Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender.*

[37] See William Cronon, 'A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative,' *The Journal of American History* (March 1992): 1354.

Part 1: Cartographic Conceits and Spatial History

Whereas regional histories of the mountain state of Uttarakhand naturalize contingent constructions of locality, the model of spatial history disrupts the stage upon which such historical narratives unfold by instead excavating a 'prehistory of places.' Regional studies of the Central Himalayan regions of Kumaun and Garhwal presume that the present-day mountain state of Uttarakhand had an internally bounded history as a 'geo-cultural unit.'[38] Consequently, regional histories complement and camouflage the post-colonial movement for the formation of a separate mountain state of Uttarakhand. From the 1970s onwards, mountain dwellers from Kumaun and Garhwal rallied together to challenge what they perceived as 'internal colonialism' at the hands of Indian elites from the plains. The Uttarakhand Movement, Anup Kumar argues, 'was a culmination in a series of socio-ecological movements staged in the region to prevent the encroachment on pahari *lifeworld*- a way of life that is based on a 'cultural ecology' of the mountains in which man, environment and spiritualism are intertwined in a delicate balance.'[39] After protracted campaigns for the formation of a distinct mountain state within the Union of India, Uttarakhand was finally formed in 2000. Yet, the 'geo-cultural unit' around which the Uttarakhand Movement coalesced was framed, staged, and represented over the course of the movement itself.[40]

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[38] For an analysis of Uttarakhand as a cohesive 'geo-cultural' unit see R. R. Nautiyal and Annpurna Nautiyal ed., *Uttarakhand in Turmoil* (Delhi: M D Publications, 1996).

[39] Kumar, *The Making of a Small State: Populist Social Mobilization and the Hindi Press in the Uttarakhand Movement* (Orient Blackswan: Delhi, 2011), 11.

[40] As Nayanika Mathur observes, the spatial identity of Uttarakhand developed over the course of the movement for statehood when 'a specifically *pahari* identity coalesced around the neglect of the *pahar*

Less than a distinct 'geo-cultural unit,' or a bounded region which cradled its own unique history, the model of spatial history therefore proposes that the 'Central Himalayas' are a cultural artefact that has been recursively reshaped by social relations of dominance. Spatial history tears through the notion of geographical objectivity to interrogate what Paul Carter describes as the 'spatial forms and fantasies through which culture declares its presence.'[41] Thus, spatial history exposes categories such as 'regions' and 'borders' as 'productive regimes concurrently generated by and producing social relations of dominance' spanning beyond the local.[42] This section of the chapter presents a brief overview of the spatial history of the Central Himalayas under colonial rule by examining the conceits, conflicts, and contingencies belying cartographic claims to represent geographical truths. The limits of cartographic claims notwithstanding, the spatial implications of colonial rule had longstanding social and ecological consequences in the mountains.

The Limits of Colonial Cartography

In the early-nineteenth-century Central Himalayas, British military officials observed the indispensability of mapping for the expansion of colonial rule. Situated on the cusp of trans-Himalayan trade routes, the forested hills and steep valleys of Kumaun and Garhwal had captured

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(hills) by non-*paharis*.' See Nayanika Mathur, 'A 'Remote' Town in the Indian Himalaya,' *Modern Asian Studies Vol. 49, No. 2* (2015): 369.

[41] Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History* (New York: Knopf, 1988), xxii.

[42] Harsha Walia, *Border and Rule* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2021), 6.

the attention of the East India Company. Yet, without maps and surveys, officials argued, it would be impossible to estimate the economic potential of the mountains, leave alone conquer and control the intractable landscape. 'The Gorkahs are not aware of the resources of the country they now hold,' Captain H. H. Young claimed in a report to the Secretary of the Government of India in 1814. He described how the region was endowed with 'rich copper mines, iron in great abundance, tar, hemp, and masts and yards of fir innumerable, sufficient to supply all the Navy of England' but suggested the need for more knowledge of the terrain. 'In mountaineers warfare everything depends upon information,' he cautioned.[43]

Young's letters to the Secretary, alongside his correspondence with Kumauni and Garhwali elites displaced by Gurkha rule, reflect the steady expansion of geographical knowledge that paved the way for the Anglo-Gurkha War.[44] Just as maps had charted the way for the EIC's conquest of the mountains, the annexation of Kumaun and Garhwal prompted the need for more maps. 'All the maps in possession of this Government are so incorrect, that no satisfactory judgment can be framed from them with regard to what the interests of the Company may require in that respect,' the Secretary of the Government of India wrote to Kumaun's first Commissioner shortly after the

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[43] 'Captain H. Y. Hearsey to John Adam, Secretary to the Government. Dated 24th August, 1814.' Archival document re-printed in Banarsi Prasad Saksena, ed. *Historical Papers Relating to Kumaun 1809-1842* [U. P. State Records Series: Selections from English Records No. 3] (Allahabad: Government Central Record Office, 1956), 8.

[44] Young's elite native informants and allies included Sudarshan Shah of Garhwal and Harak Deb Joshi of Kumaun.

war.[45] EIC officials subsequently called for the gathering of more geographical information about the Sarada River and trans-Himalayan passes before policing a border between Gurkha dominions and the newly annexed Indian Central Himalayas.

Thus, in the Central Himalayas, as elsewhere on the subcontinent, 'geographers created and defined the spatial image of the Company's empire.'[46] However, the authority of colonial cartography was repeatedly undermined by the agency of people and the environment. While rivers muddied borders marked by states, the alleged duplicity of 'natives' unsettled boundaries separating villages. Across the nineteenth century, the shifting course of the Sarada River precipitated repeated efforts by Survey of India officials to demarcate a clearer boundary separating Nepal and Kumaun.[47] Shortly after the Anglo-Gurkha War, the boundaries of villages in Kumaun and Garhwal were measured and recorded in Commissioner Traill's 'great measurement book' of 1823. These 'san assi' (according to the *samvat* calendar) measures were used to calculate revenue and determine jurisdiction. Much to the frustration of colonial administrators, decades later, the boundaries defined in the measurement book appeared to 'wander about hill tops in a meaningless way.' Consider the Deputy Commissioner of Nainital, H. Roberts's observations from 1893:

> 'The general boundaries in the hills are what is known as Traill's or "san assi" boundary….These boundaries do not in all instances follow permanent physical features. You will find entry as follows from "Buldoo Khand" (bullock hump) to

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[45] 'J. Adam, Secretary to the Government to the Hon'ble Gardner, Futtygurh, 3rd May, 1815.' Archival correspondence re-printed in Saksena, ed. *Historical Papers Relating to Kumaun 1809-1842*, 84.

[46] Edney, *Mapping an Empire*, 2.

[47] See 'Demarcation of Boundary between British Territory and Nepal,' 1880-93, Box No. 113, Nainital Regional Archives.

> the oak tree near "Bhawani Singh's karak" but going to the spot you will find three or four knolls like bullock's humps and as for "Bhawani Singh's karak" no one seems to know who Bhawani Singh was, there is no "karak" (cattle shed) and as for oak trees there are probably a dozen, any one of which may have been intended, or as is more probable, the oak tree referred to has been cut down or has dried...'[48]

Roberts's observations suggest how the 'san assi' boundaries of the mountains could only be made meaningful through consensus across time, involving not just colonial officials but also the agreement of villagers, trees, and landscapes. The case of the 'san assi' boundaries therefore reflects the contingencies, conceits, and contestations belying colonial cartographic claims to represent geographical truths.

Matthew Edney's historical analysis of the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India presents a similar account of the limitations of colonial cartography. Edney outlines the bureaucratic disagreements and financial constraints which undermined the colonial production of geographical knowledge. As in the case of the Trigonometrical Survey, archival correspondence between the Board of Revenue and the Commissioner of Kumaun suggest how comprehensive cadastral surveys of the mountains were repeatedly deferred. Across the first half of the nineteenth century, letters from the Sudder Board of Revenue echoed the 'opinion that a professional survey on the hills would be costly and useless.'[49] It was this resistance from the board that explains why officials

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[48] 'Revision of the Boundaries of Nainital and Almora,' 1883-93, Box 23, Nainital Regional Archives. Also see, 'Boundary between Almora and Garhwal,' 1894, Box No. 8, Nainital Regional Archives.

[49] 'H. Elliot, Secretary to the Officiating Commissioner of the 3rd or Bareilly Division. Sudder Board of Revenue, N. W. P. Allahabad, 7th June, 1837,' in Saksena, ed. *Historical Papers Relating to Kumaun 1809-1842*, 235.

in the mountains continued to rely on Traill's measurement book well into the century, even when they acknowledged its inaccuracies.

Beyond bureaucratic and financial frustrations, Edney argues that the case of the Trigonometrical Survey reflects how 'surveys were exercises in negotiation, mediation, and contestation between the surveyors and their native contacts.'[50] In the mountains, native intermediaries also continued to inform the production of official geographical knowledge, to varying degrees, well into the twentieth century.[51] Edney concludes his study of the Trigonometrical Survey by arguing that the survey constituted an 'imperfect Panopticon-like grid' for colonial surveillance. While the contingencies of mapping in the mountains confirm Edney's assessment of the limits to the colonial use of geography as an instrument of rule, the implications of colonial geography went far beyond questions of surveillance in the Central Himalayas. Across the nineteenth and early twentieth century, colonial spatial categories and surveys of the mountains were fundamentally linked to interests in economic extraction.

The Colonial Construction of Locality

The Central Himalayas are characterized by substantial variations in climate and topography. The region encompasses the thick *sal* forests of the foothills (the *bhabar*), malarial jungles skirting the foothills (the *terai*), the warmer climate of terraced rice fields ascending the slopes of river valleys, dense oak forests on the fringes of fields, meadows of delicate grass blanketed by winter snow, and jagged mountain peaks. Under British colonial rule, this mosaic of

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[50] Edney, *Mapping an Empire*, 25.

[51] For more on the role of native intermediaries in the production of colonial geographical knowledge, see chapter 4.

diverse landscapes, which had hitherto been integrated by peasant practices, were parcelized into separate units for natural resource and revenue extraction.

With the advent of EIC rule in 1815, the Central Himalayas were governed as a 'non-regulation province.' This implied that Kumaun and Garhwal were exempt from certain laws and regulations applied to other Indian provinces such as Bengal. For instance, the Permanent Settlement of 1793, that granted propriety rights to revenue-collecting zamindars, was not imposed on Kumaun and Garhwal. Instead, the mountains were characterized by a 'village proprietary system' and a 'tenancy system based on custom and case-law only.'[52] Furthermore, in non-regulation provinces, administrative and judicial functions were combined, thereby rendering the administrative head of Kumaun into the High Court of Kumaun. As non-regulation areas, Kumaun and Garhwal occupied a distinct place in the imagination of British administrators as 'wilder tracts, where the people are considered unsuited for the stricter and more technical procedure of general administration.'[53] Instead, as the Deputy Commissioner of Garhwal V. A. Stowell remarked, the 'naturally obedient' character of hill-dwellers called for a 'patriarchal administration.'[54]

The 'patriarchal' colonial administration in these so-called 'wilder tracts,' peopled by allegedly 'naturally obedient' mountain dwellers, oversaw sweeping ecological changes. In the first few decades of EIC rule, Kumaun and British Garhwal were governed as vast revenue

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[52] V. A. Stowell, *A Manual of the Land Tenures of the Kumaun Division* (Allahabad: Superintendent of Printing and Stationary, 1907), ii.

[53] *Report on the Administration of the North-West Provinces for the Year 1870-71* (Allahabad: NWP Government Press, 1872), 53.

[54] Stowell, *Manual of Land Tenures,* ii.

plantations. The trope of 'waste' figured repeatedly in administrative reports thereby legitimizing policies designed to facilitate agrarian expansion. In the early decades of colonial rule, the Commissioner of Kumaun, George William Traill, divided the total land surface of the Central Himalayas into the four categories of 'snow,' 'barren and incapable of cultivation,' 'cultivation,' and 'uncultivated' land. In this schema, uncultivated land was rendered into 'wasteland' in which economic value was yet to be realized. Traill sought to facilitate agrarian expansion in 'wastelands' through the grant of revenue free farm lands (*nayabad* leases) and bounties on the extermination of 'wild beasts.' Consequently, Traill claimed that in 1823 there was 1/3rd more land under cultivation than in 1815.[55] This extension of cultivation complemented an expansion in the amount of revenue realized from Gurkha rule to British rule. Under Traill's tenure, dues were also applied on the cutting of timber in the *bhabar* forests, where revenue collection was farmed out to native contractors.

In official accounts issued by the 'patriarchal' Kumaun government, these early expansions in farm lands and revenue collection were cast as benevolent measures, heralding 'improvements' for natives. By equating the reduction in uncultivated 'wasteland' with improvement, administrators in the Central Himalayas were tapping into a wider colonial discourse surrounding 'waste.' As Vinay Gidwani argues in his study of the idea of 'waste' as it figured in the Permanent Settlement of Bengal, 'the concept of 'waste' not only possessed an ecological dimension that described land types, but also a moral dimension that described undesirable kinds of human

[55] 'Mr. Traill's Statistical Memoir Reports,' April 1823- December 1826, IOR/F/4/1158/30396, British Library, London. Also see, Traill, *Statistical Sketch of Kumaon* (London: John Murray, 1851).

behavior.'[56] In the utilitarian view, Gidwani adds, both human and nonhuman nature could be improved through the 'culling' of waste which manifested in the form of 'useless species,' 'idle lands,' and 'indolent behaviors.' British administrators in Kumaun and Garhwal, who contrasted their 'intelligent leadership' with the alleged despotism of Gurkha rule, thus equated prosperity with the reclamation of land that had ostensibly been left waste as a result of Gurkha policies. As the Settlement Officer J. H. Batten avowed in his appraisal of Traill's tenure, Traill 'found the province (especially the Gurhwal portion of it) fast falling owing to the tyranny of its late rulers into a depopulated desert, and he left it a comparative paradise, with inhabitants invoking blessings on his name, and on that of the Government which he represented.'[57] However, these 'public transcripts' of native approval for colonial policies were subverted by the 'hidden transcripts' of vernacular poetry.[58] Consider these lines by the Kumauni poet Gumani Pant (1790-1846), for instance:

> '*Kare firangi raaj abadi, dharti me na jungle hain/ Campu paltan jage jage par, kile kotghar bangle hai.*
> The firangi rules over the populace, the land is denuded of forests/ You can see platoons of the company all over, and forts, kotwalis, and bungalows.'[59]

Early colonial tropes about allegedly 'wasteful' *pahari* practices were thus inverted in *pahari* poetry which bemoaned the environmental consequences of colonial revenue extraction.

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[56] Vinay Gidwani, ''Waste' and the Permanent Settlement in Bengal,' *EPW* Vol. 27, No. 4 (1995): 44.

[57] George William Traill, *Statistical Sketch of Kumaon* (London: John Murray, 1851), 114.

[58] James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

[59] Uma Bhatt ed., *Kahen Gumani* (Nainital: Pahar Pothi), 42-6. In chapter 2, I note more of the poetry of Gumani Pant and in chapter 5, I discuss his sole Ayurvedic work.

The expansion of infrastructures of economic extraction in the Central Himalayas did not necessitate precise cartographic maps. Nonetheless, colonial policies, such as the settlement of agrarian revenues, depended upon a range of geographical surveys. As Bernard Cohn observes, 'upon the acquisition of each new territory,' the EIC launched new surveys 'which went far beyond mapping and bounding to describe and classify the territory's zoology, geology, botany, ethnography, economic products, history, and sociology.'[60] At times, surveys accompanied cartographic expeditions, as in the case of the mineralogical survey of Kumaun that accompanied Lieutenant Webb's topographical survey in 1817. In other instances, the extension of surveys was haphazard and new geographical knowledge was often superimposed onto existing maps. Consider J. H. Batten's observations from the mid-nineteenth century, for example:

> 'The map of the province [of Kumaun] was prepared from an old office copy fast going to decay, left by Mr. Commissioner Traill, but with many additions and corrections, especially in regard to the main mountain ranges, and water sheds of the rivers, and with the omission of numerous unimportant names of places which only serve to confuse a sketch of the kind, and the insertion of which in captain Webb's map (No. 66, *Company's Atlas*) has together with other defects, rendered that work in parts somewhat unintelligible.'[61]

To smoothen out the 'unintelligible' surfeit of place-names in Webb's early-nineteenth-century map of the Central Himalayas, Batten proceeded to make as many edits as possible to the 'old office copy.' His observations suggest how the criteria of geographical relevance for government officials had shifted in the course of decades. Furthermore, early surveys of the mountains were heavily dependent upon the expertise of natives, even while such expertise was considered to be

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[60] Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 7.

[61] Traill, *Statistical Sketch of Kumaon*, 208.

suspect. As Batten noted, 'original sketches for the Bhabur, were drawn up by Moolchund, the native surveyor, but however correct, were not in a state fit for the examination of superior authority, much less for being printed.'[62] Rather than timeless signifiers of colonial authority, then, maps represented the slippery ground of colonial power which needed constant recalibration through fresh surveys of the mountains.

While the production of colonial geographical knowledge thus remained imperfect, the effects of surveys was no less severe. With the expansion of mineralogical surveys, the iron and copper mines of the Central Himalayas were opened up to private companies. The Kumaun Iron Works Company was the most notable of these private enterprises and in 1862, the colonial government leased out vast swathes of forest to give the company 'entire control over the fuel supplies.'[63] Just as forest land was privatized in British Kumaun, in Tehri Garhwal timber merchants secured leases for acres of dense forests in the Bhagirathi Valley at nominal rates from the Princely State. Therefore, the relationship between mapping and extraction remained dynamic, as the changing value of natural resources prompted alterations to colonial spatial categories and policies.

Most significantly, whereas the early colonial categorization of 'uncultivated' land as 'waste' incentivized agrarian expansion, as the value of timber grew with the demands of railway construction towards the second half of the nineteenth century, demarcated forest lands were policed against peasant subsistence practices. The beginnings of scientific forestry in British

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[62] Ibid., 208.

[63] Edwin Atkinson, *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts of the NWP Vol. 1.* (Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1973 [First published in Allahabad, 1882]): 263.

Kumaun and Garhwal in 1878, and in the Tehri Princely State in 1885, heralded the enclosure of vast tracts of common lands in the mountains. The proclamation of 1893 marked a culmination of enclosures as all uncultivated lands, ranging from snow-clad peaks and lakes, to pasture grounds and village pathways, were declared as protected forest. Chapters 2 and 4 explore the social, aesthetic, and embodied dimensions of these changing valuations of 'nature' in the Central Himalayas. While these chapters examine the social and ecological consequences of colonial imaginations of 'improvement,' chapter 3 suggests how the moral logic of improvement also guided colonial infrastructural changes to Himalayan pilgrimages, which sought to cater to the idealized figure of the 'respectable Hindu.'

Thus, the production of colonial geographical knowledge remade mountain landscapes even while maps were recursively redrawn by changing environmental, social, and economic contexts. Binaries of field/forest, as well as wild/settled, which undergirded colonial polices, represented a geographical imagination that was at odds with the patterns of agro-forestry that had long characterized life in the mountains. Contrary to Traill's enduring separation of 'cultivation' from 'uncultivated' land, forests were essential in providing mountain peasants with fuel, fodder, and fertilizers. Furthermore, the different ecological belts of the Central Himalayas had been historically interwoven through the cyclical rhythms of animal husbandry. Mountain peasants would migrate annually to meadow pastures or to the *bhabar* to graze their livestock. Spatial categories introduced through colonial surveys and subsequently materialized through revenue and forest polices thus played a crucial role in reshaping the landscapes of the Central Himalayas. Indeed, less than representations of the place-worlds of mountain dwellers, colonial spatial

categories worked as 'productive regimes' which reshaped the Central Himalayas to suit the interests of a London-centric economy.[64]

Perhaps the clearest example of the cartographic reconstruction of locality in the colonial Central Himalayas is the case of the trans-Himalayan frontier. Over the course of colonial rule, the Central Himalayas became increasingly connected to the Gangetic plains at the expense of historic connections with the trans-Himalayan region. Prior to colonial rule, the Central Himalayas were locked in political and economic exchanges with Tibet and Nepal. Vasudha Pande traces trade relations between Western Kumaun and Tibet to the ninth century C.E. and notes how by the seventeenth century, the domination of specific trading groups, such as the Joharis, had been systematized through concessions from Tibetan authorities. Better linkages between the Central Himalayas and the Gangetic Plains dramatically altered this trade across the nineteenth century. By the turn of the century, the trans-Himalayan trade in salt, borax, and grain sharply declined. As Pande writes, 'the colonization of the Kumaun economy changed the structure of its trade; the trans-Himalaya lost its significance, and Kumaun looked southwards, beyond the Tarai.'[65] The shifting significance of the trans-Himalayas in the spatial history of the Central Himalayas thus

[64] On 'place-worlds' see Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

[65] Vasudha Pande, 'Borderlands, Empires, and Nations: Himalayan and Trans-Himalayan Borderlands (c. 1815-1930),' *EPW Vol. LII, No. 15* (2017): 76.

confirms Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson's contention that colonialism 'represents the displacement of one form of interconnection by another.'[66]

The shifting trajectory of cartographic maps, spatial categories, and geographical surveys of the Central Himalayas suggests the limitations as well as the protracted consequences of colonial constructions of locality. As U. Kalpagam and Manu Goswami have argued, scientific surveys and colonial geographical knowledge directed the extraction and circulation of revenue and resources away from the colony to the imperial metropole.[67] Paradoxically, colonial spatial categories were strategically appropriated by *pahari* elites during the colonial as well as the post-colonial periods. Just as Kumauni nationalists adopted colonial tropes about the 'backwardness' of the hills to campaign for the region's incorporation into the nationalist mainstream in the early twentieth century, after independence, mountain dwellers deployed colonial gazetteers to chart out the contours of their proposed hill state of Uttarakhand.[68]

By calling attention to the historical and social construction of locality, the model of spatial history thus disrupts trans-historical definitions of Kumaun and Garhwal as a bounded 'geo-cultural unit.' In the colonial Central Himalayas, we have seen how spatial categories were molded by interests in revenue and resource extraction. Nevertheless, the spatial history of the mountains

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[66] Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, 'Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference,' In *Cultural Anthropology* Vol. 7, No. 1. (1992), 8.

[67] Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); U Kalpagam, *Rule by Numbers* (London: Lexington, 2014).

[68] On Kumauni nationalism, see Badri Dutt Pande, *History of* Kumaun, tr. C. M. Agrawal (Almora: Shree Almora Book Depot, 1993). On colonial gazetteers and the proposed boundaries of Uttarakhand see Zakir Hussain, *Uttarakhand Movement* (Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 1995), 148.

cannot be read in terms of economic factors alone. Beyond the Euclidean space of official maps, geographical imaginaries of the Central Himalayas entangled humans, nonhumans, gods, and landscapes into dynamic webs of relations. These imaginaries at times complemented, contradicted, or exceeded the spatial categories undergirding colonial surveys and policies. To review histories of place-making through the lens of variegated geographical imaginaries, spatial history must examine different kinds of historical agents, such as the role of affect and sensation in molding both sensorial experiences as well as material constructions of landscape. Furthermore, geographical imaginaries are not homologous with bounded locales but are instead scripted through interactions across spatial scales. As Donald Moore argues, the framing of cultural conceptions of place defies the supposed isomorphism between 'isolated enclaves' and 'essential cultures.' As Moore writes, 'cultural difference *emerges* through the very processes that span localities, producing a sense of culture and identity that become rooted in particular places.'[69] The next section of this chapter deploys the analytic of the geographical imaginary to examine responses to colonial constructions of locality in the mountains which defied the binaries of colonizer/colonized and hills/plains.

Part 2: Conceptions of Nature and Constructions of Difference

While colonial maps were thus recursively reshaped by shifting social, economic, and environmental contexts, colonial spatial categories nonetheless worked as 'productive regimes' to reshape the material landscapes of the mountains. Indeed, colonial spatial categories went far beyond the advancement of economic interests by working to define and naturalize social

[69] Donald S. Moore, *Suffering for Territory: Race, Place, and Power in Zimbabwe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 18.

exclusions in the mountains. Through the medium of maps, surveys, settlement reports, aesthetic sensibilities, and concomitant concepts of nature, 'racialized discourse' came to mark 'both living beings and geographical territories' across the colonial Central Himalayas.[70] Furthermore, the trajectory of colonial constructions of locality was determined by the agency of differentially situated mountain dwellers, nonhumans, and landscapes. Beyond colonial constructions of locality, native intermediaries, protesting peasants, elite travelers from the plains, and enterprising former EIC officials all participated in the spatial history of Kumaun and Garhwal. As Doreen Massey writes, viewing place as a web of relations 'inherently implies the existence in the lived world of a multiplicity of spaces: cross-cutting, intersecting, aligning with one another, or existing in relations of paradox or antagonism.'[71] In this section, I explore the region of Rawain to suggest how the manifold meanings of land in the Central Himalayas were determined by historical differences of region, caste, and class. I then argue that official and hegemonic geographical imaginaries of the mountains not only worked to elide these manifold meanings of land, but also helped articulate and naturalize constructions of social difference.

Manifold Meanings of Land

The Rawain uprising against colonial forestry in Tehri Garhwal occupies a central place in the historiography of the Central Himalayas as well as in Indian environmental history more broadly. In regional histories of Uttarakhand, the Tehri Princely State's decision to open fire on

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[70] Donald S. Moore, Jake Kosek, and Anand Pandian, 'Introduction: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nature,' in *Race, Nature and the Politics of Difference*, ed. Donald S. Moore, Jake Kosek, and Anand Pandian (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 2.

[71] Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender,* 3.

peaceful peasant protestors at Rawain in 1930 represents the Jallianwala Bagh incident of the Himalayas. Historians of Garhwal further argue that the Rawain uprising, which culminated in the Tilari Massacre, marked the origins of anti-feudal consciousness in the mountains. As Anup Kumar writes, peasants appeared to be challenging the 'ritual authority of the raja' and their political consciousness was 'influenced by new ideas of liberty, anti-colonialism and anti-feudalism.'[72] For environmental historians, the series of peasant uprisings against forest enclosures which erupted across British colonial Kumaun and Tehri Princely State from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century signaled the limits of scientific forestry.[73] Decontextualized from the specific regional history of North-Western Garhwal, in these accounts, Rawain appears as a synecdoche for the conservationist ethos and fearless resistance of mountain dwellers. Ramachandra Guha's account the Rawain uprising works to confirm his assessment of 'remarkably egalitarian' mountain communities which lived in harmony with nature prior to the advent of scientific forestry. Thus, Guha observes that both Dalits and estranged kinsmen of the raja were martyred in their efforts to contest forest enclosures during the Tilari Massacre.[74] By situating Rawain within the overarching spatial dichotomy of the hills and plains, these dominant historical narratives overlook power laden social dynamics within the mountains as well as the manifold meanings of land at play in the Rawain agitation.

Well before the advent of scientific forestry, the jurisdiction of territorial gods in Rawain challenged the boundaries drawn by the Tehri Durbar and the British government since the

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[72] Kumar, *The Making of a Small State,* 92.

[73] Pathak, *The Chipko Movement: A People's History*, 63-68.

[74] Guha, *Unquiet Woods*, 76.

beginning of the nineteenth century. Situated on the cusp of the Himachal hills in North-Western Garhwal, the regions of Jaunpur, Rawain, and Jaunsar-Bhawar remained on the fringes of Garhwali politics and culture from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards. Not only was North-Western Garhwal incorporated into the dominions of the Raja of Garhwal relatively late, but the region was also considered 'marginal' from the perspective of Eastern Garhwal due to differences in language, subsistence, and cultural practices such as polyandry. Jaunpur, Rawain, and Jaunsar-Bhawar straddle the high-altitude valleys of the Yamuna and Tons Rivers. The steep undulations of mountain ridges in these tracts gave rise to practices of shifting cultivation (*kheel katil*), cattle raiding, and animal husbandry. Like their counterparts in Eastern Garhwal, the peasants of North-Western Garhwal observed restrictions on the lopping of leaves and protected fodder trees such as *bhimal* (*Grewia oppositifolia*). Yet, unlike in neighboring Eastern Garhwal, where bards sang songs in praise of the Pandavas of the *Māhābhārata* epic, along the Tons River basin, the leader of the Kauravas, Duryodhana, and the tragic anti-hero of the epic, Karna, were worshipped.

Distinct subsistence practices and religious beliefs engendered different ideas about land and territory in North-Western Garhwal. Territorial gods in Rawain, Jaunpur, and Jaunsar-Bhawar administered justice and, in some cases, enjoyed rights to collect revenue through a hierarchy of officials.[75] Through the mediation of territorial gods, land was rendered into a 'system of reciprocal relations and obligations' for the peasants of the region.[76] The presence of their god, *mahasu devta*,

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[75] For example, a 'Bhomdari' was appointed to transmit orders from the *devta* (god) to the public.

[76] Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 13.

at Hanol, for instance, engendered peasant worship of a nearby rivulet and the collective protection of the Tapkeshwar sacred grove. The distinct meanings and practices associated with land in the region consequently intervened in territorial conflicts. From 1835 to 1836, a boundary dispute between Tehri Garhwal and British Garhwal was settled by invoking the authority of a territorial god in North-Western Garhwal. The dispute arose when the Raja of Garhwal claimed that the Temple of Hanol fell within the borders of Tehri Garhwal. The *vazir* of Hanol (the head of the temple administration) sought to contest the Raja's claim by taking an oath in front of the presiding deity, *mahasu*. Atul Saklani argues that the British administrator, Colonel Young, was keen to support the *vazir's* claim and thereby incorporate the Temple of Hanol into the British administered region of Jaunsar-Bhawar.[77] Young therefore agreed to the *vazir's* request to resolve the boundary dispute over Hanol by an oath in the temple, which subsequently confirmed the region's incorporation into British Garhwal.

Territorial gods thus played a crucial role in processes of place-making in North-Western Garhwal. Furthermore, the *pargana* of Rawain was subject to a distinct history of peasant opposition to the Tehri Durbar and British officials across the nineteenth century. In official Garhwali and British colonial discourses of counter-insurgency, Rawain appears as a 'turbulent' region, marked by treacherous terrain riddled with the hideouts of 'enterprising robbers.' The people of Rawain reportedly conducted frequent cattle raids into neighboring hill areas and were known to loot pilgrims journeying to the glacial sources of the Ganga and Yamuna Rivers. Rawain peasants further recollected their historic victories over the Raja of Garhwal. When the British

[77] See Atul Saklani, 'Territorial God and State, Political Role of Super Natural in Polyandrous Region of Himalaya,' *Proceedings in the Indian History Congress* Vol. 50 (1989): Pp. 414-419.

traveler, J. B. Fraser, journeyed to the sources of the Ganga and Yamuna Rivers in the midst of the Anglo-Gurkha War, Rawain peasants charted their ancestors' valiant defeat of Garhwali troops across the storied mountain landscape. The early nineteenth century witnessed an escalation of raiding in the region, perhaps in defiance of Garhwali and British attempts to curtail cattle raiding. Consequently, British troops were stationed at Rawain in 1818, and the region was only formally vested in the hands of the Raja of Tehri Garhwal by the *sanad* (charter) of 1824.

The establishment of British rule, and the reinstatement of the Raja of Garhwal after the Anglo-Gurkha War, heralded more upheavals in Rawain. In the 1830s, the *tehsildar* (revenue collector) of the region challenged the authority of the Raja of Garhwal.[78] Conversely, peasants sidestepped the *tehsildar* and instead made direct appeals to the king against the imposition of oppressive taxes. Peasants used the phrase '*battis kalam aur chattis rakam*' (thirty-two levies and thirty-six taxes) to describe what they perceived as the Princely State's parasitic infringements on their rights. The disputes of the 1830s were resolved in favor of the Tehri Durbar. Yet, the Rawain peasantry continued to contest official surveys and policies by directly appealing to the king well into the century. From the 1870s onwards, when the Princely State established a Forest Department and began to draft forest settlements, official demarcations of protected areas bisected the realms of territorial gods.[79] Whereas village boundaries had hitherto been marked by the jurisdiction of

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[78] Govind Bisht staked a claim to revenue collection in Rawain against the jurisdiction of the Tehri Raja. See 'Letter from K. H. Scott, Secretary to the Government of Agra to Col. Young, Political Agent of Dehra Dun, Dated July 4, 1835,' in Saksena, ed. *Historical Papers Relating to Kumaun 1809-1842*, 225.

[79] A series of uprisings (*dhandaks*) took place in Rawain in the 1860s against revenue demands. In 1882, the peasants of Rawain staged a protest against the Durbar's forest surveys and the imposition of taxes on

village *devtas* (gods), the new forest surveys served to undermine 'ritually enforced boundaries' between villages.[80] Boundary pillars subsequently became a principal target of attack. Indeed, traditional forms of protest (the *dhandak*), in which Rawain peasants appealed to the king without challenging his dominion, came to be replaced by more open acts of subversion.

While forest protests erupted across colonial Garhwal, in Rawain, these struggles therefore stemmed from deeper histories of spatial conflict as well as different ideas about land. The most pronounced case of protest in Rawain erupted in response to the revised forest settlement of 1929. The forest settlement for the region included 'the village paths, grain threshing grounds, animal barns (*chhan*) etc.' within protected forest areas. Rumors circulating among villagers claimed that the District Forest Officer, Padam Dutt Raturi, planned to put a cap on the number of livestock that herders in the mountains could keep. Outraged peasants abducted forest officials and destroyed the symbols of the new settlements, such as boundary trenches surrounding forests. Peasants organized meetings in the villages of Chanda Dokhri, Tilari, and Thapla, where they began to form a parallel government under the leadership of peasants such as Dayaram of Kamru and Hira Singh of Nagangaon.[81] Together with openly defying forest laws, protesting peasants

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firewood, fodder, and pastures. Hundreds of peasants marched to Tehri, the capital of the Princely State. In response to these agitations, the commissioner of Kumaun, Ramsay, alleged that the Rawain people 'are a troublesome set, and have always been so.' See 'Administration Reports of Tehri State,' 1878-1885, IOR/V/10/2021, British Library.

[80] Kumar, *The Making of a Small State,* 90-91.

[81] Hema Uniyal, *Jaunsar-Bhawar, Rawain- Jaunpur: Samaj, Sanskriti, Vastushilp evam Paryatan* (Delhi: Uttara Books, 2018). Also, Shekhar Pathak, *Chipko*, 65.

organized rural festivals to rally villagers together.[82] The arrest of leaders of the Rawain uprising spurred further protests in the region, during which peasants attacked the Durbar's police officers in an attempt to free arrested leaders. Such actions were in turn met by more state repression.

On the 30th of May in 1930, the Diwan of Tehri State, Chakradhar Juyal, ordered the army to fire on a meeting of peasants assembled at the rice fields (*sera*) of Tilari village in Rawain. Seventeen peasants were shot, 194 were arrested, and an additional fifteen died while incarcerated. In response to the Tilari Massacre, representatives of peasants from across Jaunpur and Rawain, including Jamman Singh and Tej Singh, appealed to the Political Secretary of the Government of India. They demanded 'intervention, enquiry, and action in incidents of firing in which many villagers [were] shot dead on Friday last, specially [due to] actions of Pandits Chakradhar Juyal and Padmadutt.'[83] In addition, they demanded the release of prisoners, the grant of compensation for those widowed by the Tilari Massacre, and a ban on the state's use of uncompensated *coolie* labor (*begar*). The Rawain peasant struggle against forest demarcations thus included the struggle for labor rights as well. Whereas the Tehri Durbar sought to control protected forests as timber sources, the Rawain peasantry defended their religious and economic relationships with forests.

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[82] A *bedwart* was organized in Jaunpur *parganah*, a region bordering Rawain and also in a state of protest, on May 20th, 1930. Durbar officials surveilled and attempted to prevent the *bedwart* from unfolding. Atul Saklani, 'Changing Nature of Unrest in Princely Himalaya,' *Proceedings in the Indian History Congress* Vol. 46 (1985): 511.

[83] 'Letter to the Political Secretary of the Government of India, June 9th,' 1930, File 485-P(S)/Disturbances in the Tehri-Garhwal State, IOR, British Library.

The Rawain uprising pushed the Tehri Durbar to grant further concessions to forest rights in the state, such as the replacement of official control over village forests with the establishment of 'Prant Patti Panchayats.'[84] Villagers were further granted rights to use wood for making agricultural implements, as well as rights to the collection of fallen timber and medicinal herbs without permits. These concessions notwithstanding, the memory of the Durbar's brutal response to the Rawain uprising had lingering consequences for the spatial history of the Central Himalayas. The martyrs of Tilari inspired Sridev Suman, a young activist from Garhwal, to organize against the Tehri Durbar in the 1940s. Anti-feudal protests culminated in 1948, when peasants forced the Raja of Garhwal to relinquish control and transfer the region of Tehri Garhwal to the Indian state. Furthermore, the memory of the Tilari Massacre was mobilized during the movement for the establishment of a separate hill state of Uttarakhand in the post-colonial period.

Exploring the history of the Rawain region therefore suggests how conflicts over land entailed conflicts over geographical imaginaries of the mountains. Here, the cultural politics of place-making was determined by the jurisdiction of territorial gods as much as it was fueled by peasant subsistence practices and the defense of their customary rights to the forest. Furthermore, far from a single, homogenous, and bounded *pahari* place-world, the example of Rawain gestures towards variations in the meanings of land across region, caste, class, and gender. These manifold

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[84] 'The Prant Panchayat Act 1938 and its rules have given to the villagers considerable powers to manage their own affairs relating to sanitation, public health, education, means of communication, management of open forests, starting of cooperative societies and other rural development activities.' 3rd class forests were vested in the hands of these panchayats. 'Annual Administration Report of Tehri Garhwal State 1933-39 [p.4],' IOR/V/10/2025, British Library.

meanings of land were either concealed or dismissed by hegemonic geographical imaginaries of the mountains and accompanying projects of enclosure. In Rawain, the Tehri Durbar's response to peasant agitations drew upon pre-colonial as well as colonial tropes about the 'wildness' of the region. For colonial travelers and officials of the Tehri Princely State, the 'wild, remote, and almost impenetrable' mountains of Rawain seemed to map seamlessly onto the allegedly thieving, insular, and treacherous character of its inhabitants.[85] Consequently, in colonial Tehri Garhwal, the trope of wildness helped naturalize the criminalization of the supposedly 'simple and ignorant' peasants of Rawain as 'outlaws' who were 'traditionally and historically dacoits.'[86]

Enclosure and Exclusion

Across the nineteenth century, colonial spatial categories were imposed upon the Central Himalayas for revenue and natural resource extraction, despite the disagreement of people and landscapes. As elsewhere in colonial India, racial regimes of property buttressed late eighteenth century revenue settlements as well as late nineteenth century forest enclosures. The communal use of land was associated with savagery in colonial accounts. Scientific forestry in British Kumaun and Garhwal, as well as in Tehri Garhwal, was therefore premised upon contrasting the commercial value of forests with the allegedly 'wasteful' native uses of forests, such as slash-and-

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[85] James Ballie Fraser, *Journal of a Tour through parts of the Snowy Range of the Himala Mountains* (London: Bodwell and Martin, 1820), 486.

[86] 'Report of Dewan Chakra Dhar Juyal to the Council,' 1930, File 485-P(S)/Disturbances in the Tehri-Garhwal State, IOR, British Library.

burn cultivation.[87] Consequently, a 'monetized value' of land came to displace the social values of land, which included the jurisdiction of territorial gods as well as sensuous interrelationships between 'mind-body-environment.'[88] The elision of these variegated social values of land hinged upon processes of displacement and exclusion. As Judy Whitehead explains, 'by metonymically signifying both landscapes and people, the category of wasteland gestured towards a multivocal array of policies that applied to both the uses of land and the users of land.'[89]

In colonial Tehri Garhwal, a constructed opposition between 'wildness' and 'civility' was indispensable to projects of forest enclosures. The Durbar's monetary valuation of forests hinged upon the privileging of elite forms of expertise over peasant relationships with the land. In a speech to the Princely State's Assembly of Representatives, delivered shortly after the Tilari Massacre, the Raja of Garhwal cautioned that 'forest conservancy is a very difficult and important subject' that 'ordinary people cannot understand.'[90] For this reason, he explained, the Durbar had commissioned a 'European expert' to revise the demarcation of forest boundaries. At the same time, the Raja drew upon older colonial tropes about the 'wildness' of Rawain to render peasant

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[87] See K. Sivaramakrishnan, 'Colonialism and Forestry in India: Imagining the Past in Present Politics,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol. 37, No. 1 (1995): 3-40; and Guha, *Unquiet Woods.*

[88] On 'emplacement,' see David Howes, 'Introduction: Empire of the Senses,' in *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader,* ed. David Howes (New York: Berg, 2005).

[89] Judy Whitehead, 'John Locke and the Governance of India's Landscape: The Category of Wasteland in Colonial Revenue and Forest Legislation,' *Economic and Political Weekly Vol. 45, No. 50* (2010), 93.

[90] 'Translation of His Highness's Speech to the Representative Assembly in October 1930 [p. i-v],' In 'Annual Administration Report of Tehri Garhwal State for the Year 1932-1933,' IOR/V/10/2024, British Library.

relationships with the land into crude remnants of a barbaric past. The 'turbulent' tract was allegedly witness to frequent 'disturbances' a century prior to the Rawain uprising. Official reports further cited the travelogue of J. B. Fraser to allege that the peasants of Rawain had hitherto dwelt in thatched huts, before the Durbar had trained them to stay in solid wooden homes. In light of such claims about the 'uncivilized' character of the peasants of Rawain, the Raja declared that, 'I myself, have tried every means to civilize and educate the inhabitants of that province.'[91]

Tropes about the 'wildness' of the inhabitants of Rawain were thus reiterated by the 'prose of counter-insurgency' following the 1929-30 uprising.[92] In his report to the Government of India, Chakradhar Juyal, the Diwan responsible for the firing at Tilari, portrayed peaceful peasant protestors as supposedly intractable and dangerous criminals. Juyal supplemented his claims about periodic outbursts of 'disturbances' in the region with descriptions of the tumultuous landscape, where forests were 'ablaze with fire everywhere.'[93] While Juyal reduced the Rawain peasantry into an intransigent 'threat,' other Durbar officials further compared them to troublesome animals, such as monkeys and bears, who also destroyed timber cultivation. If 'the worst animal offenders' in the Bhilangana forests were 'sambhars, pigs and porcupines,' then it appeared that the Rawain

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[91] Ibid.

[92] Ranajit Guha, 'The Prose of Counter-Insurgency,' in *Selected Subaltern Studies,* edited by Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Spivak, 45-86 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[93] Report of Dewan Chakra Dhar Juyal to the Council [p.10],' 1930, File 485-P(S)/Disturbances in the Tehri-Garhwal State, IOR, British Library.

peasantry constituted the worst human offenders in the Tons and Yamuna forest circles.[94] The Durbar's official reports on the forests of Rawain therefore included peasants within the realm of nature.

By 'assimilating peasant revolts to natural phenomena,' the Durbar assumed an 'identity of nature and culture' in the 'backward' tracts of North-Western Garhwal.[95] In his canonical study of the 'prose of counter-insurgency,' Ranajit Guha identifies this equation of nature and culture as a key feature of the colonial elision of volitional peasant agency.[96] Moreover, the Diwan's report proceeded to dismiss religious meanings of the landscape for the peasants of Rawain:

> 'I must also mention here that the Rawain people are traditionally and historically dacoits…The songs which are sung in Rawain relate the dacoity adventures and the Rawain people point to this day with considerable pride the various underground storage houses in the hills where booty in olden times used to be kept by their ancestors. There is a curious superstition that the gods are propitiated, and bestow prosperity when they are satisfied by witnessing plunder and bloodshed.'[97]

Juyal effectively targeted the deities of the region as an inspiration for the Rawain peasantry's allegedly habitual delinquency. The official criminalization of the Rawain peasantry was thus complemented by claims about their indelible 'savagery' and 'credulity.' In addition to being purportedly 'averse to honest labor,' 'prone to crime,' and 'superstitious,' Juyal argued that the

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[94] 'Indian States Administration Reports Tehri Garhwal State 1909-1929 [1912-13; p.7],' IOR/V/10/2023, British Library.

[95] Guha, 'The Prose of Counter-Insurgency,' 46.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Report of Dewan Chakra Dhar Juyal to the Council [p. 14],' 1930, File 485-P(S)/Disturbances in the Tehri-Garhwal State, IOR, British Library.

people of Rawain were incorrigibly insular. 'A Rawain man will never move out of his circle,' he reported, adding that 'the only occasion when a few of them moved out of the state was when Mr. Muir induced them to go as far as Naini Tal at Darbar expense to see the *world outside.*'[98] Therefore, Juyal's prose of counter-insurgency not only pushed the peasants of Rawain into a state of nature, but further elided and dismissed their distinct approaches to place.

The prose of counter-insurgency surrounding peasant opposition to forest settlements in Tehri Garhwal suggests how official conceptions of 'external nature' remained fractured by 'internal boundaries' through discourses of exclusion as well as polices of spatial enclosure. Jake Kosek finds such contradictions current in the 'wilderness' movement in North America as well. Kosek situates the history of the 'wilderness' movement in the eugenicist and anti-immigrant milieu of the late-nineteenth-century United States. Figures such as John Muir and Aldo Leopold were raising concerns over the 'degradation of the natural integrity of pure wilderness' at precisely the same moment when 'immigrants were 'flooding' the cities, when new epidemics were 'infecting' the population, and when the frontier that had supposedly both tested and made white men and their governance was believed to be 'closing.''[99] Ideas about purity and pollution, which permeated racial eugenics, also colored imaginations of the wilderness. Thus, North American notions of the wilderness have been closely tied to 'historical forms of whiteness,' Kosek concludes.[100] Similarly, the case of Rawain demonstrates how constructed oppositions between

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[98] Ibid., 14.

[99] Kosek, 'Purity and Pollution: Racial Degradation and Environmental Anxieties,' 136.

[100] Ibid., 126.

the 'wildness' of the region's peasantry and the 'civility' of the Tehri Durbar were central to defining and defending protected forests in colonial Tehri Garhwal.

The case of Rawain therefore introduces us to two central questions addressed by this dissertation: to what extent did the construction of social difference enable projects of spatial enclosure in the Central Himalayas? And how were systems of social exclusion, such as race and caste, articulated and naturalized through ideas about 'nature' in the mountains? By posing these questions, I hope to build upon studies of race in colonial India.[101] 'Racism,' the geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore writes, 'is a practice of abstraction, a death-dealing displacement of difference into hierarchies that organize relations within and between the planet's sovereign political territories.'[102] This spatial organization of racial inequality is evidenced across nineteenth century India. David Arnold argues that even before 1857, the making of racial difference in the subcontinent can be discerned through discourses of medical topography and ethnology. From the 1790s onwards, Indians and Eurasians had been excluded from bureaucratic and military positions in the East India Company. As Arnold observes, 'among many sections of the European population in India by the eighteen-thirties Indians were habitually referred to as 'black' (usually accompanied by some other insulting epithet) and not uncommonly as 'niggers' (one indication, among several, of how the language and sentiments of 'race' in the Atlantic world were being echoed in South

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[101] For a general overview of race making in South Asia, see Peter Robb, ed., *The Concept of Race in South Asia* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011). For a study of the British concept of the 'Aryan' in India see Thomas R. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (Delhi: Yoda Press, 2004).

[102] Ruth Wilson Gilmore, 'Fatal Couplings of Power and Difference: Notes on Racism and Geography,' *The Professional Geographer Vol. 54, No. 1* (2002): 16.

Asia).'[103] It was precisely this naturalization of difference between natives and Europeans which allowed colonial officials to examine racial differences among Indians themselves, Arnold argues. English officers in India furnished anatomical data for metropolitan institutions such as the Ethnological Society of London. For instance, Brian Hodgson, who served as the British resident in Nepal, supplied a collection of ninety human skulls from the mountains to the British Museum to contribute to the 'scientific' study of race. In addition to proposing a philological explanation of racial difference, Hodgson was a chief advocate for the European colonization of the Kashmir, Nepal, and Sikkim Himalayas. Thus, Arnold insightfully studies reinforcing relationships between racialization and place-making in the early colonial period.

Scholarship on the decennial census and colonial anthropometry has shown how late-nineteenth-century biological and anatomical constructions of race had become institutionalized in the post-1857, 'high imperial era' of British India.[104] Together with census reports, the use of race as a deterministic and self-explanatory category was reflected in the criteria of recruitment to the army, the classification of 'criminal tribes,' as well as carceral practices in the late nineteenth

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[103] David Arnold, 'Race, Place and Bodily Difference in Early Nineteenth-Century India,' *Historical Research Vol. 77, No. 196* (2004): 263.

[104] On caste, anthropometry, and the decennial census see Bernard Cohn, 'The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia,' in *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays* (Delhi: Oxford University Press), and Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). Also see Radhika Singha, *A Despotism of Law: Crime and Justice in Early Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000).

century.[105] Official descriptions of Rawain peasants as 'habitual' criminals in Tehri Garhwal thus echoed broader colonial logics. While this chapter has focused on Rawain as a case study, the remainder of this dissertation further explores the ways that hegemonic and official geographical imaginaries implicated both colonial officials and colonized elites in projects of 'spatializing race and racializing space' across the Central Himalayas. [106]

Part 3: Reading the Archives of Spatial History

This chapter has demonstrated how the model of spatial history moves beyond the framework of local history by enjoining us to examine the social and historical construction of locality. Rather than script another regional history of the Central Himalayas as a bounded 'geo-cultural unit,' I ask how geographical imaginaries, which were borne out of colonial encounters across spatial scales, inflected the identities of people and places in the mountains. By revisiting the case of the Rawain peasant uprising against forest enclosures through the analytic of the geographical imaginary, I have argued that power laden ideas about landscape and nature are central to projects of spatial enclosure and social exclusion. With respect to the Princely State's

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[105] On race and 'scientific policing' see Radhika Singha, 'Settle, Mobilize, Verify: Identification Practices in Colonial India,' *Studies in History Vol. 16, No. 2* (2000): 151- 198. On the Criminal Tribes Act (1871) see Radhika Singha, 'Punished by Surveillance: Policing 'Dangerousness' in Colonial India, 1872-1918,' *Modern Asian Studies Vol. 49, No. 2* (2015): 241-269.

[106] On post-colonial policies, race, and space in Africa see Moore, *Suffering for Territory*, 12. Similarly, the anthropologist Ajantha Subramanian traces the dynamics between caste identity, fisher rights politics, and the 'ongoing production of the coast' in Tamil Nadu. See Subramanian, *Shorelines: Space and Rights in South India* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

brutal response to the uprising, colonial and pre-colonial tropes about the alleged 'wildness' of North-Western Garhwal furnished the prose of counter-insurgency. Furthermore, revisiting the case of Rawain through the analytic of the geographical imaginary enjoins us to depart from existing historical narratives which superimpose spatial oppositions of hills/plains onto the uprising and thereby reduce the event into a synecdoche for the homogenous, conservationist ethos of mountain dwellers. As noted, the North-Western Garhwali region of Rawain had a distinct pre-colonial and colonial history of spatial conflicts and geographical beliefs within the Central Himalayas. These intra-regional variations determined the manifold meanings of land at play in the uprising.

To widen understandings of the spatial implications of colonial encounter, this dissertation draws upon the model of spatial history and the analytic of the geographical imaginary. Thus, I set out to map they ways the Central Himalayas loomed over the geographical imagination of the subcontinent under colonial rule. Forged through encounters between colonial epistemologies and high Hindu 'traditions,' from the late eighteenth to the middle of the twentieth century, modern imaginaries of the Himalayas as a site for pilgrimage, improvement, and healing had protracted social and ecological consequences. By analyzing geographical imaginaries, we can not only alert environmental historians to the ways they frame their subjects of study but further demonstrate how contingent social hierarchies have been articulated and naturalized through ideas about 'nature.' Indeed, I argue that hegemonic, modern imaginaries of the mountains precipitated material processes of place-making which further fragmented embodied experiences of landscapes along lines of race, caste, and gender.

By integrating a range of sources, as well as different techniques of reading, the chapters to follow assess the social and ecological consequences of modern geographical imaginaries of the

Central Himalayas. Defining geographical imaginaries as ways of seeing, sensing, dreaming of, and acting upon landscapes, I draw upon different strategies of reading to re-enliven geographical imaginaries from the deadened space of the archive. To evaluate the role of sensation, affect, and the nonhuman in place-making, I adopt what the literary critic Sten Putz Moslund calls a 'topopoetic reading.' Moslund's topopoetic reading is geared towards the analysis of 'sensuous geographies…constituted by our senses of smell, taste, touch, hearing, and seeing.'[107] Thus, I read 'not for the plot but for the setting,' to assess how different actors sensed, described, represented, and consequently remade place. Writing the ecological back into the historical further requires a 'mode of viewing and reading practice of space that can gather together a multitude of inhabited worlds: rational, natural, and spiritual,' as Debjani Bhattacharyya argues in her environmental history of Calcutta.[108] The chapters to follow collate and analyze a range of archival sources to rehabilitate this 'multitude of inhabited worlds.' For instance, chapter 2 juxtaposes reconnaissance surveys with vernacular poetry, while chapter 3 reads Sanskrit *māhātmyas* (Puranic texts in praise of place) alongside sanitary reports about pilgrimage.

Following Paul Carter, I find the 'evidence' of spatial history sedimented in records, reports, and representations which participated in historical processes of place-making and further index geographical imaginaries.[109] These sources include travelogues, maps, hunting journals, geographical surveys, administrative records, vernacular guidebooks, paintings, Sanskrit

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[107] Sten Pultz Moslund, *Literature's Sensuous Geographies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 30.

[108] Debjani Bhattacharyya, *Empire and Ecology in the Bengal Delta: The Making of Calcutta* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 12.

[109] Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History.*

manuscripts, periodicals, *pahari* poetry, petitions from marginalized groups, and legal disputes over land. I have drawn together the scattered evidence of spatial history over the course of archival field work at the British Library, the National Archives of India, the Uttarakhand State Archives, and the Nainital Regional Archives. To trace the trajectory of modern imaginaries of the Central Himalayas, I read sources authored by colonial officials, Indian elites from the plains, European travelers, *pahari* elites, and subjugated mountain dwellers.

Chapter 2, 'The Sublime and Racial Difference in the Central Himalayas,' argues that colonial authority over the forests and high snows of the Central Himalayas was legitimated through the aesthetics of the sublime. To study the co-constitutive entanglements of race, space, and the sublime in the Central Himalayas, I analyze the ways in which published travelogues, hunting journals, unpublished administrative reports, reconnaissance surveys, and sketches echoed the 'logic of taste' outlined in Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). Burke's 'physiological sublime' not only explains why colonial constructions of the sublime Himalayas were premised upon the demarcation of racial differences, but further suggests how racial logics of taste shaped the body into an instrument and signifier of colonial control over land. Furthermore, I contrast the sublime aesthetics of colonial sportsmen's accounts with the pre-colonial aesthetics of courtly hawking through a reading of the sixteenth-century *Śyainika Śāstra*, a Sanskrit treatise on hawking from Kumaun.

Racialized notions of place and the body subsequently informed the colonial management of subcontinental pilgrimages to the mountains. Chapter 3 traces the politics behind the packaging of the *chār dhām yātrā* as a stable itinerary of 'Hindu' pilgrimage in colonial Garhwal. Entitled 'Pain, Property, and the Remaking of Pilgrims' Imaginaries of Garhwal,' this chapter evaluates the impact of colonial legislation, 'upper' caste property disputes, and secular conceptions of

agency on the ecology and ethos of Central Himalayan pilgrimage. To survey the reinvention of the *chār dhām yātrā* from the early nineteenth to the middle of the twentieth century, I draw upon parliamentary papers, the records of modern Hindu institutions such as the Kali Kamli Wala Kshetra, legal controversies surrounding the Badrinath Temple Bill (1939), and the writings of Hindu nationalists such as Madan Mohan Malaviya. Moreover, through a reading of printed Sanskrit guidebook-*māhātmyas* authored by Garhwalis, including Munshi Nasiruddin's *Badrīmahātmya* (1889) and Maheshanand Sharma's *Bṛhad Śrībadrīnārāyaṇamāhātmya* (1913), I argue that the locus of the sacred shifted away from pilgrims' ephemeral encounters with the natural world towards the precincts of shrines.

Paralleling the packaging of pilgrimages to Garhwal, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, settlement reports and forest surveys were paving the way for large scale projects of enclosure in the Central Himalayas. By inventorying resources for extraction, calibrating improvements in revenue, and curating landscapes for aesthetic consumption, Edwin Thomas Atkinson's *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts of the North-Western Provinces* (1881-86) constructed locality in the mountains in ways that naturalized late-nineteenth-century colonial enclosures. The *Gazetteer* also had a pervasive influence on nationalist and post-Independence understandings of Kumaun and Garhwal. Chapter 4, entitled 'Caste, the Commons, and the Construction of Colonial Spatial Knowledge,' critiques colonial and 'upper' caste imaginations of the 'commons' in the Central Himalayas by re-viewing the *Gazetteer* and its making through the differentially situated bodies of colonial bureaucrat, native intermediary, and marginalized peasant. By evaluating the relationship between Atkinson's *Gazetteer* and his native informant Taradatta's *Bhūgola Kūrmmācala* (1871), I consider the extent to which Jotirao Phule's assessment that 'the higher European officers generally view men and things through Brahmin

spectacles' applied to the colonial Central Himalayas.[110] Moreover, I assess how petitions by Dalit activists challenged elite imaginaries of the mountain commons by rescuing the labor of marginalized bodies, otherwise submerged by official maps as well as vernacular geographies.

Chapter 5, 'The Himalayas as a Site and Signifier of Healing,' traces the modern commodification of longstanding associations between the Himalayas and healing. Through a reading of Gumani Pant's *Jñānabhaiṣajyamañjarī*, or 'ornament of knowledge and healing,' I contrast relations of place and health in the early-nineteenth-century Himalayas with the commercialization of landscapes of healing in the early twentieth century. I argue that late colonial infrastructures of physical and spiritual healing in Kumaun and Garhwal were increasingly abstracted from the labor, knowledge, and livelihoods of mountain dwellers. To flesh out this argument, I examine the case of the Tehri Princely State's manufacture of Himalayan medicinal herbs on enclosed alpine meadows through the Vanaspati Karyalaya, as well as the expansion of Ayurvedic dispensaries, pharmaceutical works, and modern yoga *ashrams* in the Himalayan foothill town of Rishikesh. I argue that medical discourses about salubrious and hygiene converged with moral discourses about bodies and expertise to remake landscapes of healing in the mountains. The conclusion elaborates upon the future stakes of this dissertation's study of geographical imaginaries of the colonial Central Himalayas.

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[110] Jotirao Phule, 'Slavery,' in *Selected Writings,* ed. G. P. Deshpande (Delhi: Manohar, 2002): 32.

Chapter 2

*The Sublime and Racial Difference in the Central Himalayas**

Standing on the glacier that feeds the Bhagirathi River in Tehri Garhwal, the notorious hunter Frederick Wilson and the unnamed author of *A Summer Ramble in the Himalayas* (1860), stood 'admiring the wild scenery.' Shapes and colors were imprinted on to their memory as their gaze followed the mountain peaks with their 'unearthly forms,' and the 'strange white, spectral appearance' of the glacier with its discolored ice, occasionally tinted with blue like 'the glass of a black bottle.' They were struck by the movements and sounds of the terrain as well, where 'strange noises' like the 'sharp crack of artillery, broke the stillness that reigned over all.' 'What can be conceived more sublime?,' asked the author of the widely-read *Summer Ramble*.[1] Yet with the first sight of game, 'the scenery is forgotten' and a 'fine male musk-deer' is added to the 'list of killed.'[2] By the middle of the nineteenth century, musk-deer hunting on the slopes of the Gangotri

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*This chapter has been extended and adapted from my article 'Imperial Hunting and the Sublime,' published in *Environmental History*. ©The Author 2021.

Nivedita Nath, 'Imperial Hunting and the Sublime: Race, Caste, and Aesthetics in the Central Himalayas,' *Environmental History* 26 (2021): 301-323. doi: 10.1093/envhis/emaa084

[1] The general popularity of *A Summer Ramble* can be gauged through a series of favorable reviews. For instance, *The British Quarterly Review* (vol. 32) declared that its fresh descriptions of the region 'cannot fail to delight the general reader no less than the Nimrods, ramrods, and fishing-rods', while the *Literary Gazette* avowed that the *Summer Ramble* 'cannot be commended too highly'.

[2] *A Summer Ramble in the Himalayas* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1860), 74-78.

Glacier had become a 'set-piece' in sportsmen's journals about the Central Himalayas.[3] In colonial reports, travelogues, and surveys about the mountains from the first half of the nineteenth century, the 'awful' yet 'inconceivably awe-inspiring' sublimity of Himalayan scenery served more to arouse the 'ardor' of the colonial traveler than to invite romantic introspection or the refined exercise of reason. This arguably Burkean 'physiological sublime' was deeply sensorial in its origins, and profoundly political in its implications.

Well into the middle of the nineteenth century, the scene of deer hunting on mountain glaciers served as a performative act in sporting journals which displayed the experience of sublimity as the exclusive preserve of the European male. This assumption permeated travelogues outside the genre of the sportsman's journal as well. English travelers to the Himalayas considered themselves unique in their inclination to 'wander through strange lands for the mere purpose of seeing the country, and admiring the prospects,' a trait that was ostensibly beyond the comprehension of natives. Colonial travelers acknowledged the hill-dwellers' love of home, but dismissed them for taking 'little interest in scenery which threw us into raptures.'[4] The awe and admiration of the colonial traveler was therefore defined in contrast to the indifference of the 'native.' Contingent upon the sensibilities of the perceiver, the colonial sublime worked to map differences across bodies. Indeed, the narration of the sublime in colonial surveys, reports,

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[3] See Bernard Cohn's analysis of the 'observational/ travel modality' which created a 'repertoire of images and typifactions that determined what was significant to the European eye'. In Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 6-7.

[4] Emma Roberts, *Hindostan* (London: Fisher, Son & Co., 1850), 14.

travelogues, and hunting journals across the first half of the nineteenth century suggests how the senses and the body were deeply implicated in authorizing colonial control over land.

This chapter argues that British authority over Central Himalayan landscapes was forged through a sensuous aesthetic of the sublime. Prior to the annexation of Kumaun and Garhwal to the expanding territories of the East India Company (EIC), and the simultaneous subordination of Tehri Garhwal under the paramount authority of the EIC in 1815, the Central Himalayan landscape appeared as 'dangerous' and 'desolate' in English writings about the mountains. In the decades following the Anglo-Gurkha War, the aesthetic of the sublime was increasingly evoked in colonial reports, surveys, travelogues, and hunting journals about the mountains. Here, the sublime transfigured the hitherto treacherous terrain of the mountains into a site for the renewal of the 'ardor' of the white male official and traveler. The discourse of the sublime complemented the material assertion of colonial authority over the Himalayan landscape. Well into the 1860s, the regions of Kumaun and Garhwal served as a vast revenue plantation for the British. Agrarian expansion was facilitated through the lease of unmeasured village lands for potato cultivation while swathes of forest were contracted out to timber merchants by the British Government as well as the Tehri Durbar. These changes were critiqued in *pahari* poetry from the early nineteenth century, though evocations of the sublime in contemporary English writings legitimated colonial authority over the Central Himalayas for metropolitan readers.

Part 1 of this chapter explains why the evocation of the sublime in early colonial writings about the Central Himalayas must be understood in terms of Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry* (1757). The Himalayas are pervaded by all the qualities Burke identifies with sublime objects; its forests are 'dark,' 'gloomy,' and pervaded by thunderous sounds, while its mountains are 'vast,' 'rugged,' and seemingly 'infinite' with their confounding succession of ridges.

Paradoxically, in colonial accounts, the sublime as a passion was assumed to be beyond the apprehension of 'native' denizens and visitors to the region. If for Burke the sublime is bound up with the human instinct for self-preservation, then the high level of mortality among Indian pilgrims from the plains was understood as the utter indifference to the will to survive. If for Burke sympathy can be borne of the sublime, then for Europeans who had spent decades in the region, *paharis* (hill-dwellers) were 'envious, vindictive, uncharitable' and effectively incapable of sympathy.[5] I argue that Burke's 'logic of taste,' as well as his physiological theory of the sublime, suggests how colonial discourse declared the white male subject to be physically and emotionally capable of cultivating superior *passions* upon confronting potentially threatening mountain terrains.

Literary critics and theorists have extensively critiqued the sublime for its deleterious political implications and its valorization of masculinized experiences of power. What, then, can be gained by a critique of the sublime in the context of colonial imaginaries of the Himalayas? I propose that the critique of the colonial sublime reveals how taste, as both a physical and ideological judgment about the world, shapes the body into an instrument and signifier of power over place. Burke's theory of the sublime is particularly useful in this regard because, as Vanessa Ryan argues, the *Philosophical Enquiry* provides a 'physiological explanation for our passions.' Burke's 'physiological sublime' is conjured by sensations, as well as our physiological and

[5] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry,* ed. David Womersley (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 91; *A Summer Ramble in the Himalayas* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1860), 182.

psychological responses to them.[6] While Ryan proposes that the subject of the *Enquiry* is universal, this universality seems to be belied by the resonance of the sublime in the colonial Himalayas. Following the trajectory of British encounters with precarious Himalayan bridges from late-eighteenth-century reports about *jhulas* (rope-bridges) to the mid-nineteenth-century legend of 'Wilson's bridge,' part 2 of this chapter critiques the mutually reinforcing relationships between the physiological sublime, the construction of racial difference, and the consolidation of colonial authority over the Central Himalayas.

To render the sublime into the preserve of the white male in the mountains, colonial surveys, reports, sporting journals, and travelogues contrasted the 'strong nerves' and 'ardor' of European travelers with the 'hardened' bodies of hill dwellers and the 'feeble' frames of pilgrims from the plains. In the Central Himalayas, the colonial sublime was arguably entangled with the articulation of a wider 'imperial sensory order' that mapped an uneven distribution of subjects and objects of perception. The concept of 'sensory orders' implies that the senses turn history into nature by blending hegemonic ideas into the body's perception of the world. As Sten Pultz Moslund notes, 'the senses are deeply implicated in the ways in which we make sense of the world as social beings: the way we understand or agree to understand- or *compel each other* to understand- the world…We see and hear and smell what we *think* we see and hear and smell.'[7] Part 2 suggests that the 'physiological sublime' was entangled in a broader imperial sensory order that naturalized racial logics of taste in the mountains.

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[6] Vanessa Ryan, 'The Physiological Sublime', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 62 No. 2 (Apr 2001): 269.

[7] Sten Pultz Moslund, *Literature's Sensuous Geographies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 31.

Lastly, part 3 evaluates the social and ecological consequences of the colonial sublime through the case of the sportsman and timber merchant, Frederick Wilson (1816-83). Known as *pothalya sahib* (Garhwali for 'master birder'), Wilson contributed significantly to the international trade in the *moonal* pheasant before embarking upon the rapacious destruction of old growth *deodar* trees in the Bhagirathi Valley. Wilson also served as a guide to several sportsmen who were in pursuit of the sublime, including the unnamed author of *A Summer Ramble*. I suggest that Wilson's career demonstrates how the aesthetic of the sublime facilitated the capitalist valuation and extraction of 'nature' in the mountains. The critique of colonial extraction in the Himalayas is now well established, but the question of how colonial encounters with nonhumans differed from pre-colonial traditions of hunting and capturing animals in the subcontinent remains contested. Current scholarship on the control of animals in South Asia tends to emphasize continuities in knowledge and practices across the pre-colonial and colonial periods.[8] In contrast, this chapter presents an analysis of the *Śyainika Śāstra,* a sixteenth-century hawking manual from Kumaun, to delineate the contrasts between the colonial sportsman's sublime and the aesthetics of the courtly hunt.

The aesthetics of the sublime as it unfolded in the colonial Central Himalayas was bound up with the construction of racial difference. Through the aesthetic of the sublime, the difference between colonized and colonizer, as well as male and female, was not so much calibrated through a scale of reason or knowledge as through one of sentiment and sensation. William Cronon's foundational essay on North American ideas of the wilderness argues that the sublime was used to

[8] See Sujit Sivasundaram, 'Trading Knowledge: The East India Company's Elephants in India and Britain', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 48 No. 1 (Mar., 2005): Pp. 27-63.

articulate a definition of 'wild nature' as untouched by human habitation. In Cronon's analysis, the American sublime distinguished the essential otherness of 'nature' from 'culture.'[9] On the other hand, in the British colonial imagination of the Indian Himalayas, the sublime did not emerge from a pristine or untouched wilderness. Rather, the colonial sublime hinged upon the obscene otherness of oriental responses to landscapes, in terms of which the otherness of 'nature' came to be defined. This chapter foregrounds the role of aesthetics of the sublime in the construction of racial difference and the consolidation of colonial rule over the Central Himalayas. The critique of Burke's physiological sublime and the shifting symbolism of the *jhula* in the first parts of this chapter, elucidates the co-construction of race and space in the Central Himalayas. Lastly, the story of Wilson and the *moonal* exposes the material consequences of the naturalization of racial logics of taste in the mountains.

Part 1: Burke's 'Physiological Sublime' in the Himalayas

While literature on the colonial institution of the 'hill-station' proposes that the overwhelming landscapes of the Himalayas were tamed by the picturesque landscaping of sanatoria from the 1820s onwards, this shift from the sublime to the picturesque does not capture colonial encounters with the snows and forests of the Central Himalayas. In this section of the chapter, I first survey scholarship on colonial hill-stations, as well as shifting conceptions of mountains in the imperial metropole, before elaborating upon the need to critique colonial encounters with the Central Himalayas in terms of Burke's 'physiological sublime.' David Arnold's *Tropics and the Traveling Gaze* presents an incisive critique of romantic English travel

[9] William Cronon, 'The Trouble with the Wilderness', *Environmental History,* Vol. 1 No. 1 (Jan 1996): pp. 7-28.

writing about the Himalayas. Arnold observes how the climate and flora of the mountains invoked memories of England and the Scottish Highlands. 'For visitors who felt 'as if transported by some good genii from India to Europe', the change was as much corporeal as scenic,' he writes.[10] These corporeal aspects of colonial imaginaries of the Himalayas have largely been explored with respect to the institution of the 'hill-station.' Hill-stations were first established as convalescent depots for invalid officers and soldiers. Devastating cholera epidemics across the tropical subcontinent between 1817-21 prompted the establishment of exclusively white sanatoria in the 'salubrious' climate of the hills. Several military inquiries were conducted to quantify and prove the medical benefits of life in the hills. For instance, a report of 1847 concluded that 'the death rate for European troops stationed in the hills was *half* that of their counterparts in the plains'.[11]

Beyond such medical concerns, the desirability of European settlement in the Indian 'highlands' was fueled by more ambiguous fears of racial degeneration. As Dane Kennedy argues, hill-stations served as 'remote retreats' that promised 'escape from the subversive effects of the Indian environment.'[12] The requirement of remoteness did not imply that the hills were reimagined as pristine and unpopulated wildernesses. Instead, peasants and indigenous tribes near colonial sanatoria were framed to appear as embodiments of 'Edenic innocence.' Kennedy relates how the trope of the 'picturesque primitive' rendered native habitation around white sanatoria into

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[10] David Arnold, *The Tropics and the Traveling Gaze* (London and Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 99.

[11] Dane Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1996), 25.

[12] Ibid., 30.

something unthreatening, even aesthetically pleasing. While Arnold and Kennedy insightfully critique hill-stations as 'racial enclaves,' or picturesque islands of England in the tropics, they do not entirely address the character of colonial encounters with the higher ranges of the Himalayas, which defy comparison with the rolling hills of Britain. Moreover, the trope of the 'picturesque primitive' differed from the way the aesthetics of the sublime was used to construct colonial difference in the Central Himalayas.

To understand colonial imaginaries of the high snows of the Indian Himalayas, it is worth tracing changing conceptions of mountains in the imperial metropole. In late-eighteenth-century England, romanticism as well as the aesthetic of the sublime was beginning to transfigure cultural evaluations of mountains. The seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were dominated by a fondness for images of nature as pastoral and fecund. In this context, mountains were fearful places associated with supernatural and hostile spirits. At worst, they were described as 'warts' or 'boils' on the Earth's surface, and at best dismissed as useless obstructions or, as Dr. Johnson called them, 'considerable protuberances.'[13] Such descriptions starkly contrast with John Ruskin's mid-nineteenth-century contention that 'mountains are the beginning and the end of all natural scenery.'[14]

What trends contributed to this transfiguration of mountains, and how do they relate to early colonial encounters with the Himalayas? The religious sublime was a considerable strand in eighteenth century English aesthetics of the sublime. For the climber-poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the physical ascent of mountains facilitated a spiritual journey. The religious sublime

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[13] Robert Macfarlane, *Mountains of the Mind* (London: Granta Books, 2003), 18.

[14] John Ruskin. *Modern Painters- Vol. 4: Of Mountain Beauty* (London: George Allen & Sons, 1910), 283.

'offered a taste of the transcendent' and an escape from the 'orderly, rational world' of Enlightenment Europe. Thus, mountains like the Alps became a standard part of the itinerary of romantic travelers who sought out 'strong emotions and stimuli.' For the romantic traveler, the contemplation of landscape invited the mapping of the interior world of feelings. While we can certainly discern the influence of the religious sublime in colonial writing about the Himalayas, rarely did the Himalayas evoke philosophical introspection or soul searching in the accounts of colonial travelers. The aesthetic of the sublime as it unfolded in Europe might have provided a refuge for the romantic bourgeoisie disillusioned with the trappings of civilization, but in the Indian Himalayas the sublime renewed the 'civilizing mission.'

Literary critic Ann Colley explores the shifting significance of the sublime as a trope used by Victorians to comprehend mountains. In her reading, the vulgarization of Alpine tourism by the middle of the nineteenth century was 'sinking' its sublimity. With the popularization of the Alps, Colley contends that the Himalayas promised elite travelers an increasingly rare experience of the sublime. She rightly points out that what often gets lost in studies of Britain's imperial project in the Himalaya is this aesthetic sensibility. 'Forgotten is the reality that explorers were frequently overwhelmed by the sheer sublimity of their surroundings,' she writes.[15] However, Colley's analysis of the relation between the sublime and empire is rather inchoate. She concludes that 'the majesty and sheer power of the mountains reflected the grandeur of Britain's strength and reach' but is quick to add that the sublime 'detracted from these explorers' sense of mastery or domination.'[16] Part of the problem is her limited focus on late nineteenth century histories of travel

[15] Ann Colley, *Victorians in the Mountains* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 221.

[16] Ibid., 222.

and mountaineering, which risks portraying the sublime as something unconstrained by gender and quite distanced from the dirty work of conquest. By the 1850s, the Indian Himalaya had already been extensively mapped, taxed, and subjugated, and by the 1890s, the wives of British officials and naturalists could comfortably accompany their husbands into the mountain interior. This was not the case in first half of the century, when women seldom ventured beyond the sequestered spaces of the hill-station.

Colley's critique of the Victorian sense of the sublime is also confined to the bilateral encounter between Europeans and the landscape, thereby eliding native impressions of landscape as well as European impressions of 'natives.' Even more questionable is her assertion that Victorian visitors to the distant Himalayas were unfettered by metropolitan theories of the sublime. 'Outside the authority of their own culture, they did not need to elicit the mediation of the Romantic poets nor did they have to recall Longinus's words to help them sense the sublimity before them. They had come to a culture that did not depend upon the matrix of clichés and pre-formed ideas; it was if they were looking at a mountainous landscape for the first time,' she writes.[17] This leads to her characterization of Victorian encounters with the Himalayas as expressions of an '*ur*-sublime' or a 'raw sublime,' which in her narrative curiously appears to be the preserve of the white traveler. To pursue the relationship between the sublime and empire, it would perhaps be more productive to build upon the insights of David Arnold and Saree Makdisi, who submit that romantic writing was compatible with, and even serviceable to, colonial projects of

[17] Ibid., 224.

'improvement.'[18] As this chapter argues, the narration of the sublime in colonial accounts paved the way for the capitalist extraction of Central Himalayan flora and fauna.

Colonial experiences of the sublime in the Himalayas were overwhelmingly sensorial, and frequently elicited references to the 'ardor' of the subject of sublimity. 'Strong nerves' and 'steady heads' repeatedly figure as preconditions for the experience of the sublime.[19] Consider these lines from Emma Roberts's popular retelling of European exploration in the Himalayas: whereas the fanatical Hindu pilgrim was content merely with reaching the shrines of Gangotri or Yamunotri, 'it was reserved for the *ardor* of those who measured the altitudes of the highest peaks, and penetrated to the utmost limits of man's dominion, to trace the exact birth-place of the holy river.'[20] The consistent correlation between white bodies and sublimity was sometimes complemented by the privileging of the Christian approaches to nature over the alleged depravity of native idolatry. Whereas the Hindu pilgrim in the Himalayas was presumed to be 'happy in the belief that they have secured the road to heaven…the European surveys with admiration and wonder the sublime features which the great Creator of the universe has here assembled.'[21]

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[18] Saree Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998) and David Arnold, *The Tropics and the Travelling Gaze.*

[19] 'Those who have brains and nerves to bear the frightful whirl, which may assail the steadiest head, plant themselves on the bridge that spans the torrent, and from this point survey the wild and awful grandeur of the scene, struck with admiration at its terrific beauty, yet, even while visions of horror float before them, unable to withdraw their gaze.' From Emma Roberts, *Hindostan* (London: Fisher, Son & Co., 1850), 42.

[20] Emma Roberts, *Hindostan* (London: Fisher, Son & Co., 1850), 21.

[21] Ibid., 65.

Given the overwhelmingly sensorial character of English experiences of the sublime in the Central Himalayas, among various theories of the sublime current in Enlightenment Europe, Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry* provides the most appropriate analytical framework. Burke contended that his evaluation of 'passions, which are the organs of the mind, cannot be barren of praise to him [the creator]', and the *Enquiry* has been read as an instance of eighteenth-century theodicy.[22] More significantly, unlike Kant's 'supersensible' sublime that is shored up by the faculty of reason, Burke's sublime is deeply sensorial in its origins and physiological in its effects.[23] It is this aspect of Burke's 'physiological sublime' that makes it a fitting analytical frame for deciphering frequent references to 'ardor' and 'strong nerves' in colonial descriptions of the Himalayan sublime.

To read British experiences of sublimity solely in terms of Burke's writings could be no less reductive than the colonial use of the '*shasters'* to typify the Indian mind. Nonetheless, to the extent that aesthetic theory is informed by and informs the socio-cultural imagination, our use of the *Enquiry* to understand recurrent patterns in the colonial encounter with the Himalayas is arguably justified. For example, Burke's *Enquiry* allows us to explain the cultural self-understandings underlying a distinctly male dominated genre of 'hunting in the Himalayas' on the

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[22] David Womersley, 'Introduction,' in *A Philosophical Enquiry,* ed. David Womersley (London: Penguin Books, 2004), xxv.

[23] Vanessa Ryan cautions against a teleological reading of Burke's theory in terms of Kant's *Critique.* 'Burke is in some ways the least Kantian of eighteenth-century British thinkers. Whereas Kant holds that the sublime allows us to intuit our rational capacity, Burke's physiological sublime involves a critique of reason', Ryan writes. See Vanessa Ryan, 'The Physiological Sublime', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 62 No. 2 (Apr 2001): 266.

one hand, and the image of the leisurely *mem sahib* of the hill-station on the other hand. Scholarship on South Asia has insightfully analyzed Burke's *Enquiry,* most notably Sara Suleri's masterful study of the Trial of Warren Hastings proposes that Burke's moral critique of Hastings was implicitly informed by his aesthetic theory. She argues that Burke's 'Indian sublime' evaded colonial attempts to rationalize and govern the colony through catalogues or inventories. Without detracting from this line of enquiry, my reading of Burke's sublime is less concerned with its implications for eighteenth-century political discourse, and more attuned to how the *Enquiry* constitutes the perceiving subject.

Vanessa Ryan observes that Burke's physiological explanation for our passions as well as his related conception of 'psychological hygiene,' was his 'unique contribution to the debate on the sublime.' Burke's own contemporaries were most struck by his emphasis on the body's physical responses to aesthetic qualities. For instance, in 1805 Richard Payne Knight mockingly pointed out that if Burke's explanation of the sublime is to be pursued then 'the sheet of paper on which one writes would be more sublime than the Peak of Teneriffe.'[24] The *Enquiry* is premised on the assumption that our common human physiology generates a universal 'logic of taste.' For sense objects to be qualified as sublime, they must have tangible effects upon the sensate body of the perceiver manifesting either in an 'unnatural tension of the nerves' or a contraction of the muscles. Burke maintained that these physiological reactions are productive of *both* pain and delight, or a 'tranquility tinged with terror,' because they exercise the 'finer and more delicate

[24] Ibid., 270.

organs, on which, and by which, the imagination, and perhaps the other mental powers act.'[25] He concluded that the sublime is the most powerful of all passions not only because it induces 'self-preservation' in the face of a flirtation with mortality, but also because it helps maintain the physical and psychic health of the individual.

The declared universality of Burke's 'logic of taste' notwithstanding, aspects of the *Enquiry* reflect how his subject remains specifically embodied. Burke's sublime is beyond the reach of certain types of bodies as too much manual labor 'destroys the mental faculties' while too much lassitude takes away the 'vigorous tone of fiber which is requisite for carrying on the natural and necessary secretions.' Furthermore, female and black bodies figure not as subjects but as objects of beauty and sublime horror respectively. The fractured universalism of Burke's aesthetic theory was not lost on his contemporaries. Mary Wollstonecraft's rejoinder to Burke's position on the French Revolution pointed out these discrepancies in his aesthetics. 'You have clearly proved that one half of the human species, at least, have not souls,' Wollstonecraft argued. 'The affection they [women] excite…should not be tinctured with the respect which moral virtues inspire, lest pain should be blended with pleasure, and admiration disturb the soft intimacy of love,' she added.[26] The case of colonial encounters with the Indian Himalayas arguably resonates with the fractured universalism of Burke's *Enquiry.* The next section of this chapter explains how evocations of Burke's 'physiological sublime' in colonial discourse about the Central Himalayas were premised on the construction of differences of race and gender.

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[25] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry,* ed. David Womersley (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 164-65.

[26] Ibid., xi.

Part 2: Race, Place, and the Sublime

In colonial accounts of the Central Himalayas before the Anglo-Gurkha War and the consolidation of East India Company rule in the region, the sublime did not feature in descriptions of mountain landscapes. Early travelers, such as Thomas Hardwicke, bemoaned the treacherous mountain terrain which made constant demands on the traveler's attention, consequently precluding experiences of the sublime. Similarly, Captain Raper's pre-war report of Garhwal in 1814, portrayed a desolate landscape dominated by 'lofty and precipitous mountains' separated by 'deep water courses and streams, which are formed and supplied by numerous rivulets and torrents that roll down the sides.'[27] How, then, was this desolate landscape, which inspired 'dread rather than pleasure,' transfigured into a sublime site for travel, refuge, and even colonial settlement by the 1840s and 1850s? To answer this question, this section of the chapter traces the mutually reinforcing relationships between the sublime, the making of racial difference, and the legitimation of colonial rule in the Central Himalayas from the late-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century.

I argue that colonial imaginaries of the Central Himalayas as a sublime landscape had a circular relationship with the consolidation of colonial rule. The vulnerable dependence of English travelers to Kumaun and Garhwal on guides and porters from the hills prior to the Anglo-Gurkha War (1814-16), gave way to affirmations of the security and strength of the white body after the EIC's annexation of the mountains in 1815. Descriptions of the sublime landscapes of the Central

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[27] Raper, Captain Felix, 'Description of the Route from Almora in Kumaon to Burokeru Garh.' The Nepal War, 1814-16., pp. 533-61, IOR/H/645. India Office Records and Private Papers.

Himalayas in colonial reports, surveys, travelogues, and hunting journals from the 1820s onwards hinged upon a constructed contrast between white and native bodies. The sublime was consistently evoked alongside the denigration of *pahari* relationships with place in colonial accounts.

Colonial travel to the Himalayan regions of Kumaun and Garhwal can be divided into three distinct chronological stages. The late eighteenth century and first decade of the nineteenth century witnessed furtive attempts at exploration. This period was dominated by the journey of the naturalist Thomas Hardwicke to Garhwali Srinagar in 1796, and the reconnaissance mission of Lieutenant Webb, Captain Hearsey Young, and Captain Francis Raper in 1808. The commencement of the Anglo-Gurkha War in 1814 heralded a second stage in colonial travel and exploration. Beginning with the travels of James Baillie Fraser in 1815, accounts from the first half of the nineteenth century were colored by the confidence of successful conquest. The 1850s seem to mark the next phase of colonial accounts, one shaped by modern infrastructure and backgrounded by the region's loyalty during the rebellion of 1857. The genre of the Himalayan hunting journal, epitomized by *A Summer Ramble*, reached a crescendo during this period. Over the course of these three periods, the Central Himalayas were transfigured into a site peculiarly suited for white male experiences of sublimity. The shifting signification of colonial encounters with the *jhula*, precarious rope-bridges of the mountains, makes manifest the relationship between the colonial sublime and the demarcation of racial difference in the mountains.

In the early phase of colonial travel, *jhula* crossing reminded the colonial traveler of the ephemerality of his own body. Botanist Thomas Hardwicke's *Narrative of a Journey to Srinagar* is the first English written account of the region. In 1796 Hardwicke traversed the course of the Ganga from Haridwar to Srinagar, the erstwhile capital of Garhwal, cataloguing various plant species encountered along the way. Hardwicke and his small coterie of sepoys made their way on

foot, employing *coolies* as guides and porters. His *Narrative* includes one of the earliest colonial records of the *jhula* (rope-bridge):

> 'Two scaffolds are erected in the form of a gallows, one on each side of the stream: over these are stretched very thick ropes…to these, by means of pendant ropes, a ladder is fixed horizontally, and over this tottering frame the travelers pass.'[28]

In its references to 'gallows,' Hardwicke's *jhula* strikes the reader as a veritable gateway to death requiring a degree of insanity to cross. Lieutenant Webb and Captain Raper remarked upon the *jhula* for military purposes and noted that such bridges could be easily dismantled by enemy forces seeking to obstruct mobility. Captain Young's illustrations (*fig 1.*), made during Webb's survey, depicts the *jhula* as a flimsy contraption hanging loosely above the roaring white rapids of the Alakananda River. To the right of the bridge the buildings of the town of Devaprayag cast shadows over a gathering of split-eared Nath Yogis. The ascetics sit serenely on the rocky riverside as a bare-chested woman washes clothes. Here, the *jhula* enhances Young's portrayal of the primitive and crude 'native.' Yet, like Hardwicke, Young and the other members of Webb's survey party were left giddy from their 'first passage of so unsteady a machine.' 'The motion of the passengers causes it to swing from one side to another, while the current flowing with immense rapidity below, apparently increases the effect,' Raper testified.[29]

Even though the *jhula* was mapped onto the trope of the 'primitive' native, in early colonial accounts of Kumaun and Garhwal, the experience of crossing the *jhula* exposed the vulnerability of white travelers in the mountains. Indeed, as Hardwicke noted, the experience of *jhula* crossing

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[28] Thomas Hardwicke, 'Narrative of a Journey to Sirinagur', *Asiatic Annual Register* (1800): 258.

[29] Francis Raper, 'Narrative of a Survey for the Purpose of Discovering the Source of the Ganges', *Asiatic Researches* Vol. 11 (1810): 475.

epitomized the treacherous Himalayan terrain which precluded the full experience of the sublime: 'neither the traveler's mind, nor his eye, can be enough disengaged to admire in security the sublimity of this prospect.'[30]

Early colonial travelogues to the Garhwal Himalayas therefore exposed the vulnerability of the traveler who felt terror rather than delight on first approaching the mountains. Here is an account by Captain Raper of Webb's survey in 1808: 'It is necessary for a person to place himself in our situation, before he can form a just conception of the scene. The depth of the valley below, the progressive elevation of the intermediate hills, and the majestic splendor of the 'cloud-capt' Himalaya, formed so grand a picture, that the mind was impressed with a sensation of *dread rather than pleasure*.'[31] The fatal dangers of the mountain terrain thus precluded experiences of the sublime, as a 'tranquility tinged with terror,' and instead left colonial travelers reeling from sensations of dread.

[30] Thomas Hardwicke, 'Narrative of a Journey to Sirinagur', *Asiatic Annual Register* (1800): 253.

[31] Francis Raper, 'Narrative of a Survey for the Purpose of Discovering the Source of the Ganges,' *Asiatic Researches* Vol. 11 (1810): 469.



Fig. 1. H. H. Young's Depiction of a Rope Bridge across the Bhagirathi, 1808.
[© British Library Board, Visual Arts Collection (WD346).
Painting by Hyder Hearsey Young, 'Devaprayaga and a Rope Bridge across the Bagirathi,' 1808, India Office Records, British Library, London.]

In colonial descriptions of the *jhula* written during and after the Anglo-Gurkha Wars, a marked reconfiguration of the rope-bridge's relationship to the sublime is discernable. In this second stage of colonial encounters with Kumaun and Garhwal, the triumphant passage of the white man across precarious mountain bridges was used to epitomize the sublime. In travelogues and reports from 1815 onwards, the passage of the *jhula,* or the *sangha* (a plank bridge), often preceded eloquent word-pictures of sublime landscapes. This is exemplified by iterative descriptions of the bridge above the Bhagirathi River at Bhaironghati. Consider J. B. Fraser's account from 1815:

> 'Just at the bottom of the deep and dangerous descent, and immediately above the junction of these two torrents, an old and crazy wooden bridge is thrown across the Bhagiruttee, from one rock to the other, many feet above the stream: and it is not till we reach this point that the extraordinary nature of the place, and particularly of the bed of the river, is fully comprehended…no description can give just ideas of this spot, or reach its *sublime extravagancies*.'[32]

Or consider Hodgson's cartographic survey report from three years later: 'nowhere in my travels, in these rude mountains, have I seen anything to be compared with this, in horror and extravagance' he confessed further suggesting that 'a painter wishing to represent a scene of the harshest features of nature, should take his station under the *Sanga* of Bhaironghati.'[33]

How did the *jhulas* of the Central Himalayas, first a source of fear and a grim reminder of the colonial traveler's lack of security, become a marker of the strength of the colonial traveler and his ability to appreciate the sublime mountain landscape? The answer arguably lies in colonial constructions of racial difference. Returning to Fraser's narrative, for example, he seems to have deliberately remarked upon how 'amusing' it was to see his servants from the plains 'arming themselves with courage' before crossing *jhulas.* Hodgson described how his party met with three recently repaired *sanghas* below the village of Derali. 'The people from the plains passed them very well (three persons excepted)', he took care to note, 'but many of the mountain coolies were obliged to be led over, with their eyes shut, as well as some of the Goorkha sepoys.'[34] Therefore,

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[32] James Ballie Fraser, *Journal of a Tour through parts of the Snowy Range of the Himala Mountains* (London: Bodwell and Martin, 1820), 463.

[33] Captain Hodgson, 'Journal of a Survey to the Heads of the Rivers Ganges and Jumna', *Asiatic Researches* Vol. 14 (1822): 89-90.

[34] Ibid., 79-80.

the contrast between white and native bodies gave rise to narrations of the sublime in colonial accounts.

As explained in the preceding section of this chapter, one of Burke's conditions for the apprehension of the sublime, as the simultaneous sensation of terror *and delight*, was a body that was neither too lax with leisure nor too overburdened by labor. Following this logic, neither the hardened bodies of 'mountain coolies' nor the 'feeble' frames of natives from the torrid plains could effectively grasp sublimity in colonial estimations. The lax plainsman or the muscular *pahari* presumably lacked the correct physique, or the bodily freedom, to feel delight as well as terror when they did cross the *jhula*. Colonial accounts thus assumed a circularity between 'strong nerves' and apprehensions of sublimity that aligned with Burke's theory of the sublime. In this Burkean framework, sublimity emerges as the *recursive* renewal of physique and psyche reserved for the enterprising but unencumbered bourgeois body. As an exercise for the 'finer organs' of the body, the sublime could entertain a flirtation with mortality but not a complete submission to life-threatening power.[35] For British travelers and rulers, the conquest of Garhwal at the very least gave rise to a feigned sense of security that invited experiences of sublimity.

While colonization engendered the apprehension of the sublime, sublimity conversely legitimated colonial control over Himalayan landscapes. On the Gangotri Glacier, a few miles ahead of the Bhaironghati bridge, Hodgson and his crew came face to face with some of the tallest

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[35] 'When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful, as we every day experience.' From Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry,* ed. David Womersley (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 86.

mountains in the world. 'We were surrounded by gigantic peaks, entirely cased in snow, and almost beyond the regions of animal and vegetable life, and an awful silence prevailed,' Hodgson recalled. 'A Pagan might aptly imagine the place a fit abode for demon,' he alleged, contending that 'it falls to the lot of a few to contemplate so magnificent an object, as a snow-clad peak rising to the height of upwards a mile and a half.'[36] The claim that the magnificence of the mountains can only be appropriately appreciated by 'a few' seems to reinforce the notion that the mountains are destined for the white man. The inextricable connection between the sublime, the marking of racial difference, and the legitimation of colonial possession is best summed up by the following description of *sangha* crossing. In her retelling of the tour of two army officials in the Himalayas, Emma Roberts noted that the officers observed that:

> 'Our Mussulman servants, and the people from the plains looked upon these tottering *sanghas* with great horror, and a sense of shame, and the dread of our ridicule alone induced them to attempt the passage. *Not participating in our delighted admiration of the romantic characters of the scene, they had nothing but a point of honor to console them under its terrors*.'[37]

The performative act of fearlessly crossing *jhulas* and *sanghas* while appreciating sublime landscapes in colonial accounts of the Central Himalayas, complemented the pragmatism of early colonial infrastructural policies. Up until the 1840s, the Commissioner of Kumaun contracted the repair and maintenance of *jhulas* to the specialist bridge-building *doomar* caste.[38] After the 1850s,

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[36] Captain Hodgson, 'Journal of a Survey to the Heads of the Rivers Ganges and Jumna', *Asiatic Researches* Vol. 14 (1822): 116-117.

[37] Emma Roberts, *Hindostan* (London: Fisher, Son & Co., 1850), 9-10.

[38] See correspondence on *jhoolas* addressed to Commissioner G Lushington, March 1844 and correspondence between Commissioner Henry Ramsay and John Strachey on iron suspension bridges,

the steady replacement of *sanghas* and *jhulas* with iron suspension bridges to facilitate trans-Himalayan trade was accompanied by an increasing reluctance to acknowledge the ingenuity of indigenous techniques of bridge building. Iron suspension bridges prefabricated in Britain were projected as signs of colonial improvement even while they were installed by forced labor. In the case of the *jhula,* caste injunctions on the reeds used in rope-making compelled *doomars,* who were coerced into their trade, to accept their outcaste status. Iron suspension bridges did not quite liberate *doomars* from their trade, but instead displaced the income that they had hitherto gained from tolls on bridge crossing.

It is in the context of mid-nineteenth-century infrastructural changes and the gradual disappearance of *jhulas* that the myth of 'Wilson's bridge' first took shape. Frederick Wilson was an enterprising ex-serviceman who set out into the dominions of the subordinated Raja of Tehri in what turned out to be a spectacularly successful quest for wealth. He started out as a professional hunter dispatching hides, musk, bear grease, and stuffed birds to the hill-station of Mussoorie as well as to the imperial metropole. Sportsmen who relied on Wilson as a guide and companion recalled crossing the bridge he had built 'for sporting purposes.' They alleged that Wilson had intentionally designed the bridge to be frightful. Wilson's bridge was '*admirably calculated to try the nerves of the traveler*,' Fred Markham noted.[39] In this way, hunting narratives singled out Wilson's bridge just as the *sanghas* and *jhulas* of the mountains were being gradually replaced. The supposed exceptionalism of Wilson's bridge rested upon a constructed opposition between

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January 1855. In 'Miscellaneous Letters Received, 1841-55,' Vol. 7, List 13, Pre-Mutiny Records, Uttarakhand State Archives, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India.

[39] Fred Markham, *Shooting in the Himalayas* (London: Richard Bentley, 1854), 83.

freedom and necessity. Whereas *jhulas* and *sanghas* were deemed to be the only possible products of crude native engineering, Wilson deliberately chose to make precarious bridges to 'try the nerves of the traveler' and thereby preserve his shooting grounds from the 'Himalayan public.'

Accounts from the late nineteenth century perpetuated the myth of Wilson's bridge, even though some credited the construction of the bridge to another colonial forest official. In his *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts of the North-Western Provinces,* Atkinson claimed that Wilsons's bridge was a 'vast improvement' to the design of the Garhwali *jhula*. Despite the claimed durability of the bridge, the nerves of natives ostensibly could not quite match up to the task of crossing it: 'Many of the hill-men themselves have to be led across by others with stronger hands and nerves. Pilgrims to Gangotri and others accustomed to dizzy heights generally crawl across on their hands and knees.'[40] The myth of Wilson's bridge became so prolific and enduring that it appears in the stories and journalistic writing of the contemporary author Ruskin Bond. He describes Wilson's bridge as a 'rippling contraption' and 'a source of terror to travelers.' 'To reassure people, Wilson would often mount his horse and gallop to and fro across the bridge,' Bond writes.[41] A bridge modelled on traditional Garhwali *jhulas* which had initially reminded

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[40] Edwin Thomas Atkinson, *The Himalayan Districts of the North-Western Provinces Vol III* (Allahabad: North-Western Provinces Government Press, 1886), 76.

[41] Ruskin Bond, 'Where the Ganga Descends', *Christian Science Monitor*, July 6, 1989, https://www.csmonitor.com/1989/0706/uganga.html. See also his short story 'Wilson's Bridge' from Ruskin Bond, *A Season of Ghosts* (Delhi: Penguin, 2016).

colonial travelers of their own mortality, was thus transformed into a marker of the unmatched courage of the white man.

The story of Wilson's bridge confirms how the colonial sublime emerged through the demarcation of racial difference, while other colonial accounts of the *jhula* further suggest how the aesthetic of the sublime was gendered. In these accounts, *jhula* crossing came to display the distinction between man/woman and courage/folly. The story of Miss Salmon's fatal encounter with a bridge over the Mandakini River is instructive in this regard. Traveler P. Baron recounted her untimely death: 'Miss Salmon, and, I believe, a Major II- in crossing, began very imprudently to amuse themselves with its elasticity, when, shocking to relate, with one crash the entire bridge fell into the river.'[42] Though her male companion survived, Miss Salmon did not share his luck. While there are several accounts of male officers crossing *jhulas* and *sanghas*, the story of Miss Salmon is one of the rare instances where a woman is shown attempting bridge crossing. It is perhaps no coincidence that the tale of her 'playfulness' made its way into successive colonial accounts.[43] Miss Salmon's untimely death on the *sangha* acted as a parable. For the male official and commentator, crossing mountain bridges required a degree of levelheadedness and fortitude seemingly found wanting in white women as well as natives.

Thus, in nineteenth-century colonial encounters with the Central Himalayas, the aesthetics of the sublime depended upon the constructed otherness of native bodies as well as the constructed otherness of oriental responses to the mountain landscape. Recall Hodgson or Roberts' writings about the alleged ignorance and apathy of *pahari* responses to scenery which left white travelers

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[42] Pilgrim Baron, *Notes of Wanderings in the Himmala* (Agra: Agra Ukhbar Press, 1844), 101.

[43] For instance, see Sherman Oakley, *Holy Himalaya* (London: Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier, 1905), 146.

in ‘raptures’ of admiration. The contradictions of the colonial sublime thereby complemented the notion that there was something fundamentally lacking in native engagements with place. Colonial travelogues and reports from the first half of the nineteenth century repeatedly dismissed the *pahari* sensorium as ‘rustic’ and even injurious to the body. The ‘frugal diet’ of the *paharis*, consisting of the ‘coarsest flour and a little salt,’ left much to be desired, though it made them a ‘martial race’ capable of enduring a ‘great amount of privation and fatigue.’[44] If Garhwali food was too Spartan, their music and dance was excessively sensual. Colonial travelers often dismissed the ‘harsh discordant peal’ of their instruments, and the ‘crude’ spectacle of their communal dances.[45] Most significantly, colonial discourse reduced the hill-dweller into an object of perception apprehended by the ‘complex’ sensation of dirt. The motif of the ‘dirty’ *pahari* pervaded colonial accounts and the ‘smoke-filled’ homes of *paharis* were frequently admonished. ‘How the people contrive to live in some of the houses would puzzle a philosopher of any civilized country,’ Wilson’s companion, the author of *A Summer Ramble in the Himalayas*, noted.[46] Dirt here is a ‘complex’ sensation because it was constructed through sights, smells, *and* intangible qualities like the unabashed behavior of hill women.[47]

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[44] *A Summer Ramble in the Himalayas* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1860), 184.

[45] Francis Raper, ‘Narrative of a Survey for the Purpose of Discovering the Source of the Ganges’, *Asiatic Researches* Vol. 11 (1810): 472.

[46] *A Summer Ramble in the Himalayas* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1860), 59.

[47] On dirt as a ‘complex sensation’ see William Ian Miller, ‘Darwin’s Disgust,’ in *Empire of the Senses,* ed. David Howes (Oxford: Berg, 2015).

Indeed, the colonial sublime consolidated an imperial sensory order that privileged the white male as a perceiver while it reduced natives into objects of dirt. This uneven distribution of subjects and objects of sensation naturalized dualisms like freedom/necessity, man/woman, white/nonwhite, human/animal and reason/the erotic. By turning history into nature, the imperial sensory order legitimated the colonial appropriation of Himalayan landscapes. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the British controlled districts of Kumaun and Garhwal, as well as the Princely State of Tehri Garhwal, which was subordinated under the paramount authority of the British Government, served as revenue plantations for the East India Company. While early commissioners of Kumaun incentivized agrarian expansion by leasing out unmeasured lands to potato cultivators as *nayabad* occupancies, they also contracted out vast swathes of forest land to private companies, such as the Kumaun Iron Works Company. In the Princely State of Tehri, similar processes unfolded to the benefit of enterprising former officials of the East India Company such as the timber merchant Frederick Wilson. Just as the Himalayan sublime could only be appreciated by the 'strong nerves' of white travelers and officials, the colonial official was deemed to have authority over prescribing the right uses of mountain landscapes.

The narration of the sublime in colonial accounts about the Central Himalayas thus acted to legitimate colonial authority over the mountains. Yet, colonial imaginaries of the sublime Himalayas had little impact upon *pahari* conceptions of place in the first half of the nineteenth century. Instead, *pahari* poetry associated the advent of East India Company rule in Kumaun with the devastation of mountain landscapes. As the famous Kumauni poet Gumani Pant (1790-1864) noted in his poem 'Almora,' the English had turned the map of the city upside down:

'*Vishnu ka devaal ukhada, upar bangla bana rakha…*

Angrezon ne Almora ka naksha auri aur kara'[48]
(They uprooted the temple of Vishnu and built a bungalow above it…
The British turned the map of Almora topsy-turvy.)

Gumani's family had ancestrally served as physicians to the Chand court at Almora.[49] His poetry, written in Sanskrit, Kumauni, and the Khariboli dialect of Hindi, became popular across Kumaun and the Princely State of Tehri. Gumani was not alone in his poetic critique of colonial rule in the mountains. Krishna Pande, who was a fellow poet from Almora and a contemporary of the Kumaun Commissioner, G. W. Traill in the 1820s and 1830s, similarly bemoaned the declining fertility of soil and growing indebtedness in the countryside:

'*Mulk Kumaun mein badi bhaari chaim,*
Nau naali jve ser chai naali bhain
(There are a good many agricultural operations going on in the land of Kumaun,
the result of which is that nine *nalis* are sown, the yield is but six *nalis*).'[50]

These verses were performed by Krishna Pande to the rhythm of drums and subsequently circulated orally in villages surrounding Almora.

Thus, the rise of colonial imaginaries of the sublime Himalayas paralleled *pahari* narratives about a declining rural landscape. Whereas colonial discourse admonished *paharis* for failing to

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[48] विष्णु का देवाल उखाड़ा ऊपर बंगला बना खरा…अंग्रेज़ों ने अलमोड़े का नक़्शा औरी और करा

From Charu Chandra Pande, '*Says Gumani*' (Nainital: PAHAR, 1994): 25.

[49] See chapter 5 on Gumani Pant's Ayurvedic work.

[50] Krishna Pande's Kumauni poems were recorded and translated by Pandit Ganga Dutt Upreti, an employee of G. A. Grierson of the Linguistic Survey of India. G. A. Grierson, 'A Specimen of the Kumauni Language,' *Indian Antiquary* Vol. 39 (1910): 78. Upreti witnessed Pande's performances as a child in Kumaun.

appreciate scenery which threw English travelers into 'raptures,' *pahari* poets satirized the supposed marks of colonial progress and bemoaned a declining countryside. This parallel *pahari* discourse notwithstanding, the aesthetic of the sublime was evoked in colonial accounts about the Central Himalayas across the first half of the nineteenth century to imply that *paharis* were not worthy of their 'majestic mountain land.' The final part of this chapter explains how the physiological sublime was deployed in metropolitan travelogues and sporting journals to make colonial authority over the Central Himalayas appear as natural rather than political.

Part 3: The *Moonal* Trade and the Empire of the Senses

The critique of Frederick Wilson and his role in the expansion of the *moonal* trade demonstrates how the colonial sublime legitimated the extractive export of animals and trees from the Central Himalayas, consequently leading to dramatic changes in the social lives of mountain forests. Colonial visitors to the hill-stations and forests of the Himalayas considered themselves to be refined connoisseurs of the sublimity of mountain landscapes. Yet rumors circulating among *pahari coolie* laborers ferrying *sahibs* and *mems* from the plains up to the hills reveal how to the 'native' eye there was something suspicious if not duplicitous about white appreciations of nature. The author of *A Summer Ramble* recounted how a few years before his visit to Garhwal a report had spread among hill *coolies* 'that some of the Europeans were catching any unfortunate native they could find alone, and taking him to a secluded house, extracting the oil from his body by hanging him up by the heels before a large fire.' 'In my progress through the hills I found the strange idea still entertained,' the author of *Summer Ramble* continued, 'and was several times asked for what purpose the oil of puharies was required.'[51] Visitors to the hill-station might have

[51] *A Summer Ramble in the Himalayas* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1860), 9.

prided themselves upon their gentility, yet the brazen exploitation undergirding colonial refinement was clearly not lost on the *pahari*. Indeed, the hunting projects of the nineteenth-century sportsman and timber merchant, Frederick Wilson, resembled the descriptions in these rumors. At one of his seasonal hunting grounds, Wilson occupied a cave where 'heaps of musk-deer fur, scores of their feet, bones in abundance and several pairs of burrells' horns remained bleaching about the spot.'[52]

To metropolitan readers and gentlemen-sportsmen, on the other hand, Wilson was an autodidact natural historian, paternalistic employer of natives, and a connoisseur of the wild. 'Mountaineer [as Wilson was called] carries with him to the chase, not only all those qualities essential to success, but many which render him something more than a sportsman: he is fond of natural history, alive to the beauties of Nature, inquisitive to the habits and customs of the people to whom his wanderings introduce him,' James Hume of the Pall Mall Reform Club declared.[53] Wilson curated the Himalayan sublime for sportsmen and readers both in the metropole and in the colony. He was a guide to famed hunters such as Fred Markham and Robert Dunlop. His writings appear in *A Summer Ramble in the Himalayas* (1860), A. O. Hume's *The Game Birds of India* (1879), and posthumously in Northam's *Guide to Masuri* (1884). Writing for the *India Sporting Review* (1849), for instance, Wilson described the environs of the Gangotri Glacier as the best 'shooting locality' in the higher regions. Here, amidst the 'mightiest and sublimest works of nature,' surrounded by the 'still and silent grandeur' of the Himalaya mountains, Wilson declared that an abundance of musk deer and blue sheep (*bharal*) awaited the trigger of imperial

[52] Ibid., 69.

[53] Ibid., iv.

sportsmen.[54] To his Anglophone readership, Wilson came to epitomize the sublimity of hunting in the Himalayas and his name became 'indissolubly associated' with the mountains. Contemporary sportsmen ascribed his intimate knowledge of the Himalayas to his deep appreciation of the 'grand and romantic scenery of the surrounding country.'[55] Metropolitan sporting journals further alleged that Wilson's 'indefatigable ardor' astonished mountain dwellers: 'his reputation for hardihood and skill became a household word' among a people who had 'hardly ever heard and never seen a white man.'[56]

'*Shikari* Wilson- Hunter and Lumberer' exported bear grease, *moonal* pheasant feathers, taxidermized birds, and musk before extracting wood from the forests of the Bhagirathi Valley in the 1860s to furnish the expansion of imperial railway networks. As the author of *Summer Ramble* remarked, though Wilson's work as a professional hunter was 'exciting and healthful,' the solitude of the mountains and the 'deprivation of intercourse with any but the ignorant puharies' made it challenging in the eyes of contemporary European sportsmen. Wilson's trade embroiled him in relations of intimacy and dependence upon hill dwellers. In his professional and personal life, Wilson came dangerously close to breaching color lines and class lines. He relied, for instance, upon the hunting and taxidermy skills of 'lower' caste hill dwellers. And though he professed that *paharis* were not worthy of their 'majestic mountain land' and berated their allegedly 'adulterous'

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[54] See Mountaineer, "Shooting Localities in the Himalayas," *India Sporting Review* (June 1849): 121- 144. [Wilson writing under the pseudonym "Mountaineer."]

[55] "Indian Sporting Literature," *Bentley's Miscellany* 63 (London: Chapman and Hall, 1868): 531.

[56] Ibid.

displays of sexuality, he married a Garhwali girl who bore him three sons to whom he bequeathed much of his estate.

Through much of his life Wilson shared greater intimacy with natives than with higher class white men. As a nineteen-year old army recruit he served in the British Other Ranks of the East India Company. The BORs were housed in bare barracks which were rife with venereal disease, so it is unsurprising that his first taste of the mountains was as an invalid soldier in the hill station of Landor. Nevertheless, his lowly class position among the ranks of the rulers only enhanced his display of power towards the ruled. He proudly related the punishment he meted out to an allegedly insolent officer in the employ of the Tehri Durbar- 'I thrashed him till every rod was in shivers, and my arm fairly ached, while not one of his attendants mustered up courage to interfere,' he is quoted to have said.[57] Indeed, Wilson's proximity to 'natives' made the aesthetics of the sublime in colonial hunting discourse even more significant in distinguishing him as an 'English *shikari*.' The theatrical ways in which nineteenth-century Himalayan hunting journals portrayed Wilson as a pioneering sportsman and the foremost connoisseur of the sublime worked to inscribe racial differences and authorize colonial control over the mountains.

As noted in Part 2, the legend of Wilson's bridge dramatized the relationship between the aesthetics of the sublime, the sportsman's body, the demarcation of racial difference, and the assertion of colonial control. Hunting accounts, such as Markham's *Shooting in the Himalayas*, evoked the story of Wilson's bridge to display the ardor and ingenuity of the white hunter, and thereby naturalize his claims to Himalayan hunting grounds. Together with the sublimity of the sportsman's pursuits, Wilson admonished mountain dwellers' allegedly wasteful use of the

[57] Ibid., 117.

landscape to legitimatize his own extractive enterprises. For instance, his inventory of the trees of Garhwal in *Summer Ramble*, simultaneously scoped out their economic potential and dismissed hill-dwellers' failure to realize this potential. 'Many of the finest trees are useless to the Puharies, as they have no saw,' he observed, further noting that 'to get a couple of dozen decent planks, a Puharie carpenter uses up a tree.'[58] Thus, just as the aesthetics of the sublime distinguished the colonial sportsman as a perceiving subject, Wilson's critique of *pahari* uses of the landscape complemented the demarcation of racial difference.

While the demarcation of racial difference through the aesthetics of the sublime appeared to justify and naturalize Wilson's professional sporting career in the discourse of hunting journals, the details of his trade were more complicated. The success of his enterprises relied upon 'native' labor and knowledge, as well as contracts with the subordinated ruler of Garhwal. An official—albeit largely unenforceable—tax on *baz-beena* (hawks and musk) in the Princely State of Garhwal notwithstanding, animals and forest produce effectively remained common property.[59] Hunting was widely practiced for subsistence purposes, and game meat comprised a healthy portion of the hill-dweller's diet. After he obtained a contract for the animal trade at a nominal rent from the Tehri Raja Bhawani Shah, who ruled under the paramount authority of the colonial state, Wilson proved able to exploit this hunting expertise, reworking the hitherto scattered structure of hunting

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[58] Mountaineer, *A Summer Ramble in the Himalayas*, 160.

[59] See J. H. Batten, *Official Reports on the Province of Kumaon* (Agra: Secundra Orphan Press, 1851), 80-81.

by centralizing the collection and processing of animal and avian hides.[60] Wilson's hunting bore all the marks of a capitalist industry- a cheap and undercompensated labor force of 'low-caste' *shikaris* and *bajgis* trained as taxidermists, centralized 'bird godowns' for the collection and processing of skins and hides, and a commission agent dispatching time sensitive orders to distant markets.[61] A single season could yield 'upwards of 500 birds, principally pheasants and partridges,' 'scores of the deer tribe,' enough bears to furnish 'upwards of a hundred quart bottles of grease,' and four leopards.[62] Musk and *moonal* were his chief products before he successfully petitioned the Raja of Tehri for the lease of the Bhagirathi forests in 1858. While musk had long been an object of trade, Wilson helped expand a nascent continental market in *moonal.*

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[60] Under the reign of Bhawani Shah (1859-71), Wilson received exclusive contracts "on a nominal rent for collecting animal fur, feathers, and musk-pods." See Atul Saklani, *The History of a Himalayan Princely State* (Delhi: Durga Publications, 1987): 63.

[61] Wilson began by employing Dalits from the *bajgi* caste of musicians in and around the village of Mukhwa as apprentice taxidermists. While he is still fondly remembered by these communities, having married into one of their families, Wilson's choices were guided less by compassion and more by the most cost-effective options. After commencing the timber trade, for example, he deliberately employed non-local labor from the Himachal hills. Furthermore, his rapacious destruction of the region's *deodar* forests was by no means beneficial to locals. He identified a cheap way of transporting fallen logs by floating them down the Ganga, thereby escalating the rate of deforestation. Far from acting like a Robin Hood figure who shared his spoils with his subaltern staff, he funneled profits into more capitalist enterprises such as the Himalaya Bank at Mussoorie.

[62] Fred Markham, *Shooting in the Himalayas* (London: Richard Bentley, 1854), 28.

The *moonal* as seen in its mountain environs is a remarkable sight. Even bird expert A. O. Hume agreed that 'there are few sights more striking, where birds are concerned, than that of an old cock shooting out horizontally from the hill-side just below one, glittering and flashing in the golden sunlight, a gigantic rainbow-tinted gem.'[63] Its gloomy call and astonishing feathers almost rendered it into an object of the sublime for early travelers.[64] Once deracinated from the Himalayan ridges and fetishized into a commodity, the *moonal* was tamed into an object of beauty. In his study of the 'branding' of teak in Myanmar, Raymond Bryant explains how nonhuman objects become commodified and branded by elaborating upon 'the rich discursive potential of nature's products.'[65] The *moonal* pheasant was little known in Britain before the beginning of colonial rule in the latter half of the eighteenth century, but by the turn of the century tales of its dazzling beauty was fashioning it into an object of desire. Lady Impey, wife of the then Chief Justice of Bengal, first housed a *moonal* in her extensive menagerie and the pheasant was subsequently named *Lophophorus Impeyanus* in her honor. After visiting Mr. Morrow, an early-nineteenth-century pioneer of the memento trade in Landor, Fanny Parks inventoried the hill birds he had collected, taking care to measure their beauty. She admired the 'splendid plumage' of *moonal* males and

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[63] A. O. Hume and Charles Marshall, *Game Birds of India Vol. I* (Calcutta: A. O. Hume and C. T. Marshall, 1879), 125.

[64] Pilgrim Baron, *Notes of Wanderings in the Himmala* (Agra: Agra Ukhbar Press, 1844), 43-44

[65] Raymond Bryant, 'The Fate of the Branded Forest: Science, Violence, and Seduction in the World of Teak' in Morrison, Hecht and Padoch (Ed.) *The Social Lives of Forests: Past, Present, and Future of Woodland Resurgence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), Pp. 220-230.

attempted to domesticate two pheasants at her bungalow. While Parks lost her own *moonals* to the ravages of an intruding beast, on her return to Britain the bird resurfaced in conversations with an aristocratic gentleman. 'I divide mankind into those who have seen my *moonal* pheasants, and those who have not,' he is quoted to have said, adding that 'Lady William Bentinck gave them to me, and they are the most beautiful birds I ever saw.'[66]

The high-ranking colonial official's fascination with the *moonal* as an exotic emblem of oriental riches soon spread to the metropolitan public. In the 1820s plumassier J. C. Stevens was already auctioning Impeyan Pheasants in Covent Garden. *Moonals* were used to ornament women's bonnets as well as to serve as ornithological specimens. Wilson's own taxidermy pheasants were objects of praise among metropolitan ornithologists. John Gould, author of *Century of Birds* (1831), described *moonal* feathers as 'resplendent with tints of burnished green and purple changing in every light,' and proposed that the bird 'if introduced into our country would form a splendid ornament to our woods and lawns.'[67] The imagination of the *moonal* had therefore become so dislodged from its ecology, that the idea of its introduction into Britain as an 'ornament' was growing in popularity. By the late nineteenth century Impeyan feathers were highly sought after millinery accessories on both sides of the Atlantic. Between 1884-1885 the number of *moonal* pheasants sold in a single London auction room was 4,974.[68] Wilson's thirty-year long career in

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[66] Fanny Parks, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim* (London: Pelham Richardson, 1850), 355.

[67] John Gould, *Century of Birds* (London, 1831), 256.

[68] Audubon Society, *The Audubon Magazine*, Vol. 1 (New York: Forest and Stream Publishing Company, 1887), 159.

the pheasant trade sent home an average of 1,500 *moonal* skins to Britain yearly.[69] An 1878 article in *Harper's Magazine* suggests that much of this enormous market in *moonal* was entirely oblivious to its origins: 'feathers bring no longing for more perfect natural surroundings; and the Beauty of fashion, to whose attire they add a new wondrous grace, never gives a thought to the wild.'[70] This modern commodification of the *moonal* diverged from Indian traditions of pheasant knowledge and exchange.

Before colonial rule, *moonals* had been traded and hunted as items of prestige and display; even Webb's survey party was gifted a pheasant by the Gurkha governor of Kumaun. However, even when the *moonal* was used as an adornment in the caps of *pahari* communities, it circulated within an economy that was deeply entwined with the forest. Environmental historians have lucidly demonstrated how animal husbandry, trade, and agriculture in the hills was contingent upon the access to and the preservation of the forest.[71] The pre-colonial *moonal* trade therefore remained embedded within the sensory fields of the Himalayas. Diverse Indian knowledges about the *moonal* also situated the bird in a storied landscape that referred to its Himalayan home. In Sanskrit literature, it is named *mayūra kukkuṭa,* literally 'peacock cock,' and is associated with the

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[69] A. O. Hume and Charles Marshall, *Game Birds of India Vol. I* (Calcutta: A. O. Hume and C. H. T. Marshall, 1879), 130.

[70] Helen S Conant, 'Birds and Plumage,' *Harper's New Monthly Magazine,* June 1, 1878: 386.

[71] See Chetan Singh, *Natural Premises: Ecology and Peasant Life in the Western Himalaya 1800-1950* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

hill-dwelling Goddess Parvati. Here, the *moonal* 'is said to pray to the sun morning and evening' with its whistling call which was contrasted with the *kekadhvani* or thundering noise of the Peacock.[72]

The golden, peacock-like cock of the Sanskritic imagination had its analog in the *Murgh-i-Zareen* of Persian writings. A wondrously embellished *pahari* style painting of the *moonal,* collected by Thomas Hardwicke in the 1790s, was labeled by this Persian appellation. This illustration evokes the playful sense of curiosity and imaginative anatomy that shaped native approaches to the *moonal.* The painting was dismissed by a collector at London's Natural History Museum in the 1890s as one among a series of curiously depicted 'nonsense birds,' whose 'artist has had a kind of idea of some species, on which he has based his pictures…but always added some extravagant decoration, such as does not exist in any living bird.'[73]

Indian knowledges and approaches to the *moonal* were thus suffused with a sense of wonder that constantly harkened back to the bird's Himalayan ecology. This resonates with the aesthetics of the courtly hunt in the Central Himalayas. Consider Rudra Deva's sixteenth-century treatise on hawking, the *Śyainika Śāstra.* While there are no direct references to Rudra Deva and his times in the *Śyainika Śāstra*, he was likely to have been the late-sixteenth-century Chand ruler of Kumaun and a contemporary of the Mughal Emperor Akbar. During the reign of the Chands in Kumaun, the forested foothills of the *terai* were brought under the plough. Consequently, the Central Himalayas were linked with the Gangetic Plains.

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[72] K N Dave, *Birds in Sanskrit Literature* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2005), 279.

[73] '96 drawings in an album depicting birds from Srinagar, Kumaun and Betul, C.P.', Thomas Hardwicke Collection, Visual Arts Collection (NHD39), India Office Records, British Library, London.



Painting of a Moonal Collected by Thomas Hardwicke
[© British Library Board, Visual Arts Collection (NHD39)
Painting no. 49 from '96 drawings in an album depicting birds from Srinagar, Kumaun and Betul, C.P.', Thomas Hardwicke Collection, India Office Records, British Library, London.]

The production of an agrarian surplus also facilitated the elaboration of a three tier caste system, and Rudra Chand of Kumaun authored the first description of the *varna* system in the mountains in his *Traivarnik Nyaya*.[74] His manual on hawking reflected core aspects of aristocratic imaginations of 'nature' in pre-colonial Kumaun.

[74] Vasudha Pande gives a broad range for the composition of this treatise between 1535 and 1597 C.E. See Vasudha Pande, 'Law, Women and Family in Kumaun,' *IIC Quarterly* 23 (Winter 1996): 106-120.

In the pre-colonial context, uncultivated lands were not directly managed by rulers and forested tracts were not the monopoly of the state. Nonetheless, under Rudra Deva the Chands attempted to increase agrarian revenues and exert central authority over nomadic groups in the forested *terai*.[75] This effort to protect agrarian surpluses and secure the margins of the kingdom can be gleaned from the *Śyainika Śāstra*. Rudra Deva remarked that hunting 'leads to the acquisition of religious merit' through the protection of standing crops, the surveillance of thieves, and from conciliating forest dwellers (*āṭavikarañjanāt*). He even describes a specific style of hunting called *yāvaśī*, or 'hunting by watching the motion of standing crops,' in which wild animals were captured on cultivated land. Hawking specifically indexed the expanded territory of the Chands, as it could be staged both in the valleys close to the hill capital and in the newly acquired tracts of the foothills. Hawking not only enabled the Central Himalayan ruler to delight in the ecology of his realm, but further allowed him to participate in wider subcontinental languages of sovereignty. The language of the *Śyainika Śāstra*, which was written in Sanskrit but inflected with several Persian and Turkish words, is indicative of a wider pre-colonial world of Indo-Persian courtly culture. Bird hunting figures in legends associated with the foundation and expansion of Chand rule, and the exchange in birds constituted a form of tribute cementing the power of regional courts in the hills. For instance, after the regions of Doti and Jumla were

[75] Edwin Thomas Atkinson, *The Himalayan Districts of the North-Western Provinces* Vol II (Allahabad: North-Western Provinces Government Press, 1884), 548.

subordinated to Kali Kumaun in the fifteenth century, they pledged their allegiance partly through the gift of hawks.[76]

The *Śyainika Śāstra* was written in the milieu of social change within the Central Himalayas and trans-regional courtly interactions. Given that Rudra Deva patronized Sanskrit scholarship and made grants to temples, the *Śyainika Śāstra* reads both as a prescriptive manual on hawking and a defense of hunting in general, in response to Brahmanical denunciations of hunting as vice. His treatise bears an ambiguous relationship with the existing canon of Sanskrit texts on morality, therefore. At times, he defended the practice of hawking by drawing on the *Bhagavad Gītā* and at other times he critiqued *shastric* prescriptions. Rudra Deva held that though the *shastras* list eighteen sensual activities as vices or *vyasanas*, this list must be qualified:

> 'तेषु ये अष्टादश प्रोक्ता व्यसनानौति यान् विदुः I
> तैः विना ना इंद्रयफलम त एव रमभूमयः II ६
> Of those activities [like hunting] that the wise have mentioned as the eighteen vices
> Without them there can be no fruits of the senses, they alone are the cause of exquisite delight.'[77]

Along with hunting, the Brahmanical 'vices' listed in the *shastras* include women, gambling, instrumental music, and wine. Rudra Deva took care to qualify each of these so-called vices, pointing out their benefits when indulged with discretion. For instance, to the classification of strolling as a vice, he remarked that 'it is praiseworthy as it mitigates ennui.' To redress the sin of killing animals, he suggested that if slaughtered creatures are sprinkled with water they may be

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[76] Ibid., 530.

[77] This translation is my own. See translation with Sanskrit MSS in Rudra Deva, *Śyainika Śāstra: Or a Book on Hawking*, translated by Haraprasada Shastri (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1910), 1.

ritually transfigured into acceptable objects of sacrifice. Moreover, Rudra Deva avowed that the emotions of classical aesthetics can be derived from hunting: 'The emotions which the dramatists have excited at different times and by elaborate processes, may be enjoyed in no less a degree at one and the same time by experts, in hunting excursions.'[78] Rudra Deva's defense of hawking contended that, much like the 'enjoyment of women,' hunting allowed the attainment of three of the four 'ends of man' (love, wealth, and morality). The audience of *Śyainika Śāstra* was thus shaped by gender as well as caste.

Rudra Deva beautifully articulated how the eight *rasas* (literally 'tastes') or emotions of classical aesthetics can be derived from the sport of hunting. As with any other sensuous pleasure that could be classified as a vice, hunting had to be restrained and conducted in a style suited to the hunter's caste or trade. Hunting by snares and traps could be justly practiced by 'lowly' *nisadas*, while 'hunting by watching the motion of standing crops' could produce great excitement for peasants. For Rudra Deva, even though rank and caste determine appropriate forms of hunting, the pleasure derived from animals and the forest was not the preserve of any single group. *Syenapātā* or hawking befitted the *ksatriya* nobleman. Rudra Deva listed different types of hawks and made prescriptions for their health accordingly. For example, hawks 'who are accustomed to the valleys of the Himalayas…where the breezes blow fragrant with the exudation of pine-trees' must be housed in cool environs.[79]

Courtly hawking was restricted to specific seasons, when it played out as a spectator sport that immersed hawk, hawker, and viewer in the forest. Before the drama, the king and hawkers

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[78] Ibid., 33.

[79] Rudra Deva, *Śyainika Śāstra*, 23.

had to proceed 'to a shady place in a mountain in proper time and with great watchfulness.'[80] There the art of hawking transformed the forest into a theater, and the contest between different species of birds scripted dramas of different genres. The cantankerous skylark's futile efforts to hide generated laughter, while hawking cranes excited 'fierce' emotions. The aesthetics of the courtly hunt were deeply sensual and did not need to yield success. Indeed, the purpose of hawking was not mastery but a pure emotional state: 'at times the hairs stand on end, extreme delight is felt, tears of joy flow, amazement overcomes, the voice gets choked, anxiety, incoherent talk, change of color and other symptoms of *sattva guṇa* [the quality of sensitivity] manifest themselves.'[81] Thus, the ends and aesthetics of the colonial hunt differed from those of the courtly hunt. The colonial hunt gave rise to experiences of the sublime and indexed the sublimity of the white sportsman. In contrast, courtly hawking honed the connoisseurship of emotions among ruling elites in the Chand court without codifying boundaries between 'nature' and 'culture,' or even human and hawk. Whereas the former aimed to extract beings from the forest, the latter sought to immerse them in the landscape.

In light of these contrasts between courtly hawking and colonial hunting, it is worth emphasizing the ways in which Wilson's commodification of the *moonal* resulted in significant changes to the social life of the Himalayan forest. Wilson reworked the hitherto scattered and localized structure of hunting by centralizing the collection and processing of animal and avian hides. Far from being a lone white hunter heroically mastering the rugged mountain terrain, as the lore surrounding him suggested, Wilson relied upon a network of *pahari shikaris.* Gentlemen-

[80] Ibid., 29.

[81] Ibid., 32.

sportsmen contrasted the fair play of their techniques of hunting with the alleged cruelty of native *shikaris* and claimed that Wilson himself hunted sustainably by singling out males instead of females. However, the very *shikaris* who were rebuked for their indiscriminate snaring ultimately took their spoils to Wilson's godowns in the Bhagirathi Valley. Wilson managed to centralize and dominate this trade by replacing *pahari* techniques of stuffing hides using moss, with the use of arsenical soap as a preservative. That Wilson's trademark contributed to the branding of nature is evidenced by contemporary reports about both *moonal* and musk. For instance, Wilson's stuffed pheasants were endorsed by sportsman Robert Dunlop, and while English guidebooks warned travelers that musk sold from *paharis* was often adulterated, at no point was Wilson subject to such allegations.

The ecological consequences of Wilson's operations were starkly visible by the 1870s, after he began his logging operations in the Bhagirathi Valley. Contemporaries observed that the extent of the *moonal* trade had pushed the bird to the brink of extinction in the region.[82] Edwin Brooks's article, 'Notes upon a collection of birds made between Mussoori and Gangotri in May

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[82] 'This splendid bird, once so abundant in the Western Himalayas, is now, comparatively speaking, restricted to certain localities in the wooded sloped of the higher ranges. Whole tracts of forests, once dazzling with the gorgeous forms of these birds, are now without a single specimen…No words can convey an accurate idea of the brilliancy of this bird's plumage.' From Andrew Leith Adams, *Naturalist in India: The Western Himalayas, and Cashmere* (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1867), 89. He further notes that hundreds of *moonals* are sold at Stevens' sale-rooms where they are purchased 'chiefly to adorn ladies' bonnets!'

1874,' which appeared in A. O. Hume's ornithological journal *Stray Feathers*, provides the most direct indictment of Wilson's complicity in the endangerment of the *moonal.* Appalled by the wreckage left behind by Wilson's logging operations, Brooks declared that 'such wanton and wholesale destruction of the timber of a fine valley is not to be met with anywhere else upon the face of the earth.'[83] The price offered for *moonal* skins at Wilson's godowns was allegedly stimulating rampant hunting by villagers, leaving nothing for the European sportsman-naturalist. Brooks also aired his disappointment with the difficulties of mountain travel- in his estimation amaranth, or 'spinach meal' as he called it, 'does not do for an Englishman when he is walking from 12 to 20 miles per day.'[84] Wilson's response to Brooks clearly exposes the use of the sublime as a tool to legitimate extractive uses of the Himalayan landscape.

In a letter to the editor in the 1876 volume of *Stray Feathers,* Wilson voiced his defense of his extractive enterprises in the 'sublime' environs of the Bhagirathi Valley. Wilson was a celebrated connoisseur of wild nature and a curator of the sublime, and he himself affirmed that 'there is satisfaction no doubt in gazing on, or wandering through, a primeval forest.' However, he continued to note that 'so also there is satisfaction in starting from Calcutta with the knowledge that next day you will be in the North-West, instead of the weeks or months of travelling which the journey would have taken not so very many years ago.'[85] Having made the 900-mile journey

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[83] Edwin Brooks, 'Notes upon a Collection of Birds made between Mussoori and Gangotri in May 1874', *Stray Feathers: A Journal of Ornithology for India and its Dependencies* Vol. III (1875): 225.

[84] Ibid., 226.

[85] Frederick Wilson, 'Letters to the Editor', *Stray Feathers: A Journal of Ornithology for India and its Dependencies* Vol. IV (1876).

from Calcutta to the North-West on foot in just about thirty days, Wilson was aware of the travails of travel. The civil engineer and naturalist Brooks, on the other hand, was disgruntled by the *pahari* diet just on his brief expedition into the mountains. So, Wilson justifiably made a polite jibe at Brooks, 'I can sympathize with Mr. Brooks on being deprived of milk for his tea or coffee for the week he was above Derallee. But surely he did not expect to find the valley flowing, not metaphorically, but *actually with* milk and honey?' Brooks sadly failed to follow the precautions taken by earlier sportsmen who sought Wilson's guidance. The author of *A Summer Ramble,* for instance, took 25 *coolie* loads of goods packed with tents, clothes, books, and supplies like ham and biscuits 'for the inward man' along with him. The essential message of Wilson's brief rejoinder to Brooks was that leisurely travel and hunting in the mountains, and the accompanying search for sublimity, was enabled by a broader web of bourgeois tastes. Just as the aesthetic of the sublime had emerged from the demarcation of racial difference, and was thereby used to legitimate displacement, so also it had to be maintained by preserving the racialized white body and its attendant patterns of consumption. Or as Wilson put it, the destruction of 'grand old forests' was a 'sad necessity' as 'we 'can't keep our cake and eat it.''

While the advent of scientific forestry in the Central Himalayas heralded a new discourse about the management of nature, the demarcation of racial difference remained central to the colonial imagination of Himalayan people and places. The aesthetics of the sublime played a key role in constructing racial difference in the region, even when sportsmen like Wilson relied upon native labor and knowledge. By elevating the white male sportsman as the sole subject of sublimity, and dismissing *pahari* relationships with the landscape, the aesthetics of the sublime in nineteenth-century colonial discourse naturalized hierarchies of race in the Central Himalayas. Indeed, the physiological sublime, and accompanying description of the 'ardor' of the imperial

sportsman in hunting journals through anecdotes such as the legend of Wilson's bridge, not only legitimated colonial authority over the landscape but further naturalized the colonial transformation of the social lives of Himalayan forests.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the mutually reinforcing relationships between the 'physiological sublime,' the demarcation of racial difference, and the legitimation of colonial authority over the Central Himalayan landscape. Far from a 'natural' quality of the vast mountain terrain, the aesthetic of the sublime had a murky social history. During the first half of the nineteenth century, colonial imaginaries of the Himalayan sublime were contingent upon the constructed otherness of native bodies as well as the constructed otherness of oriental responses to the mountain landscape. In colonial reports, surveys, travelogues, and hunting journals the sublime was rendered into the preserve of the white official and traveler in the mountains, whose 'strong nerves' and 'ardor' was recursively contrasted with the bodies of *paharis* as well as natives from the plains. Correspondingly, *pahari* responses to the 'majestic mountain land' of the Central Himalayas were consistently interpreted in terms of lack, thereby legitimating colonial uses of the landscape. Thus, the sublime was evoked in hunting journals to distinguish the figure of Frederick Wilson as an 'English *shikari*,' despite his reliance on and intimacy with natives. As part 3 of this chapter has demonstrated, the dramatic narration of the sublime in colonial hunting journals not only marked a departure from pre-colonial aesthetics of elite hunting but was further used to make colonial control over Central Himalayan landscapes appear as natural rather than political.

The critique of the 'physiological sublime' presented in this chapter proposes that the body and the senses were deeply implicated in the assertion of colonial control over land. Furthermore, the sublime reveals how differences between the colonized and colonizer could be measured by

scales of sentiment and sensation, rather than reason alone. Before the advent of scientific forestry, the sublime and concomitant racial logics of taste made the capitalist extraction of Himalayan flora and fauna appear as natural. Nevertheless, *pahari* poetry critiqued the impacts of colonial policies on the mountain countryside and the rumors of *coolies* exposed the contradictions of white appreciations of nature. While chapter 4 continues the story of colonial constructions of 'nature' in the Central Himalayas, the disjuncture between colonial understandings of oriental relationships with landscape and Indian affinities to the mountains is further explored in the next chapter about pilgrims' imaginaries of Garhwal.

Chapter 3

Pain, Property, and the Remaking of Pilgrims' Imaginaries of Garhwal

In 1890, Munshi Nasiruddin petitioned the Viceroy and Governor General of India as a 'poor man' seeking patronage for his expanding publication of Himalayan tourist guides. Nasiruddin appended his recently printed work, the *Badrīmahātmya* (1889), and detailed his plan to write a complementary travelogue on Garhwal's trans-Himalayan hinterland up to the Tibetan city of Gartok. Combining the genres of guidebook and *māhātmya* (Puranic text in praise of a place), *Badrīmahātmya* juxtaposes ten chapters of the *Sanatkumāra Saṃhitā* alongside vivid descriptions of meadows flanking Badrinath, the Ganga's multi-hued tributaries, and forests encountered along the pilgrim route.[1] Nasiruddin's guidebook simultaneously reflected and subverted dramatic changes to pilgrims' imaginaries of Garhwal which unfolded from the early nineteenth to the mid twentieth centuries. Hitherto ascetic and dangerous journeys up to the hallowed glacial sources of the Ganga and Yamuna Rivers were gradually tamed by the inscription of bourgeois tastes in an increasingly standardized routine of pilgrimage. These changes were not neutral consequences of infrastructural improvements, but were inflected by deeply political notions of propriety, agency, and pain. This chapter argues that the 'respectable Hindu' tourist was

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[1] Nasiruddin emphasized the care he had taken in finding and compiling manuscripts of the *Sanatkumāra Saṃhitā,* which he allegedly salvaged from an 'ocean of obscurity.' He personally transcribed and translated Sanskrit verses into Hindi, and further verified his work with Brahmin pandits at Joshimath and Pokhra. See Munshi Nasiruddin, *Badrīmahātmya* (Bombay: Jwalaprakash Press, 1889);'Shaikh Nasir-uddin forwards a copy of his work 'Badrinath Mahatam,'' March 1890, D. No. 186 A, No. 105, Books and Publications, Home Department, National Archives of India, New Delhi, India.

cast as the normative pilgrim in the mountains through colonial policies and caste Hindu tussles over property. In the process, the landscapes and sensibilities of travel, as well as the ways in which the Himalayas signified the sacred, were transformed.

From the late nineteenth century, printed guidebooks in Sanskrit, Hindi, and English indexed the packaging of subcontinental pilgrimages to Garhwal. In some ways *Badrīmahātmya* exemplified broader themes within this corpus of printed pilgrimage literature. Like most guidebooks, *Badrīmahātmya* granted authority to Brahmin priests in narrating myths and prescribing ritual actions. Nasiruddin cast the bourgeois tourist as the normative pilgrim by disparaging unseemly practices of austerity and celebrating novel roadworks along routes to shrines. Yet, in other respects his work stands out from those of his contemporaries. *Badrīmahātmya* interweaves Garhwal's pilgrimage routes into the economy of the Central Himalayas and the ecology of its river systems. Writing as a proud Garhwali Muslim, Nasiruddin's geographical imagination departed from subsequent Hindu nationalist maps of *bhārat* as a holy land. For instance, later works such as Maheshanand Sharma's *Bṛhad Śrībadrīnārāyaṇamāhātmya* (1913) superimpose Garhwal's 'great' shrines onto subcontinental networks of high-Hindu pilgrimage. These differences notwithstanding, overall the discourse of printed guidebooks was structured by consistent assumptions about pilgrims' imaginaries of the Central Himalayas.

The concept of the imaginary allows us to depart from transcendent definitions of sacred space and explore how pilgrimage is constituted through kaleidoscopic interactions between humans, nonhumans, gods, stories, and landscapes. Imaginaries have been defined 'as the explorative, yet somewhat restricted, sense-making fields wherein humans cultivate and negotiate relations with the material world, both emotionally and rationally, *while also creating identities*

for themselves.'[2] So, delineating the contours of pilgrims' imaginaries can suggest how their identities, as well as their definitions of the sacred, could be made, unmade, and remade through their journeys. Changes to the landscapes and sensibilities of pilgrimage under colonial rule restricted pilgrims' imaginaries and attenuated the variable possibilities of their travels. Meandering routes embedded in unpredictable mountain terrain were surveilled and sanitized into a single 'pilgrim road.' Just as pilgrims' encounters with the landscape were more closely curated, the body of the pilgrim was increasingly marked by caste, class, and gender privilege.

Some scholars have proposed that historical imaginations of the Central Himalayas as sacred space reflect India's pre-colonial cultural unity.[3] This perspective risks treating sacred space as a thing rather than a process, thereby eliding the stark social exclusions which make pilgrimage possible. On the cusp of colonial rule, major temples controlled over one-fifteenth of all arable land in Kumaun and Garhwal in a context in which agrarian production relied on caste bondage. Well into the early nineteenth century, Badrinath reportedly held numerous 'female slaves' and its head priest adjudicated civil and criminal cases.[4] However, the exclusions of pre-colonial caste

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[2] Astrida Neimanis, Cecilia Asberg, Johan Hedren, 'Four Problems, Four Directions for Environmental Humanities', *Ethics & the Environment* Vol. 20, No. 1 (Spring 2015): 81.

[3] For a nuanced evaluation of the historical roots of Uttarakhand's construction as '*dev bhoomi*' (land of the Gods) see Nachiket Chanchani, *Mountain Temples and Temple Mountains* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019). Nevertheless, even Chanchani echoes arguments about how pilgrimage confirms India's pre-colonial cultural unity, which are more unequivocally expressed by nationalists such as K. M. Munshi. See K. M. Munshi, *To Badrinath* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1953).

[4] 'Judicial Record Issued,' 1844-47, List- 13, Vol. 4, Collectorate Records Pauri Garhwal, Uttarakhand State Archives, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India.

Hindu pilgrimage did not necessarily translate into the hegemony of Brahmanical Sanskrit texts in defining pilgrims' subjectivities. Well into the nineteenth century, there was no standardized repertoire of travel to temples at the sources of the Ganga and Yamuna Rivers in Garhwal. Shrines were only built at Gangotri and Yamunotri in the late eighteenth and mid nineteenth centuries respectively.[5] Indeed, pilgrims' imaginaries of the Central Himalayas seemingly exceeded temple precincts to enfold their phenomenological, social, and ecological encounters. Part 1 of this chapter presents a mosaic of descriptions and archival fragments detailing pilgrimages from the late eighteenth to about the middle of the nineteenth century. During this period, pilgrims were alternately motivated by trade, ritual duties, and ascetic practices. Their impressions of the

[5] Chanchani, *Mountain Temples and Temple Mountains,* 180-85. In his monograph on the temple architecture of Uttarakhand, Nachiket Chanchani dates the provenance of pan-Indian veneration of the Central Himalayas as a sacred landscape to the twelfth century CE. He describes the formative role played by Pashupata ascetics, who resided in groves, grottoes and the banks of atypical northward flowing rivers, in welding a 'coherent cultural region' in the mountains that was linked to sacred sites across the subcontinent. He follows further changes to networks of pilgrimage by examining the construction of temples funded by non-local elites in the fifteenth century. The complex of Badrinath and Kedarnath grew into predominant sites of pilgrimage relatively late in this longer history of pilgrimage, Chanchani shows. Quoting the accounts of seventeenth-century Portuguese Jesuit missionaries Antonio de Andrade and Francisco de Azevedo, Chanchani argues that the expansion of the Srinagar based rulers of Garhwal was closely bound to the rise of Badrinath as a site of pilgrimage. Thus, well into the eighteenth and even the early nineteenth century, there was no conception of the '*chār dhām'* as an integrated itinerary of pilgrimage to Gangotri, Yamunotri, Badrinath and Kedarnath. Temples too had a tumultuous trajectory in this nascent circuit of pilgrimage.

landscape were informed by at times contradictory vernacular and orally related myths, rather than just Sanskritic texts. Official accounts from the 1820s even report how some pilgrims relentlessly trekked up glaciers only to relinquish their bodies to the snows.

Part 2 argues that colonial notions of propriety, together with 'upper' caste tussles over property, restricted pilgrims' imaginaries. To early colonial observers, pilgrims appeared as mute holograms of suffering unthinkingly enacting unchanging traditions. While pitiable pilgrims were deemed in need of rescue, the risks of theft, floods, and illness along the pilgrimage route were managed through numerous 'improvements.' Beyond colonial policies, the Tehri Princely State, Hindu nationalists, Brahmin families, and institutions such as the Kali Kamli Wala Kshetra lobbied to consolidate control over land and labor along the pilgrimage route. Consequently, the comforts of 'upper' caste, propertied pilgrims were secured at the expense of forced laborers engaged in road repairs, porters (*coolies*), sweepers, and famished hill peasants. For instance, references to the purity of the mountains in pilgrimage guides did not translate into a need to inculcate hygiene among pilgrims themselves. Instead, the labor of sanitation was displaced onto the bodies of Dalits from the plains who were employed on contract by the colonial government.

The routinization of caste in the making of Himalayan sacred space paralleled more general colonial policies which 'Orientalized the Hindu temple as the physical manifestation of Hindu tradition and religiosity.'[6] Colonial legislation surrounding the temples of Kedarnath and Badrinath reinforced Brahmanical conceptions of the sacred. As we will see, petitioners for and against the Badrinath Temple Bill (1939) mobilized images of an internally homogenous and

[6] See Anupama Rao, *The Caste Question: Dalits and the Politics of Modern India* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009): 89.

combative Hinduism to buttress their claims. References to the interests of the 'Hindu public' figured in a variety of conflicts, including legal cases disputing the Tehri Durbar's monopoly over *coolie* services for pilgrims. Control over capital invariably lurked behind purported efforts to protect pilgrims. Garhwali nationalists profited from airline services, while Hindu nationalists in the United Provinces Legislative Council rallied for the construction of railway lines to connect mountain *tirthas* (sacred sites).

The final part of this chapter situates the discourse of printed guidebooks against the background of these transformations to the sensibilities and landscapes of pilgrimage. By the early twentieth century, the consumption of guidebook-*māhātmyas*, photographs, and virtual tours of shrines threatened to displace pilgrims' phenomenological immersion into the Himalayan landscape. Guidebooks not only stabilized itineraries of travel to selected sacred sites, but also identified the normative pilgrim as the 'upper' caste Hindu male. Contemporary pilgrimages to Yamunotri, Gangotri, Badrinath, and Kedarnath, are packaged as Garhwal's *chār dhāms* ('four holy abodes'). The *chār dhāms* attract an annual average of 2.6 million visitors and generate a revenue of over a thousand crore rupees. The wealthy tourist can even conduct pilgrimage by helicopter to escape traffic jams on widened 'all-weather' roads connecting temples.[7] The pages to follow suggest that the beginnings of such forms of pilgrimage can be traced to the attenuation of pilgrims' imaginaries of the Himalayas under colonial rule.

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[7] Atul Sethi, 'The Rs. 1,000 Crore Chār dhām Economy: On a Wing and a Prayer,' *Times of India,* April 22nd, 2015, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/The-Rs-1000-crore-Char-Dham-economy-On-a-wing-and-a-prayer/articleshow/47018707.cms

Brahmanism, Orientalism, and Pilgrims' Agency

In 1844 a 'Bunarsee aurut' died near the temple of Koteswar, not far from the confluence of the Mandakini and Alakananda Rivers at Rudraprayag. She was one among several pilgrims who died that year as they traversed forests, rivers, and snows. Like most pilgrims she was elderly and owned meagre belongings, in her case just a couple of pots. Unlike most pilgrims, her gender and place of origin is listed in an otherwise nameless catalogue of mortalities.[8] How can we avoid burying journeys like hers in our analysis of the modern packaging of pilgrimage? What sources should we privilege? Is it possible to separate the small voices of pilgrims themselves from the voluminous discourse of Brahmanical and colonial texts? To answer these questions, we must first grapple with conceptual issues related to the study of 'sacred space.'

Scholars have critiqued stable and transcendent definitions of sacred spaces presented by the 'world religions' framework.[9] In the South Asian context, a rich inter-disciplinary literature

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[8] 'Zillah Garhwal Criminal Records' [Page 129], 20th August 1845, Volume 54, Pre-Mutiny Records, Uttarakhand State Archives, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India.

[9] Jacob Kinnard cautions against the 'world religions' framework for studying religion and sacred sites. Dating back to the late nineteenth century, the world religions framework assumes exclusive and non-overlapping religious identities discernable through fixed minimal criteria. Kinnard argues that this approach to religion, along with a diffuse and often essentialist definition of the 'sacred,' distort scholarly understandings of 'sacred space'. He therefore dispenses with the category of sacred space as it assumes that sacrality is what is most significant about places, carries connotations of timelessness, and elides the intentionality involved in place-making. The intentionality involved in pilgrimage is entirely absent in

has problematized orientalist approaches to religion. Romila Thapar's work on text-based formulations of 'Semitic Hinduism' and Ronald Inden's critique of Indology are foundational in this respect.[10] As Lata Mani notes, orientalist constructions of religion are marked by 'the presumed hegemony of Brahmanic scripture, with religion as scriptural rather than customary' and an 'extraordinarily reductive conception of indigenous agency' rooted in the alleged incompatibility between religious motivations and worldly concerns.[11] These insights are indispensable to our critique of colonial conceptions of Central Himalayan pilgrimage.

Colonial officials assumed that pilgrims from the torrid plains were patently out of place and unavoidably disoriented in the icy mountains.[12] As argued in the previous chapter, colonial conceptions of the sublime contrasted the unencumbered body of the European male with the

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colonial writings about Himalayan pilgrimage. Jacob Kinnard, *Places in Motion: The Fluid Identities of Temples, Images and Pilgrims* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[10] See Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and 'the Mystic East'* (New York: Routledge, 1999), Ronald Inden, *Imagining India* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), and Romila Thapar, 'Syndicated Hinduism', in Kulke and Sontheimer edited, *Hinduism Reconsidered* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2001).

[11] Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on* Sati *in Colonial India* (Los Angeles and Berkeley: UC Press, 1998): 161.

[12] Beyond colonial constructions of the Central Himalayas, place plays a deterministic role in orientalist writings about India more generally. As Ronald Inden observes in his canonical critique of the episteme of Indology, to the orientalist 'Asia, with vast river valleys juxtaposed to its uplands and a climate either hot or cold, is inhabited by peoples of extreme temperament.' See Ronald Inden, *Imagining India* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).

feeble frames of fatalistic native pilgrims. Commissioner Traill thus described Himalayan pilgrimage as no less than 'voluntary death from religious motives.'[13] Medical reports from the 1850s echoed Traill's dismal evaluation: 'No one who has travelled along the pilgrim road at the season when the pilgrims are passing in the greatest number will ever forget the frightful sights of mangled limbs and disease and misery that are everyday most painfully visible.'[14] Sanitary inspector G. F. Adams even alleged that 'nowhere on the route among the thousands passed was a pilgrim seen admiring the beauties of nature or even stopping to pick a flower.'[15] For colonial officials, fearful veneration and penitential austerity encapsulated the responses of Hindu pilgrims in the mountains.[16]

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[13] Parliamentary Papers 1780-1849 (London: Parliament, House of Commons, H. M. Stationery Office), 43.

[14] 'Report on Garhwal addressed to Batten, Commissioner of Kumaon', 1850, Pre-Mutiny Records, Series IX (Judicial), Vol I (From Uttararakhand State Archives, Dehradun): 299.

[15] Adams, G F. 1913. *A Report on the Pilgrim Route to Badrinath*. Public Records, September 1913, File No. 507. (From National Archives of India, New Delhi): 38.

[16] Consider the assessment of Edwin T. Atkinson, who's monumental *Gazetteer* is the subject of chapter 4: '…when wearied with toiling through the chasms in the mountains which form the approach to the principal shrines, the traveler from the plains is told to proceed in respectful silence lest the god should be angered, he feels 'the presence.' And should the forbidden sound of song and music arise and the god in wrath hurl down his avalanche on the offenders, then the awe-stricken pilgrim believes that he has seen his god, terrible, swift to punish, and seeks by *renewed austerities to avert the god's displeasure*.' Edwin Atkinson, *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts of the NWP Vol. 2.* (Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1973 [Reprint]): 704.

To move beyond such reductive tropes about pilgrims as suffering bodies we will try to engage with anthropological studies of embodiment. The centrality of exertion to the merits of pilgrimage is reflected in the etymology of words such as *yātrā,* that derives from the Sanskrit root *yā* or 'to go.'[17] In Kumaun, participants in the Nandadevi *jat* display their sincerity to the deity by choosing to engage in ascetic practices.[18] Brahmanic conceptions of pilgrimage similarly maintain that 'the more arduous the mode of travel, the more meritorious its gains.'[19] Given how the embrace of pain could prove pilgrims' agency, what explains colonial and subsequent nationalist discourse about 'helplessly' suffering pilgrims? Talal Asad suggests that secular notions of agency are premised upon a metaphysical question: 'Given the essential freedom, or the natural sovereignty, of the human subject, and given, too, its own desires and interests, what should human beings do to realize their unfreedom, empower themselves, and choose pleasure?'[20] Implicit in this question, Asad contends, is an overarching historical trajectory from 'increasing self-empowerment' to 'decreasing pain.' In contrast to secular conceptions of agency as unfettered freedom, I propose that pilgrims embraced an alternative conception of agency whereby they sought to *be controlled* by the world in certain ways.

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[17] See William S. Sax, 'Village Daughter, Village Goddess: Residence, Gender, and Politics in a Himalayan Pilgrimage,' *American Ethnologist* Vol. 17, No. 3 (Aug 1990): 491-512.

[18] William Sax, *God of Justice: Ritual Healing and Social Justice in the Central Himalayas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 493.

[19] See P. V. Kane's discussion of *tirth yātrā* in his *History of Dharmasastras.* Noted in Vasudha Dalmia, *Hindu Pasts: Women, Religion, Histories* (New York: SUNY Press, 2017).

[20] Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam,* Modernity (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003): 71.

Pilgrim's experiences of the sacred seemingly unfolded through sensorial exchanges between body and landscape. In his extensive ethnographic studies of Garhwal, William Sax proposes that the 'idea that people's natures are continually altered through transactions of substance' is broadly accepted across South Asia. 'One's body, and hence one's morality or dharma, is altered by eating certain kinds of foods, by engaging in certain kinds of sexual intercourse, by partaking in certain rituals, and by falling under certain kinds of (astrological) influence…[therefore] caste has so fundamentally to do with intimate physical contact', he writes.[21] So, instead of analyzing morality as a matter of psychology or mental state, Sax finds that it is 'immanent in the body.' While it is important to avoid sweeping generalizations about the significance of 'transactions of substance' in the subcontinent, as these risk rehearsing Louis Dumont's essentializing explanation of caste, Sax's insights nonetheless enjoin us to consider power laden, osmotic exchanges of place, pilgrimage, and personhood.[22]

Attentiveness to embodiment alone cannot resolve problems related to pilgrimage and colonial constructions of the sacred, however. Recent works underline continuities in structures of caste and religious domination across the colonial divide. For instance, Ramnarayan Rawat and K. Satyanarayana maintain that 'modernity has reinforced caste Hindu society's commitment to

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[21] Sax's work on the Nandadevi *jat* in Kumaun and Garhwal cautions against applying models of liminality and communitas to studies of Hindu pilgrimage. See William S. Sax, 'Village Daughter, Village Goddess: Residence, Gender, and Politics in a Himalayan Pilgrimage,' *American Ethnologist* Vol. 17, No. 3 (Aug 1990).

[22] Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications,* English ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). For a critique of Dumont, see for example Dilip Menon, *The Blindness of Insight* (Delhi: Navayana, 2011), xi.

exclusionary regimes.'[23] In her study of Dalit temple entry movements in Maharashtra, Anupama Rao demonstrates how colonial law courts provided new grounds for the preservation of caste property by aligning the language of custom and its 'religio-ritual definition of differentiated personhood,' with contract and its regime of private property.[24] My study of the consolidation of caste property in Garhwal's major pilgrimage sites seems to confirm Rao's assessment. Families earning an income from pilgrims sought legal backing for their monopoly over bathing *ghāts* and ritual duties through the publication of caste lineages as well as the adoption of Brahmanic rituals. Just as Brahmanic conceptions of the sacred were deployed to adjudicate local disputes over temple properties, debates over the management of large shrines such as Kedarnath and Badrinath invoked the interests of the wider 'upper' caste 'Hindu public'.

Dalit perspectives on caste Hindu society and politics thus force postcolonial scholars to move beyond neat conclusions about colonial constructions of 'Hinduism.' The long-standing role of the Tehri Princely State in reinforcing exclusionary regimes is extremely significant in this respect. For instance, in the 1830s the Tehri Raja used his proximity to Badrinath to defend caste slavery. Close to a century later, the Tehri Durbar drew upon the expertise of Hindu nationalists such as Madan Mohan Malaviya to rearticulate Badrinath's caste exclusions. Manu Bhagavan argues that princely states were a 'crucial plank in the platform of Hindutva and a critical, if vastly

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[23] Ramnarayan Rawat and K. Satyanarayana, edited, *Dalit Studies* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016): 19.

[24] Anupama Rao, *The Caste Question: Dalits and the Politics of Modern India* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009): 86-88.

understated and little understood, element in the making of modern India.'[25] Bhagavan's work informs this chapter's assessment of the role of the Tehri Durbar in the modern invention of Garhwal's *chār dhāms*. The presence of Gangotri and Yamunotri within the boundaries of the Princely State to some extent explain why these sites were popularized alongside Kedarnath and Badrinath over older temples such as Jageshwar in Kumaun.

Thus, this chapter attempts to account for the role of Brahmanical hegemony, orientalism, and pilgrims' agency in transforming pilgrimages to Garhwal. These complexities suggest the hazards of making teleological arguments about the inscription of bourgeois tastes in *yātrās* to Garhwal as well. Returning to the fatal pilgrimage of the woman from Benares, we might still wonder what inspired her to venture into the mountains? What maps and myths could have acted as her guide? Could she have commissioned a priest (*pāṇḍā*) as an escort? Was she likely to have journeyed alone or in a group? To avoid overly simplistic conclusions about the meaning of pilgrimage, the first section of this paper will try to keep such questions open ended. By presenting a mosaic of images from the archives, perhaps we might appreciate how pilgrims' imaginaries of the Central Himalayas were more explorative than restricted well into the nineteenth century.

Part 1: Before the '*Chār Dhāms*'

This section of the chapter presents a glimpse of pre-colonial, as well as early nineteenth-century pilgrims' imaginaries of Garhwal. It first examines the power of princely courts and ascetic orders in curating pilgrimages, before presenting vignettes of pilgrims' embodied encounters with the mountain ecology.

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[25] Manu Bhagavan, 'Princely States and the Hindu Imaginary,' *The Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. 67, No. 3 (August 2008): 885-886.

Caste and Power in Himalayan Pilgrimage

A route map painted by an unnamed Rajasthani artist in the early eighteenth century, follows the meandering course of the Alakananda River to the Himalayan shrine of Badrinath.



Map of the Ganga (early 18th century)
[SOURCE: 'Map of the Ganges (Early 18th Century), by Rajasthani Artist,' *Collections of Kalakriti Archives, Hyderabad and National Museum*.[26]]

Staff bearing pilgrims on foot or *dandi* (carrier) are shown traversing yellow paths which curve along the contours of hills and fade into rivers. Characteristic of such route maps, landscapes on the left bank of the river are shown upside down. Parts of the landscape, including trees, villages, and *dharamshalas* (pilgrims' rest houses) are emphasized and labeled.

[26] Online Exhibition: https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/cosmology-to-cartography-sacred-maps-from-the-indian-subcontinent/1wLSzO0BWWZ3Jw

Towards the end of the map scroll, the temple of Badrinath is shown floating amidst cloud-like mountains. At the top left corner of the scene, the mountain of Nara (*nar parvat*) is identified, while pilgrims are shown bathing in a sacred spring (*nārad kund*) at the bottom right.



The Temple of Badrinath (early 18th century)
[SOURCE: 'Map of the Ganges (Early 18th Century), by Rajasthani Artist,' *Collections of Kalakriti Archives, Hyderabad and National Museum*.[27]]

[27] Online Exhibition: https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/cosmology-to-cartography-sacred-maps-from-the-indian-subcontinent/1wLSzO0BWWZ3Jw

While little contextual information is available about this Rajasthani pilgrimage map, architectural historians Vivek Nanda and Alexander Johnson draw interesting inferences from its style.[28] They deduce that the map dates from the reign of the Garhwali Raja Fateh Shah (1684-1716). The Garhwali Rajas of Srinagar cast themselves as 'speaking Badrinath' (*bolanda badari*) and used Vaishnavite imagery to glorify their dominions.

In the late eighteenth century, paintings by Srinagar's most prominent artist, Mola Ram, portrayed Garhwal's rulers as incarnations of Vishnu. While the Rajasthani painter of the pilgrim's map showcased the Garhwali Raja's court, the artist is not likely to have visited the mountains. Indeed, the map would be of little use for navigation as it takes several liberties with geographical accuracy. For instance, the confluence of the Pindari and Alakananda Rivers at Karnaprayag is shown before the courtly capital of Srinagar, though it is farther upstream. The temple of Badrinath, destroyed by an earthquake in 1803, is illustrated through the conventions of Rajasthani architecture, which was unlikely to have corresponded with the original structure. The map-scroll thus tells us more about the powerful symbolism of sacred space than the cartography of pilgrimage. Both before and after the Gurkha invasion of Garhwal in 1804, Badrinath was intimately wrapped up with royal sovereignty. As historian Vasudha Pande observes, 'to celebrate

[28] Vivek Nanda and Alexander Johnson, *Cosmology to Cartography: A Cultural Journey of Indian Maps from the collections of Kalakriti Archives, Hyderabad and National Museum* (Delhi: Viba Press, 2017): Pp. 33-35.

their victory the Gorkha decided to reconstruct the Badri Nath temple' in the early nineteenth century.[29]

While the temple structure was bound to temporal power, the range of texts related to pilgrimages to Garhwal circulated beyond the realm of the court. To inventory the plethora of myths associated with the upper tributaries of the Ganga and Yamuna in the Himalayas would be an impossible task. The story of the descent of the Bhagirathi River, which is believed to have flowed from Shiva's matted locks following the Sage Bhagiratha's *tapasyā* (ascetic practice), appears in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Māhābhārata,* and several *Purāṇas*. Legends of Kedarnath and Badrinath feature in the *Shiva Purāṇa* and the *Skanda Purāṇa*. Numerous verses have been penned in praise of the Ganga and Yamuna, such as the *Gaṃgāshtakam*. Complementing this complex weave of stories, the Himalayas themselves have been ferried across the subcontinent through traveling legends. As Diana Eck writes, 'the transposition of Himalayan peaks from the north to other parts of India is a widespread motif, creating a landscape dotted with mountains transported from the snowy north.'[30] Sometimes, mountain landscapes were literally transposed to the humid plains through the iconography of temple structures. Art historian Nachiket Chanchani details the case of an eleventh century C. E. temple at Balligamve village in Karnataka which tried to replicate

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[29] Vasudha Pande, 'Divergent Historiographical Traditions: A Comparative Study of Gurkha Rule in Kumaun and Far Western Nepal', in M. P. Joshi, J. Pant, and R. Shah edited, *Before the Emergence of Nation States* (Almora: Almora Book Depot, 2014): 23.

[30] Eck, Diana L, *India: A Sacred Geography* (New York: Harmony Books, 2012): 36.

Kedara's geophysical landscape.[31] This South Indian temple mimicked the mountains before the temple of Kedarnath was even constructed. At the time, pilgrims traveled to the glacial source of the Mandakini River to pay respects to Shiva manifested as a 'rock outcrop at the center of a sedge meadow.'[32]

While the sources of the Mandakini, Alakananda, Bhagirathi, and Yamuna Rivers were long venerated as imagined landscapes, permanent temple structures at Badrinath and Kedarnath can only be dated to after the seventeenth century. Until the Gurkha conquest of Garhwal in 1804, there was no temple structure at Gangotri, and the still more modern temple at Yamunotri is as an entirely 'invented tradition' initiated by the Tehri Durbar. Badrinath and Kedarnath were especially patronized as *tirthas* by Srinagar's rulers who encouraged the circulation of *māhātmyas* such as the *Kedārakhaṇḍa*. These Sanskrit *māhātmyas* used language which upheld the Brahmanical order, frequently extolling the merits of donating to Brahmins. For instance, the *Sanatkumāra Saṃhitā* underlines the power of Badri *kshetra* by claiming that the alleged 'sin' of offering food touched by a Shudra to the deity is rendered 'pure' by the power of the site:

'शूद्रा दिम्पृष्ट मण्येतन्महापातकनाशनम्
बदरीनथ नैवेध्यं विष्णु भक्ति प्रदाण्यपि'
'*śūdrādimpṛṣṭa maṇyetanmahāpātaka nāśanam*
badarīnatha naivedhyaṃ viṣṇu bhakti pradāṇyapi'

[31] Nachiket Chanchani, *Mountain Temples and Temple Mountains* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019), 143.

[32] Kedara literally means lord of the *daldali bhoomi* or swamp land.

'Even if food touched by a Shudra is offered as prasād, this sin can be cleansed by one look at Badari that makes you a devotee of Vishnu.'[33]

Thus, Brahmanical Sanskrit texts, temple architecture, and courtly patronage complemented each other in composing elite, caste Hindu landscapes of pilgrimage.

Courtly proximity to temples involved the legitimation of caste based agrarian bondage in the Central Himalayas. Land grants historically favored Brahmin families close to the courts at Srinagar and Almora. Juridical prescriptions were fractured along caste lines as well, with severe punishments such as the death penalty meted out to 'untouchable Doms' ('Dom' was a derogatory word for Dalits in the Central Himalayas) alone. This complementarity between caste Hindu landscapes of pilgrimage and forms of enslavement continued into the colonial period. Consider the case of a Dalit family that fled agrarian bondage in Tehri Garhwal in the 1830s to seek refuge in the neighboring EIC administered district of Dehradun. The Raja of Garhwal appealed for the extradition of Koojoo and his family on behalf of their 'upper' caste owner Uttul. 'All over the hills great number of Brahmin and Rajpoots reside, men of small property, who live by the produce of cultivation, and if you insist on their ploughing and cultivating with their own hands they will disobey the shasters…cultivation cannot be continued without purchasing men for the purpose,' the Raja alleged.[34] He went on to point out that the British government in Kumaun was sanctioning

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[33] Translation my own. Verse 22 of the *Sanatkumāra Saṃhitā* in Nasiruddin, *Badrīmahātmya* (Bombay: Jwalaprakash Press, 1889), 19.

[34] 'Papers regarding the prevalence of agricultural slavery in Garhwal and Kumaon- five slaves from Tehri-Garhwal take refuge in Dehradun- correspondence of the British Authorities with the Raja of Garhwal Sudarshan Sah', Dec 1835- May 1836, IOR/F/4/1649/65726, IOR, British Library, London.

agrarian slavery as well. The veracity of the Raja's claim about 'shastric' commands is of less concern than his use of religious arguments to justify caste bondage.

Caste and gender exploitation intersected at pilgrimage sites as well. The Garhwali historian Harikrishna Raturi alleged that during Narayan Rawal's priesthood in Badrinath, a queen from the Tehri Durbar gifted the Rawal a Dalit slave girl for 'his services.' The practice of keeping 'outcaste' women subsequently continued among Badrinath Rawals until nineteenth century reforms. Raturi also noted that villagers close to Gangotri used to donate their first-born girl children to the temple.[35] Records from Lieutenant Webb and Raper's 1808 reconnaissance survey to Garhwal similarly mention the presence of 'dancing women' at the Rajeshwari Temple of Srinagar. 'The ceremony of initiation to this society consists in anointing the head with oil, taken from the lamp placed before the altar; by which act, they make a formal abjuration of their parents and kindred, devoting their future lives to prostitution.'[36] This murky history of caste and gender oppression is crucial to understanding how Dalits figured in colonial period debates over the interests of the 'Hindu public' in the *yātrā*.

Trans-Himalayan networks of trade and powerful ascetic orders nevertheless posed a threat to courtly and priestly control over *tirthas*. The seventeenth-century travelogue of the Portuguese missionary Francisco de Azevedo describes the unsuccessful attempt made by a large troupe of warrior ascetics to visit Badrinath in defiance of the Raja of Srinagar. Gosains played a key role in trans-Himalayan trade and the Dandi Swamis managed Badrinath until 1782. The Gosains and

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[35] Harikrishna Raturi, *Garhwal ka Itihas* (Tehri: Bhagirathi Prakashan Griha, 1928), 41.

[36] Francis Raper, 'Narrative of a Survey for the Purpose of Discovering the Source of the Ganges', *Asiatic Researches* Vol. 11 (1810): 504.

Bairagis were caught up in violent confrontations at the Haridwar Kumbh Mela in the late eighteenth century as well. While these ascetic groups challenged courtly power, some ascetic orders seemingly upheld Brahmanical authority over Central Himalayan pilgrimage. From the sixteenth century onwards, the mountain town of Joshimath was chosen as the site for the northern *dhām* (abode) of the Dasanami ascetic order, believed to have been established by the foremost proponent of Advaita Vedanta, Shankaracharya.[37]

Furthermore, ascetics were conduits for the introduction of *nirguna* ('without distinction' or formless) forms of worship and *yogic* practices into the hills as well. Sax notes the continued prominence of the subversive Nath *yogi* and Aghori *sadhu* traditions in the iconography and lexicon of worship to Bhairav among Dalits in the region. 'Bhairav appears as a Nath yogi who helps the poor and the oppressed, while Kachiya Bhairav appears as a tantric Aghori renouncer closely associated with the Harijans,' he writes.[38] The Garhwali student of Hindi literature, Pitambar Datt Bartwal, similarly noted the influence of Kabir and Gorakhnath in framing the *nirguna* beliefs of Dalits. 'The Doms who worship Narankar (*nirakar*) are actually followers of Kabir,' he observed.[39] Thus, the pilgrimage routes of Garhwal offered opportunities for the exchange of potentially subversive religious beliefs as well.

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[37] See Luke Whitmore, *Mountain Water Rock God: Understanding Kedarnath in the Twenty-first Century* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2018).

[38] William Sax, *God of Justice: Ritual Healing and Social Justice in the Central Himalayas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 43.

[39] Quoted in Purushottam Agrawal, 'The Naths in Hindi Literature,' in David Lorenzen and Adrian Munoz edited, *Yogi Heroes and Poets* (New York: SUNY Press, 2011): 11.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, *sadhus, yogis,* and *sanyasis* continued to dominate routes to Gangotri, Kedarnath, and Badrinath. The practices of ascetics at pilgrimage centers flouted normative sexual and gendered conduct. George Weston Briggs's canonical *Goraknāth and the Kānphata Yogīs* describes tantric rituals practiced by Nath *yogis* in the hills. *Yogis* of both genders ate flesh, drank wine, and indulged in the 'orgies of the left-hand sect' that were ostensibly open to all classes. 'Garhwal is more frequented by pilgrims and wandering religious mendicants, and this is given as reason for the more frequent public exhibition of their [tantric] ceremonies there,' Briggs explained.[40] While the ascetic practices of some *sadhus* in Garhwal transfigured their own bodies into sites of pilgrimage, others seem to have made more fleeting visits to the mountains. The impressive itinerary of one *sadhu* from Benares features in a late eighteenth century volume of *Asiatic Researches*.[41] The *sanyasi* Purana Poori, called *oordhbahu* 'from his arms and his hands being in a fixed position above his head,' reportedly entered Garhwal by crossing over mountains from Himachal. He recounts the narrowness of the river at Gangotri and marks legendary *Bhojpatra* trees in the mountains. Thus, the princely court and the ascetic were at times complementary and conflicting poles of authority in pilgrimages to Garhwal. However, the experiences of lay pilgrims were not overdetermined by the prescriptions of texts, rulers, or ascetics.

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[40] George Weston Briggs, *Goraknāth and the Kānphata Yogīs* (Calcutta: YMCA Publishing House, 1938), 174.

[41] Jonathan Duncan, 'An Account of Two Fakeers,' *Asiatic Researches Vol. 5* (1799): 37-52.

Pilgrims' Agency and Animate Landscapes of Pilgrimage

How, then, did lay pilgrims understand the Central Himalayan terrain? What attracted them to the mountains, and what can we infer about their class, caste, and gender backgrounds? Lay pilgrims largely arranged their travels by relying on caste networks. For instance, Brahmin priests (*pandās*) from the town of Devaprayag customarily traveled across the subcontinent encouraging clients (*jajmāns*) to undertake the pilgrimage to Badrinath. Ledgers (*bahi khātās*) maintained at Joshimath, Ukhimath, and Devaprayag allowed pilgrims to identify the names of ancestors who traveled to Garhwal before them. The role of Brahmin priests in attracting and curating pan-Indian pilgrimages have been noted in studies of other regions, such as Anand Yang's study of Bihar.[42] With or without Brahmin guides, both men and women traveled in groups to Garhwal from Gujarat in the West, Bengal in the East, and the Deccan in the South. Many combined pilgrimage with trade, clearing out the market at the village of Mana near Badrinath, where trans-Himalayan traders peddled their wares. Buddhists, Sikhs, and Jains are said to have traveled along pilgrimage routes in Garhwal as well, troubling rigid categorizations of such pilgrimages as 'Hindu.'[43]

While pilgrims' place of origin and class seems to have varied, their caste and age appear more uniform. Pilgrims from the plains were overwhelmingly from 'twice-born' (*dwija*) castes. At the same time, overwhelmingly elderly pilgrims seemingly made a departure from their caste and

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[42] Anand Yang, *Bazaar India: Markets, Society, and the Colonial State in Gangetic Bihar* (Los Angeles and Berkeley: UC Press, 1998), 136.

[43] 'Appointment of a Chief Priest, or Naib Rawal, at the Temple of Badrinath in British Garhwal,' 1895, IOR/L/PJ/6/408, File 1930, India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library, London.

gender specific responsibilities as householders by wandering into the mountains during their next phase of life (*ashrama*).[44] Indeed, death pervaded both the meaning and the enactment of Central Himalayan pilgrimages. *Māhātmyas* prescribe the performance of the *piṇḍa dāna* (death rites) at the Brahma Kapal in Badrinath as the last of all ritual duties.[45] Pilgrimages to Garhwal were associated with the archetypal journey of the Pandavas into the mountains. On his pilgrimage to Kedarnath, Kaka Kalelkar observed pilgrims abandoning their astrological birth charts in pools near the temple. Kalelkar suggests that the practice stemmed from the belief that on receiving *darshan* from Kedarnath 'all life's sins are washed away, and the planets have now withdrawn all their influence on one's life.'[46] Associations between mountain *tirthas* (literally 'fording places') and transitions between life and death were most strongly manifested by willful pilgrim 'suicides.'

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[44] Four *ashrams* or stages of life: *Brahmacharya* (student), *Grihastha* (householder), *Vanaprastha* (retired) *and Sannyasa* (renunciate).

[45] The *Sanatkumāra Saṃhitā* (reprinted by Nasiruddin) described the Pinda Dan ritual at Badrinath. Selected Sanskrit verses on the indispensability of conducting Shraddha ritual (to pay homage to departed ancestors) during Central Himalayan pilgrimages were reprinted in the Kali Kamli Wala Kshetra's *A Guide to Shri Badri-Kedar Yātrā* (Rishikesh: KKW Kshetra, 1938): Pp. 31-34. Verses include the following- 'A man gets progeny and attains great fame on account of the performance of the Shraddha ceremony. Again, rain falls because of Shraddha and a man gets happiness on account of Shraddha.'

[46] Kaka Kalelkar, *The Himalaya: A Cultural Pilgrimage,* translated by Ashok Meghani (Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2014), 225.

Through the 1820s, Commissioner Traill maintained a census of such willful pilgrim 'suicides,' counting an annual average of twenty deaths across genders.[47] The different routes used by pilgrims to court death were recorded by colonial officials. On his visit to Kedarnath in 1827, Superintendent of Dehradun F. J. Shore counted 'three spots where those Hindoos who are tired of life destroy themselves.' He classified different kinds of suicides through a speculative reading of the significance of chosen places of death. So, he inferred that the 'Mahapunt' was 'where the followers of Shewa go,' 'Soorgarooin' was a path taken by devotees of Vishnu, while the precise beliefs inducing pilgrims to jump from the 'Byronjamp' (a rock that Shore measured to be 85 cubits) remained elusive.[48] In Shore's account, place-names are abstracted from their storied contexts and reductively associated with gods. For Shore, Mahapath and Swargarohini were merely 'paths leading to the snow' on which pilgrims 'proceed till overwhelmed by falling into some hollow.' He consequently effaced all other dimensions of the landscape, such as the grandeur of mountains and their mythic resonances. In the twentieth century, Indian nationalist travelers to Garhwal reinterpreted such deaths by speculating that it was the infinite expanse of the Himalayas which moved pilgrims to relinquish their bodies:

> 'It is one thing to be so disappointed with life as to take the cowardly way out and commit suicide. It is quite different to witness nature's vast and heavenly beauty,

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[47] 'Report on Kumaun' [G W Traill], c. 1836, List – 13, Vol. 25, Pre-Mutiny Records, Uttarakhand State Archives, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India.

[48] 'Private Journal' (Page 83), Jul 1825- Dec 1830, Private Papers of Frederick John Shore, Mss Eur E307/2, India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library, London.

> to experience the irresistible urge to become one with it, to lose the desire to be bound to one's mortal body and jump off to gain that unity with the Infinite.' [49]

Such accounts contended that the mountains offered a glimpse into the unity and eternity of life, thus emboldening pilgrims to embrace the Vedantin notion of 'living by dying.'

In contrast, colonial officials such as Traill concluded that an element of religious intimidation provoked these 'suicides.' 'From the rules and ceremonies in force on such occasions, care would seem to have been originally taken to preclude the return of these infatuated people,' he affirmed. Traill noted that pilgrims were 'required to proceed without any provisions, and with no other clothes or covering than a single cloth,' remarking that 'they must consequently necessarily perish in a short period from cold and hunger.'[50] Subsequent colonial administrators continued to indulge these early explanations. The bureaucrat Edwin Atkinson noticed that pilgrims who chose to sacrifice their lives often left memorials in the mountains. Atkinson alleged that 'before proceeding to execute their design' it 'was usual' for suicidal pilgrims to 'inscribe their names and the dates on the walls of the neighboring temples.' The temple of Gopeshwar 'has several such records *chiefly of Dakhini and Bengali pilgrims*; the freshest cut bears a date

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[49] Kalelkar, *The Himalaya: A Cultural Pilgrimage,* 105. The travel writings of Akhandananda and Kaka Kalelkar suggest that pilgrims who chose to die were likely to have been overwhelmed by the infinite scale of the landscape.

[50] George William Traill quoted in Parliamentary Papers Volume 20, 1780-1849 (Great Britain: House of Commons, H. M. Stationery Office), 105

corresponding to 1820 A.D.'[51] Even when the pilgrim inscribed their individuality in this manner, the colonial gaze was incapable of recognizing it. All willful pilgrim deaths were disparaged as 'suicides' representing fatalistic native beliefs about the Himalayas as 'the great way to final liberation.'[52] The idea that pilgrims could have been experimenting with alternative philosophies of death was not for a moment entertained. Instead, self-congratulatory colonial accounts claimed that road closures and improvements had put an end to such depraved practices by the late nineteenth century. While even in the early nineteenth century willful pilgrim deaths were relatively few, there were less fatal ways in which pilgrims embraced pain and allowed themselves to be controlled by the landscape.

The sensory dimensions of travel were arguably central to pilgrims' experiences of the sacred. Whereas colonial discourse portrayed suffering as proof of native helplessness, pilgrims' painful experiences of landscape can instead be interpreted as signs of their agency. Agentive pain in pilgrimage can to some extent be explained by the principle of *kaṣṭa sādhana*, the belief that hardship enhances the benefits of pilgrimage by 'removing the layers of dirt accumulated by one's

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[51] Edwin Thomas Atkinson, *The Himalayan Districts of the North-Western Provinces Vol II* (Allahabad: North-Western Provinces Government Press, 1884), 71. Atkinson credited G. W. Traill with ending religious suicides, though the latter made no formal legal interventions to this effect. In official narratives, as well as modern guidebooks such as Munshi Nasiruddin's, the disappearance of 'religious suicides' over the course of the nineteenth century was attributed to secular improvements to the pilgrimage route.

[52] Ibid., 703

body through overindulgence or laziness.'[53] The distances covered on foot between different sources of the Ganga and Yamuna exceeded three hundred miles of difficult terrain. Pilgrims walked up precarious pathways skirting river valleys, proceeded through dense forests, and weathered mercurial changes in temperature. While the wealthy engaged the services of porters, the majority traveled entirely on foot well into the nineteenth century. They carried few belongings, often just their own pots to prepare food along the way.

By experiencing the porosity and fragility of their bodies, pilgrims seemed to have invited transformative experiences. Ritual bathing elicited a range of reactions, for example. The mid-nineteenth century travelogue of the German explorer Hoffmeister offers a colorful glimpse into such 'singular bathing scenes.' At 125 degrees Fahrenheit, spring waters at Gaurikund singed the skin. 'The female bathers especially found the heat decidedly too great for their softer skins. They popped in alternately, first one, then another foot, without venturing a leap; many, even of the men, betrayed their pain while in the water by a most doleful mien. Others again displayed great heroism, standing in the center amidst the bubbling of the fountain.'[54] Hoffmeister's gendered description of dainty women bathers contrasted with official colonial denunciations of the 'crude' mixing of the sexes at hot springs. In subsequent nationalist discourse, the intermingling of genders during ritual bathing at hot springs was disciplined.

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[53] Kaka Kalelkar, *The Himalaya: A Cultural Pilgrimage,* translated by Ashok Meghani (Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2014), 252.

[54] Dr. W Hoffmeister, *Travels in Ceylon and Continental India* (London: Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1848), 311.

Pilgrims' sensorial immersion into the mountains provoked curiosity and ingenuity. J. B. Fraser's early nineteenth century account observed pilgrims conversing with the Gangotri Temple priest about the possible courses taken by the Bhagirathi River above the shrine. Pilgrims proceeded barefoot towards Gangotri from the village of Daralee onwards. They braved 'devious' paths littered with fallen trees and encroached by 'tangled jungle,' but such privation did not keep them from halting 'where a cool spring, and the pleasantness of the place' induced them to. Pilgrims frequently attributed the effects of high altitude to the intoxicating scent of flowers carried by breezes blowing down from meadows (*bis ki hawa*). Flowers encountered along the way, like the *go gool* and *brahma kamal,* were considered sacred. Contrary to sanitary inspector Adams' assertion that nowhere along the pilgrim route was any one 'seen admiring the beauties of nature or even stopping to pick a flower,' pilgrims carefully collected such flowers as tokens.

When pilgrims could not find *dharamshālās* (rest houses) or *chattis* (lodging provided by Garhwali shopkeepers), they dwelt in caves. English traveler P. Baron noticed an 'immense number of natural caves in the rocks' which pilgrims had 'improved by industrious excavation' on the way to Kedarnath. At other spots, he saw them fashion shelters from tree branches. Traveling without any provisions, pilgrims relied on the cultivated and natural foods of the hills. They sustained their daily walks with modest meals of *daal* and rice. Some helped themselves to indigenous fruits like gooseberry, while others sucked the petals of rhododendron flowers, copying the style of poor Garhwali peasants. Pilgrims learnt about the fragrance of mountainous cedar trees, and carried pieces of their wood to use as *dhoop* (incense).[55] So, far from helplessly suffering

[55] James Ballie Fraser, *Journal of a Tour through parts of the Snowy Range of the Himala Mountains* (London: Bodwell and Martin, 1820), 482.

through their journeys, pilgrims savored the sensorial richness of the landscape by tasting, smelling, bathing, and dwelling.



H. H. Young's 'A View of Badrinath,' 1808
[© British Library Board, Visual Arts Collection (WD347)
Painting by Hyder Hearsey Young, 'A View of Badrinath', 1808, India Office Records, British Library, London.]

Stories mediating pilgrims' embodied engagement with landscape were by no means uniform. Before a shrine presided over by a priest was established at Yamunotri, multiple stories were told by locals as well as visiting pilgrims. The etymology of Bandarpoonch ('monkey's tale'), the mountain from which the Yamuna descends, was subject to varying interpretations. Some pilgrims connected the mountain with Hanuman, who is said to have extinguished his flaming tale in the icy mountains after using it to set fire to Lanka. Denizens of the region furnished a distinct explanation, claiming that 'in the month of Phagun, a single monkey comes from the plains, by way of Hurdooar, and ascends the highest peak of this mountain, where he remains twelve months,

and returns to give room to another.'[56] Animals and stories about animals thus played a role in performing an animate landscape of pilgrimage.

Pain and hardship during pilgrimage were not necessarily opposed to pleasure and freedom, therefore. Though the way was challenging, pilgrims' sensory engagements with place seemed to invite experiences of the sacred. Anand Taneja's work on religious encounters amidst the ruins of Delhi is illuminating in this respect. 'Historically, one of the primary experiences of the sacred in Delhi, for both Hindus and Muslims, was ecological,' Taneja writes, 'based on greenery, flowing water and the scent of flowers, and the potentialities of affective *transformation* and healing that result from opening our sensate selves to nature.'[57] Emerging from the confluence of the ecological and the sensorial, the sacred thus cannot be set apart as fixed or transcendent. However, reductive colonial constructions of the pilgrim's body, as well as secular conceptions of agency, elided these dynamic aspects of the sacred in Garhwal. The next section of this chapter tries to demonstrate how the management of Central Himalayan pilgrimage under colonial rule increasingly favored transcendent constructions of the 'sacred' by fetishizing temple precincts and controlling the contingencies of travel.

Part 2: Secular 'Improvements' and the 'Pilgrim Road'

Beyond ascetic, Brahmanical, and royal poles of authority, pilgrims' imaginaries of the Central Himalayas were deeply sensorial and ecological well into the nineteenth century. The

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[56] James Ballie Fraser, *Journal of a Tour through parts of the Snowy Range of the Himala Mountains* (London: Bodwell and Martin, 1820), 420.

[57] Anand Taneja, 'Nature, History, and the Sacred in the Medieval Ruins of Delhi' (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2013), 21.

pilgrim's itinerary was knitted together through mundane acts of dwelling, cooking, and walking, just as much as it was informed by the lore of priests, fellow travelers, and locals at sacred sites. The osmotic relations between body and place involved in Himalayan pilgrimage were largely bleached from colonial evaluations. This section of the chapter traces how pilgrims' sensorial experiences of the Himalayan landscape were transformed through nineteenth-century colonial infrastructural improvements as well as 'upper' caste tussles over property and land along the reformed 'pilgrim road.' I first outline the relationship between orientalist understandings of pilgrims' agency and Commissioner Traill's 'pilgrim road,' built by the forced labor of *paharis* in the 1820s and 1830s, to suggest the protracted implications of colonial legislation related to pilgrimage. I then turn to caste-based contestations over property and control over the Badrinath Temple Bill, before demonstrating how the privileging of the bourgeois, caste Hindu male as the 'respectable pilgrim' transformed the ethos and ecology of pilgrimages to Garhwal by the turn of the century.

The Oriental Gaze and the 'Respectable' Pilgrim

The colonial reduction of the sensate, spontaneous persona of the pilgrim into a benumbed, suffering body is crucial to our understanding of the modern packaging of Central Himalayan pilgrimage. Thomas Skinner's observations in his *Excursions in India* (1833) represent one instance of pervasive colonial associations drawn between pilgrimage to Garhwal and 'scenes of the saddest of all the fatal delusions which lead their victims, with a nobleness worthy of a better cause to perish miserably.'[58] By the early twentieth century, the thickening repetition of such

[58] Skinner, Thomas, *Excursions in India* (London: Richard Bentley, New Burlington Street, 1833): 307.

descriptions almost entirely obscured the ludic elements of pilgrimage. Sanitary inspector G. F. Adams, whom we have noted for his admonition of pilgrims who failed in 'admiring the beauties of nature,' went on to explain that 'one of the most noticeable characteristics of the pilgrims is the steady persistence with which he plods on his way…footsore, weary or ill he never rests a day.' Pilgrims were motivated 'as though impelled by fate' and were only forced to tolerate hardship because of monetary constraints, Adams maintained.[59]

The orientalist trope of the suffering pilgrim was deployed to justify 'secular improvements' to the *yātrā.* While reforms to health, hygiene, and infrastructure undoubtedly may be desirable in principle, it is nonetheless necessary to scrutinize the rationale behind and the consequences of such reforms. This is particularly the case given that modern reforms only exacerbated hierarchies of caste, class, and region in Himalayan pilgrimage. The idea that infrastructure can engender transformations to the sensibilities of *yātrā* was dramatized by the myth of the pilgrim road. In 1826, Commissioner Traill diverted temple funds towards the repair and expansion of roads in Garhwal. Deemed to be 'second only to Vishnoo' in the estimation of natives, Traill commanded sole credit for the construction of the new road, despite his reliance on forced labor. English traveler P. Baron relates how Traill 'marked out with a hatchet every mile of the line of road in the Kedar Gunga glens,' risking his life to do so as 'he had frequently to be

[59] G F Adams (p. 35), 1913, *A Report on the Pilgrim Route to Badrinath*. Public Records, September 1913, File No. 507, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

pulled up the precipices by ropes, and to be suspended over chasms, the very sight of which would make you shudder.'[60]



Sir Henry Yule's 'Coolies, Gangotri,' 1849
[© British Library Board, WD55, Visual Arts
Sir Henry Yule, 'Coolies, Gangotri', British Library, London.
This sketch from 1849 contrasts the European sportsman, enrapt by the sublimity of the mountains, with struggling pilgrims and load bearing *coolies*.]

[60] Pilgrim Baron, *Notes of Wanderings in the Himmala* (Agra: Agra Ukhbar Press, 1844), 61. These descriptions echo the rhetoric surrounding PM Modi's reconstruction works at Kedarnath following devastating floods on the Mandakini River in 2013. While Traill suspended himself from ropes, present-day reports allege that Modi supervises restoration works at Kedarnath via CCTV cameras.

While missionaries and certain India Office officials admonished Traill for supporting idolatry, others like P. Baron welcomed the new road, predicting that it would correct the depraved sensibilities of the *yātrā*. Baron surmised that 'in half a century, when Kedarnath and Badrinath become better known to the multitude, the pilgrimages for martyrdom by cold and privation will gradually diminish in number, and be succeeded by those of enthusiastic travelers, like ourselves, who undertake this journey of endless toil merely to have an opportunity of admiring the stupendous grandeur of the regions of eternal winter.'[61]

Baron's hope that the pilgrim road would invite a different breed of traveler was shared by Traill and his colleagues in government. Auditing the revenues earned by the temples of Kedarnath and Badrinath, Traill noted how the offerings of devotees was much 'less productive than might have been expected.' He surmised that the hardships of the journey checked the 'resort of rich pilgrims.'[62] This colonial preference for the moneyed, 'respectable pilgrim' determined how temple endowments were appropriated and managed. Consider the arguments forwarded by John Strachey in defense of the state's appropriation of the *sadabrat* endowment in the 1850s, for instance. These endowments of villages were created under the Gurkha government to feed all pilgrims at fixed stations along pilgrimage routes in Garhwal. Traill's decision to treat *sadabrat* funds as a public trust rather than a religious grant financed his road construction. When Traill's policy was briefly reversed in the 1840s, Strachey argued against reverting funds back to temple authorities. Though he agreed that the government should not intervene in the religious beliefs of natives, he maintained that officials should not confine themselves to strictly literal readings of the

[61] Ibid., 64.

[62] G. W. Traill, *Statistical Sketch of Kumaon* (London: John Murray, 1851 [Reprint]), 24.

terms of donations. Instead, officers 'ought to consider nothing but the *spirit* of the original grants,' as this would allow them to 'carry out those intentions with the light of the *superior knowledge* that we possess.'[63] For Strachey, continuing the distribution of free food to pilgrims did nothing to enhance the *yātrā* as no 'respectable pilgrim' availed of the service. He alleged that most recipients of free food were 'bairagees, jogees and other mendicants' who 'deserve as little consideration as can be given to them.'[64] Strachey therefore argued that *sadabrat* funds would be more productive if they were managed as a public trust assigned for infrastructural works. He also mandated the appointment of 'one or more respectable Hindoos' to help oversee the trust.

The case of the *sadabrat* endowment is instructive as it mapped the contours for successive changes to the control of land and labor along the pilgrimage route. It demonstrates how colonial visions of 'improvement' became closely associated with bourgeois sensibilities, and suggests how the image of the 'respectable pilgrim' was framed in opposition to the dreaded ascetic. Furthermore, Strachey's system of managing temple funds through local committees comprised of priests, government officials, and elite representatives of the 'Hindu public' endured into the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Nonetheless, measures implemented by the government of Kumaun and Garhwal were not simply top down impositions upon a hostile native population. Caste elites in the hills, as well as reformist Hindu institutions from the plains, were quick to use the legal framework laid out by colonial officials to advance their own interests.

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[63] 'Appointment of a Chief Priest, or Naib Rawal, at the Temple of Badrinath in British Garhwal' [Page 319], 1895, IOR/L/PJ/6/408, File 1930, India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library, London.

[64] Ibid.

Caste Contestations and the Badrinath Temple Bill

The long history of contestation over the management of the Badrinath temple reveals how colonial legislation inflected the 'upper' caste scramble for property along the 'pilgrim road.' Early colonial commissioners were faced with the thorny task of separating the temporal and religious powers of the chief priest (*rawal*) of Badrinath. The profligacy of Rawals had pushed the temple into debt, resulting in the mortgage of the revenue of whole villages granted to the temple as *gunth* properties. Moreover, up to the 1840s Rawals exercised de facto jurisdiction over neighboring villages. Pre-Mutiny records attest to Rawals arbitrating both criminal and civil cases such as compensation for thefts and the resolution of marital disputes.[65] Apart from establishing the unilateral authority of the colonial government, agents of the East India Company wanted to regulate the powers of the Rawal to secure suzerainty over the Himalayan frontier.

In the 1830s, questions of sovereignty induced the British Government to continue the feudal practice of confirming the appointment of new Rawals by issuing authorizing certificates (*sanads*). Commissioner Lushington feared that 'to withdraw these marks of supremacy in *toto*' would be to risk allowing the temple to become a center of 'political intrigue.' The strategic location of Badrinath at the crossroads of unconquered Punjab and Nepal, as well as the numbers of 'suspect' religious mendicants who visited the shrine, made it even more pressing for the Company to control it. As a part of a wider move to regulate the powers of the Rawal, Lushington began codifying the criteria to be used for the selection of Rawals, as well as for the delegation of duties across temple officials. He traced the history of the temple to its alleged foundation by

[65] 'Judicial Record Issued,' 1844-47, List- 13, Vol. 4, Collectorate Records Pauri Garhwal, Uttarakhand State Archives, Dehradun.

Shankaracharya to systematize the rights of different agents of the shrine. For instance, Lushington declared that by an 'ordinance of Shankar Achari, the Rawals of Badrinath always have been and must be of the Lamburi or Chaube tribe of Dekkhani Brahmans, no other caste of Brahmans being allowed to touch the idol.'[66]

When the management of Badrinath became a subject of nationalist interest in the early twentieth century, the regulatory framework put in place by early colonial officials like Lushington provided the grounds for contestation. Strachey's principle of managing temple properties as trusts presided over by local committees, as well as Lushington's use of historical criteria to uphold the rights of temple officials were never called into question during these debates. Instead, modern Hindu institutions and anti-colonial nationalists alike deployed these mechanisms to uphold their claims to temple properties. Two rival groups of Brahmins, the Dimris and the Devaprayag *pāṇḍās*, were pitted against each other in a bid to palm off pilgrims' offerings.[67] While the Dimris tried to expand their control by insisting to be legitimate descendants of the first Rawal, the *pāṇḍās* of Devaprayag published their genealogy in a printed pamphlet entitled *Devprayāgī Prakāsh* to broadcast their cause. In the 1920s and 1930s, this rivalry between local caste elites had become the basis of a wider nationalist controversy. The nationalist debate focused on the proposed Badrinath Temple Bill (1939) as well as the Tehri Durbar's efforts to regain territorial control over

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[66] 'Appointment of a Chief Priest, or Naib Rawal, at the Temple of Badrinath in British Garhwal'[Page 20], 1895, IOR/L/PJ/6/408, File 1930, India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library, London.

[67] Whereas pilgrims' offerings were worth 5,000 rupees during Traill's tenure as commissioner, by modest estimates the income from donations amounted to 1 lakh 25 thousand rupees in 1927.

the temple (which had been ceded to the British after the Anglo-Gurkha War). The Durbar's bid for control was seemingly instigated by the *pāṇḍās* of Devaprayag who had been effectively excluded from the temple following a court judgment in British Garhwal in 1896.

Questions of property were thus at the heart of the Badrinath controversy. Nevertheless, the debate was portrayed as a tussle between autocratic and democratic forms of constituting the 'Hindu public.' The Durbar employed the legal services of Madan Mohan Malaviya to argue in favor of the transfer of Badrinath to Tehri. Malaviya argued that the proximity between the founder of the Tehri dynasty, Kanakpal, and the figure of Shankaracharya proved the Durbar's right to Badrinath. Malaviya and others in favor of the Durbar further suggested that the Princely State of Tehri would protect '*sanātan dharma*' given that the combined forces of Kanakpal and Shankaracharya had been at the forefront of Hinduism's historical combat against Buddhism.[68] As Chakradhar Juyal, the Durbar's Home Minister alleged, 'Raja Kanakpal took all the steps that a Raja could take for the preservation of Hinduism' including preparedness to wage 'wars against the Buddhists on the borders.'[69]

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[68] *Sanatan dharma* ('the eternal *dharma*') represents an orthodox vision of Hinduism centered on the authority of Brahmin priesthood, sacred texts, and the validity of caste as a system of social organization. As Christophe Jaffrelot notes, by the late nineteenth century, the Sanatanis had consolidated into a politically vocal group with strongholds in the United Provinces (present-day Uttar Pradesh). Madan Mohan Malaviya, leader of the Hindu Sabha and founder of the Benares Hindu University, was a famous Sanatani. See Christophe Jaffrelot (ed.), *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2007).

[69] 'Badrinath Temple: Report of the Religious and Charitable Endowments Committee', 1930, Punjab Hill States Agency (Tehri Garhwal), File No. V-10-5, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

Members of the United Provinces Legislative Council, the U. P. Dharma Rakshini Sabha, and Garhwali nationalists such as Tara Dutt Gairola and Anusuya Prasad Bahuguna, stood opposed to the Durbar's claims. Gairola bluntly criticized Malaviya's hypocritical support for a feudal royal dynasty, given the latter's position as an anti-colonial activist. Gairola's criticism was particularly stinging as it was made in the context of the Durbar's brutal crackdown on peasant protests over forests rights, when state police opened fire on unarmed agitators in the Rawain region.[70] To add to this, the Durbar held firm to its orthodox position by maintaining caste segregation, even after the rest of the subcontinent was embroiled in anti-caste struggles over the question of temple entry for Dalits. B. N. Sharga, an office bearer of the Dharma Rakshini Sabha and a member of the U. P. Religious and Charitable Endowments Committee, raised his concerns about the Durbar's antagonism to Dalit temple entry. Sharga noted that supporters of temple entry believed they would have 'greater chances of success in British India than in the Tehri State; *they fear that if the Tehri Durbar is against temple entry, it will meet their Satyagraha, if launched with bullets*.'[71] Though Malaviya dismissed these allegations, during subsequent negotiations over the Badrinath Temple Bill, Tehri State retained its casteist position. The Durbar challenged section 6 of the Bill, which mandated the appointment of one Scheduled Caste member to the temple committee. 'While the Durbar is cognizant of the changed circumstances of the times…members of the scheduled castes have not been admitted to the precincts of the Temple; and before that happens and the Hindu community agrees to that change, it seems to be premature to provide for a member of these castes

[70] See chapter 1 on Rawain.

[71] 'Badrinath Temple Acts, Rules, and Byelaws', 1942-52, List-15, File No. A, Case No. 42, Box No. 6, Uttarakhand State Archives, Dehradun.

to sit on the management of the committee,' the Chief Secretary of the Durbar's government alleged.[72]

While at a rhetorical level there appears to have been substantive differences between Hindu nationalists, such as Malaviya, and his Garhwali critics, such as Gairola, these differences evaporate upon closer inspection. Gairola himself was far from a radical anti-caste campaigner. He articulated his opposition to the practice of *coolie utar* and *coolie bardaish* (the forced supply of food and services by peasants to servants of the state), by contending that 'the most objectionable part of the system of *coolie utar* is its impressment on all landowners irrespective of their own social position or respectability.' To expose the caste hierarchy undergirding his notion of 'respectability,' Gairola went to the extent of admonishing 'cases when Pawars ['upper' castes] have compelled respectable Brahmins to clean the dishes of a sweeper or a khansama.'[73] Furthermore, Gairola's vision of *sanātan dharma* and his historical narrative of a combative, internally homogenous Hinduism was entirely in line with Malaviya's views.[74] 'The overwhelming majority of the Garhwalis who have opposed the transfer are all Sanatanists. So are the societies,

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[72] 'Appointment of his Highness the Maharaja of Tehri (Garhwal) as Patron of the Badrinath Temple Committee,' 1939, Political Department, F N 29 (7), P (S)/ 39, Vol. 1, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

[73] 'Coolie Bardaish Utar', 1918-19, Commisionary Record, Box No. 136, Nainital Regional Archives, Uttarakhand.

[74] See 'Badrinath Temple: Report of the Religious and Charitable Endowments Committee', 1930, Punjab Hill States Agency (Tehri Garhwal), File No. V-10-5, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

Sabhas and persons who have voted against the transfer,' Gairola affirmed. Given these similarities, it seems that the real stakes of the nationalist controversy over Badrinath involved questions of property and authority, rather than issues of morality or democracy.

I have touched upon the history of nationalist debates over Badrinath to demonstrate how the framework of regulations first articulated by colonial officers were readily accepted by nationalists on both sides of the controversy. In some respects, nationalist mobilization even exceeded existing colonial regulations by demanding further Brahmanical reforms. For example, the licentious and scandalous conduct of the Badrinath Rawal was subject to frequent criticism. The report of the Garhwal Sub-Committee of the U.P. Religious and Charitable Endowments Committee described past Rawals as 'undesirable persons' who 'invariably kept concubines, knew little Hindi and Sanskrit, and could hardly keep and check accounts.'[75] To get at 'true religious principles' the Garhwal Sub-Committee suggested that Kedarnath and Badrinath should be more closely controlled by the Jyothirmatha ('the northern pontifical seat'). The committee ordered that Maths (monastic institutions) and temples should be reorganized in accordance with the textual prescriptions of the *Mathānmaya Setu*. These reforms ignored the rootedness of shrine in the Himalayan context whereby trans-Himalayan traders at Mana Village, who were not strictly 'Hindu,' had a say in the nomination of the Rawal as well as the management of the temple.[76] The

[75] Report of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Committee, United Provinces (Allahabad: The Superintendent, Government Press, 1931): 27A.

[76] 'Bhotiya' traders practiced both Hinduism and Buddhism. 'Appointment of a Chief Priest, or Naib Rawal, at the Temple of Badrinath in British Garhwal'[Page 21], 1895, IOR/L/PJ/6/408, File 1930, India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library, London.

Tehri Durbar's Teerth Sudhār Act also made rigorous training in Hindi, Sanskrit, and ritual ceremonies compulsory for temple officials.[77]

By privileging Brahmanical, textually rooted schemes of management, and insisting that temple rituals be conducted 'in accordance with the Shastras,' nationalists as well as *pahari* elites worked to extend the reach of 'Brahmanical hegemony' in pan-Indian *yātrās* to Garhwal. The privileging of Brahmanical norms in the management of temples was manifest in disputes over smaller temples in Garhwal as well. In Buda Kedar, for example, Brahmin *pāṇḍās* began to maintain records of pilgrims (*bahi khātās*) starting from the early twentieth century, mostly to appeal to the Tehri Durbar for an exclusive right over the performance of rituals at the town's bathing *ghāt*. They strategically adopted this Brahmanical practice to wrest control from the town's Nath priests.[78] The extension of Brahmanical hegemony in the control of temple properties might have been informed by the principles of colonial legislation, but early twentieth century nationalist campaigns certainly exacerbated its reach. The role played by nationalists and modern Hindu institutions in remaking pilgrimages to Garhwal was also informed by colonial constructions of the 'respectable pilgrim.' Consequently, the privileging of bourgeois Hindu tastes in the *yātrā* manifested most concretely through projects spearheaded by literate, 'upper' caste elites from both the hills and the plains.

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[77] *Garhwal Rajya Tīrtha Sudhāra Vidhāna* (Meerut: Vidya Printing Press, 1914); Shiva Prasad Dabral, *Uttarakhand Ka Itihasa,* Vol. 6 (Dugguda: Vira Gatha Prakashana, 1965), 354.

[78] 'Scheme of Management of Budha Kedar Nath ji and Raj Rajeshwar Temple', 1931-59, List-15, File No. T, Case No. 1, Box No. 11, Uttarakhand State Archives, Dehradun.

Transforming the Economy and Ecology of Pilgrimage

Following the colonial construction of the 'pilgrim road,' and legislation to improve temple management, caste elites from both the hills and the plains, together with modern Hindu institutions, introduced substantial changes to the ecology and economy of pilgrimages to Garhwal. Nationalists demanded that the government should invest in motorways and even railroads to secure the comfort and security of pilgrims.[79] Leaders such as Anusuya Prasad Bahuguna were also stakeholders in companies such as Himalaya Airways, that flew pilgrims from the plains up to Joshimath. Underlying such reforms and businesses was not just the promise of profit, but also a disdain for painful aspects of pilgrimage. 'Is it not a fact that on account of the lack of means of communication the pilgrims have mostly to cover the entire distance on foot? And is it a fact that consequently the pilgrims have to undergo great hardship and take months to return to their homes after pilgrimage, much reduced in health?,' asked a member of the U.P. Legislative Council in 1933. The fact that the nationalist vision of pilgrimage improvement favored moneyed, 'respectable pilgrims,' is further confirmed by the viciously antagonistic stance towards 'free loading' *sadhus* expressed by council members such as Jagdish Prasad.

Caste elites in Tehri-Garhwal as well as modern Hindu institutions entered the business of supplying *coolies* and *jhampans* (devices used to carry pilgrims) for *yātrīs*. The Durbar sought to raise revenues by imposing a registration tax on *coolies* as well. Officials from Tehri stoked fears of thieving, murderous *coolies* to sanction this tax. They claimed that by monopolizing the

[79] Members of the U.P. Legislative Council, such as Lala Jagdish Prasad, requested the government to build motor-ways connecting the *dhams* and survey the possibility of building a railroad from Rishikesh to Karnaprayag.

registration of *coolies*, the Durbar could certify the 'identity and previous good character' of *coolies*. The Durbar's tax weighed so heavily on the wages of *coolies* that in 1927 porters signed a petition addressed to the British government berating this 'system of extortion' and demanding for its withdrawal.[80] The Zillah Congress of Dehradun also called for a meeting of 'pilgrim road coolies' to air their grievances over the Durbar's tax. Rival coolie agencies, such as Raghunanada Prasad Bahuguna's Uttarakhand Transport Agency were backed by nationalist opponents of the Durbar. Though coolies signed and placed their thumb prints on petitions to mark protest, tussles over the Durbar's monopoly over coolies were reduced into disputes between elites over the control of labor and capital along the pilgrim road. In these disputes, the interests of 'respectable pilgrims' were always weighted over the grievances of coolies.

The inscription of bourgeois Hindu tastes in pilgrimage required little work from pilgrims themselves, apart from consumption. If pilgrims could pay for accommodation or *jhampans*, they were considered respectable regardless of their personal hygiene or conduct. The pilgrims' ostensibly 'incorrigible toilet habits, together with their "unavoidably unpleasant accompaniments," caught the attention of high ranking officials. "We should recognize that the pilgrim will, whatever we do, use the side of the road, and the ravine and the field adjoining the road," sanitary officers remarked, adding that "the filthy condition of the road itself, of the various ravines and of any waste land, especially when this is near water is hardly possible to describe." In 1909, E. F. L. Winter, the Commissioner of Kumaun, wrote to the Sanitation Department of the Government of the United Provinces with a proposal to maintain cleanliness along the pilgrim

[80] 'Monopoly of Tehri (Garhwal) Darbar to Supply Porters to Pilgrims', 1938, Punjab Hill States Agency (Tehri Garhwal), T- Branch, File No. T 7/38, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

road. His plan was among the first to consider the employment of Dalits from the plains as manual scavengers. The post of the 'sweeper' was an implicitly casteist category. Seeking to employ sweepers along the pilgrim route, colonial officials first turned to the lowest castes of Garhwal. They found that the 'Doms' (a derogatory term for the 'harijans' or Dalits of the hills) would not attend to latrines, so they reverted to contracting Dalits from the plains at Bijnor. These seasonally employed sweepers received a paltry pay of about seven rupees a month and were eventually given small shelters to stay while they were posted in the cold mountains.'[81] By hiring Dalits as manual scavengers in a journey that they were largely excluded from, the colonial administration only exacerbated and routinized caste discrimination in the *yātrā*.

The fact that the bodies of 'respectable pilgrims' were repeatedly weighted over those of Garhwali peasants and Dalits in schemes for improvement, is confirmed by the politics of food in the *yātrā*. The appalling conditions of Dalits during famines in Garhwal moved the Arya Samaj leader Swami Shraddhananda to establish Famine Relief Camps along the pilgrim road in Garhwal in 1917. The Samaj's involvement with relief work in Garhwal and Kumaun is worth examining as it clearly unveils the hierarchies of caste that continued to reproduce the pilgrim landscape. Shraddhananda appealed to wealthy Hindus from the plains to make donations for famine relief

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[81] Nivedita Nath, "From Pilgrim Landscape to 'Pilgrim Road': Tracing the Transformation of the *Char Dham Yatra* in Colonial Garhwal," *JSRNC* 12.3 (2018): 431. Adams, G F, 1913, *A Report on the Pilgrim Route to Badrinath*, Public Records, September 1913, File No. 507 (From National Archives of India, New Delhi): 29. 'Scheme for sanitation staff for the pilgrim route', 1909, Department XXVII, File No. 8 (From Regional Archives, Nainital), 8. Also see Vijay Prashad, *Untouchable Freedom: A Social History of a Dalit Community* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000).

operations by reminding them of the sacredness of Garhwal. When the Samaj's relief camps were opened along the Badrinath and Kedarnath lines, 'upper' castes boycotted these charities and bought rations from the government instead. Historian Brijmohan Mamgain suggests that the boycott was provoked by the 'self-esteem' of dominant castes who refused to be associated with Dalits seeking relief. Following its famine work, the Arya Samaj launched *shuddhi* campaigns in Garhwal, in which they hoped to perform the *upanayana saṃskāra* ('purification' ceremonies) for Dalits. These efforts also met with vocal opposition from dominant castes in the region.[82] Whereas the Samaj continued to focus on religious and social reform, independent Dalit groups, as well as Dalit leaders from within the Samaj, such as Jayananda Bharatiya, petitioned for land and political rights.

Thus, pilgrims' sensorial engagements with the mountain landscape were increasingly mediated by caste and class interests. The growing role of literate elites from the plains in curating the *yātrā* can be examined through the case of the Kali Kamli Wala Kshetra. The Baba Kali Kamli Walas were named after a legendary late-nineteenth-century ascetic of Rishikesh, Swami Vishudhanand, who donned a black blanket (*kāli kambal*). The Kshetra claimed to be run by *sadhus* and prided itself on charitable actions for *sadhus*. The Kshetra offered some free food and Ayurvedic medicines to all pilgrims, particularly to ascetics. Yet, the Kshetra was largely managed

[82] In his *Shuddhi Kirtan,* the Kumauni author Tripathi Datt Sharma threatened hill Dalits with violent consequences if they adopted the sacred thread. Tripathi Datt Sharma, *Shuddhi Kirtan: Pahadi Geetopdesh* (Aligarh: Sudhavarshak Press, 1928).

by 'upper' caste lawyers and merchants from Calcutta and Allahabad.[83] While funding from 'upper' caste members enabled the Kshetra's construction of pilgrims' rest-houses and other charitable works, the Kshetra also enjoyed widespread government support. Though there were at least a hundred *dharamshalas* or rest-houses prior to the Kshetra's activities in Garhwal, Kshetra members presented their work as an act of 'civilizing' the Himalayan 'wilderness.'

In the 1940s, the Kshetra's 'great scheme of Atam Vigyan Bhawan' at Rishikesh envisioned the construction of replicas of the *chār dhāms.* Kshetra members explained that their intention was to 'create the illusion of the Gangotri and Yamnotri.' 'The idea again is that the visitor enshrouded in the atmosphere of these highly sanctified thirthas [pilgrimage sites] should feel as if he is actually performing the *yātrā* of four Dhamas,' the Kshetra's pamphlet on the Atma Vigyan Bhawan described. 'People who for one reason or other cannot go to these far-off places will have an opportunity to satisfy their craving by feasting their eyes on replicas of their beloved thirthas.'[84] Indeed, 'the Kshetra's virtual *dhāms* included pillars inscribed with Sanskrit verses from the *Bhagavad Gītā* and *Rāmāyaṇa*' and 'the placement of Sanskrit verse alongside the replicas of the temples directly gave weight to scripture in defining sacred space.'[85] Furthermore, the Kali Kamli Wala's proposal for a virtual *chār dhām* incisively proves how exertion and

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[83] 'A list of members of the First Executive Committee of the Kshetra included mainly merchants and lawyers with addresses in Calcutta or Allahabad.' See Nath, "From Pilgrim Landscape to 'Pilgrim Road,'" 433.

[84] 'Great Scheme of Atam Vigyan Bhawan,' page 10, In 'Question of cancellation of lease to the Kali Kamli Wala Trust,' 1949. List 11, File No. 38, Box No. 13, Uttarakhand State Archives, Dehradun.

[85] Nath, "From Pilgrim Landscape to 'Pilgrim Road,'" 434.

embodied engagements with landscape were undermined by bourgeois Hindu imaginaries of pilgrimage. How did these material and economic changes to pilgrimage induce changes in pilgrims' self-awareness? How did the modern packaging of pilgrimages to Garhwal as the *chār dhām yātrā* change the way the pilgrimage was mapped through narratives? The final part of this chapter tries to grapple with these questions.

Part 3: The Guidebook-*Māhātmya* and the Making of Garhwal's *Chār Dhāms*

It is in the context of these transformations to the landscapes and sensibilities of Central Himalayan pilgrimage, across the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, that Nasiruddin and his guidebook must be situated. The role of printed guidebook-*māhātmyas* in attenuating pilgrims' imaginaries forms the subject of the remainder of this chapter. Scholarship on Hindu pilgrimage often focuses upon a sub-genre of Puranic literature called *māhātmyas* (eulogistic literature in praise of a deity or place).[86] From the late nineteenth century, printed *māhātmyas* circulated alongside guidebooks and both genres were combined for the convenience of pilgrims. By the early twentieth century, the corpus of guidebook-*māhātmyas* arguably imprinted an exclusively 'Hindu' identity onto the body of pilgrims, just as it integrated Garhwal's 'great' shrines into pan-Indian networks of high-Hindu pilgrimage. As we have seen, institutions such as the Kali Kamli Wala Kshetra came to curate where pilgrims stayed and how they traveled. Correspondingly, they also took to printing pamphlets to guide their patrons. In what way did *māhātmyas* circulate before these changes, and how did print and the guidebook genre transform existing narrative forms? How did written Sanskrit texts and printed guidebooks interface with orally circulating stories? To

[86] For example, Anne Feldhaus, *Connected Places: Religion, Pilgrimage, and Geographical Imagination in India* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

what extent did caste and property determine the printing of pilgrimage guidebooks? To answer these questions, this section of the chapter presents a close reading of Sanskrit pilgrimage literature penned by Garhwali authors.

The Emergence of the Guidebook-māhātmya

Manuscript copies of *māhātmyas,* as well as the *Kedārakhaṇḍa* of the *Skanda Purāṇa,* were in circulation in Kumaun and Garhwal on the cusp of colonial rule.[87] For example, Atkinson's *Gazetteer* draws from two such manuscripts, supplied by Ganga Datta Upreti of Srinagar and Dharmanand Joshi of Almora. These early manuscripts differed from the late nineteenth century genre of the printed guidebook-*māhātmya.* Modern printed *māhātmyas* about the Garhwal Himalayas combined the genre of guidebook with Puranic myths. Nasiruddin's *Badrīmahātmya* (1889) and Maheshanand Sharma's *Bṛhad Śrībadrīnārāyaṇamāhātmya* (1913) are two examples of the novel genre of the guidebook-*māhātmya*. Both Munshi Nasiruddin and Maheshanand Sharma's *māhātmyas* present Sanskrit verses alongside Hindi translations, thereby making these texts accessible to a wider reading public. Printed at presses in Bombay, these works sought to advertise Himalayan pilgrimage to a wider network of Indian readers though they both curated the mountains in vastly different ways.

Indeed, the differences between *Badrīmahātmya* and *Bṛhad Śrībadrīnārāyaṇamāhātmya* reflect the gradual emergence of the *chār dhām yātrā* as a stable itinerary of pilgrimage. Munshi Nasiruddin's *Badrīmahātmya* is a particularly interesting text as it muddies neat equations between Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan. Not only did Nasiruddin write as a Muslim, but his pilgrimage guide

[87] '*Skanda Purāṇa*,' Acc. No. 98, Box No. 2, 7 Folios. Manuscript Collection. Nainital Collectorate Records, Uttarakhand Regional Archives.

defied maps of *bhārat* as a Hindu holy land by foregrounding trans-Himalayan geographies as well as the ecology of the Ganga. In contrast, Maheshanand Sharma's *Bṛhad Śrībadrīnārāyaṇamāhātmya* played a foundational role in collating myths about Gangotri, Yamunotri, Badrinath, and Kedarnath. Sharma presented these sites as the *chār dhāms* of Garhwal and related them to wider subcontinental networks of pilgrimage.

Nasiruddin was a Muslim who penned a guide about Hindu pilgrimage, but he seems to have primarily identified as a Garhwali. His Hindi translation of Sanskrit verses is occasionally inflected with Garhwali words.[88] In his natal town of Nandaprayag, as well as in towns such as Srinagar, Pauri, and Dugadda, Muslims participated in Ramlila performances (enactments of the life of Rama) as actors, singers, and designers. Muslims are even said to have learnt *āratī* (rituals) from Dimri priests attached to Badrinath.[89] Therefore, in the context of late nineteenth century Garhwal, there was nothing exceptional about the compatibility between Nasiruddin's religious persuasions and his interest in Badrinath. Indeed, Nasiruddin was not alone in his ecumenical efforts. In 1893 Aziz Al-Din Ahmad published his *Badari Yātrā* from Lucknow. While Nasiruddin found no reason to justify his enterprise, Ahmad did concede initial hesitation to pen a guide for Hindu pilgrims. Unlike Nasiruddin, Ahmad was writing in the increasingly communally polarized atmosphere of the United Provinces. However, even Ahmad was quick to allay his initial hesitation

[88] Such as *bāsā* instead of *rahna* for 'to stay.' I owe this insight to Dr. Chittranjan Dutt of the Landor School of Languages.

[89] Personal communication with Professor D. R. Purohit from H. N. B. Garhwal University.

by claiming his right as a 'resident of Hindustan' who was writing for the benefit of his Hindu friends.[90]

What sets Nasiruddin's work apart, then, is not merely his religious persuasions, but his geographical imagination. Munshi Nasiruddin was a wealthy moneylender, and a 'commission agent' for Badrinath, hailing from the town of Nandaprayag in British administered Garhwal. Failed investments in a bridge building project pushed him to write travel guides to earn money. After publishing *Badrīmahātmya* (1889)*,* he planned to write a second travelogue about the regions of Bhot and Tibet, up until Gartok, and he appealed to the colonial government for patronage to do so. So, we must situate his *Badrīmahātmya* within his broader project of describing the integrated landscapes of the Central Himalayas. In his *māhātmya,* he mentions how he personally visited the pilgrimage places described, thereby assuring readers of the utility of his travel guide. Even though Nasiruddin relied upon two old manuscript copies of the *Sanatkumāra Saṃhitā* -their antiquity is evidenced by the inflection of Vedic Sanskrit particles (such as *vai*) in their original Sanskrit verses- his presentation of these texts alongside translations and commentary reshaped the way they could be read.[91] For instance, his table of contents inventories places mentioned in alphabetical order. This allows the reader to refer to passages about specific locations independent of the narrative structure of the original *māhātmya.* The index of places listed in the table of

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[90] Ahmad expressed subsequent plans to print an Urdu version of his guidebook as well. Having served as Deputy Collector in Garhwal, he set out to write a guidebook for the use of Hindu pilgrims. Kazi Aziz Al-Din Ahmad, *Badari Yatra* (Lucknow: Ganga Prasad and Brothers, 1893).

[91] I owe this observation to Mr. Chittranjan Dutt of the Landor School of Languages.

contents also includes locations not covered by the original *māhātmya* but mentioned by Nasiruddin in a geographical overview appended to his translation. These locations include major towns along the course of the Ganga and its tributaries such as Allahabad, Moradabad, and Calcutta.

The clearest indication of Nasiruddin's reworking of *māhātmya*-as-guidebook can be seen in an exclusively Hindi section of his text entitled 'Badrikashram Bhugol.' In Sanskrit sections of the *māhātmya*, the landscape of *Badrīkshetra* is clearly defined as the area between Nandaprayag and the Sarasvati River. The Sanskrit verses of the *Sanatkumāra Saṃhitā* chart a fourfold division of the landscape into the manifest, the subtle, the still more subtle, and the pure:

'स्थूलंसूक्ष्मं ततः सूक्ष्मं शुद्दं चेति चतुर्विधं
बदरीक्षेत्र माहुर्वै सारुप्यादिपदं त्रुमात्
कण्वाश्रमादि पक्ष्यम्बु पर्यन्तं स्थुलमुच्यते
'sthūlaṃsūkṣmaṃ tataḥ sūkṣmaṃ śuddaṃ ceti caturvidhaṃ
badarīkṣetra māhurvai sārupyādipadaṃ trumāt
kaṇvāśramādi pakśyambu paryantaṃ sthulamucyate.'

There are four kinds of areas in Badrinath; the physically manifest (*sthūlaṃ*), the subtle (*sūkṣmaṃ*), the still more subtle (*tataḥ sūkṣmaṃ*) and the pure (*śuddaṃ*).
In this order, there are four kinds of liberation to be attained. The area from Kanva Ashram to the Garuda Ganga (*pakśyambu*) is called *sthūlaṃ.*[92]

Nasiruddin's geography (*bhugol*) extends this sacred landscape by connecting it with trans-Himalayan passes, as well as the Ganga's riverine ecosystems. He not only details the availability of lodging or the character of the roads along the route to Badrinath, but also invites the pilgrim to

[92] Translation my own, Munshi Nasiruddin, *Badrīmahātmya* (Bombay: Jwalaprakash Press, 1889), 13. The pilgrim is assured that all these four areas stretching from Kanvashram to the Garud Ganga, the Garud Ganga to Vishnu Prayag, Vishnu Prayag to Kuber Shila and Kuber Shila to the Sarvasti, all promise religious rewards.

situate their journey within the distinct social and natural worlds of Garhwal. He lists Garhwali place-names alongside their Sanskrit counterparts, such as Barahaat, the local name for Uttarkashi. He takes readers ahead of Badrinath and beyond Mana village, where meadows abound with musk deer and fragrant flowers during the monsoons. He describes less prominent Garhwali towns such as Lohava on the banks of the Ram Ganga River, famous for its metal work and hempen clothing. He mentions types of trees, cultivation, and wildlife in the region as well. In this way, Nasiruddin narrates the intertwined ecology and economy of Garhwal.

Nasiruddin's geography perfunctorily deals with the other sacred sites of Gangotri, Yamunotri, and Kedarnath, in addition to Badrinath, though he does not refer to them as the *chār dhāms*. Instead of following a fixed itinerary of pilgrimage, he deviates from the 'pilgrim road' to meander along the course of rivers. At the source of the Bhagirathi at Gaumukh, for instance, Nasiruddin marvels at the glorious transformation of a narrow trickle into the magnificent sweep of the Gangetic delta. He then transports the reader across the course of the Ganga, describing the multihued birds which frequent Kapil Ashram at the river's mouth in Bengal. The places he describes are not cloaked in the mists of some mythic memory but subject to decay. He remarks upon the ruined palace of the Tehri Raja at Srinagar, where the fear of scorpions and snakes prevailed. Nasiruddin's tabular map (*naksha*) of Garhwal's rivers, which includes a column referencing associated river myths, lucidly captures his interpretation of *māhātmya*-as-guidebook. Here he distinguishes rivers through their association with pilgrimage sites as well as their color. For example, he mentions how the white rapids of the Dhauli Ganga, which meets the Alakananda at the pilgrimage town of Vishnuprayag, can be attributed to the river's passage through a chalk colored mountain.

By capturing the diverse people and places of the Central Himalayas, his *māhātmya* refuses to subscribe to a homology between Garhwal and Hinduism. Even though he foregrounds Brahmanical texts and authority, his guidebook-*māhātmya* departs from strictly scriptural enunciations of the routes and rules of pilgrimage. Echoing contemporary colonial constructions of the 'respectable pilgrim,' Nasiruddin arguably imagined the pilgrim as a picturesque tourist. For instance, he entices readers with the pleasures of travel to the hill-station of Nainital, with its lake of unfathomed depths, and then to Bhavani Khal, with its panoramic views of the snow-capped Himalayas. Thus, in some respects his work exemplifies the broader changes to the landscapes and sensibilities of pilgrimage traced in this chapter. Nasiruddin's desire to complete his Central Himalayan travel guides unfortunately could not be realized as the colonial government refused his request for patronage. His pilgrimage guidebook was also buried by a deluge of subsequent works. These works effectively subsumed Garhwal's caste Hindu pilgrimage networks into increasingly narrowly defined conceptions of India as *bhārat.*[93]

Maheshanand Sharma's *Bṛhad Śrībadrīnārāyaṇamāhātmya* (1913) exemplifies the kinds of guidebooks which engulfed Nasiruddin's pioneering work. *Bṛhad Śrībadrīnārāyaṇamāhātmya* was among the first printed guidebooks to systematize Puranic lore related specifically to the shrines of Kedarnath, Badrinath, Yamunotri, and Gangotri. Whereas Nasiruddin attempted to integrate pilgrimage places with the cultural landscapes of Garhwal, Sharma declared that Badrinath is the jewel of pan-Indian pilgrimage sites (*tīrtha śiromaṇi*). The introduction to Sharma's sprawling collection of verses, the *Cārodhāma Devaprayāga, Pancakedāra Māhātmya*

[93] Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

tathā Gaṃgottarī Māhātmya, emphasizes the significance of pilgrimage to *sanatān dharma*. Pilgrimage is prescribed as an indispensable practice for respectable Hindus. Sharma's text reflects a slippage between India and Hinduism, with its claim that pilgrimages to Jagganath in the East, Dwarka in the West, Rameshwaram in the South, and Badrinath in the North have integrated the nation (*bhārat khand*) since antiquity. An illustration at the beginning of his *māhātmya* also superimposes the icons of these four shrines upon a rough outline of the subcontinent, with the Himalayas stretched across the page. Where Sharma references the landscapes of the Central Himalayas as opposed to invoking the nation, he uses the language of purity. He describes Badrinath as an 'unparalleled holy ground' (*puṇya puneet bhoomi*) crisscrossed by merit-bestowing waters (*puṇya salila*), for instance. 'Whose mind will not be purified by the sight of snowclad mountains,' he asks. However, more than immersion into landscape, Sharma promises pilgrims that reciting his *māhātmya* will make them 'feel peaceful.'

As a member of the 'Badrinath Rasa Amrit Karyalaya,' an institution founded by the *pāṇḍās* of Devaprayag and devoted to the improvement of pilgrimages to Garhwal, Sharma was unabashedly catering to propertied, 'upper' caste clients from the plains. As noted in part 1, Brahmin *pāṇḍās* from the town of Devaprayag historically invited and guided clients from the plains to Badrinath. By the 1920s, these *pāṇḍās* were collaborating with officials of the Tehri State to publish and distribute the *Badri Kedarnath Panth Darshika* ('pilgrim route pamphlet') assuring potential pilgrims of the availability of lodging and secure roads to the shrines. Quoting this pamphlet, Tehri State officials tried to extend their authority over pilgrimages by claiming that the 'prescribed Sastric pilgrimage route is Hardwar, Jamnotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath.' This route would take pilgrims into territories under the Tehri Durbar's administration first, thereby making them liable to pay the *coolie* registration tax. Sharma's *māhātmya* thus participated

in the wider packaging of Garhwal's *chār dhāms* of Gangotri, Yamunotri, Kedarnath, and Badrinath for 'upper' caste, propertied pilgrims.

Sharma appealed to respectable pilgrims (*sajjan vidwān yātriyon*) to ensure that they purchased his original *māhātmya,* warning them of the sale of counterfeit copies. He also used his 'upper' caste authority and association with the Badrinath Rasa Amrit Karyalaya to argue that his *māhātmya* is authentic. He advertised the Karyalaya's other texts as well, including a photobook, *Chitradarshan*, that promised the merits of pilgrimage without leaving the comforts of home. *Chitradarshan* included photographs of the mountains, shrines, and temple officials. Such publications confirm the attenuation of pilgrims' imaginaries of the Central Himalayas. Sensory immersion into place increasingly gave way to comfortable practices of consumption. In footnotes to Sanskrit verses, Sharma makes further concessions to the pilgrim in a hurry. For example, he notes that though the *shastras* prescribe bathing at Nandaprayag before a visit to Badrinath, the improved pilgrim road bypasses the town. He cautions that while it is best for pilgrims to make a deviation and visit Nandaprayag before Badrinath, pilgrims who stick to the road would not be robbed of the fruits of their pilgrimage either.[94] Danger, difficulty, and vulnerability scarcely figure in Sharma's conception of pilgrimage.

The *māhātmya*-as-guidebook unequivocally catered to the propertied, literate pilgrim with bourgeois tastes. Whereas Nasiruddin cast the pilgrim as a picturesque tourist, Sharma assumed an implicitly 'upper' caste and exclusively Hindu identity for the pilgrim. Whereas Nasiruddin embedded pilgrimages within the distinct social and natural worlds of Garhwal, Sharma

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[94] Maheshanand Sharma, *Bṛhad Śrībadrīnārāyaṇamāhātmya* (Bombay: Venkateshwara Press, 1913), 24. [Sourced from South Asian Retrospective Material, Microfilm, Library of Congress Office, 1996.]

superimposed Garhwal's 'great' temples onto a map of the imagined nation. Sharma's trans-local Sanskritic imaginary seems to align with Hindu nationalist conceptions of space.[95] By collating and systematizing myths about pilgrimage sites, Sharma's text reveals how the *māhātmya*-as-guidebook endeavored to contain narrative authority over pilgrimage within the pages of the text, just as the modern packaging of the *yātrā* confined the locus of the sacred to temple precincts. Comparing Nasiruddin and Sharma's works also suggests how trans-Himalayan geographies were increasingly replaced by one way traffic between the Central Himalayas and the Indian plains. Furthermore, both their works confirm the central argument of this chapter concerning the interconnections between pilgrimage, place, and personhood. As Garhwal's *chār dhāms* were packaged into a stable itinerary of pilgrimage through the mobilization of caste capital, the propertied, 'upper' caste male increasingly represented the normative pilgrim. While guidebook-*māhātmyas* undoubtedly facilitated the inscription of bourgeois sensibilities in pilgrimage, it is worth examining their relationship to orally narrated myths about pilgrimage sites as well as to questions of landscape.

Place-making, Storytelling, and the Printed Guidebook

Whereas the recitation of *māhātmyas* was traditionally a ritual act considered efficacious irrespective of the place of reading, the *māhātmya*-as-guidebook encouraged pilgrims to chant verses during their physical journeys to the places described. Therefore, guidebook-*māhātmya*

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[95] Hindu nationalism, Christophe Jaffrelot observes, 'defends an ethnic conception of territory but in opposition to particularism.' Christophe Jaffrelot, 'From Indian Territory to Hindu *Bhoomi*', in *The Politics of Cultural Mobilization in India*, edited by John Zavos, Andrew Wyatt and Vernon Hewitt (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 207.

arguably flattened distinct ontologies and epistemologies of place. For instance, older *māhātmyas,* such as the *Kedārakalpa,* situated physical travel to the Himalayas within the body. The *Kedārakalpa* describes an allegorical ascent of the Himalayas, achieved through the mastery of yogic practices.[96] In contrast, printed *māhātmyas,* such as Sharma's *Bṛhad Śrībadrīnārāyaṇamāhātmya,* were more straightforwardly geographical. Differences between printed *māhātmyas* and vernacular myths about places further reflect this flattening of the ontology of sacred sites.

Sharma's *Bṛhad Śrībadrīnārāyaṇamāhātmya* collated selected *ślokas* (verses) from Puranic texts, such as the *Kedārakhaṇḍa,* to provide a single explanation for the sacredness of a site. In his subsection on the Bhagirathi River, entitled *Gaṃgottarīmāhātmyam,* Sharma selected verses to relate how King Bhagiratha led Ganga down from the mountains to liberate his ancestors. The passages present a conversation between Shiva and Bhagiratha, in which Shiva enjoins the King to liberate the Ganga from his matted locks:

'धारां त्रैलोक्यपापन्धीं ग्रहाण पितृमुक्तये
यस्या दर्शनमात्रेण सर्वेयांति शुभां गतिम्'
'*dhārāṃ trailokyapāpandhīṃ grahāṇa pitṛamuktaye*
yasyā darśanamātreṇa sarveyāṃti śubhāṃ gatim'

[Mahadev said:] For the salvation of your ancestors, grasp the stream that destroys sins in the three worlds [the Ganga]. Only the sight (*darśanamātreṇa*) of the Ganga will make all happy.'[97]

The verses selected by Sharma focus on the various obstacles faced by the King in clearing the way for the Bhagirathi Ganga. Near the Svachod Lake, for instance, the Bhagirathi disappears

[96] See David White, *Myths of the Dog-Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 122.

[97] Translation my own, from Sharma, *Bṛhad Śrībadrīnārāyaṇamāhātmya*, 419-20.

into a hole, where she is abducted (*apharaṇa*) by *asuras* (enemies of the gods). The king then challenges two 'dwarf-like, black-faced men' (*kṛṣṇāsyau hrsvarūpau*) of the *asuras* to war. He ultimately successfully rescues Ganga and wins the attention of a fair maiden to boot. This racy story of Bhagiratha's fight against obstacles in the way of Bhagirathi's descent continues to Somkuta Mountain, where the Ganga's roaring flow disturbs the meditation of Jahnu Rishi. Enraged, Jahnu swallows the river up like a drop of ritual water (*ācamana*) and only releases Bhagirathi after King Bhagiratha's deferential requests.

The same story of Ganga and Jahnu Rishi was narrated quite differently to J. B. Fraser when he traveled to Gangotri in 1815. Near Bhaironghati, Fraser was told that the 'Jum-Rekhee' was once meditating on a large rock in the middle of the Bhagirathi's rapids when suddenly he absorbed the river into his belly. Meanwhile, the Goddess Bhagirathi remained enrapt in worship at Gangotri. After she found out that her flow had been stopped in this strange way, she furiously 'clove the Jum Reekhee in two, and gave free passage to the river.' One half of the Rishi's body gave way to the Ganga, while the other half, that Bhagirathi threw westward, gave way to the Yamuna River.[98] Fraser was shown traces of this story in the landscape, where a 'large block of granite…curiously split in two' was said to be the same rock where the Rishi once sat. The differences between the orally narrated and *māhātmya* versions of the Jahnu Rishi story demonstrate how printed guidebooks transformed the way the landscape was curated. Whereas Sharma's *māhātmya* privileges the agency of the righteous King Bhagiratha, in the vernacular rendition the River Bhagirathi herself is a fierce protagonist. Whereas the *māhātmya* story was

[98] James Ballie Fraser, *Journal of a Tour through parts of the Snowy Range of the Himala Mountains* (London: Bodwell and Martin, 1820), 477.

largely abstracted from the material landscape, the narrative told to Fraser was literally inscribed in the rocks. Whereas nationalist attempts to revive the Brahmanical geography of the subcontinent stress the uniqueness and exclusivity of places, Indian traditions of pilgrimage have historically depended upon the polycentricism, multiplicity, and pluralism of sacred sites.

Modern guidebook-*māhātmyas* potentially distorted the character of original Puranic texts as well, as they collated only a few chosen stories from various *Purāṇas*. For instance, though the *Bṛhad Śrībadrīnārāyaṇamāhātmya* draws amply from the *Kedārakhaṇḍa*, Sharma's selection of stories works to diminish its meaning. Wendy Doniger observes that the principle of organization used in the *Kedārakhaṇḍa* is 'neither spatial (geographic) nor temporal (the life story narrative), but thematic.'[99] However, in Sharma's modern *māhātmya,* stories from the *Kedārakhaṇḍa* are reorganized by spatial logics. Doniger argues that the redactor of the *Kedārakhaṇḍa* had endeavored to salvage 'two human groups that more conventional Puranas have marginalized and excluded: women and (male) sinners who do not consciously worship at all.'[100] The *Kedārakhaṇḍa* redeems the marginalized through the motif of 'undeserving salvation,' Doniger notes. While the theme of the 'accidental devotee' similarly appears in Sharma's text, here the devotee is rarely from the social margins. Whereas Doniger notes how Kiratas (hunters, considered 'untouchable') appear in *Kedārakhaṇḍa* stories about undeserving salvation, Sharma's text relies upon the figure of the wayward Brahmin to emphasize the redemptive powers of pilgrimage places. In Sharma's text, a section on the sanctity of Kedarnath and its environs includes the story of a sinning Brahmin

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[99] Doniger, Wendy, 'The Scrapbook of Undeserved Salvation,' in *Purana Perennis: Reciprocity and Transformation in Hindu and Jaina Texts,* Edited by Wendy Doniger (New York: SUNY Press, 1993): 62.

[100] Ibid., 80.

whose corpse was scavenged by a crow. When the crow accidentally dropped one of the Brahmin's bones on the Tungnath mountain, the latter was miraculously liberated by the sanctity of the place.

Doniger proposes that the *Kedārakhaṇḍa* is marked by a 'satirical and quasi-feminist vein' as well, as it casts female characters as bold and witty. She recounts stories from the text which equate women with the indomitable force of nature:

> 'When Parvati asked permission to serve Siva while he meditated, he Said to Himalaya, "This slender young girl with her terrific hips and her sweet smile must not come into my presence." But Parvati laughed and replied, "You should consider who you are, and who Nature [*prakriti*] is." When he retorted, "I will destroy Nature with my ultimate inner ascetic heat, and I will stay here without Nature," she said, "How could you transcend Nature? What you hear, what you eat, what you see- it's all Nature. How could you be beyond Nature? You are enveloped in Nature, even though you don't know it. But if you are, in fact beyond Nature, then what do you have to fear from me." Shiva laughed and let her stay.'[101]

Such subversive, 'feminist' aspects of the *Kedārakhaṇḍa* are abandoned by Sharma's printed *māhātmya.* In Sharma's text, feminized aspects of the landscape, such as Bhagirathi, were stripped of agency while the actions of heroic male figures, such as the King Bhagiratha, were lauded.

Thus, the circulation of printed guidebook-*māhātmyas* not only displaced orally narrated stories about places, but also effaced the potentially subversive resonances of Puranic literature. As we have suggested, overall the corpus of printed pilgrimage literature contributed to the packaging of pan-Indian pilgrimages to the Central Himalayas as the *chār dhām yātrā*. Printed guidebooks weighted comfort over austerity, security over vulnerability, human over nonhuman, text over landscape, and masculine over feminine. The circulation of guidebook-*māhātmyas* was intimately tied to the changing control over property and labor along the pilgrim road. Sharma's

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[101] Ibid., 78.

links with the *pāṇḍās* of Devaprayag and the Badrinath Rasa Amrit Karyalaya clearly demonstrates how the consolidation of caste Hindu property and the circulation of printed literature worked hand in hand. Thus, by the early twentieth century, the propertied, 'upper' caste male was increasingly identified as the normative pilgrim. The normative pilgrims' consumption of the sacred was increasingly mediated by institutions such as the Kali Kamli Wala Kshetra, and printed guidebooks, such as Sharma's *Bṛhad Śrībadrīnārāyaṇamāhātmya.* As the '*chār dhāms*' emerged as a stable itinerary of pilgrimage, the 'great' shrines of Garhwal were dislodged from the ecology and economy of the Central Himalayas and instead interwoven into nationalist maps of India as *bhārat.* Printed guidebooks therefore undoubtedly participated in the attenuation of pilgrims' imaginaries of the Himalayas.

Conclusion

Soon after India's Independence, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan published an account of the nationalist K. M. Munshi's pilgrimage to Badrinath. This little book arguably marks a crescendo in the developing equation between Hindu pilgrimages and the map-icon of the nation. At Badrinath, Munshi felt as though he had come back to his 'own old, old home.' In his account, he confides that he is not attracted to religious shrines out of devotion but instead 'attracted to our shrines because I love the Motherland.'[102] Whereas in the early nineteenth century, pilgrims' imaginaries of the Himalayas articulated alternative valuations of life and nature, the equation drawn by Munshi and other nationalists between pilgrimage networks and India's national unity disciplined the variable possibilities of pilgrimage. This chapter has examined how hitherto dangerous and ascetic journeys gave way to standardized and comfortable routines of travel

[102] K. M. Munshi, *To Badrinath* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1953), 54.

towards the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The 'upper' caste Hindu male was privileged as the normative pilgrim through colonial policies, modern Hindu institutions, and nationalist enterprises. While the 'suffering' pilgrim was thus 'rescued' from toilsome immersion into the landscape, the security of his person and property were maintained at the expense of marginalized castes and classes. As Mahadevi Verma suggests in a personal account of her pilgrimage to the Himalayas in the 1930s, the mutilated body of the *coolie* emerged as the shadow of the 'respectable Hindu':

> 'Incessant tramping on the meandering rocky footpaths of the high Himalayan mountains had left its mark on him [the *coolie*] in the form of broken toe nails and injured toes splayed apart by sandals made of coarse wild grass. *His condition seemed to mock the God* who, having made a human being into a pack animal, had neglected to bestow cloven hoofs on him.'[103]

The packaging of pilgrimages to Garhwal as the *chār dhām yātrā* was complemented by wider changes to the political economy of the Central Himalayas under colonial rule. While in the case of pilgrimages to Garhwal legislation related to temple management and tussles over property transformed landscapes of travel in the late nineteenth century, in other parts of the Central Himalayas colonial enclosures were rapidly reshaping the mountains at the same time. The *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts*, the subject of the next chapter, not only draws a homology between Hinduism and the Central Himalayas to complement attempts to integrate the hills to the plains at the expense of historical connections to the trans-Himalayas, but it further harnesses Kumaun and Garhwal into subcontinental networks of resource extraction.

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[103] Mahadevi Verma, *A Pilgrimage to the Himalayas and Other Silhouettes from Memory*, translated by Radhika Srivastava and Lillian Srivastava (London: Peter Owen, 1975), 34.

Chapter 4

Caste, the Commons, and the Construction of Colonial Spatial Knowledge

In British administered Garhwal and Kumaun, settlement officers mapped agrarian land and calibrated revenue assessments by surveying villages from surrounding mountain ridges. Peasants in the region reportedly satirized surveyors as telescope-wielding *durbeenwallahs* who superciliously charted their fields from distant prospects.[1] With their caricature of the *durbeenwallah,* hill peasants were exposing the arbitrariness and specific embodiments involved in making administrative space just as colonial projects of enclosure were reaching a climax. In the late nineteenth century, colonial policies, which were premised upon constructed distinctions between field and forest, steadily curtailed peasant rights over forests, pasture lands, river beds, meadows, and other common lands in the Central Himalayas. Complementing late nineteenth century enclosures, official gazetteers and vernacular geographies mapped the Central Himalayas in ways that concealed caste and gender specific labor, knowledge, and skills from the mountain commons. Extending the hill peasant's critique of the *durbeenwallah*, this chapter analyzes bureaucratic spatial knowledge as embodied knowledge. By studying the *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts of the North-Western Provinces* (1881-86) and the *Bhūgola Kūrmmācala* (1871), a vernacular geography cited in the gazetteer, I trace the protracted historical and historiographical implications of elite imaginations of the mountain commons.

Colonial maps and policies about the 'wastes' or common lands of the Central Himalayas changed in response to considerations of accumulation across the course of the nineteenth century. In 1823, the Commissioner of Kumaun, G. W. Traill, worked closely with native intermediaries to

[1] Garhwal Settlement, 1926-27, Box No. 116, Nainital Regional Archives.

compile village boundaries in Kumaun in what came to be known as the *san assi* borders. The *san assi* borders included vast swathes of jungles and bush interspersing cultivated fields as a part of hill villages. As settlement officers admitted later in the century, Traill's village borders reinforced the notion that in Kumaun 'villagers owned their jungles.' Traill's nominal inclusion of 'wastelands' and forests within village boundaries was successively eroded across the nineteenth century. Settlement reports in the middle of the nineteenth century enabled the enclosure and leasing of unmeasured land for new cultivation, as *nayabad* leases, and for tea plantation by white planters. When 'wasteland' was not enclosed for plantations and *nayabad* leases, the Government of Kumaun contracted out hemp cultivation to propertied villagers, who in turn oversaw the labor of marginalized peasants on village commons. The colonial approach to the 'patches of bush, jungle, or inferior forest' which interspersed hill villages thus responded to shifting economic interests. [2]

Similarly, colonial policies successively undermined the common uses of forests situated at a distance from villages, though former commissioners of Kumaun admitted that the forests of the Central Himalayas were far from 'howling wildernesses.'[3] Before the Forest Act of 1878, forests had been contracted out to private timber merchants in Kumaun, Garhwal, and Tehri Garhwal, as noted in the discussion of Frederick Wilson in chapter 2. The passage of the Forest

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[2] On the image of the hill village as distinct from 'bush, jungle, or inferior forest' see V. A. Stowell, *A Manual of the Land Tenures of the Kumaun Division* (Allahabad: Superintendent of Printing and Stationary, 1907), 9.

[3] J. O'B. Beckett, *Report on the Settlement Operations in Garhwal District from 1856-64* (Allahabad: Government Press, 1866): Pp. 46- 50.

Act distinguished Protected Forests from Reserved Forests and expanded the demarcation of wastelands as state forests.[4] The steadily expanding enclosure of common land in the Central Himalayas culminated with the proclamation of 1893 which included virtually all unmeasured land- such as forests, cliffs, snow-clad mountains, river beds, lakes, and pasture grounds- as District Protected Forests. While there was no consistent policy pertaining to wastes or common lands across the nineteenth century, official enactments persistently valued considerations of revenue over the rights of peasants. Just as unmeasured land was increasingly being severed from peasant control, in the late nineteenth century, the monumental *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts of the North-Western Provinces* stabilized maps of the Central Himalayas in ways that legitimated the enclosure of the commons. By integrating settlement reports, forest surveys, historical sources, and geographical data, the *Gazetteer* presented changing policies governing the mountain commons as coherent and natural.

To critically evaluate late-nineteenth-century spatial knowledge about nature and the commons in the Central Himalayas, this chapter surveys the gazetteer and its making from the differentiated positions of the colonial bureaucrat, native intermediary, and the marginalized hill peasant. Part 1 of this chapter examines the environmental and economic logics deployed by the gazetteer's author, E. T. Atkinson, to structure his tome. Atkinson's past experiences editing a series on the *Economic Products of the North-Western Provinces,* alongside his penchant for the

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[4] Ramchandra Guha, *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989); Judy Whitehead, 'John Locke and the Governance of India's Landscape: The Category of Wasteland in Colonial Revenue and Forest Legislation,' *Economic and Political Weekly Vol. 45, No. 50* (2010): 83-93.

study of insects, enabled him to contain the complexities of Central Himalayan history and ecology through the 'principle of locality.' By presenting mountain dwellers as products rather than producers of nature, Atkinson's gazetteer worked to obscure gender and caste specific production upon the mountain commons. Even while he inventoried Dalit manufactures which relied on the commons, he relegated these trades to the past. Atkinson's vision of the mountains thus rehearsed what Neeladri Bhattacharya has recently critiqued as the more general colonial pattern of privileging the agrarian as a 'synecdoche for the universal rural' and reflected wider colonial policies which undermined a range of non-agrarian livelihoods.[5] Indeed, as a 'carto-statistical' instrument of rule, the gazetteer instead facilitated the 'sociospatial ordering of resources and the means for their distribution and circulation' for the benefit of the colonial economy.[6] To make mountain resources available for extraction, Atkinson's gazetteer severed the space of the mountains from the emplacements, or the 'sensuous relationships between body-mind-environment,' of hill peasants.[7]

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[5] See Neeladri Bhattacharya, *The Great Agrarian Conquest* (New York: SUNY Press, 2019).

[6] U Kalpagam, *Rule by Numbers* (London: Lexington Books, 2014): 84. As U. Kalpagam writes, the carto-statistical construction of space 'entailed demarcating boundaries and locating places in a grid of scientific precision in an attempt to create a fetishized space reductive of differences that would increasingly serve important roles in the evolving world economy of exchange and accumulation.' Ibid., 104.

[7] 'While the paradigm of 'embodiment' implies an integration of mind and body, the emergent paradigm of emplacement suggests the sensuous interrelationship of body-mind-environment. The environment is both physical and social, as is well illustrated by the bundle of sensory and social values contained in the feeling of 'home.' The counterpart to emplacement is displacement, the feeling that one is homeless,

Much like early colonial surveys of the mountains, the making of Atkinson's *Gazetteer* involved the expertise of native intermediaries. To examine the role of native surveyors in the production of colonial spatial knowledge, part 2 of this chapter focuses upon a vernacular geography that served as a source for Atkinson's tome. Taradatta's *Bhūgola Kūrmmācala* (1871) resembles a gazetteer and is inflected by the colonizer's discourse of improvement. Yet, by drawing unique relations between taste and place, Taradatta arguably disturbed colonial efforts to undo indigenous emplacements. I consider the convergences and conflicts between Atkinson and Taradatta's visions of the mountains. Whereas Atkinson used the logic of environmental determinism to structure his *Gazetteer*, Taradatta deployed the pre-colonial spatial category of the *pargana* to emphasize storied and sensuous interrelations between *paharis* and the landscape. Nevertheless, like Atkinson, Taradatta buried relationships between value and making in his portrayal of the mountain commons. As an 'upper' caste, elite member of Almora's official class, Taradatta overlooked the ways in which experiences of the mountain environment remained fractured along lines of gender and caste. Indeed, both colonial gazetteers and vernacular geographies submerged the laboring bodies of women and Dalits from their maps of the mountains.

To rescue the laboring body from official gazetteers and vernacular geographies, part 3 of this chapter demonstrates how marginalized castes and genders have been disproportionately dependent upon common lands through the case of catechu and hemp cultivation. Viewing the commons from the perspective of marginalized groups reveals how the commons had been fragmented along lines of gender and caste long before colonial rule in the Central Himalayas. At

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disconnected from one's physical and social environment. A sense of displacement is often the plight of the socially marginal.' See David Howes (ed.), *Empire of the Senses* (New York: Berg, 2005): 7.

the same time, in the late colonial period, Dalit activists from the mountains noted how colonial spatial categories and enclosures exacerbated their marginalization. Drawing upon reports, petitions, and poetry by anti-caste activists in Kumaun, the last part of this chapter explains how Dalit leaders linked their experiences of humiliation to their uneven control over land. Organizations such as the Shilpkar Sabha argued that the enclosure of village 'wastes' and the demarcation of forests furthered the depredation of marginalized castes. By 1934, anti-caste organizations in the mountains successfully lobbied the Government of Kumaun for the reallocation of enclosed forest lands for Dalits.

Thus, this chapter's study of the *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts* attempts a wider critique of the colonial construction of spatial knowledge, the role of the native intermediary in shaping colonial geographies, and the fraught social history of the commons in the Central Himalayas. By evaluating official constructions of the mountain commons in administrative gazetteers from the differentiated positions of white civil servant, 'upper' caste interlocutor, and marginalized peasant, I draw upon the works of feminist geographers who argue that alongside asking '*what* counts as legitimate knowledge in geography; it is also vital to consider *who* counts as a bearer of legitimate knowledge.'[8] The trajectory of the *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts* demonstrates how definitions of the mountain commons diverged starkly depending upon who was doing the defining.

Historiography and Colonial Framings of the Mountain Commons

The study of how colonial gazetteers and vernacular geographies imagined the mountain commons in the late nineteenth century has implications for contemporary debates about the

[8] Robyn Longhurst, '(Dis)embodied Geographies,' *Progress in Human Geography* 21, 4 (1997): Pp. 494.

environmental history of the Central Himalayas. Environmental histories of forest enclosures in the Central Himalayas occasionally diverge on the impacts of scientific forestry in the mountains. Nevertheless, even conflicting accounts tend to rehearse the environmental determinism of colonial gazetteers. In Ramachandra Guha's history of peasant resistance in Tehri-Garhwal, supposedly isolated hill peasants are assumed to have subsisted off the soil in a state of harmonious stasis until the enactment of the Forest Act of 1878 that curtailed their use of forest resources. Prior to this, subsistence based, communal 'systems of resource use had become an integral, seemingly permanent part of the social fabric,' Guha argues.[9] Moreover, in Guha's account, the village community of the mountains was 'remarkably egalitarian' because of the unique ecosystems of the Himalayas. 'The absence of sharp class cleavages within village society clearly owes its origins to the ecological characteristics of the mountain society,' Guha writes.[10] His account ascribes the 'conservationist' ethos of hill dwellers to the ecological constraints of mountain life.

Critics such as P. C. Baumann dismiss Guha's work on the grounds that it elides feudal social hierarchies in the Central Himalayas. Baumann debunks the assumption that hill villages were isolated spaces of subsistence production by noting how transhumance and trade had long been crucial to rural livelihoods in the region. While he correctly complicates idyllic constructions of hill villages, he nonetheless falls prey to environmental determinism. 'Ecological constraints, as well as ecological variety, led to diversity in production of which agriculture and common

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[9] Guha, *The Unquiet Woods*, 34.

[10] Ibid., 27.

property were only one component,' he writes.[11] Baumann contends that to the extent that forests thrived before colonial rule, this was an *inadvertent* consequence of demographic and technological limits to agrarian expansion. He even suggests that systems of common property management arose as a response to scarcity during the colonial period rather than any cultural impulse towards conservationism. 'Colonial rule in the early phase, rather than destroying indigenous systems of forest management, created the circumstances within which it was necessary for people to conserve resources in what had been the village commons,' he hypothesizes.[12] However, he offers little evidence to substantiate his claims about the veritable absence of pre-colonial systems of conservation.

While Guha and Baumann differ in their assessments of environmental degradation and the mountain commons, they rely upon the same colonial source- Edwin Thomas Atkinson's *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts of the North-Western Provinces.* Their environmental histories echo the environmental determinism of colonial gazetteers. Given the enduring ways in which colonial gazetteers continue to inform studies of the Central Himalayas, it is worth asking whose maps of the mountains these texts encompass. Whereas conventional environmental histories of the Central Himalayas script narratives of either conservation or degradation upon a taken for granted scene, this chapter takes the 'scene' as its point of departure. While Guha and

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[11] Baumann contends that 'there is no explicit mention of common property resource management in pre-British Uttarakhand, nor a system of conservation.' P. C. Baumann, 'Historical Evidence on the Incidence and Role of Common Property Regimes in the Indian Himalayas,' *Environment and History* Vol. 3, No. 3 (1997): 335.

[12] Ibid., 337.

Baumann debate the history of peasant relationships with the mountain commons, I ask how their understandings of the mountain 'commons' have been rendered through colonial and 'upper' caste geographies.

Part 1: The Entomologist's Gazetteer

The *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts* has been instrumental in defining the Central Himalayas as a spatial object. By inventorying resources for extraction, calibrating increases in revenue, and curating landscapes for aesthetic consumption, Atkinson's *Gazetteer* combined more general late-nineteenth-century techniques of rule in the region. His encyclopedic work compiled recent land settlements and cadastral surveys, such as Beckett's pioneering *khusrah* survey of Garhwal (1867). The gazetteer included detailed reports about scientific forestry and economic botany as well. Atkinson's text has consequently been widely cited as a source by environmental historians writing about the mountains. Given this enduring legacy, it seems pertinent to examine how the *Gazetteer* presents the Central Himalayas. How did the *Gazetteer* stage the mountain commons? Whose maps does it naturalize and with what consequences? How did colonial bureaucrats, who compiled gazetteers, understand caste in terms of space? To answer these questions, this section of the chapter traces how the civil servant cum entomologist, Edwin T. Atkinson, deployed the 'principle of locality' to stage the spaces of the Central Himalayas and portray the mountain commons.

The Principle of Locality and Environmental Determinism

In the early years of British colonial rule in the Central Himalayas, the physiological sublime was deployed to justify colonial trusteeship over human and nonhuman 'nature' in the mountains. The second chapter of this dissertation demonstrates how early colonial surveyors, military officers, sportsmen, and timber merchants all partook of the Burkean aesthetic of the

sublime. This aesthetic rendered ardor and strong nerves into the monopoly of the bourgeois white male, who was thereby deemed solely capable of honing the sublimity of the Himalayas. Imbued with the spirit of sublimity, early administrators in Kumaun fashioned themselves as paternalistic mother-father (*mai baap*) figures. Like Thomas Munro and Mountstuart Elphinstone, G. W. Traill was celebrated for his close knowledge of 'natives.' In the early nineteenth century, these stalwarts of what Eric Stokes calls the 'paternalist school' of British government in India shared a romantic appreciation of nature, a yearning for adventure, and a deep sense of history. Like his counterparts in Madras Presidency, Traill presided over a revenue system that treated the village rather than the zamindari estate as the primary fiscal unit. Towards the latter half of the nineteenth century, the tenor of British administration in the Central Himalayas was changing. Commissioners in Kumaun, like Henry Ramsay who served at the time Atkinson was compiling his *Gazetteer*, continued to align with the paternalist school. However, they were increasingly ensconced within a centralized bureaucratic system that was structured in accordance with utilitarian principles of efficiency and streamlined chains of command.[13] Atkinson was a product of this reformed bureaucratic system and its concomitant ideals of guardianship.

When the first volume of the *Gazetteer* was completed in 1881, Edwin Thomas Atkinson had already served in various offices in the Indian Civil Services (ICS) over the course of twenty years. Overwhelmingly educated in English public schools and Oxbridge, ICS officers prided themselves on qualities of chivalry, courage, a sense of responsibility, and integrity. As Raghavan Iyer argues, these 'Platonic guardians' styled themselves as a part of an exclusive and irreplaceable

[13] See Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Delhi: OUP, 1990).

caste of 'experts in nothing or everything, answerable in practice mainly to themselves.'[14] E. T. Atkinson hailed from the Northern Irish town of Tipperary as a member of the Protestant Ascendancy. Atkinson distinguished himself as an autodidact entomologist who honed his interest in collecting insects during a childhood spent in a landlocked county. As a student at Trinity College, he won awards for his proficiency in Irish and also studied Sanskrit. After passing the Civil Service Examinations in 1861, Atkinson's embarked upon a protracted career in India. His prolific career as a Civil Servant as well as his broad interests, ranging from classical languages to the legalities of criminal procedure, are reflected in the scale of his *Gazetteer.*

In 1874 Atkinson was appointed as the primary editor of a proposed multi-volume series entitled the *Statistical, Descriptive, and Historical Account of the North-Western Provinces of India.* 'The project was devised by the Government of the NWP to "collect and exhibit all information on public affairs" to aid new bureaucrats and inform non-official readers. The project marked a departure from an earlier and ultimately abortive attempt to publish *District Memoirs* which were to be prepared by District Collectors themselves. The new series was envisioned as a chapter in a general scheme to prepare gazetteers for all provinces within British India. Introducing the first volume of the series, Atkinson explains how he was "directed to give

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[14] Iyer further notes how officials such as John Strachey, who incidentally began his career in the Central Himalayas, combined notions of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism with the Civil Service's ethos of guardianship. 'Sir John Strachey went so far as to claim hereditary virtues, mental powers and physical courage for the English, 'those qualities necessary for the government of men, and which have given us an empire.' The British guardians must always remain guardians because they alone possessed qualities that were proved by the fact that they were guardians, in the first place.' Raghavan Iyer, 'Utilitarianism and All That: The Political Theory of British Imperialism in India.' St. Antony's Papers (No. 8), 1960. Pp. 35-37.

in the fewest possible words a description of each district, its products, and its people" by compiling the results of a fixed list of 'Gazetteer Queries' sent to all District Officers. The Gazetteer Queries were prepared by the Director-General of Statistics, W. W. Hunter. Atkinson edited the first two volumes of the series on the Divisions of Bundelkhand (1874) and Meerut (1875) while residing in the hill-station of Nainital.'[15] Though he was relieved of his duties in the following year, he made his most significant contribution to the series after his official retirement.

In his voluminous *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts of the North-Western Provinces,* Atkinson took several liberties with Hunter's scheme of queries. 'Unlike the earlier volumes on Meerut and Bundelkhand, in which he had played an editorial role, in the *Himalayan Districts* Atkinson assumed more of an authorial position by single-handedly collecting and compiling information. His *Gazetteer* was shaped by extensive travels in the regions described as well as his experience as census officer in 1881. Whereas his earlier gazetteers primarily included information on the products and inhabitants of districts with brief notes on geography and history, the *Himalayan Districts* further includes elaborate sections on topography, geology, entomology, botany, and religion.'[16] The breadth of research conducted by Atkinson allowed him to publish a separate essay in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* entitled 'Notes on the History of Religion in the Himalaya*'* (1885).

We might ask what drove Atkinson to push beyond the formal requirements imposed upon him? Even after the publication of *Himalayan Districts*, Atkinson toiled tirelessly as Chairman of

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[15] Nivedita Nath, 'Edwin F. Atkinson,' *MANAS, UCLA Social Sciences*, https://southasia.ucla.edu/history-politics/colonial-epistemologies/edwin-felix-atkinson/

[16] Ibid.

the Trustees of the Indian Museum of Calcutta. Shortly before his death in 1890, he edited *Indian Museum Notes* which compiled data related to economic entomology. While at the Indian Museum, he invited readers to participate in his latest encyclopedic enterprise- collecting Indian insects. 'Caterpillars, grubs, and other soft-bodied insects can be sent in alcohol,' he instructed cautioning that 'live insects should be sent when there is a reasonable probability of their surviving the journey.'[17] The quaintness of this advice notwithstanding, there seems to have been very little frivolity in Atkinson's own understanding of his efforts. His career as a scholar-official seems to have been inspired by an ideology deeper than personal discipline or fidelity to duty. Running through the *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts* as well as the persona of Atkinson himself was an abiding faith in liberal notions of improvement.

In his preface to Volume II of *Himalayan Districts* Atkinson clearly states how he was driven by something beyond the aim of 'diffusing a knowledge of India and its peoples.' His 'personal aim,' Atkinson relates, was to pursue some study 'which may give to the student a fresh interest in life and help to dissipate the 'general dissatisfaction' which an eternal round of hearing petty cases and going through drills and parades, added to climatic influences, is certain to effect.'[18] He hoped that his work could be inspiring as well as instructive for the next generation of bureaucrats gearing up for the 'general dissatisfaction' of a career in the East. So, far from fondness for or innocent curiosity about mountain dwellers, Atkinson's research into the Central Himalayas was a part of his personal project of self-improvement. The idea of improvement shaped the arc of

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[17] *Indian Museum Notes Vol. 1* (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1889-91): i.

[18] Edwin Atkinson, *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts of the NWP Vol. 2.* (Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1973), i.

Atkinson's pursuits in more economic terms as well. As editor of various official publications, Atkinson appears to have undertaken the meticulous collection of statistics, specimens, ethnographic notes, and manuscripts to simplify rather than complicate his vision of nature, history, and the economic value of things. When he remarked in his *Economic Products of the NWP* that nothing 'should be considered too trivial for record,' he did so not out of any belief in the inherent worthiness of objects of knowledge. 'Materials will be accumulated from which a complete description of every product can be written, and a numerical determination of the properties which fix its value can be made,' he clarified.[19] This logic of simplification through statistics, tables, and calculation, as well as the concomitant belief that 'improvement' can be measured across time, undergirds the *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts.*

To track improvement over time and to make mountain resources measurable, commensurable, and controllable, Atkinson needed to stabilize space. Thus, he deduced that general laws governed the entirety of the 'Himalayan system' by which all complexities of a locality could be made intelligible. 'There is a clear connection between the distribution of the nations that are found in the Himalaya and the physical characteristics of the regions that they occupy,' he affirmed in the first volume of his *Gazetteer*. He deployed the 'principle of locality' to delineate deterministic, causal relationships between landscapes, fauna, and cultures. 'If we had time to pursue the subject further,' Atkinson went on, 'it might be shown that the orographical [relating to mountain systems] conditions of a tract have materially influenced its history, political and religious, and the social and moral character of its inhabitants.' A plethora of cultural traits are

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[19] Edwin Atkinson, *Economic Products of the North-Western Provinces Part I* (Allahabad: NWP Government Press, 1876): iii.

transfigured into byproducts of nature through Atkinson's principle of locality, including language and 'the disposition of a people towards peace or war.' Atkinson the entomologist did not neglect to note that 'not only is man so affected' by the environment 'but the entire fauna and flora obey the same laws.' If the reader is left in any doubt over his allegiance to environmental determinism and his belief in the utility of examining the large (cultures, histories, animals) through the small (insects), consider these lines: 'the skillful naturalist can from a plant or even a butterfly describe the general character of the country of which it is a native, and with it the customs and manners of the inhabitants.'[20]

Atkinson's principle of locality cast mountain dwellers as products rather than producers of their environment. Concomitantly, borders and transregional relationships morphed from works of human history into works of natural history. Late-nineteenth-century economic policy in Kumaun and Garhwal centered upon the collection of agrarian revenues, the extraction of timber, and the cultivation of commodities such as tea and potatoes.[21] This economic structure necessitated both the measurement of farmland for revenue settlements as well as the demarcation of alienable 'wastes' for plantations and raw material extraction. By projecting dualisms of nature/culture, forest/field, and waste/village into the history of the Central Himalayas, Atkinson could conceal

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[20] Edwin Atkinson, *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts of the NWP Vol. 1.* (Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1973 [Completed in 1881 and published in 1882]): 41.

[21] Haripriya Rangan, 'State Economic Policy and Changing Regional Landscapes in the Uttarakhand Himalaya, 1818-1947', *Agrarian Environments: Resources, Representations, and Rule in India*, ed. Arun Agrawal and K Sivaramakrishnan (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000): Pp 23-46.

the politics behind such spatial demarcations. Atkinson's principle of locality allowed 'nature' to script human history in the mountains. He similarly naturalized environmental change under colonial rule by assuming agrarian expansion to be both inevitable and inherently desirable.

Bhábar.	Number of		Assessment in rupees.					Area in acres in 1846.			Incidence of assessment per acre.	
	Leases.	Villages.	1815.	1820.	1828.	1832.	1850.	Total assessable.	Cultivated	Culturable.	On total area.	On cultivation.
			Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.				a. p.	a. p.
Tallades,	15	29	...	147	436	409	354	5,757	834	4 923	0 11	6 9
Chaubhainsi.	25	43	...	164	909	949	815	6,259	845	5,214	2 1	15 5
Chhakháta.	49	77	123	808	1,623	2,051	2,892	52,023	7,280	34,361	0 10	6 0
Kota ...	45	159	1,062	3,182	4,392	4,707	4,892	111,344	9,488	48,586	0 8	8 2
Total ..	134	308	1,185	4,321	7,360	8,116	8,953	175,383	18,447	93,084	0 9	7 9

Fig 1. Table Mapping Increases in Revenue with Agrarian Expansion in the Bhabar. Atkinson noted that 'the increase in the revenue is chiefly due to new lands brought under cultivation for the first time.'
[Source: Edwin Atkinson, *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts of the NWP Vol. 3.* (Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1973 [First published in Allahabad, 1886]), 64.]

Yet, the *Gazetteer's* portrayal of inexorable agrarian expansion unfolding with the retreat of forests was superimposed upon a landscape that refused to fit within dualisms of nature/culture or forest/field. Instead, intermeshed patchworks of forest and field were mediated by the sequential rhythms of agro-forestry in the Central Himalayas.[22] In the mountains, forests had long

[22] See S. Nautiyal et al, 'Agroforestry systems in the rural landscape- a case study in Garhwal Himalaya', *Agroforestry Systems* 41 (1998): Pp. 151-165 and R. S. Parihaar et al, 'Status of an indigenous agroforestry

complemented farming through the provision of fertilizers or wood for plough making. The rhythms of agro-forestry render Atkinson's contention that agrarian prosperity requires the retreat of the forest hollow. Nonetheless, by measuring improvement in terms of increases in yield and diminishing wildernesses, colonial policies strove to reify dichotomous spatial categories (*fig 1.*).

More than modes of description, then, Atkinson's logic of environmental causality and his presumed telos of agrarian expansion can be critiqued as tactics of concealment. This is particularly significant given that his *Gazetteer* straddled radical transformations to the spatial history of the Central Himalayas. G. W. Traill's settlement of 1823, widely known as the *san assi* (per the *samvat* calendar) boundaries, provided a capacious definition of hill villages. In Traill's settlement the boundaries of many villages extended 'for miles and miles into the dense jungles and to the top of the ridges.' Subsequently, colonial administrators suggested that these boundaries had been capaciously defined only because a detailed cadastral survey was too cumbersome for early officials.[23] Towards the end of the nineteenth century, however, Traill's 'great demarcation book' was dismissed as the 'guess book.' Nonetheless, surveyors admitted that Traill's *san assi*

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system: A case study in Kumaun Himalaya', *Indian Journal of Agricultural Sciences* 85, 3 (2015): Pp. 442-7.

[23] 'The nature of the cultivated lands, consisting of successive terraces rising above each other and varying in length and breadth according to the declivity and shape of the mountain on which they situate would have rendered the ascertainment of the area of each village by actual measurement an operation of considerable time and labor; such a project was therefore abandoned in the outset, and the scheme finally terminated in a lose method of approximating the Rukbas to a given standard by estimation.' From page 31 of Mr. Traill's Statistical Memoir Reports, April 1823- December 1826, IOR/F/4/1158/30396, British Library, London.

boundaries aligned more closely with peasants' own spatial understandings: 'the people adhere tenaciously to these old boundaries and look upon any interference with their rights, and anyone who steps in as an enemy and interloper.'[24] The Settlement Officer for the region, J'O. B. Beckett, also acknowledged peasant adherence to the *san assi* boundaries. 'It must be remembered that the villagers owned their jungles in a way before we came to Kumaun,' he remarked.[25] However, Beckett's cadastral surveys participated in the late-nineteenth-century colonial project to rewrite the *san assi* boundaries and discipline peasant practices.

Enclosure in the Central Himalayas was a meandering and protracted process extending across the nineteenth century. In 1866 Commissioner Ramsay cautioned against overstating government rights to 'wastes' in the mountains through 'mischievous demarcation.' After all, he admitted, 'the Central and Lower Himalayan pergunnahs are not howling wildernesses, but for ages occupied by an industrious agricultural population.'[26] Such initial caution notwithstanding, the project of large-scale enclosure expanded, culminating with the 1893 proclamation. This broadened the definition of state owned Protected Forest to include all unmeasured lands, apart from pockets of Reserved Forests which were already managed by the Forest Department. As the nationalist Forest Grievances Committee complained, enclosed lands effectively included 'all the

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[24] Quoted in Edwin Atkinson, *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts of the NWP Vol. 3.* (Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1973 [First published in Allahabad, 1886]): 315.

[25] J. O'B. Beckett, *Report on the Revision of Settlement in the Kumaon District* (Allahabad: NWP Printing Press, 1874): 24.

[26] Quoted in J. O'B. Beckett, *Report on the Settlement Operations in Garhwal District from 1856-64* (Allahabad: Government Press, 1866): Pp. 46- 50.

snow-clad peaks, hard rocks, inaccessible cliffs, river beds, lakes, intervening spaces between measured fields…camping grounds, lands brought under cultivation since the settlement and not measured or recorded in the name of any body, roads, paths and tracts, roadside shops, dak bungalow compounds, nazul lands and probably lands inside the recently constituted notified areas, etc.'[27] This sweeping appropriation of lands hitherto included in village boundaries explains why the anti-colonial nationalist G. B. Pant described the year 1893 as 'a red-letter day in the fiscal and forest history of Kumaon.'[28]

Compiled in the 1880s, Atkinson's *Gazetteer* seems to have been tasked with reconciling Traill's capacious village boundaries with the expanding projects of enclosure precipitated by increasing tea plantations and scientific forestry. By drawing upon forest surveys as well as settlement reports, Atkinson also balanced conflicting approaches to the village commons adopted by different government departments. In the process, he attempted to naturalize politically motivated shifts in policies related to 'wastes' or common lands. For instance, the move to redefine village boundaries was a direct response to lobbying by tea planters in the Central Himalayas.[29] To transform lands formerly included within village boundaries into lands in which the government had intrinsic rights as 'lord paramount,' officials like Beckett at times appealed to the

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[27] Pant, *Forest Problem in Kumaon,* 40.

[28] Ibid., 39.

[29] As noted in Beckett's *Settlement Report*, with the interests of tea planters it 'became necessary to demarcate the lands for which application was made to determine whether the lands could be granted- that is, whether the Government would exercise its rights as lord paramount, with due regard to the prescriptive rights of the village proprietors.' J. O'B. Beckett, *Report on the Revision of Settlement in the Kumaon District* (Allahabad: NWP Printing Press, 1874): 11.

trope of the Oriental despot.[30] In addition to this argument Atkinson papered over the politics of enclosure by reifying the nature/culture and forest/field binary. To cast forests and wastelands as 'primeval' spaces of nature, Atkinson relegated the manufactures of marginalized castes, who relied upon the commons, to the past.

Caste-based Manufactures, the Commons, and Improvement

The portrayal of the 'commons' as products of nature rather than culture, in which the state had always enjoyed paramountcy, became commonplace in late-nineteenth-century bureaucratic discourse. However, 'waste' lands in the mountains had historically been cultural landscapes shaped by local power dynamics. From Traill's observations it seems clear that even though the erstwhile monarchical rulers of Kumaun and Garhwal did not directly intervene in non-agrarian lands, apart from levying taxes on select forest products, not all people within hill villages had equal power over common lands. For instance, Traill noted that village headmen (*padhans*) enjoyed decision making authority over the use of uncultivated village lands.[31] Reports from the

[30] 'From time immemorial, the forests along the foot of the hills to which alone any fiscal value pertained as well as those within the hills were considered the property of the ruling power and as such invariably formed a source of revenue to the state.' Edwin Atkinson, *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts of the NWP Vol. 1.* (Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1973 [First published in Allahabad, 1881]): 846.

[31] 'Uncultivated lands which may not have been even subjected to division among the proprietors are managed by the padhan, and the rents yielded from their cultivation are accounted for by him to the body of proprietors who take credit for the same quota of the Government cess to which they are respectively liable.' Quoted in J. O'B. Beckett, *Report on the Revision of Settlement in the Kumaon District* (Allahabad: NWP Printing Press, 1874): 6.

1880s similarly suggest how tenants and property holders tussled over common lands.[32] While common lands could be sites of conflict, they were indisputably far from 'primeval' wildernesses.

Pervasive landlessness among Dalits, some of whom had endured years of agrarian slavery and continued to struggle as tenant laborers throughout the colonial period, meant that unmeasured lands were particularly valuable for subjugated castes.[33] Atkinson's list of occupations peculiar to 'Doms,' a derogatory term for Dalits in the Central Himalayas, reflects their reliance on the fractured commons. Metal workers including *lohars* (blacksmiths), *tamtas* (braziers), and *agaris* (iron smelters and miners) required timber from forests. *Badis,* who were primarily wandering musicians and acrobats, additionally relied on fishing and snaring for subsistence. Oil pressers and basket weavers who sourced their materials from specific trees were Dalit. Periodic hemp cultivation in clearings of bush as well as the processing of forest products such as catechu were largely resorted to by Dalits as well. These trades were often carried out in exchange for nominal

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[32] Consider Colonel Fisher's observations on Garhwal in the 1880s: 'The relations between landlords and tenants continue satisfactory and generally friendly. The chief strain between them is caused by the pressure of population on the soil, this pressure induces proprietors, where the possession is largely in the hands of tenants with occupancy rights, to claim the right of ownership in all lands not assessed, and the tenants are equally resolute in contesting the claim or evading it by declaring the waste plots necessary for pasturage.' Quoted in Edwin Atkinson, *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts of the NWP Vol. 3.* (Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1973 [First published in Allahabad, 1886]): 312.

[33] Drawing from the Settlement Report of 1884, historians Naval Viyogi and Anawar Ansari estimate the total acreage of land owned by Brahman households in Kumaun and Garhwal to have been 77, 815, in contrast with a mere 8,965 acres in the possession of Dalits. Naval Viyogi and Anawar Ansari, *History of the Later Harappans and Shilpkara Movement* (*Vol. 2)* (Delhi: Kalpaz, 2010).

quantities of grain and were in certain cases punitively taxed by both colonial and pre-colonial officials. Part 3 of this chapter will try to describe the knowledge and labor mediating relationships between subjugated castes and mountain commons, focusing specifically on catechu making and hemp cultivation. At this juncture, it is sufficient to note that the character of caste specific trades corroborates the specific significance of unmeasured 'common' lands for oppressed castes.

Given this dense local usage of the commons, what enabled Atkinson to portray forests, meadows, and bush as products of nature rather than culture? Along with assuming agrarian expansion to be inexorable, Atkinson and his fellow late-nineteenth-century bureaucrats repeatedly undermined indigenous manufactures in the Central Himalayas. 'The population being almost entirely agricultural, there are no manufactures of note'; 'implements of husbandry are of the rudest description'; 'there are no manufactures worth noticing'; 'there are no good artisans'; 'blankets, hempen bags and a small quantity of the coarsest cotton cloth was made for home use.'[34] In this way, bureaucratic discourse pushed non-agrarian manufactures into the time of the past just as it projected the arrow of inexorable agrarian expansion into the future. This progression projected the field/forest dichotomy onto a rural landscape which depended upon agro-forestry.

By naturalizing the forest/field dichotomy and undermining caste specific manufactures, Atkinson obscured the social and cultural worlds of unmeasured 'waste' lands. By eliding the social lives of non-agrarian landscapes, Atkinson also papered over the ways in which experiences of these landscapes were fractured along lines of caste and gender. Colonial understandings of

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[34] J. O'B Beckett, *Report on the Revision of Settlement in the Kumaon District Part I* (Allahabad: NWP Press, 1874), 12, 30.;Atkinson, *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts Vol. III,* 262. *E*. K. Pauw, *Report on the Tenth Settlement of the Garhwal District* (Allahabad: NWP Press, 1896), 29.

caste hierarchies in the hills were thus dislodged from economic and political factors, and instead attributed to the hold of Brahmanism alone. Indeed, precisely when colonial political economy was dispossessing Dalit manufacturers of their meager livelihood, officials extolled the retreat of Brahmanical influence. 'The Brahmans are losing their influence, and the social position of the Doms has greatly improved,' the Secretary to the Board of Revenue of the NWP claimed.[35] Nevertheless, Atkinson and his contemporaries were not ignorant of caste segregation in hill villages. Settlement Officers testified that Dalits were not permitted to build their houses alongside those of 'upper' castes. Variously called '*dumana'* in Garhwal and '*domtola*' in Kumaun, Dalit quarters were observed to have been displaced at some distance from the main village, far from the water supply, and usually below dominant caste houses.[36] Official explanations for caste

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[35] J. O'B. Beckett, *Report on the Settlement Operations in Garhwal District from 1856-64* (Allahabad: Government Press, 1866): 12. As we have seen in chapter 3, Brahmanical hegemony expanded in the hills towards the late nineteenth century with the remaking of pan-Indian pilgrimages to Garhwal.

[36] Pauw and Atkinson both noted caste segregation in the hill village. 'The dwellings of the Chattri and Khasiya families are now clustered irregularly according to the nature of the ground, usually in rows in front of each of which the series of chauks (a paved space before the house) forms a street. Apart from the main village, and usually below it or on either side, are the Doms' quarters or Dumana and the cowsheds (gaushala). The Doms have never been permitted to build their houses amongst those of the higher castes, and their dwellings are usually at some distance apart, and away from the village water-supply. Not only are they not allowed to use the water-supply common to the rest of the village, but water brought through the Dumana is considered polluted and unfit for drinking. Water wherever plentiful is drawn from a spring

segregation focused on the hold of Brahmanism rather than economic or historical factors. Indeed, colonial discourse cast caste hierarchy as an archaic sediment in the landscape with no specific political or social cause for its reproduction. Consider these lines from E. K. Pauw's *Report on the Tenth Settlement of the Garhwal District* which use the imagery of fossils and stratigraphic layers.

> 'The population of Garhwal appears to consist of a substratum of low-caste non-Aryan aborigines, with successive layers as it were, of Aryan invaders and immigrants superimposed. The aborigines are the *doms*, who appear to have been reduced by the first invaders to a state of slavery from which they have not yet fully emerged.'[37]

Atkinson similarly attributed caste slavery to the principle of locality. He contended that across the Himalayan system 'from Afghanistan to the Kali' wherever the 'Khasiya race' was to be found, the 'Doms' are 'certain to be found' as their serfs.[38] The 'montane' character of Dalit belief systems and rituals seemed to confirm their status as aborigines: 'It is the Doms who preserve to

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provided with a stone spout (dhara) which effectually prevents all contamination.' E. K. Pauw, *Report on the Tenth Settlement of the Garhwal District* (Allahabad: NWP Government Press, 1896): 15.

[37] E. K. Pauw, *Report on the Tenth Settlement of the Garhwal District* (Allahabad: NWP Government Press, 1896): 11.

[38] 'The most important of these different castes is undoubtedly that of the Doms or Dums, the serfs of the Khasiya race from Afghanistan to the Kali. Wherever the one exists the other is certain to be found.' Edwin Atkinson, *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts of the NWP Vol. 3.* (Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1973 [First published in Allahabad, 1886]): 277.

the present day the pure daemonism of the aborigines… [as] the recognized priests of the malignant spirits of the hill and glen.'[39]

Aside from the theory of an original Khasiya invasion subjugating Dalit 'aboriginals,' Atkinson and his contemporaries refrained from searching for economic and political explanations for the persistence caste inequality. Instead, they repeatedly celebrated 'improvements' to the condition of Dalits with the alleged retreat of Brahmanical power under colonial rule. While some Dalits undoubtedly gained from infrastructural contracts and municipal postings under British administration, they remained overwhelmingly landless despite policies encouraging the extension of farmlands through *nayabad* leases. Consequently, Dalits continued to bear the brunt of famines and diseases, as evidenced by famine records from 1867 onwards. Records related to the scarcity of 1890 describe how Dalits in Kumaun subsisted on wild indigo and rhododendron flowers, while those in Garhwal were left to plead for grain from landholders. Colonial officers were aware that

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[39] 'Their [Dom] montane and non-Brahmanical origin is sufficiently shown by the names of the deities worshiped by them: Ganganath, Bholanath…..Most of these gods, goddesses and deified mortals are known under the generic name bhut-pret. These too possess their followers and cause them to dance and leap and cry out and throw ashes on their heads and beat themselves with nettles. They eat greedily of uncooked rice and split pulse and altogether appear demented. Their relatives then call in the aid of the Dholi or Badi as an exorcist and offer at the nearest shrine of the demon said to possess the patient some of the following articles: - whole pulse or rice…. The shrine (marhi) is usually placed on a ridge or eminence and is composed of two to four or ten to fifteen stones placed upright with a flagstone on the top.' Edwin Atkinson, *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts of the NWP Vol. 3.* (Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1973 [First published in Allahabad, 1886]): 447.

'it is by low caste laborers, such as the Doms, that the scarcity is most severely felt,' but continued to refrain from 'offering anything in the nature of gratuitous relief.'[40] They preferred to forward cash advances to the distressed for the purchase of grain and thereby expand markets in the remote mountains. Even paltry charitable relief efforts were tainted by caste prejudice in Kumaun.[41]

Late-nineteenth-century bureaucrats recognized how caste manifested through spatial segregation within villages, but by refusing to link common lands to Dalit subsistence they were complicit in undermining Dalit livelihoods. By extending entomological ideas such as the 'principle of locality' to map human histories and cultures, Atkinson arguably portrayed caste as primordial rather than political. Moreover, the deracination of caste-based manufactures from the commons allowed officials to legitimate the government's appropriation of forests, bush, meadows, and other unmeasured lands. While peasant opposition to colonial spatial enclosures exceeded divisions of caste and gender, the social reliance of mountain dwellers upon the commons remained fragmented. [42]

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[40] 'Famine Works', April 1890, Almora District Records, Box No. 10, Nainital Regional Archives, Nainital, Uttarakhand, India.

[41] See chapter 3 on the caste Hindu boycott of famine relief stations opened by the Arya Samaj in the early twentieth century.

[42] The subsequent history of forest restrictions was convoluted, with forest lands repeatedly being reclassified to include village forests where customary rights were recognized. Nevertheless, restrictions remained severe and peasants continued to oppose to Forest Department. G. B. Pant lists the constraints on the collection of leaves and wood, as well as fines imposed on villagers. The caste specific impact of such restrictions is evidenced in his report as well. 'The right of blacksmiths to bark and wood for their furnace has been totally denied by the settlement officers.' Pant, *Forest Problem in Kumaon,* 60.

In his analysis of colonial mapping, U. Kalpagam explains how the production of space in the colony 'entailed demarcating boundaries and locating places in a grid of scientific precision to create a fetishized space reductive of differences that would increasingly serve important roles in the evolving world economy of exchange and accumulation.'[43] This section has argued that Atkinson's *Gazetteer* relied upon the 'principle of locality,' binaries of field/forest and nature/culture, as well as notions of progress to justify enclosure and redistribute resources for the benefit of the colonial economy. Atkinson deployed environmental determinism to make political constructions of space appear natural, and portrayed mountain dwellers as products rather than producers of their environment. This environmental determinism runs through the discourse of contemporary environmental histories of the Central Himalayas which draw upon the *Gazetteer* as well. While the *Gazetteer's* spatial categories were superimposed upon mountain dwellers' own sense of place, the making of the text nonetheless relied on a range of local intermediaries. How did Atkinson's vision of space conflict or converge with that of his native interlocutors? To what extent were landed and 'upper' caste elites responsible for Atkinson's understanding of the spatial dynamics of caste? To probe these questions, the next section of this chapter will assess a crucial vernacular source for the *Gazetteer*.

Part 2: Taste and Place in *Bhūgola Kūrmmācala*

Atkinson's *Gazetteer* thus cemented binaries of nature/culture and forest/field to justify ongoing colonial projects of enclosure. To define these binaries, Atkinson studied the 'Himalayan system' and its underlying 'principle of locality.' Such scientific study in turn distanced him from the diverse sensibilities of mountain dwellers. If attentiveness to emplacement requires asking how

[43] U Kalpagam, *Rule by Numbers* (London: Lexington Books, 2014): 104.

perception and phenomenology participate in place-making, as Steven Feld proposes, then the *Gazetteer's* rather sterile descriptions seem utterly indifferent towards native senses of place.[44] However, Atkinson's interlocutors were simultaneously rooted in the place worlds of the mountains and trained in the language of official surveys. Written a decade before the completion of the first volume of Atkinson's tome, Taradatta's *Bhūgola Kūrmmācala* (1871), not only served as a source for Atkinson but is also structured like a gazetteer. Unlike Atkinson, however, Taradatta juxtaposed liberal notions of improvement with *pahari* senses of place. What role, then, did native intermediaries, like Taradatta, play in fashioning bureaucratic geographies? What are the comparisons and contrasts between Taradatta and Atkinson's constructions of the commons? To explore these questions, this section of the chapter evaluates the role of sensuousness and storytelling in Taradatta's descriptions of place.

Native Intermediaries and Colonial Spatial Knowledge

Indian intermediaries had participated in British mappings of the Central Himalayas since the inception of colonial rule in Kumaun and Garhwal. The social position of these intermediaries as well as their relative power within the administrative system changed alongside the shift from paternalist to bureaucratic approaches to government. In 1823, Commissioner Traill produced a revenue-rent roll detailing how and where headmen (*padhans*) could collect rent from tenants

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[44] Steven Feld writes, 'The sense of place: the idiom is so pervasive that the word 'sense' is almost completely transparent. But how is place actually sensed? How are the perceptual engagements we call sensing critical to conceptual constructions of place? And how does this feelingful sensuality participate in naturalizing one's sense of place?' In David Howes (ed.), *Empire of the Senses* (New York: Berg, 2005): 179.

(*asamis*). This rent-toll was compiled by 'native officials, who sat on commanding positions and summoned the *pudhans* of all villages within sight or easy distance…[and] wrote down from their information the names of the *thokes* of land and their areas.'[45] Landholding elites and erstwhile officials of pre-colonial states (such as *thokdars* and *sayanas*) thereby collaborated in the early colonial collation of spatial information in the mountains.[46] Late-nineteenth-century bureaucrats were dismissive of the allegedly rough character of measurement resulting from this reliance on local knowledge, though they affirmed that 'even this was a vast improvement on the utter blank of former times.' For surveyors like Beckett, map-making had as much of a prescriptive role to play as a representational one. In his preface to Beckett's *Settlement Report,* the Secretary of the Board of Revenue opined that even inaccurate maps compiled by former commissioners 'were of some use, and indirectly so, in teaching the people that they had rights capable of being defined and secured.'[47]

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[45] J. O'B. Beckett, *Report on the Revision of Settlement in the Kumaon District* (Allahabad: NWP Printing Press, 1874): 1.

[46] In the pre-colonial Chand court of Kumaun, caste dictated official services. See Vasudha Pande, 'Divergent Historiographical Traditions: a Comparative Study of Gorkha Rule in Kumaun and Far Western Nepal with particular reference to Jumla and Doti', in M P Joshi, S Thapa, and R Shah (ed.), *Before the Emergence of Nation States* (Almora: Almora Book Depot, 2014): Pp. 106-142. For a list of feudal offices and the shifting role played by native intermediaries in Kumaun see R. S. Tolia, *British Kumaun- Garhwal: An Administrative History of a Non-Regulation Hill Province* (Almora: Shree Almora Book Depot, 1994): Pp. 27-30.

[47] J. O'B. Beckett, *Report on the Revision of Settlement in the Kumaon District* (Allahabad: NWP Printing Press, 1874): 1.

While propertied elites had been crucial collaborators in the early colonial mapping of the Central Himalayas, the turn towards carto-statistical techniques of rule in the latter half of the nineteenth century undermined and disciplined their role. With the advent of carto-statistical techniques of mapping, as U. Kalpagam observes, 'the unreliability of the native systems and of the natives themselves became a discursive tactic in the attempt to assert the superiority of the English methods and to impose greater control.'[48] Beckett's *Settlement Report* elaborates upon the training and layers of surveillance imposed on native surveyors. Survey parties comprised of clerks, officers, and *amins* in charge of measuring instruments, all supervised by a superintendent: 'The superintendent sent out his ameens, who were supplied with hempen ropes sixty feet long, and marked off into six feet lengths…Any disputes that occurred were entered in the column of remarks.'[49] Initial maps were then verified by a second *amin,* who was required to send a written report to the superintendent. Despite this intricate and layered establishment of native surveyors, the labor for the cadastral survey was ultimately attributed to the white official. 'No one could have worked harder than Mr. Beckett did,*'* Commissioner Ramsay declared, 'almost the whole of the settlement has been done by himself, without any assistance from Deputy Collectors, and entirely without the intervention of native subordinates.'[50] In this way, the visibility and autonomy

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[48] U Kalpagam, *Rule by Numbers* (London: Lexington Books, 2014): 99.

[49] J. O'B. Beckett, *Report on the Revision of Settlement in the Kumaon District* (Allahabad: NWP Printing Press, 1874): 2-3.

[50] J. O'B. Beckett, *Report on the Revision of Settlement in the Kumaon District* (Allahabad: NWP Printing Press, 1874): 11.

of native spatial knowledge was increasingly sidelined with the turn towards carto-statistical techniques of rule.

In the late nineteenth century, the role of the native intermediary in revenue and cadastral surveys was being undermined and disciplined. However, the encyclopedic character of the *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts* embroiled a network of largely 'upper' caste intermediaries in generating historical and geographical knowledge. Just as rural officials were deployed in the cadastral survey, the administrative collection of information about economic products, listed in gazetteers such as the *Himalayan Districts*, relied upon village accountants (*patwaris*).[51] Additionally, gazetteer compilation drew upon the knowledge of 'learned' urban 'upper' castes for research into history, culture, and society. Atkinson's choice of interlocutor reinforced orientalist rationales by privileging the expertise of the Brahmin male. For instance, his history of Kumaun and its royal genealogy drew extensively from the notes of Rudradatta Pant, 'a learned Brahman of Almora.' For translations of Sanskrit inscriptions, he relied upon Bengali scholars such as Saroda Prasada Chakravarti. His description of ceremonial observances in Kumaun was based on the *Dasa Karmādī Paddhati* or the 'Manual of Ten Rites,' an old Sanskrit text more recently lithographed by a Nainital printing press. Like the *Dasa Karmādī Paddhati*, Taradatta's *Bhūgola Kūrmmācala* is referenced in volume two of the *Gazetteer* on Central Himalayan history and religion. Atkinson's almost exclusive dependence upon 'upper' caste, 'Hindu' expertise for this volume is a telling reflection of his orientalist reading of the region's past.

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[51] Correspondence between Director of Land Records and Agriculture, U.P. and the Deputy Commissioner of Kumaun on Yams., November 23rd, 1903, Box 41, Nainital Regional Archives.

Segregated Social Worlds and Vernacular Geographies

How, then, can we situate the author of *Bhūgola Kūrmmācala*, Atkinson's main vernacular source? Why did Taradatta write his gazetteer-like text and to what extent was he informed by colonial notions of improvement? What role did sensuousness and perception play in his definition of geography? And to what extent were his spatial conceptions delimited by his caste and gender? *Bhūgola Kūrmmācala* was published in 1871 by the newly formed Almora Debating Club. Almora had been the capital of the pre-colonial Chand Dynasty of Kumaun for over three centuries and had long acted as a center of learning and administration.[52] Dominated by 'upper' caste men educated in colonial or missionary schools, the Debating Club owed its establishment to Almora's pre-colonial genealogy. The Club was even patronized by Raja Bhim Singh, a descendant of the former Chand rulers.[53] The Club's feudal character complemented its proximity to the colonial administration. The founder of the club, Buddhi Ballabh Pant, served as Inspector of Public Instruction for Kumaun Division. As Deputy Inspector of Public Instruction, Taradatta was likely to have been Pant's subordinate and contemporary. At the time, Deputy Inspectors were tasked

[52] Almora was subsequently to become a center of contestation for administrative posting among caste elites. See Vasudha Pande, 'Stratification in Kumaun circa 1815-1930', *NMML Occasional Paper New Series 37* (2013): Pp. 23-25.

[53] Anil K. Joshi, ''Almora Akhbar': Initial years of vernacular journalism in 19th century Kumaon', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* Vol. 60 (1999): 474.

with compiling reports on the progress of rural schools. Reports on the North-West Provinces suggest that Taradatta's work was used as a geography textbook.[54]

Bhūgola Kūrmmācala thus reflects the closely-knit world of native officials at Almora who were invested in colonial projects of compiling and disseminating geographical knowledge. Taradatta's sensibilities as an elite regional intellectual, as well as his duties as educational inspector, shape his text. He translated the colonizer's discourse of improvement into the vernacular; he celebrated agrarian expansion at the expense of forests and extoled the policy of bounty hunting. He alleged that the sale of tiger and leopard skins to the government at ten and five-rupee rates had encouraged hunting and expunged villagers' fear of wild animals.[55] Given his work in Public Instruction, he praised the government's educational efforts, hoping that they would make economic activities like mining more efficient.[56] Indeed, *Bhūgola Kūrmmācala* portrays British officials as emblems of rationality who restored lost knowledge to the region. Commissioners like Batten are eulogized for enabling the translation of inscriptions which even local pandits could no longer decipher.[57]

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[54]In the early 1870s Pant observed that at the Kundara Girls' School the examination for Bhoogol Koormanchul was 'not at all satisfactory' because of the 'inefficiency of the teacher.' M. Kempson, *Report on the Progress of Education in the NWP for 1872-73* (Allahabad: NWP Government Press, 1873): 88.

[55] Taradatta, *Bhūgola Kūrmmācala* (Almora: Almora Debating Club, 1871): 14. [Microfilmed by the British Library, SAMP record number 10537.]

[56] Ibid., 7.

[57] Ibid., 16.

At the same time, the text introduces readers to uniquely Kumauni relationships with the Central Himalayas. The title of *Bhūgola Kūrmmācala* references the name first acquired by the region under Chand rule. As the Sanskritized rendition of the more colloquially used 'Kumaun,' 'Kūrmācala' signifies the legend of Vishnu's tortoise avatar (*kūrma*), who is believed to have dwelt on a mountaintop in Kali Kumaun. Taradatta's use of the *pargana* as a primary mode of organizing information similarly revived the memory of the Chand period. The use of the *pargana* arguably disrupted the ways in which colonial carto-statistical categories were superimposed on native emplacements. As explained in part 1, Atkinson deployed the 'principle of locality' to stage the mountains in the *Gazetteer*. The *Gazetteer* thereby subsumes socially defined spatial categories within environmental zones, such as the *bhabar* (forested belt fringing the foothills) and the *tarai* (swampy terrain between the hills and plains). Volume III of the *Gazetteer* organizes different spatial units alphabetically, describing *pattis* (fiscal divisions) at greater length than *parganas*. In contrast, the *pargana* as a historically defined spatial unit muddied physical boundaries.

In the early nineteenth century, Traill had pointed out that the pre-colonial spatial unit of the *pargana* was needlessly malleable, even though 'the intersection of the country in every point by rivers would have afforded prominent boundaries for local division.' Much to Traill's frustration, *parganas* had instead been drawn and redrawn by shifting power dynamics between 'petty principalities' as well as feudal land grants. Moreover, as *parganas* revolved around the world of the Chand court, they were not even physically contiguous: 'a line of villages extending from the snowy mountains to Almora was known as a separate division under the designation of

Heeoonpal being appointed for the supply of snow to the Raja's court.'[58] Taradatta's persistent use of the *pargana* thus invoked the memory of pre-colonial geographies, rather than conforming to colonial notions of cartographic rationality or corresponding with Atkinson's 'principle of locality.'

Bhūgola Kūrmmācala's patchwork of *parganas* is ostensibly organized in terms of sensuous interrelations between place and taste, as well as landscape and memory. Whereas Atkinson divides sections on physical geography from sections on history, Taradatta reintegrates folk memories with the landscape. Whereas Atkinson inventories Central Himalayan products to estimate their potential value for the colonial economy, Taradatta delights in local patterns of consumption. Consider the case of grains and fruits, for instance. Chapters on 'economic botany' in the *Gazetteer* meticulously tabulate the names, uses, and chemical content of mountain produce. In contrast, *Bhūgola Kūrmmācala* uses affect to root plants and crops within specific regions. For instance, Taradatta offers an intimate account of peasant uses of the *chyuru* fruit (from the butter-nut tree) which grows abundantly along the Kali River. Readers are told how villagers grind the kernel of the fruit into *phulwa* oil which makes the skin soft and can be substituted for *ghī.* Entanglements between place and food are then mapped across *parganas*. Sira *pargana* is distinguished by its fields of Shali rice (*shāli ke chāwal)*, millets (*madua*), and sesame (*til*), Askot

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[58] 'The existence of numerous petty principalities, the chiefs of which were engaged in constant aggressions on each other necessarily led to frequent changes in the division of the country as the conquered villages on receiving new masters were incorporated in his own district or formed into a separate Pergunnah under some new name.' Pages 53-55 in Mr. Traill's Statistical Memoir Reports, April 1823- December 1826, IOR/F/4/1158/30396, British Library, London.

pargana through bananas (*kela*), oranges (*nārangi*), and big cardamoms (*baḍī ilayācī*), and the *pargana* of Dasoli through its peculiarly sharp honey (*tīkṣaṇa madhu*). Taradatta's descriptions of *parganas* resemble veritable food maps, which correspond to the culinary notion of *terroir,* by connoting complex relations between place and taste which are erased by Atkinson's tabular estimations of nutrition and price.[59]

As a roving supervisor of rural schools, Taradatta had the luxury of sampling and reveling in the richness of regional foods without sparing a thought for the unequal labor relations entailed in agrarian production. Nor did he need to consider how casted and gendered bodies did not have equal access to food. In this respect, both Atkinson and Taradatta were complicit in burying connections between value and making. Nonetheless, by territorializing specific grains and crop varieties, Taradatta's geography departed from official gazetteers. While Atkinson quantified grains through chemistry, Ramsay went further to measure improvement through changes in diet. 'In former years, the people were content with the coarser grains- *mundooa, koonee,* and *joongra,*' he wrote dismissively. 'But I think this is not so much the case now. A great deal of wheat and rice is eaten.'[60]

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[59] Terroir connotes a 'taste of place'. As Edward Melillo writes, 'the term terroir suggests a region with a soil, microclimate, drainage properties or other distinct environmental features that impart unique qualities to the food produced there.' Edward Melillo, 'Empire in a Cup', *Eco-Cultural Networks and the British Empire,* ed. Melillo et al (London: Bloomsbury, 2015): 82.

[60] J. O'B. Beckett, *Report on the Revision of Settlement in the Kumaon District* (Allahabad: NWP Printing Press, 1874): 21.

The routes Atkinson and Taradatta used to traverse through the mountains occasionally diverged as well, suggesting differences in their phenomenological experiences of landscape. Take their contrasting maps of the forests flanking the village of Gangoli Hat for instance. *Bhūgola Kūrmmācala's* trail begins at the Kali Temple, nestled amidst a grove of *devadāru* trees to the east of the sparsely populated village. Readers are then led three miles away from the grove to the Shaila Mountain where a cave cradles a hidden river. The path proceeds treacherously to Patal Bhuvaneshwar Temple and the remote Brahmakanti Cave. Here, readers are cautioned to watch out for thorns and sticks laid by temple priests to close misleading trails. Taradatta's route ends in copper mines and still more picturesque temples beyond Patal Bhuvaneshwar.

Atkinson's journey through the forests around Gangoli Hat traces an altogether different set of landmarks. He begins at the government bungalow, close to the Kali Temple which he identifies solely with the ostensible barbarism of animal sacrifice. Beyond the temple he notes a suspension bridge near Harara Village where wild flowers and ginger thrive. His trail then snakes from one scenic view to the next. Where Taradatta stages folk tales and seasonal festivals, Atkinson immerses himself in studies of flora. While Taradatta speculates about Gangoli Hat's thriving past, Atkinson reduces it to a 'resting place' on the road from Almora to Pithoragarh.[61] Taradatta's insertion of temples, fairs, and stories into Gangoli Hat's forests is thus bleached from Atkinson's descriptions of the same. These differences notwithstanding, Taradatta does not

[61] Edwin Atkinson, *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts of the NWP Vol. 3.* (Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1973 [First published in Allahabad, 1886]): 232-4. And Taradatta, *Bhūgola Kūrmmācala* (Almora: Almora Debating Club, 1871): Pp. 14-15.

question government restrictions on peasant uses of forest produce, such as herbs. Indeed, his work arguably complements the *Gazetteer's* elision of labor and livelihood from the commons.

In addition to Taradatta's use of story and sensuousness to map the Central Himalayas, his evaluation of social change in the region departs from the assessments of contemporary British officials. Far from extolling the retreat of Brahmanism, Taradatta nonchalantly notes continuities in Brahmin proximity to political posts across the colonial divide. For instance, he relates how the Khanyudis of Garhwal, who had hitherto acted as the Tehri Raja's most trusted ministers, came to monopolize the legal post of *kanungo* under British rule. Just as orientalist tropes about religion and race allowed Atkinson to draw homologies between people and place, Taradatta's 'upper' caste, urban sensibilities informed his writings about mountain society. *Bhūgola Kūrmmācala* describes residents of Srinagar as simultaneously 'clever' (*catur*) and 'respectable' (*sughaḍa*). Yet, he cautions readers about the 'quick-tempered' disposition of the denizens of Kali Kumaun. Taradatta's descriptions reflect more general characteristics of Central Himalayan culture whereby place and personhood are codetermined, as anthropologist William Sax's work confirms.[62] This mutuality was fractured by caste as well, with only 'upper' castes taking on surnames derived from their ancestral villages.[63]

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[62] See William Sax, *God of Justice: Ritual Healing and Social Justice in the Central Himalayas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[63] Whereas landed castes could take the name of their locality, Dalits and to some extent *khasas* were not granted this luxury. 'The minor castes or subdivisions of Brahmans and Chattris are largely local, e.g., Dimris are so called from their village of Dimar…. Amongst the Doms, on the other hand, caste names are

The conflict between Atkinson and Taradatta's views on hill society is reflected by their contrasting reading of marriage practices in high-altitude villages as well. In villages dominated by trans-Himalayan trading communities, marriage customs privileged women. Many women in these 'Bhotiya' communities had personal property from profits on handlooms. In the *pargana* of Darma, peasants constructed communal shelters (alternatively called *hrimba ghar* and *rambaukri*) where young boys and girls from surrounding villages could socialize unchaperoned. After spending close to a month eating, drinking, and dancing together the girls were free to choose their partners. A vocal competition between the girl and her chosen spouse would then determine whether the couple would marry in her natal village or in her in-law's house. Both Taradatta and Atkinson agree upon the exceptionality of these practices. Atkinson describes 'Bhotiya' customs as 'strange,' proposing that 'the inclinations and will of the female appear to have greater weight than is common in the east.'[64] Taradatta, on the other hand, unapprovingly notes how such customs deviated from the norms of *bhārat khand*.[65] Here, his use of *bhārat* as a spatial category signifying normative, 'upper' caste cultural practices seems to align with emergent nationalist constructions of *bhārat.* As Manu Goswami argues, modern constructions of *bhārat* as a geo-historical unit

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given exclusively from the employment followed, e.g., lohar blacksmith, or mason.' Quoted in E. K. Pauw, *Report on the Tenth Settlement of the Garhwal District* (Allahabad: NWP Government Press, 1896): 12.

[64] Edwin Atkinson, *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts of the NWP Vol. 3.* (Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1973 [First published in Allahabad, 1886]): 117.

[65] Taradatta, *Bhūgola Kūrmmācala* (Almora: Almora Debating Club, 1871): 20.

identified 'upper' caste 'Hindu' males as 'core nationals.'[66] Intriguingly, while Taradatta alleges that the Senior Assistant under Batten's administration had broken down the *hrimba ghar* to put an end to such 'inappropriate' mixing of the sexes, Atkinson makes no mention of this restriction. Taradatta's seemingly uncorroborated claim potentially reveals more about his own caste and gender sensibilities than it does about colonial policies, therefore.

As a high class member of Almora's literati, Taradatta was twice removed from the world of rural labor. The bodies of women and Dalits scarcely figure in *Bhūgola Kūrmmācala*. In a rare passage, he romanticizes the one-handed Dalit craftsman who is said to have sculpted the *Ek Hathiya Mandir*, which he celebrates as Kumaun's answer to the Ellora Temple of the plains. Nevertheless, he fails to comment upon the contradiction between this supposed 'gift' of free craftsmanship and the overwhelming exclusion of Dalits from sacred spaces in the region. Taradatta's evocation of Kumauni emplacements thus drowned the suffering and laboring body. Taradatta's notes on the rope-sliding *bedwart* ritual provide the starkest instantiation of his marginalization of subjugated bodies. He observes how in every *pargana* of Garhwal, in every twelve years, a male member of the Dalit *badi* community was made to slide down a precarious rope suspended across steep slopes. Despite reports of *badis* having lost their lives, the ritual was still held to protect against crop failure, and occasionally to entertain visitors to the Tehri Durbar.[67]

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[66] Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

[67] The *bedwart* is reported in early colonial reports by F. J. Shore as well. Frederick John Shore, "Papers of Frederick John Shore, Bengal Civil Service," 1814- 1837, India Office Records and Private Papers. British Library, London.

Badis who survived the ritual received a payment at the expense of having their hair plucked by villagers who considered their strands to be potent charms.

The *bedwart* seems to have been an extreme manifestation of the more general humiliation and dispossession thrust upon Dalits in parts of the mountains. However, 'upper' caste readings of the practice pointedly refuse to relate the ritual to caste violence. Taradatta's passing commentary on the ritual's strangeness pales in comparison with the Garhwali nationalist Tara Dutt Gairola's subsequent categorization of the *bedwart* as one of the traditional 'games' of Garhwal. Gairola labels the ritual as a game even as he draws inferences about its originally sacrificial character, whereby the blood of the deceased was believed to bestow 'fertility to the soil.' Notably, Taradatta's writings on the *bedwart* were directly referenced by Atkinson. Both Atkinson and Taradatta relate how the colonial government prohibited the *bedwart* across British Garhwal and Kumaun in the mid-nineteenth century. Yet, they both fail to consider the fate of *badis* after the practice was banned. This denial of *badi* voices is striking given that as late as 1917 a petition from the *badis* of Sitonsyum in Garhwal appealed to the Lieutenant-Governor 'for permission to carry on what they professed to be their only means of livelihood.' A second petition from 1931 details seemingly futile struggles waged by *badis* to find alternative sources of subsistence.[68] Thus, both the *Gazetteer* and *Bhūgola Kūrmmācala* fail to recognize how pre-colonial 'prosperity' as well as colonial 'improvement' in the mountains unfolded at the expense of profound and persisting Dalit sacrifice.

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[68] Copy of letter no. D. O. No. 100/ C from Deputy Commissioner of Garhwal, December 5, 1923, Mss Eur E307/14, IOR, British Library, London.

Contrary to colonial and 'upper' caste assessments of the *bedwart* as either a barbaric or romantic relic of primitive customs, we might consider the ritual as a spectacular illustration of the caste violence undergirding the reproduction of mountain landscapes. The differences between Atkinson and Taradatta's geographies notwithstanding, together their works bury bonds between value and making in the Central Himalayas. In other words, relationships between caste violence, unequal labor relations, and place-making are explicit in neither the *Gazetteer* nor *Bhūgola Kūrmmācala*. How might we redress these erasures of colonial and 'upper' caste geographies? What did emplacement mean for the marked bodies of women and Dalits in the mountains? And what are the stakes of writing caste violence back into the carto-statistical map? To pursue these questions, the remainder of this chapter endeavors to unearth subterranean landscapes of subjugation and struggle from official geographies.

Part 3: Re-emplacing the Marked Body

Thus far, this chapter has argued that colonial administrative geographies elided caste and gender specific labor from 'wastelands,' just as the privileging of the *pargana* as a spatial unit in vernacular geographies overlooked gender and caste-based discrimination in the Central Himalayas. Official gazetteers transformed the commons of the mountains from cultural processes into natural spaces, while the vernacular geographies of native intermediaries celebrated the specific products of mountain commons without acknowledging their producers. To appreciate how the mountain commons were the product of gender and caste specific labor, this section of the chapter examines the case of hemp cultivation and catechu making. Furthermore, a reading of poetry and petitions from early-twentieth-century Kumaun suggests how Dalit activists identified caste-specific experiences of mountain landscapes as a source of humiliation and oppression. By strategically adopting and rejecting the spatial imaginaries of colonial bureaucrats and their native

intermediaries, anti-caste activists managed to lobby the Government of Kumaun to reallocate tracts of Reserved Forests for Dalit settlements some fifty years after the publication of Atkinson's *Gazetteer* and the culmination of enclosures in the Central Himalayas.

Labor and the Commons

Dalits specialized in the production of hemp and catechu in the pre-colonial Central Himalayas. Dalit families, and occasionally 'lower' caste *khasa* families, periodically cultivated hemp on common village lands and temporary clearings in the forest. Dalit families specializing in catechu making relied on contractors from the plains to finance their collection of acacia heartwood from *bhabar* forests. In both cases, the security of land and inputs for their trade was extremely tenuous. Such constraints faced by hemp and catechu makers were only exacerbated under colonial rule. The late-nineteenth-century enclosure of village 'wastes' threatened to displace hemp growers, while the demarcation of Reserved Forests restricted access to acacia trees. Paralleling these restrictions, carto-statistical compilations on 'economic botany' further deracinated Dalit expertise from accounts on hemp and catechu. Indeed, works like Atkinson's *Gazetteer* present hemp and *khair* (*Acacia catechu*) as natural bounties of the landscape rather than fruits of Dalit labor. Where Dalit workers do feature in scientific accounts of hemp and catechu, their techniques are dismissed as inefficient and primitive.

Atkinson's account of *khair* trees, for instance, occludes the social history of catechu production with the mirage of 'primeval forests.' The *bhabar* forest manifests 'all the magnificence usually attributed to oriental forest scenery,' Atkinson writes. 'Gigantic *haldus* (*Adina cordifolia*) and *khairs* (*Acacia catechu*) rear their heads above the tangled undergrowth of creepers and thorn-bushes which present a barrier to progress that an elephant alone can

surmount.'[69] Contrary to this depiction of impenetrable jungle, the history of catechu making suggests how *bhabar* forests had long been a site of specialized labor. Madden's mid-nineteenth-century report on catechu production describes how workers were 'constantly employed in cutting down the best trees, and for these they have to search far in the jungles; only those with an abundance of red heart-wood will answer.'[70] As all *khair* trees are not alike, expert knowledge was required to process *khair* wood into catechu. Colonial forest policy undermined such knowledge, instead valuing acacia trees more highly than the bodies of those who worked them.

If Dalit labor is incidental to Atkinson's descriptions of *khair* forests, *khair* trees defined Dalit workers in ways that they could not easily escape. Male catechu makers were branded with the name Khairni, while for Dalit families *khair* forests were tied to relentless rhythms of work. From November until the beginning of the monsoon, they toiled together for twenty hours daily. Men cut heartwood from selected trees while women and children processed the wood into *kath* extract using furnaces made from earthen pots. They seem to have wasted little in the process, reusing *khair* wood chips for fuel. Aside from its use as a dye for nets, catechu (*kattha*) is primarily consumed as an ingredient in *paan* (betel leaf) that colors the saliva red. Catechu makers gained little from lucrative subcontinental markets in *kattha*, however. Prior to Traill's administration, catechu makers were reportedly taxed at the point of production. Traill noted the considerable profits earned from this system, 'the *kuth* does not cost the capitalist more than from 5 to 8 rupees

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[69] Edwin Atkinson, *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts of the NWP Vol. 1.* (Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1973 [First published in Allahabad, 1881]): 83.

[70] Madden, 'The Turaee and other Mountains of Kumaun', *Journal of the Asiatic Society, Bengal XVII* (1847): 565.

the maund while in Rampoor and other large towns of Rohilcund the price is commonly from 10 or 14 rupees the maund.'[71] The *khair* tree's entanglement in power laden social worlds continued across the colonial divide. Traill farmed out contracts for the collection of forest revenues from catechu makers to landholders in adjoining *parganas*.[72] Towards the turn of the nineteenth century, proposals by both Indian capitalists and the Imperial Forest Department to 'improve' production threatened to further displace and discipline catechu makers. The history of the *khair* tree can thus be written as a history of Dalit dispossession.

The case of hemp cultivation similarly demonstrates how constructions of the commons in official gazetteers and vernacular geographies devalued Dalit labor. As noted in part 1 of this

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[71] 'Traffic in kuth or terra Japonica, though not from the same cause, this article is prepared only by persons of the lowest or dom caste who having no capital of their own are obliged to work on advances either at a given rate for the produce or in the shape of wages. These speculations prove extremely profitable, and the returns are always quick. The kuth does not cost the capitalist more than from 5 to 8 rupees the maund while in Rampoor and other large towns of Rohilcund the price is commonly from 10 or 14 rupees the maund.' Mr. Traill's Statistical Memoir Reports, April 1823- December 1826, IOR/F/4/1158/30396, British Library, London.

[72] 'The most simple mode of realizing this revenue was that actually adopted by subjecting the products of the forests to a small proprietary due in the shape of duties payable by the exporters. The products consumed within the hills by the people themselves were, as a rule, too inconsiderable to be taken into account and where exceptionally large, as in the case of fuel for smelting ores, were included in the revenue demand. These duties on ordinary forest produce were collected at stations along the foot of the hills, while the duty on catechu was fixed at so much per kiln and was paid by the manufacturers.' Ibid.

chapter, speculation by tea planters in the latter half of the nineteenth century prompted officials in Kumaun and Garhwal to redefine village boundaries. The colonial government's shifting interest in hemp betrays the arbitrariness of this late-nineteenth-century demarcation of 'wastes.' Until the mid-nineteenth century, the government had been invested in encouraging the temporary cultivation of hemp on unmeasured village lands and forest clearings. *Papers Regarding the Cultivation of Hemp in India* (1855) clearly reveal how administrators in Kumaun were aware of caste stigma associated with hemp cultivation. Batten observed that 'Bora Dooms' dominated the manufacture of *bhangela* (hempen cloth) in Kumaun, though all castes could sow, cast, and reap hemp for rope making. He noted that the phrase 'hemp grower' was used as an abuse in Kali Kumaun. John Strachey found the phrase *tera ghar bhang bono holo* ('may hemp be sown in your house') similarly used as a common insult in Garhwal.

Along with recognizing the caste dynamics of hemp cultivation, officials were cognizant of the fact that hemp was planted on unmeasured common lands. Batten listed three varieties of hemp- *jungle bhang, goor bhang,* and *phool bhang*- two of which grow abundantly as a weed, with only *goor bhang* requiring cultivation. He recorded areas suitable for the labor-intensive planting and processing of *goor bhang*:

> 'The favorite situation for the cultivation of Hemp is a cold, dry, upland ground, with a good soil, and with facilities for manuring, manure being most essential for the proper growth of the plant. Hence we generally see Hemp crop in the immediate neighborhood of the village homesteads, or, if at a distance from human habitations, very close to cattle-sheds and pasturing grounds on the upper ranges of mountains.'[73]

[73] *Papers Regarding the Cultivation of Hemp in India* (Agra: Secundra Orphan Press, 1855): 34.

Hemp was also periodically grown in forest clearings where there was less of a need for fertilizer. None of the lands suitable and used for hemp cultivation were measured properties. While this allowed the landless to cultivate hemp, *bhangela* making was a formidable enterprise as 'there are few crops that require so much care and labor as Hemp.' [74]

Based on such reports, in the 1850s the Commissioner of Kumaun, Ramsay, advised caution in devising schemes to encourage hemp export from the region.[75] 'I would not advocate the system of making advances to individual cultivators; it is not improbable that some ill-disposed persons might create a suspicion that Government intended evil,' he opined considering the caste stigma associated with hemp growing. 'The best plan I think would be, to enter into engagements with respectable zemindars for large quantities, and allow these contractors to make their own arrangements,' he proposed, exposing the government's strategic decision to work through caste hierarchies.[76] So long as hemp was potentially more remunerative than tea, its cultivation on 'waste' lands was encouraged above the enclosure of common lands for plantations. Consequently, hemp cultivation seems to have continued in some areas through the latter half of the nineteenth century. *Bhūgola Kūrmmācala* notes several *parganas* of Garhwal where *bhangela* was widely used as clothing for poorer peasants. Hempen cloth was also used to manufacture sacks for the packaging of potatoes cultivated on *nayabad* lands. However, the precariousness of the hemp

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[74] Ibid., 29.

[75] Batten, Ramsay, and Strachey seemed to have agreed that if hemp became more lucrative, caste injunctions related to its growth would be loosened. Until such a juncture, Ramsay proposed working through caste hierarchies to encourage hemp manufacture.

[76] *Papers Regarding the Cultivation of Hemp in India*, 32.

grower working on unmeasured lands was exploited to economize and streamline production. Where common lands hitherto used for hemp cultivation were enclosed, the manufacturers were arguably devalued as 'waste' as well.[77]

Tracing the murky histories of hemp and catechu cultivation thus exposes caste specific labor on the commons of the Central Himalayas. Just as Dalits dominated these trades, women were tasked with collecting fuel wood and leaves from village forests. The common lands of the mountains were thus more than innocent spaces of natural bounty. Instead, experiences of laboring on the commons were shaped by power-laden social dynamics of embodiment. For instance, the stories of hemp and catechu demonstrate how the interests of subjugated castes were secondary to colonial economic policies. The trajectory of hemp and catechu cultivation further suggest the networks of collusion between propertied 'upper' castes and colonial officials involved in managing mountain resources.

Mapping Humiliation and Resistance

Re-viewing bureaucratic constructions of the 'wastelands,' or commons, of the mountains from the perspective of the marked bodies of Dalits therefore exposes how experiences of the forests, pastures, and meadows of the Central Himalayas have historically been fragmented along lines of gender and caste. Moreover, to fully understand the complex relationships between space and subjectivity through which hierarchies of caste and gender were reproduced in the mountains, we must move beyond bureaucratic geographies. Geographer Katherine McKittrick differentiates 'subaltern geographies' from the 'seductive and comfortable geographies of domination and

[77] See Judy Whitehead, 'John Locke and the Governance of India's Landscape: The Category of Wasteland in Colonial Revenue and Forest Legislation,' *Economic and Political Weekly Vol. 45, No. 50* (2010).

ownership.'[78] McKittrick suggests that subaltern geographies refuse to 'replicate our present geographic organization that is fraught with claims of desirous ownership, spatial domination, and racial-sexual marginalization.'[79] She finds such subaltern senses of place archived in songs, stories, and ephemeral phenomenological engagements with place. To grapple with the co-construction of body and place in the Central Himalayas, the last part of this chapter draws upon poetry, petitions, idioms, and other traces of 'subaltern geographies.'

In his critique of the ways in which caste hegemony plays out through space, Gopal Guru argues that the civilizational violence of caste hierarchy demands both the absence and presence of Dalit bodies in 'upper' caste spaces in the form of segregation and humiliation respectively.[80] This caste segregated character of social interaction in the Central Himalayas is indexed by proverbs from the region. After retiring from his post as Extra Assistant Commissioner, Pandit Ganga Dutt Upreti compiled Kumauni and Garhwali phrases in *Proverbs and Folklore of Kumaun and Garhwal* (1894). Like Taradatta, Upreti hailed from the 'upper' caste official class of Almora. Several of Upreti's collected proverbs read as caste slurs and his own commentary on them reflects his deep caste prejudice as well. His collection includes proverbs reflecting segregated social worlds in the mountains:

> *'Duma ko bya ankhana da*
> [Translation:] The marriage of a Dum (simply) pains the eyes.

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[78] Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods ed., *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place* (Cambridge Massachusetts: South End Press, 2007): 102.

[79] Ibid., 102.

[80] See Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarukkai, *The Cracked Mirror* (Delhi: OUP, 2017), 82-83.

> [Commentary:] The Hindu *bitha* (patrician) castes do not participate in any ceremony or feasts held by a *Dum.* Applied to things in which one has no concern at all and which instead of being beneficial turn out to be troublesome to him.'[81]

Other proverbs disclose the darker sides to sensuous emplacements in the mountains:

> *'Duma ki dumyana bokya ki bokyana kakhi ni jandi*
> [Translation:] The peculiar smell of a Dum and a he-goat never dies out.
> [Commentary:] The evil propensities of low families.'[82]

Upreti also included proverbs that he ascribed to Dalits. These proverbs reflect the debilitating poverty that they were forced to endure:

> *'Pharphaten meri kundali kathen*
> [Translation:] Where is my wooden bowl.
> [Commentary:] A *Dum* (a low caste man) is in the habit of using this phrase all day and night, going in and out of his home asking 'where is my wooden dish.' This proverb is applied to one who is moving here and there in vain in search for employment. The *Dumas* are in the habit of eating a little food many times during the day, and as many times they need their respective dishes.'[83]

While Upreti's work might have been compiled for philological interest, the significance of such phrases in mediating interpersonal relationships seems to be confirmed by the character of anti-colonial agitation and social reform movements in the region. In the late 1920s, festivals held to

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[81] *Bith* denotes 'twice born' castes in Kumaun, including elite *thul jats* as well as *khasa* Brahmins and Rajputs. Pandit Ganga Datt Upreti, *Proverbs and Folklore of Kumaun and Garhwal* (Lodiana: Lodiana Mission Press, 1894): 43.

[82] Ibid., 232.

[83] Ibid., 330.

encourage inter-dining as a means of loosening caste injunctions in Kumaun pointedly included only twice born (*dwija*) castes, for instance.[84]

Alongside caste, gender was another significant vector of social differentiation in the Central Himalayas. Women were tasked with most of the farm labor, in addition to cutting grass and collecting fertilizers. During the Gurkha occupation that preceded colonial rule in Kumaun and Garhwal, punitive taxes on gendered labor were enforced. For instance, Traill noted that the Gurkha government forbid women's access to rooftops. Many aspects of domestic work relied on rooftops, including drying clothes and grain, or storing firewood. For this reason, Traill alleged that peasants found such restrictions extremely burdensome.[85] To record the plight of the 'oriental woman,' Traill initially collected statistics on female suicides. He carefully enumerated suicides which were distinct from *satis*. 'Suicide is very prevalent among females of the lower classes,' he concluded, contending that 'the hardship and neglect to which the females in this province are subjected will sufficiently account for this distaste of life- with a trifling exception the whole labor of the agricultural domestic economy is left to them, while food and clothing are dealt out to them with a sparing hand.'[86] Traill's comments arguably echoed contemporary colonial accounts of oriental cruelty towards women. Furthermore, the colonial administration did little to improve the

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[84] See Shekhar Pathak, '*Uttarakhaṇḍa me Sāmājika āndolano kī Ruparekhā,*' PAHAR 2 (1986).

[85] Mr. Traill's Statistical Memoir Reports, April 1823- December 1826, IOR/F/4/1158/30396, British Library, London.

[86] Mr. Traill's Statistical Memoir Reports, April 1823- December 1826, IOR/F/4/1158/30396, British Library, London. [Page 118.]

condition of women. Even Atkinson admitted that 'the suicide of females was and is still common.'[87]

The centrality of space in reproducing social inequality was not lost to anti-caste activists in early twentieth century Kumaun. The Tamta community of Almora, who traditionally worked as metal workers, were the first to organize an association of 'untouchables' in the mountains. Ten years after the foundation of the Tamta Sudhar Sabha in 1903, Hari Krishna Tamta was the first Dalit member to be elected to the Almora Municipal Board. In 1912, Hari Prasad Tamta converted the Tamta Sudhar Sabha into the larger Shilpkar Sabha, and as the next Dalit member of the Almora Municipal Board, he lobbied in favor of manual scavengers conscripted from the Valmiki caste from the plains. Tamta's Almora based newspaper *Samatā* voiced the interests of the wider Depressed Classes of the mountains, and not just of *shilpkars* and artisan castes. In a 1924 meeting of the Almora Shilpkar Sabha, Dalit activists enumerated the various exclusions imposed upon them on village 'commons.' Dalits could not grind flour in water mills (*pan chakki*), their position as tenant cultivators (*sirtan*) was particularly tenuous, they could not graze their livestock in shared pastures (*charagaha*), nor could they apply sandalwood leave alone wear the sacred thread.[88]

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[87] Atkinson recognizes high rates of female suicide in Garhwal as well. 'Wives were procured to help in field-work and were looked on as beasts of burden; indeed up to the present day they are treated as such, and on them falls the greater portion of the agricultural work, consequently many desert their husbands, whilst yearly a number commit suicide.' Atkinson, *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts of the NWP Vol. 1.* (Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1973 [First published in Allahabad, 1881]): 255.

[88] Quoted in Shekhar Pathak, '*Uttarakhaṇḍa me Sāmājika āndolano kī Ruparekhā*', PAHAR 2 (1986): 100.

These exclusions and humiliations, together with Tamta's position as a member of the Municipal Board, perhaps explain his favorable assessment of colonial rule in the mountains. 'We do not want to maximize caste conflicts, but want to affirm that due to the help of the government we are now counted among human beings,' Hari Tamta is reported to have said in the 1923 *District Gazette*, testifying that 'before this…even our shade was supposed untouchable.'[89]

Yet, in his petitions to the government, Tamta pointed out how policies towards tenant farmers as well as forest enclosures under colonial rule were worsening the condition of Depressed Classes. To reclaim Dalit rights to land and resources, activists such as Hari Tamta deployed assertions from gazetteers in subversive ways. Tamta seems to have agreed with Atkinson's theory of an invasion that suppressed 'free and untrammeled' aboriginals, but he pushed beyond this narrative to emphasize chronic challenges endured by Dalits in the hills. In his petition to the Simon Commission (1928), he argued that blacksmiths, metal workers, and farm laborers 'enjoy better status and public esteem' in the plains than in the hills. 'It seems hard that useful workers of every kind should thus be included in one low and despised class of 'Doms,'' he affirmed. Tamta related Dalit deprivation not only to exploitation by caste Hindu landowners but also to colonial revenue policies which failed to confirm the proprietary rights of long standing tenant farmers. He observed how the government's forest policies left Dalits especially marginalized as well. Tamta pushed beyond Atkinson's descriptions of caste as primordial by focusing on the coercive economic and social structures which reproduced Dalit displacement. Landlessness is the cause

[89] District Gazette, 15 November 1923 quoted in Shekhar Pathak, 'Dalit Awareness in Pre-Independence Uttarakhand', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* Vol. 64 (2003): 844.

for which 'our people have to live in hovels on the outskirts of the village,' Tamta declared, adding that 'even the hovels in which they live are built on land which does not belong to them.'[90]

Thus, Tamta identified and critiqued the relationship between caste, property, and humiliating experiences of space. In the 1930s, the Shilpkar Sabha in Kumaun and Garhwal, under the leadership of Hari Prasad Tamta and Khushi Ram, demanded the reallocation of forest land to Depressed Classes.[91] These campaigns resulted in the grant of land rights for *shilpkars* in selected Reserved Forests in 1934.[92] Even after the distribution of 165 acres of land south of Almora, some 18 acres of reserved forests in Dhuraphat, and 58 acres of reserved forests in Pithoragarh, the Shilpkar Sabha continued to appeal to the Deputy Commissioner of Kumaun against the dispossession of Depressed Classes.[93] While Atkinson's *Gazetteer* confined Dalit dominated

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[90] Munshi Hari Tamta, Chairman of the Kumaon Shilpkar Sabha (Union of Industrial Workers), 28 May 1928, IOR/Q/13/1/14, British Library, London. Tamta's demands and insights are particularly relevant given the conservative character of 'upper' caste anti-colonial activism in Kumaun and Garhwal. Dalits continued to be excluded from efforts to bridge caste divisions among *savarnas*. For instance, communal meals (*sahabhoj*) held in 1927 for social improvement only included 'upper' castes. Even when activists expressed the need for 'untouchable uplift,' their appeals were more performative than substantial. For example, in 1932 the nationalist G. B. Pant drank from a Tamta spring (*naula*) without thinking to invite Dalits to drink from caste *naulas*.

[91] 'Shilpkar Sabha Garhwal,' in *Garhwali* July 1932. [Accessed from Uttarakhand Archives, Dehradun.]

[92] Naval Viyogi and Anawar Ansari, *History of the Later Harappans and Shilpkara Movement* (*Vol. 2)* (Delhi: Kalpaz, 2010): 456.

[93] Ibid., 456-533.

manufactures to the place of the past, activists such as Hari Krishna Tamta petitioned the colonial government to protect and encourage handicrafts as well.[94]

The mobilization of subaltern geographies in the campaigns of anti-caste activists did not only resist 'upper' caste and colonial restrictions on space, but further sought to overturn hegemonic imaginations of the mountains. Dalits in Kumaun went beyond tactical negotiations with the colonial administration to articulate visions of unsegregated futures:

> *'Kūrmācala kī puṇya bhūmi mein, 'Samatā' ne hai janma liya…*
> *Dīna - dukhī - dalito kī unnati, karane ko yaha sadā baḍo…*
> *Prema sūtra mein guthe sakala nar, tanika nahī aba antara ho.'*
>
> In this sacred land of Kūrmācala, *Samatā* (equality) has taken birth…
> For the uplift of downtrodden-depressed-Dalits, may it always grow…
> With every man woven together by threads of love, now there is no difference [between us].[95]

In this poem, written by Bahadur Ram of Ramgarh for a 1934 issue of *Samatā*, the region of 'Kūrmācala' is removed from Brahmanical notions of the sacred and instead invoked as a holy site for the unfolding of social unity. Indeed, this fragment of poetry arguably wrests authority over the region's present and future back into the hands of those whose voices are drowned by both colonial and 'upper' caste geographies.

Conclusion

To critique bureaucratic geographical knowledge as embodied knowledge, this chapter has re-viewed Atkinson's *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts* from the perspective of the differentially situated bodies of the colonial bureaucrat, native intermediary, and marginalized

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[94] Ibid., 523-35.

[95] Bahadur Ram, 'Abhilasha,' In *Samatā*, July 1934. [From Nainital Regional Archives.]

peasant. Part 1 traced how Atkinson constructed carto-statistical categories to enable enclosures and the circulation of resources within a London-centered economy. The *Gazetteer's* dry inventories of economic products and fiscal units were superimposed upon Central Himalayan emplacements. The reading of Taradatta's *Bhūgola Kūrmmācala* in part 2, suggested how Atkinson's informants continued to chart the geography of the Central Himalayas in terms of pre-colonial spatial categories as well as sensory relationships between taste and place. Nonetheless, both Atkinson's and Taradatta's gaze deracinated the knowledge and labor of marginalized groups from their views of mountain landscapes. To some extent, then, Atkinson's choice of interlocutor confirms Jotirao Phule's observations in *Slavery*: 'the higher European officers generally view men and things through Brahmin spectacles, and hence the deplorable ignorance they often exhibit in forming a correct estimate of them.'[96] Thus, this chapter's study of Atkinson's *Gazetteer* and Taradatta's *Bhūgola* reveals how both vernacular geographies and colonial gazetteers ignored how Central Himalayan landscapes were reproduced through hierarchies of caste and gender. Only by paying attention to the fractured character of the commons can we rectify the romantic assessments about 'remarkably egalitarian' mountain communities in contemporary environmental histories relying upon Atkinson as a source.

Furthermore, Atkinson's *Gazetteer* played an inimitable role in remaking the Central Himalayas as an object of consumption. The gazetteer served as a guidebook for the European and elite Indian tourist seeking refuge in Central Himalayan hill stations. At the same time, the gazetteer recorded the earnings and potential expansion of colonial revenue extraction through scientific forestry and agrarian settlements. Atkinson's *Gazetteer* not only shaped subsequent

[96] Jotirao Phule, 'Slavery,' in *Selected Writings,* ed. G. P. Deshpande (Delhi: Manohar, 2002): 32.

gazetteers, but was also cited by Kumauni historians such as Badri Dutt Pande. Indeed, the *Gazetteer* had a pervasive influence on nationalist and post-Independence understandings of Kumaun and Garhwal. As the historian Vasudha Pande shows, the *Gazetteer* triggered a controversy among upwardly mobile *khasa* caste groups in Kumaun who began to claim a higher caste status for themselves.[97] In post-colonial times, the *Gazetteer* was cited by activists rallying for the formation of the distinct 'Himalayan' state of Uttarakhand.[98] The carto-statistical categories of the gazetteer thus had wide ranging consequences for the spatial history of the mountains. While the *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts* facilitated colonial projects of enclosure and extraction, in the early twentieth century, Indian elites were actively contributing towards the modern commodification of the mountain landscape. The next chapter of this dissertation traces the late colonial transformation of longstanding associations between the Himalayas and healing through the Tehri Princely State's commercialization of Himalayan medicinal herbs as well as through the expansion of dispensaries and *ashrams* in foothill towns.

[97] See Vasudha Pande, 'Stratification in Kumaun circa 1815-1930', *NMML Occasional Paper New Series 37,* 2013.

[98] Zakir Hussain, *Uttarakhand Movement* (Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 1995), 148.

Chapter 5

The Himalayas as a Site and Signifier of Healing

In 1924, after decades of wandering across the Himalayas in pursuit of yogis and Ayurvedic medicines, Swami Haridas established his own Ayurvedic pharmacy in Amritsar. The novelist and scholar, Rahul Sankrityayan, sketches the life and travels of Haridas in his biographical account, *Ghumakkad Swami*. As Sankrityayan relates, Haridas began his wanderings, or *ghumakkari*, by journeying to the sources of the Ganga and Yamuna rivers, visiting fellow ascetics along the way. Over the course of his Himalayan travels, Haridas honed his interest in Ayurvedic medicine and 'always oriented his attention towards identifying medicinal herbs.'[1] In the hill state of Kulu, Haridas observed mountain dwellers exchanging *kut*, *atis, kutaki,* and other *judi butiyan* (medicinal herbs and roots) for oil, salt, and clothing. Upon inquiry he learned how these herbs had been collected from the high altitude peaks of Lahul and Spiti. Beyond such smaller mountain markets, Haridas noted that the largest market for Himalayan *jadi butiyan* was at Amritsar. He chose to establish his own pharmaceutical works for the preparation of Ayurvedic tinctures in the city, before retiring to the hill sanatorium of Mussoorie during the summers of his old age. Haridas's wanderings reflect the late colonial trajectory of longstanding, historical associations between the Himalayas and healing.

From the late nineteenth century onwards, Himalayan medicinal herbs, as well as more intangible valuations of the mountains as a source of spiritual healing, were increasingly being bottled, packaged, and abstracted from the life and knowledge of mountain dwellers. This chapter

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[1] Rahul Sankrityayan, *Ghumakkad Swami* (Allahabad: Kitab Mahal, 2017 [Originally published in 1958]), 60.

examines how modern imaginaries of the Central Himalayas as a site for physical and spiritual healing materialized through the commercialization of medicinal herbs, the construction of mountain *ashrams*, and accompanying projects of spatial enclosure. Late colonial imaginaries of the Central Himalayas as a site and signifier of healing were shaped by exchanges between colonial medical topography, scientific forestry, *pahari* plant knowledges, Ayurvedic texts, and modern approaches to Hindu spiritual traditions. To analyze the modern packaging of textured associations between the Himalayas and healing, I draw upon W. J. T. Mitchell's critique of landscape as a 'spatial fetish.' Just as the commodity fetishizes the social relations required for its production, the 'spatial fetish removes the social histories that shaped our understandings of space.'[2] Deploying Mitchell's critique of the spatial fetish, I trace the social histories effaced by the commodification of relations between the Himalayas and healing in the early twentieth century.

Less than an 'object to be seen or a text to be read,' landscape as spatial fetish is a 'process by which social and subjective identities are formed.'[3] Historians of medicine have thus assessed how 'imperial landscapes of health' reshaped the identities of people and places. In the nineteenth century, 'place bore immediately and urgently on questions of imperialism, race, and health.'[4] As

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[2] Bruce Erickson, ''A Phantasy in White in a World that is Dead': Grey Owl and the Whiteness of Surrogacy,' In *Rethinking the Great White North: Race, Nature, and the Historical Geographies of Whiteness in Canada*, ed. Andre Baldwin, Laura Cameron, and Audrey Kobayashi (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011): 15-16.

[3] W. J. T. Mitchell, 'Introduction,' In *Landscape and Power,* ed. W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 1.

[4] James Beattie, 'Imperial Landscapes of Health: Place, Plants and People between India and Australia, 1800s-1900s,' *Health and History* Vol. 14, No. 1 (2012): 100.

the works of David Arnold and Nandini Bhattacharya demonstrate, colonial enclaves, including plantations and hill sanatoriums, as well disciplinary sites, such as the military and prisons, were sites of medical interventions through which the identities of the colonized and colonizer were defined. [5] Arnold further argues that the history of medicine in nineteenth-century India exposes the 'corporeality of colonialism' as the colonized body emerged as a site of contestation between colonial disciplinary practices and nationalist struggles for hegemony. Moving beyond colonial medical discourses and enclaves, I ask how elite Indian social and subjective identities were forged through late colonial imaginaries of the Central Himalayas as a site for spiritual and physical healing.

Defining landscape as a 'natural scene mediated by culture,' Mitchell argues that landscape is 'both a signifier and the signified, both a frame and what a frame contains, both a real place and its simulacrum, both a package and the commodity inside the package.'[6] Following Mitchell, this chapter sets out to examine the dynamic and multi-directional relations of ideas about health, cultural constructions of landscape, and physical environments which determined the modern commodification of longstanding associations between the Himalayas and healing. Entanglements of place and health, as well as physical and spiritual health, are articulated in classical Ayurvedic

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[5] David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: UC Press, 1993) and Nandini Bhattacharya, *Contagion and Enclaves: Tropical Medicine in Colonial India* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012).

[6] W. J. T. Mitchell, 'Imperial Landscape,' In *Landscape and Power,* ed. W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 5.

texts as well as early colonial Sanskrit medical writings from the mountains.[7] In classical Sanskrit Ayurvedic texts, including the *Caraka Saṃhitā* and the *Suśruta Saṃhitā*, qualities of healthiness and unhealthiness are mapped onto idealized categories of landscape. As Francis Zimmerman argues, 'a familiar theme' runs through classical Ayurvedic texts and commentaries: 'in dry lands [*jangala*], an absence of disorders, all the humors calm; in marshy lands [*anupa*], in contrast, plethora, discharges, and fluxes.'[8] Early colonial Ayurvedic texts from the mountains do not rehearse the spatial and medical categories of *anupa* and *jangala*, yet, they index specific climates and places through lists of herbs, honey, and other therapeutic materials. The Kumauni poet, Gumani Pant (1790-1846), transcribed the medical and spiritual knowledge that he inherited from his family of Ayurvedic practitioners (*vaids*) in his early-nineteenth-century 'ornament of knowledge and healing,' the *Jñānabhaiṣajyamañjarī*. Gumani's text inventories Ayurvedic prescriptions for various bodily ailments alongside metaphorical descriptions of the healing potential of spiritual knowledge. The *Jñānabhaiṣajyamañjarī* thus offers parallel notes on the cure to specific spiritual and physical ailments. On a section about '*bhavakleśe vraṇaroge ca*'

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[7] Ayurveda is one among several 'streams of medical knowledge' in South Asia. As Rachel Berger explains, Ayurveda's 'primary organizing feature is the interconnection of the *dosas* (humors), the *dhatu* (body tissues) and *mala* (waste products). The three *dosas* of the body (wind/*vata*, bile/*pitta*, and phlegm/*kapha*) act together with the *dhatu* (blood, flesh, fat, bone, and semen) and the *mala*. This is called *tridosa-vidya*, the doctrine of the three humors, and underlines theoretical approaches to the tradition.' See Rachel Berger, 'From the Biomoral to the Biopolitical: Ayurveda's Political Histories,' *South Asian History and Culture* Bol. 4, No. 1 (2013), 49.

[8] Francis Zimmerman, *The Jungle and the Aroma of Meats: An Ecological Theme in Hindu Medicine* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999), 58.

(impurities of being and wounds), for instance, Gumani compares the curative power of *shastric* knowledge for the soul to the efficacy of ointments made of *guggul* and *nīm* for the body.

While Gumani's text reflects entanglements of physical and spiritual health in the world of early colonial Ayurvedic knowledge from the mountains, in the late colonial period, relations of place, health, and knowledge in the Central Himalayas assumed a distinct form. The *Jñānabhaiṣajyamañjarī* was relatively unnoticed beyond the mountains until it was translated and published in Bombay in 1924. Just as Sanskrit Ayurvedic texts from various parts of the subcontinent were being studied, translated, and republished beyond their regional provenance, elite Indians from the plains as well as the Tehri Princely State were recasting traditional associations between the Himalayas and healing through the mass production of medicinal herbs and the construction of *ashrams* as sites for wellness from the late nineteenth century onwards. Whereas Gumani's contemporary practitioners would have been responsible for both the collection of herbs and the preparation of Ayurvedic tinctures, towards the turn of the century an emergent pan-Indian market for indigenous medicines was increasingly abstracting herbal knowledge from vernacular and rural contexts. At the same time, the implementation of sanitary regulations by Notified Area Committees (NACs) in smaller rural towns was changing the landscaping of *ashrams.*[9] Indeed, the late colonial commercialization of Himalayan herbs and the making of

[9] *Ashram* can be defined as a monastic center or site for religious instruction. The word derives from the Sanskrit root *sram* or 'to labor.' Patrick Ollivelle explains how in classical Sanskrit literature, *ashram* referred 'to both a residence for and a mode of life devoted to religious exertion.' See Patrick Olivelle, *The Āśrama System: The History and Hermeneutics of a Religious Institution* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2004), 17. Ajay Skaria traces how the institution of the *ashram* was reinvented in the late

mountain *ashrams* as sites for healing unfolded through constructed hierarchies of bodies and expertise.

Focusing on the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-centuries, I argue that historical relations between the Himalayas and healing were increasingly being abstracted from the labor and knowledge of mountain dwellers. The first part of this chapter maps out the exchanges between colonized and colonizer which constituted imperial landscapes of health in nineteenth-century Kumaun and Garhwal. In Part 2, I trace the processes of enclosure which enabled the commercialization of Himalayan medicinal herbs towards the turn of the century. I first contextualize and analyze Gumani's *Jñānabhaiṣajyamañjarī* before tracing the transformation of indigenous knowledges about medicinal plants through the Tehri Princely State's Vanaspati Karyalaya. Just as the Karyalaya drew upon Ayurvedic 'experts' with degrees from colleges in the plains to prepare herbs into medicines in the foothill town of Muni-ki-Reti, the Durbar's Forest Department set out to supply the Karyalaya by cultivating herbs on enclosed alpine meadows. The Durbar's project of commercializing Himalayan medicinal herbs elided the cultural value of *bugyals* (alpine meadows), replaced the complex ecology of meadows with monoculture plantations of valuable herbs such as saussurea lappa, and displaced rural Ayurvedic knowledge, as well as gendered practices of herb gathering, with certified *vaids* and *coolie* labor.

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colonial period. Skaria focuses on nationalist *ashrams*, including the Gurukul Kangri and Tagore's Shantiniketan, as sites upon which questions about what constituted the nation were resolved. See Ajay Skaria, 'Gandhi's Politics: Liberalism and the Question of the Ashram,' *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101, no. 4 (2002): 955-986.

While the mountains became sites for the mass plantation of herbs, foothill towns became entrepots for the manufacture and trade in Ayurvedic tinctures. The last part of this chapter considers how colonial discourses about salubriousness and hygiene shaped the making of dispensaries and yoga *ashrams* in the Himalayan foothill town of Rishikesh. From the late nineteenth century onwards, Rishikesh's liminal position between the plains and the mountains was capitalized by proponents of modern yoga, such as Swami Sivananda, who remade the town into an idyllic entryway into spiritual and physical healing. Through the case of the Ayurvedic Sewa Samiti, Walter Evan-Wentz's School of Yoga Philosophy, and the career of Rishikesh's Notified Area Committee, I map the ways in which the expansion of dispensaries and yoga *ashrams* in Rishikesh was enabled by caste and class-based exclusions. Mapping the circulation of ideas, herbs, and expertise across the mountains and foothill towns thus demonstrates how the late colonial commodification of the relationship between the Himalayas and healing relied upon infrastructural connections between the hills and the plains. Furthermore, I argue that medical discourses about hygiene and climate converged with gendered and racialized discourses about the body to reshape landscapes of healing in the mountains.

Part 1: Imperial Landscapes of Health in the Central Himalayas

Filtered through the lens of nineteenth-century medical discourses about the deleterious physical and moral effects of tropical climates on European bodies, the Himalayas were staged as a salubrious site for physical and racial regeneration in the colonial imagination. Yet, imperial landscapes of health in the colonial Central Himalayas were not limited to the sequestered space of the hill sanatorium, nor were they shaped by colonial medical knowledge alone. Instead, the genre of medical topography, early colonial attempts to inventory indigenous medicinal plants, and the physical landscaping of hill sanatoriums all gesture towards co-constitutive entanglements

between colonizer and colonized, nature and culture. This section reads imperial landscapes of health in colonial Kumaun and Garhwal as 'contact zones' which were shaped by the co-presence of colonial surgeons, *pahari* peasants, indigenous doctors, European travelers, and Indian elites. As Mary Louise Pratt notes, the 'contact' perspective treats relations among colonizer and colonized 'not in terms of separateness, but in terms of co-presence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, and often within radically asymmetrical relations of power.'[10] The case of medical topographies, the cultivation of indigenous drugs, and the landscaping of sanatoriums all expose the 'interlocking understandings and practices' which structured imperial landscapes of health in nineteenth-century Kumaun and Garhwal.

Environmental paradigms had dominated colonial medical understandings of the subcontinent across the nineteenth century. Since the publication of James Johnson's *The Influence of Tropical Climates, More Especially the Climate of India, on European Constitutions* (1813), medical topography was central to the colonial 'investigation and representation of the Indian environment.'[11] In the early nineteenth century, surgeons of the East India Company also served as botanists, zoologists, and meteorologists. Consequently, medical personnel shaped understandings of nature and the body in the subcontinent. While medical topography involved the 'systematic recording of all factors affecting health in a particular locality,' as Mark Harrison argues, the genre relied not only on environmental criteria but also 'moral, political, and aesthetic'

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[10] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 2008 [second edition]),8

[11] David Arnold, *Science, Technology, and Medicine in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 77.

ideas.[12] In contrast to the 'debilitating' effects of the tropical plains, early colonial medical topographies of the Indian highlands underlined the 'tonic' effect of hill climates for both European and native bodies. Harrison cites the example of D. S. Young's early-nineteenth-century medical topography of the Nilgiri hills which extolls the 'tall robust, and well proportioned' character of indigenous Toda tribes while simultaneously underlining the ways in which the climate of the Nilgiris was 'not only conducive to health but to industry and civilization.'[13]

Early colonial medical topographies of the Indian uplands thus paved the way for the foundation of hill sanatoriums as sites for medicalized leisure and the recovery of EIC troops. Initial medical reports about the Indian hill station concluded that 'the death rate for European troops stationed in the hills was *half* that of their counterparts in the plains.'[14] These medical representations of the mountains were further inflected by racialized and gendered notions of bodily renewal and security. The bracing climate of the hills were seen as conducive to 'manly sports,' while hill stations were deemed to offer relief from the 'degenerative' effect of the tropics on the European. In the 1840s, contradictory reports about the salubriousness of the hills cast doubts about the benefits of hill stations for European mortality. As Harrison notes, 'it was soon realized that hill stations were not the idyllic refuge some supposed them to be,' as Company surgeons recorded the ill-effects of the high-altitude sun and the thinner air of the hills, which led

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[12] Mark Harrison, *'Differences of Degree: Representations of India in British Medical Topography, 1820-c.1870,' Medical History* Vol. 44, No. 20 (2000): 52.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Dane Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1996), 25.

to sub-burn and chest complaints. Such skeptical reports only prompted more medical topographies investigating the precise features of localities within the hills. Reports concluded that not all parts of the Himalayas were deemed suitable for the stationing of military troops and hill stations. Surgeon William Dollard's *Medical Topography of Kalee Kumaoon and Shore Valley* (1840), for instance, distinguished the climate and topography of the cantonment of Lohaghat with the neighboring town of Champawat. Dollard relates how after the Anglo-Gurkha War, Company troops had been stationed at Champawat but 'owing to the extreme unhealthiness of the place, the Detachment was removed and cantoned at Lohooghaut.'[15] Seasonal flooding in Champawat had allegedly led to a higher loss of life from fevers in the region, which prompted the decision to shift the cantonment to Lohaghat in Eastern Kumaun.

Just as medical topography contributed to the mapping of landscapes of health and unhealth in the Himalayas, colonial officers also deployed the genre to scrutinize the bodies of mountain dwellers. In the Central Himalayas, medical topography not only aided in the identification of salubrious hill sanatoria but also in the study of purportedly 'local' diseases such as goiter. Assistant-Surgeon John McClelland's 'An Inquiry into the Causes of Goiter' (1835) included detailed statistics about the castes and villages effected by the disease in the Shore Valley, Kumaun. McClelland's medical topography not only notes native understandings of the causal relations between place and health but further suggests how such understandings informed practices of caste segregation. 'The natives themselves impute to the quality of waters, a powerful

[15] Surgeon William Dollard, 'General and Medical Topography of Kalee Kemaoon and Shore Valley with Sketches of the Cantonments of Lohooghaut and Petoragurh' (Calcutta: G H Huttmann, Bengal Military Orphan Press, 1840), 6. Accessed from the British Library [IOR/Z/E/4/16/K361].

influence over their state of health,' McClelland reported.[16] This belief in the medicinal qualities of water manifested in segregated practices of water consumption in several villages of the Shore Valley. In the village of Deota, McClelland found that 'one extremity' of the settlement was inhabited by Brahmins while the other was dominated by Rajputs and so-called 'Doms' (Dalits). Whereas all of the Brahmins of the village were free from goiter, two-thirds of the Rajput population and 'nearly the whole' of the 'Doms' were effected. McClelland notes that the former inhabitants of the village had diagnosed the 'noxious effects' of the local spring and attempted to convey water from a distant source through an aqueduct. As the aqueduct had since fallen into disrepair, 'the quantity of water it transmits is reserved exclusively for the Brahmins; but during the rainy season, when water is plentiful, the Rajpoots also use the water of the aqueduct; but the Domes have no alternative at any season, but to use the water from the [village] spring.'[17] Similar practices of the caste segregated use of water and the uneven prevalence of goiter were observed in other villages such as Panorah. While he meticulously noted native understanding of the environmental causes of sickness, McClelland set out to move beyond mere 'opinions' to establish a 'factual' analysis of the causes of goiter. After collecting a series of geographical details about regions effected by the disease, he inferred that the geology of the area and its effect on water sources could explain the prevalence of goiter.

Early colonial medical topographies of the Central Himalayas therefore reveal how native knowledge inflected colonial understandings of place and health. Given that medical topography

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[16] John McClelland, *Some Inquiries in the Province of Kemaon relative to Geology, and Other Branches of Natural Science* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1835), 268.

[17] Ibid., 292.

was not only necessary for identifying suitable locations for hill sanatoriums but also for establishing the commercial and botanical potential of highland areas, EIC surgeons relied upon native expertise all the more. Thomas Hardwicke's pioneering 'Narrative of a Journey to Sirinagur' (1796) lists the native uses and medicinal properties of the *kaiphal*, a mountain berry which flourishes across Kumaun and Garhwal: 'this is a middle sized tree indigenous to these mountains, the bark of which is much valued in Hindustan for its aromatic and medicinal properties, and found in every bazaar under this name.'[18] Hardwicke cited the reports of native intermediaries in his description of the seasonal blossoming of the *kaiphal* and the value of its fruit. Furthermore, his botanical observations of plants were illustrated by native artists.

More thorough surveys of indigenous medicinal plants from the hills were undertaken by John Forbes Royle in the decades after the Anglo-Gurkha War. Royle emerged as an expert in Indian materia medica (pharmacology) and was even appointed Professor of Materia Medica at King's College, London in 1836, shortly after earning his medical degree. Royle's technique of investigation was particularly noteworthy as he treated the native bazaar as a source of knowledge. As Bernard Cohn notes, in the nineteenth century, the British appear 'to have felt most comfortable surveying India from above and at a distance' and were 'uncomfortable in the narrow confines of a city street, a bazaar, a *mela* – anywhere they were surrounded by their Indian subjects.'[19] The bazaar's significance as a metaphor for 'oriental chaos' notwithstanding, early colonial inventories of Indian materia medica drew upon the bazaar as a source of knowledge and a potential market

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[18] Thomas Hardwicke, 'Narrative of a Journey to Sirinagur', *Asiatic Annual Register* (1800): 276.

[19] Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 10.

for medicines. As Projit Mukharji observes, in the early nineteenth century, indigenous drugs were widely used in colonial hospitals and dispensaries. Authors of lists of materia medica, like Royle, were thus more concerned with procuring the right herbs from local bazaars than with standardizing taxonomies of medicinal plants. Indeed, Mukharji argues that in the early colonial period, 'the language of botanical identification [was] premised on bazaar identification.'[20] Royle's list of materia medica lists the vernacular names of several medicinal barks, roots, and plants sourced from the Himalayas including *atis* (aconitum *atees*), *kasuri* (Euonymus tigens), *kaiphul* (Myrica sapida), and *tez-pat* (Larus cassia).[21]

Early-nineteenth-century colonial approaches to health in the Central Himalayas were thus grafted onto native medical and botanical knowledge. Even the imperial botanical garden- which was used for the study and plantation of a variety of fruiting plants, timber trees, and medicinal herbs- was at times built upon older native gardens. In the Central Himalayas, botanical gardens established in Mussorie and Saharanpur served as economic and scientific institutions. The Saharanpur garden in the Siwalik foothills was built upon a 'public garden' that was originally established and maintained by Zabita Khan, who used the revenue of seven villages for the upkeep of the garden in 1779.[22] In its new avatar as the Company's Botanic Garden, the Saharanpur garden

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[20] Projit Bihari Mukharji, 'What's in a Name?: The Crisis of Botanical Identification and the Production of 'Economic Man,'' *Social Scientist* Vol. 33, No. 5/6 (2005), 8.

[21] J. F. Royle, 'List of Articles of Materia Medica, obtained in the Bazars of the Western and Northern Provinces of India,' *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* Vol 1, No. 1-12 (1832).

[22] John Forbes Royle, 'Account of the Honorable Company's Botanic Garden at Seharanpur,' *Journal of the Asiatic Society* No. 2 (1832): 43.

not only served as a site for the naturalization of non-endemic plant species but also as a laboratory for the study and plantation of indigenous medicinal plants. During his tenure as the Superintendent of the Company's Botanic Garden at Saharanpur, Royle oversaw the cultivation of an 'experimental medicinal garden.' Plants collected from across Kumaun and Garhwal were collected and cultivated in the garden by a staff of forty men, 'with the assistance of some convicts.' The medicinal garden included 'powerful articles of the European materia medica' alongside plants 'known only to native *hakims,*' though 'not less valuable.'[23] In the Mussorie botanical gardens, Himalayan medicinal herbs were further experimented upon and grown. After confirming the efficacy of hill rhubarb as a 'tonic and astringent in profluvia' as well as a general 'purge,' for example, the plant was cultivated at Mussoorie and 'considerable quantities' were subsequently supplied to depots across India.[24]

Imperial landscapes of health in the mountains stretched beyond the sequestered space of the hill station into the native bazaar and the botanical garden. Just as medical topographies of the Central Himalayas drew upon native understandings of relations between place and health, colonial inventories of Himalayan medicinal plants drew upon indigenous medical knowledges. However, towards the latter half of the century, the colonial interest in Indian materia medica was fading. As David Arnold notes, by the 1860s, 'Western medicine felt increasingly secure in its superior knowledge' and was 'shifting away from the endless accumulation of exotic materia medica to the pursuit of scientific pharmacology and the isolation of active chemical ingredients.'[25]

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[23] Ibid., 52.

[24] Ibid., 53-54.

[25] Arnold, *Science, Technology, and Medicine in Colonial India,* 69.

The next section of this chapter notes how the diminishing colonial interest in indigenous medicinal plants provided the context for the Tehri Princely State's novel experiments with the plantation and standardized collection of Himalayan *jadi butiyan* in the early twentieth century. Though the lines between European and native medical knowledge were hardening, the plantation of non-native materia medica at botanical gardens continued across the nineteenth century. The *Report on the Progress and Condition of the Government Botanical Gardens, Saharanpur and Mussoreee* (1891) relates how large quantities of drugs, such as Hyosciamus and Taraxacum, were planted at the gardens and supplied to medical depots in Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay.[26] The cultivation and supply of drugs from botanical gardens to the Medical Department was seen as a source of 'indirect savings' for the government.

While the colonial engagement with Indian materia medica was diminishing by the 1860s, the outbreak of devastating epidemics and famines in the last decades of the nineteenth century heralded an unprecedent slew of government initiated sanitary and medical interventions in the rural Himalayas. Vinay Lal argues that 'the five decades from 1871 to 1921 were a period of catastrophic death in India' as susceptibility to endemic diseases, such as tuberculosis and dysentery, as well as epidemic diseases, such as the bubonic plague, 'increased on account of chronic malnutrition, hunger, and starvation.'[27] In the Central Himalayas, the impact of famines during the 1890s were compounded by recurrent outbreaks of the *mahamari,* or hill plague,

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[26] *Report on the Progress and Condition of the Government Botanical Gardens, Saharanpur and Mussooree for the year ending 31st March 1891* (Allahabad: NWP and Oudh Government Press, 1891), 4-5.

[27] Vinay Lal, *The Fury of COVID-19: The Politics, Histories, and Unrequited Love of the Coronavirus* (New Delhi: Macmillan, 2020), 15-16.

together with the incidence of sporadic cholera along the pilgrim route. The impact of famines and epidemics in the mountains were felt most severely by landless Dalit households. 'In all epidemics, the Doms who form the laboring classes are the first to be attacked,' Atkinson reported in his *Gazetteer*. Atkinson alleged that Dalit laborers were 'exceedingly filthy in their habits and eat meat of any kind, even carrion, hence disease when it attacks them finds in them victims prepared for its ravages and they easily succumb.'[28] However, Atkinson's racial tropes about 'Doms' overlooked the fact that the colonial enclosure of the commons through the leasing of land to tea plantations and the demarcation of protected forests only furthered the food insecurity of Dalits in the hills, who were left increasingly susceptible to famines and diseases in the late nineteenth century.

Deemed peculiar to the mountains, the *mahamari* prompted the further investigation and management of diseases in Kumaun and Garhwal. Known locally as *gola rog*, the 'great disease' or *mahamari* of the Central Himalayas was attributed to the 'excessively dirty mode of living of the villagers' in colonial accounts. After over a hundred mountain dwellers died from the disease in the 1850s, colonial doctors recommended a series of sanitary measures including the burning of infected houses, lime-washing of houses, and the removal of cattle housed in the first floor of human dwellings. Donald Macintyre's travelogue from 1889 notes native resistance to such interventions:

> 'At a place where Dr. Pearson had been rigorously carrying out his sanitary measures- by burning houses that contained putrid corpses, having the cattle removed from the village, whitewashing, and suchlike- the inhabitants sent a petition to the commissioner of the province, imploring him to take away the doctor

[28] Edwin Atkinson, *Gazetteer of the Himalayan Districts of the NWP Vol. 3.* (Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1973 [First published in Allahabad, 1886]): 532.

> sahib, as they said they would rather have the mahamurree amongst them than him with all his worry.'[29]

Across the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, studies were conducted by officers of the Indian Medical Service to ascertain whether the *mahamari* of the hills was an endemic disease or a form of the plague. The reports of these studies notwithstanding, colonial accounts overwhelmingly attributed the disease to the 'truly abominable' hygiene of mountain villages, where the cultivation of purportedly malodorous crops, like hemp, made such settlements 'hotbeds of disease.' Consequently, with respect to the *mahamari,* Macintyre contended that 'this horrible pestilence seems to confine itself entirely to the natives of the country.'[30]

While the late nineteenth century saw mountain dwellers bearing the brunt of epidemics, famines, and colonial sanitary interventions, it was also the period during which Indian elites actively adopted colonial notions about the salubriousness of the hills. The hitherto exclusively white space of the hill station was thus becoming increasingly engulfed by native bodies. As Pamela Kanwar observes in her study of Shimla, Indian elites were purchasing bungalows on the hill-side just as the lower bazaar was dominated by native merchants, rikshaw pullers, and night-soil men upon whose labor elite settlement depended.[31] Yet, the increasing Indian incursion into the racially exclusive space of the hill station did not detract from the moral and political value of these sites. As Nandini Bhattacharya argues, hill sanatoriums were 'colonial enclaves that were

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[29] Donald Macintyre, *Hindu-Koh: Wanderings and Wild Sport on and Beyond the Himalayas* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1889), 378.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Pamela Kanwar, *Imperial Simla: The Political Culture of the Raj*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007).

constantly breached by unwanted social elements, but nevertheless sustained due to political and social reasons, and it is undeniable that they provided social exclusivity and municipal infrastructure not available to the Indian cities elsewhere.'[32] Even after the late-nineteenth-century shift away from environmental paradigms of disease towards the search for pathogenic micro-organisms, moral ideas about the salubriousness of the hills continued to hold sway over the colonial imagination. Indeed, well into the early decades of the twentieth century, the colonial government decided to establish medical research institutes and bacteriological laboratories in the mountains precisely because their cooler climate and remoteness from the crowds of the plains was deemed ideal.[33]

The cultural resonance of the Himalayas as a salubrious landscape for white bodies thus persisted even after the shift away from environmental paradigms of disease and even despite increasing native settlement in hill stations. As Dane Kennedy argues, the racial and political significance of hill stations was underlined by a shift 'from clinical assessment of climatic disease to a more socially resonant understanding of the effects of the tropics on the European.'[34] At the same time, efforts were made to 'enhance' the salubriousness of the hills through drainage and tree-planting. As James Beattie demonstrates, the perceived ability of eucalyptus to 'drain swampy land and remove miasma,' led to the official plantation of the tree in hill stations across the

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[32] Bhattacharya, *Contagion and Enclaves: Tropical Medicine in Colonial India*, 12.

[33] David Arnold, 'Colonial Medicine in Transition: Medical Research in India, 1910-47,' *South Asia Research* Vol. 14, No. 1 (1994), 16.

[34] Kennedy, *Magic Mountains*, 30.

subcontinent. In the Central Himalayan hill station of Ranikhet, sixteen-thousand eucalyptus trees had been planted by 1873.[35]

As sites for physical and racial regeneration, hill stations were considered to be 'sanatoria'- from the Latin word for 'a place providing therapy'- in the colonial lexicon.[36] Beyond the hill station, the tuberculosis sanatorium emerged as another landscape of healing in the early-twentieth-century Central Himalayas. While the Almora TB sanatorium had been established by missionaries in 1908, the King Edward Sanatorium at Bhowali, established in 1912, was the first government run sanatorium in India. Situated in the scarcely populated rural countryside of the Kumaun Himalayas, the Bhowali sanatorium catered to Europeans as well as natives of all classes. The sanatorium was situated on an estate donated by the Nawab of Rampur, who had purchased it from an English tea planter. The Bhowali sanatorium was deemed ideal for tuberculosis patients: 'A succession of terraces, with a southerly aspect, well sheltered from the north and with an ample water-supply and beautifully laid out gardens, and with easy graded walks through adjoining pine woods' ostensibly afforded the 'most excellent sites…for the treatment of patients with tuberculosis.'[37]

The architecture of the Bhowali sanatorium clearly reflects the ways in which race and class were inscribed onto imperial landscapes of health. A class of cottages for 'well-to-do Indian

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[35] Beattie, 'Imperial Landscapes of Health,' 111.

[36] Sheela Prasad and B. Venkat Raju, 'The Magic Mountain Revisited: History of the Madanapalle TB Sanatorium,' *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 43, No. 33 (2008): 53.

[37] 'Phthisis Campaign: United Provinces' Scheme,' *Times of India,* May 28, 1912, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Times of India, pg. 8.

gentlemen' included sunny verandahs and a servants' quarters some 'eighty yards away.' Room rentals were available for less wealthy natives and a smaller wing of quarters provided free lodgings for indigent patients. The European quarters occupied a large lower bungalow which 'opens into the beautiful garden and orchard situated on the same plateau which Mr. Newton the original proprietor of this house, laid out with much care and taste.'[38] Far from providing accessible treatment, the Bhowali sanatorium generated revenue by raising rents and increasing the number of paying beds. The sanatorium nevertheless reflected how Indian elites were increasingly resorting to the mountains as a place for healing. Prominent nationalist figures, including Kamala Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose, spent time at Bhowali.[39] Beyond the colonial hill station and the tuberculosis sanatorium, the last section of this chapter explores how Indian elites established distinctive spaces for spiritual and physical healing through the institution of the modern *ashram*.

Colonial medical topographies, inventories of medicinal herbs, and the shifting history of hill sanatoriums all demonstrate how entanglements of place and health in the mountains were scripted through asymmetrical power relations as well as through shared understandings and practices between colonizer and colonized. The transplantation of racialized colonial tropes about salubrious hill climates onto Central Himalayan landscapes at times involved the erasure of indigenous approaches to health. The most notable Central Himalayan hill station, Mussoorie, served as a picturesque enclave for European recovery from the debilitating tropics, yet the name Mussoorie inadvertently denoted an indigenous medicinal plant. The Anglicized 'Mussoorie' is a mispronunciation of *masuri*, which is a local name for the medicinal plant *Coriaria Nepalensis*.

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[38] Ibid.

[39] Bose was briefly lodged at the Bhowali sanatorium as a 'state prisoner.'

This berry-bearing shrub-like tree once abundantly adorned the ridges of the Himalayan foothills, where it had been used to adulterate senna. 'Mussoorie' is therefore testament to the long history of local uses of medicinal herbs and roots (*jadi butiyan*) in the Himalayas. The next section of this chapter traces the late colonial commercialization of Himalayan medicinal herbs. Just as moral notions of place, race, and health pervaded the colonial imagination of the Central Himalayas, I argue that intangible valuations of the Himalayas as a signifier of healing inflected the late colonial commodification of medicinal herbs.

Part 2: Alpine Enclosures and the Commercialization of Himalayan Medicinal Herbs

Swami Haridas's wanderings across the Himalayas in search for *jadi butiyan*, before he established his own Ayurvedic pharmacy in 1924, mirrored the trajectory of contemporary Ayurvedic practitioners. In 1922, Swami Kedar Nath publicly announced his Ayurvedic expertise by underlining his extensive Himalayan travels. In an advertisement for *The Leader*, Kedar Nath described himself as 'a sadhu, a most successful Ayurvedic physician, formerly principal [of] Dayanand Ayurveda College, Lahore, who has acquired specific knowledge of medicinal herbs by extensive Himalayan travels.' Kedar Nath's Himalayan herbal knowledge supposedly allowed him to treat all manner of physiological and mental ailments including 'hysteria, asthma, lunacy and other hopeless cases.'[40] In another advertisement for *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Kedar Nath highlighted his preparation of the Ayurvedic medicine Chyabanprash using mountain plants. 'Prepared from the best Benares Amlaki and other ingredients mostly collected in the Himalayas' his Chyabanprash was deemed 'much more efficacious.'[41]

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[40] *The Leader*, November 4, 1922, World Newspaper Archive.

[41] *Amrita Bazaar Patrika*, June 13, 1922, World Newspaper Archive.

References to the Himalayas as a source of Ayurvedic expertise and medicinal herbs were echoed across late colonial publications from both the hills and the plains. While the Dehradun based periodical, *Garhwali,* carried several advertisements for Himalayan herbs prepared by the Verma Pharmaceutical Works, the plains based newspaper, *Hindu Panch,* featured pronouncements about the wide-ranging efficacy of roots sourced from the Himalayas and Tibet. In one such advertisement, a yogi who had allegedly learned about Tantric amulets (*kavach*) and medicinal roots (*jadi*) during thirty-seven years of Himalayan travels, promised readers medicines to obtain jobs, successful exam results, victory over enemies, and freedom from diseases. In such advertisements for indigenous medicines, the 'Himalayas' signified both a material and metaphorical source of healing. What explains the centrality of the Himalayas in the late colonial commercialization of indigenous medicines and Ayurvedic expertise? What role did mountain dwellers play in the burgeoning commodification of Himalayan herbs? And how did late colonial understandings of the relations between Ayurveda and the mountains compare with early-nineteenth-century Ayurvedic knowledge from the Central Himalayas? To explore these questions, this section of the chapter will first analyze Gumani Pant's *Jñānabhaiṣajyamañjarī* before tracing the Tehri Durbar's attempts to mass produce Himalayan herbs into Ayurvedic tinctures through the Vanaspati Karyalaya and Forest Department.

The Himalayas and the Composite Nature of Medical Practice in South Asia

Scholars of indigenous medical knowledges have underlined the 'composite nature of medical practice' in the subcontinent. As Joseph Alter notes, 'what counts as medicine [in Asia] blurs into other things- martial arts, beauty regimen, alchemy, aesthetic surgery, diet and yoga.' The 'bracketing forces of medicine itself- conceptualized across time as a naturally delimited system dealing with illness and disease,' obscures a 'history of health that encompasses much

more,' Alter argues.[42] Interrogating the 'composite nature' of medicine not only calls attention to the entanglements of health, religion, and other bodily practices, but it further entails problematizing the identification of separate 'Indigenous Medical Systems' with purportedly distinct religious groups. Linear associations drawn between Ayurveda and Hindu culture, Tibetan medicine and Buddhism, and Unani Tibb and Islam obscure the ways in which 'a variety of forms of therapeutic knowledge have influenced each other.'[43] Guy Attewell notes centuries of exchanges between Unani Tibb and Ayurveda, for instance. Sanskrit Ayurvedic works were compiled and translated into Persian, as in the case of the Lodhi period *Ma'dan al-Shifā-i Sikandar Shahi* which was based on the *Suśruta Saṃhitā* and the *Caraka Saṃhitā*. Similarly, works on tibb were to a lesser extent compiled and translated into Sanskrit, such as Mahadeva's eighteenth-century *Hikmatprakāśa* which was based on Unani terminology. Furthermore, Attewell questions the classification of amorphous approaches to healing and therapeutics as distinct 'systems': 'It is clear that not only have Ayurveda and tibb evolved together as learned medical traditions over several centuries, but they have coexisted alongside other methods of healing- overtly religious, magical, alchemical, astrological and local herbalist.'[44] Attewell thus moves beyond the exclusive categorization of 'systems' towards the study of 'streams of medical knowledge and practice in India.'

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[42] Quoted in Laurent Pordie, 'Genealogy and Ambivalence of a Therapeutic Heterodoxy, Islam and Tibetan Medicine in North-western India,' *Modern Asian Studies* Vol. 49, No. 6 (2015): 1773.

[43] Pordie, 'Genealogy and Ambivalence,' 1775.

[44] Guy Attewell, *Refiguring Unani Tibb: Plural Healing in Late Colonial India* (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2007).

The composite nature of medical practice provides the context for understanding historical associations between the Himalayas and healing. Pankaj Gupta, Vijay Sharma, and Sushma Sharma estimate that approximately 7,500-10,000 species of plants in the Indian Himalayas have medicinal properties which have been utilized in Unani Tibb, Sowa-Rigpa (Tibetan medicine), Ayurveda, Chinese medicine, and a variety of rural 'folk medicines.'[45] Historically, texts from across these 'streams of medical knowledge' have cast the Himalayas as a storehouse of medicinal herbs. In a second century C.E. Sanskrit biography of the Buddhist physician Jivaka, for instance, the Buddha is shown to guide his physician through the mountains in search of herbs: 'the Blessed One took Jivaka, the royal physician, and went flying to the Himalaya, the king of mountains. There, various kinds of medicinal herbs shone like lamps. The Blessed One said to Jivaka, the royal physician, 'Jivaka, gather the herbs as you like!''[46] In classical Ayurvedic texts, the Himalayas were 'the object of contradictory evaluations,' Francis Zimmerman observes. Whereas the Himalayas are considered 'pure and auspicious according to Caraka,' in the *Suśruta Saṃhitā* the mountains are deemed to 'provoke diseases of the heart and head, swellings, elephantiasis, and goiter.'[47] Zimmerman notes how medieval Ayurvedic commentaries resolved these contradictory evaluations by uniformly extolling the purity of waters originating from the Himalayas as well as

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[45] Pankaj Gupta, Vijay Kumar Sharma, and Sushma Sharma, *Healing Traditions of the Northwestern Himalayas* (Delhi: Springer, 2014).

[46] Gregory Schopen, 'The Training and Treatments of an Indian Doctor in a Buddhist Text: A Sanskrit Biography of Jivaka,' In *Buddhism and Medicine,* ed. Pierce Salguero (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 197.

[47] Zimmerman, *The Jungle and the Aroma of Meats,* 72-73.

by drawing distinctions between healthful high mountains (*adhityaka*) and the unhealthy valleys and foothills (*upatyaka*).

Pre-colonial medical texts, largely composed in the plains, thus underlined the healing qualities of the Himalayas. Yet, the mountains were also home to a variety of indigenous medical knowledges and rural practitioners often drew from multiple streams of medical knowledge. As Laurent Pordie demonstrates, in Ladakh, Shiite Muslims have been practitioners of Tibetan medicine. In the Central Himalayas, the rural knowledge of medicinal plants often exceeded the lists of Ayurvedic therapeutics. The Tharu communities of Kumaun reportedly use 179 medicinal plants of which 42 are valued in Ayurveda.[48] While village *vaids* in the Central Himalayas were largely 'upper' caste and male, medical knowledge varied along lines of ethnicity and gender. As Anjali Capila notes, knowledge of healing therapies and diets have been passed down orally among rural mountain women for generations. Furthermore, she finds that the '*pashu* Vaidyas' of Almora district, who specialize in the treatment of domestic animals, are largely women.[49]

Among the Bhotiyas of the Niti Valley, over a hundred medicinal plants are largely collected by women from high-altitude meadows. Traditional practitioners provided treatment as welfare, refusing any payment for their services.[50] Bhotiya communities have also inverted mythic legends about medicinal herbs mentioned in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. In the ancient epic, the monkey-god

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[48] Gupta, Sharma, and Sharma, *Healing Traditions of the Northwestern Himalayas,* 30.

[49] Anjali Capila, *Traditional Health Practices of Kumaoni Women: Community and Change* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing, 2004), 199.

[50] Sunil Kainthola, Dhan Singh Rana, Nandan Singh et al. *Community Rights and Livelihoods in the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve* (Kathmandu: ICIMOD, 2006), 20.

Hanuman is said to have ventured to the Himalayas in search of the life reviving *sañjīvanī* herb to treat Rama's brother Lakshmana. Afraid of losing time by gathering the herb, Hanuman instead ripped off the entire hillside upon which the plant grew. The story of Hanuman and the *sañjīvanī* is remembered differently by the Bhotiya community of Drongiri village. Here, Hanuman is not only accused of recklessly defacing the sacred mountain of Parbat Dev, but also of tricking an elderly women into locating the *sañjīvanī* herb for him.[51] Medical knowledges in the rural Himalayas have thus been historically heterogenous and often refracted along lines of ethnicity and gender.

The Jñānabhaiṣajyamañjarī *and Early Colonial Ayurvedic Knowledge in the Himalayas*

The plural worlds of healing in the Central Himalayas provides the context for our reading of Gumani Pant's early-nineteenth-century *Jñānabhaiṣajyamañjarī* ('ornament of knowledge and healing'). Gumani's writings circulated orally and through fragments of paper across the Kumaun Himalayas before they were compiled and published by Devi Dutt Pande, who served as a Sanskrit teacher at Almora's Ramsay College. Pande's *Gumani Kavi Sanskrit evam Bhasha Kavya* was printed at Etawah in 1897 and was the first publication of Gumani's diverse works. While Gumani is largely remembered for his poetry in Kumaun, he also hailed from a family of royal Ayurvedic physicians (*raja vaidyas*) and was trained in Ayurveda by his uncle Radha Krishna Vaidyaraja. Gumani spent twelve years of his life wandering in solitude, observing various medicinal plants and animals during his travels. His botanical knowledge is evidenced by his sole Ayurvedic text, the *Jñānabhaiṣajyamañjarī*. Written in the early decades of the nineteenth century, the

[51] Mrinal Pande, 'The Sanjivani Quest,' *Scroll*, July 31, 2016, https://scroll.in/article/812802/the-sanjivani-quest-an-uttarakhand-village-hasnt-forgiven-hanuman-for-defacing-their-holy-mountain

Jñānabhaiṣajyamañjarī was first published in Pande's volume before it was reprinted as a separate text by Bombay's Venkateshwara Press in 1924.

Reading the *Jñānabhaiṣajyamañjarī* against Gumani's larger corpus demonstrates how he traversed Sanskrit and the vernacular, the spiritual and the medical, as well as the hills and the plains in both his texts and travels. Gumani notes his intended audience in the last verses of the *Jñānabhaiṣajyamañjarī*:

'गुमानी प्राज्ञभिषजां हेतोरुभयतः फलम्
व्यरीरचध्यथाप्रज्ञं ज्ञानभैषज्यमञ्जरीम्'
'*gumānī prājñabhiṣajāṃ hetorubhayataḥ phalam*
vyarīracadhyathāprajñaṃ jñānabhaaiṣajyamañjarīm'

'For the mutual benefit of healers (*bhiṣaj*) and learned men (*prājña*), Gumani
Has compiled this 'ornament of knowledge and healing' with his own intellect.' [52]

Catering to both doctors and learned men, the *Jñānabhaiṣajyamañjarī* includes references to yoga, Vedanta, and Ayurveda to cure both spiritual and physiological ailments. The spiritual ailments listed in the *Jñānabhaiṣajyamañjarī* include ignorance, craving, attachment, and ego, while listed bodily diseases and wounds span the human birth cycle. Gumani offers herbal prescriptions for afflictions as varied as fevers, baldness, indigestion, miscarriages, toxins, snake-bites, and insomnia. Apart from treating deficiencies, Gumani suggests spiritual and therapeutic aids for improving mental control, virility, contraception, hair growth, and even breast growth. Thus, the *Jñānabhaiṣajyamañjarī* offers wide-ranging advice for spiritual and physical problems applicable across genders and ages.

[52] Gumani Pant, *Jñānabhaiṣajyamañjarī: Hindībhāṣānuvādasahitā*, trans. Ram Karan Sharma (New Delhi: Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, 1998), 80. Translation and transliteration my own.

Gumani's metrical verses sometimes present similes between mental and physical ailments and in other instances are posed as rhetorical questions. Consider his unusual prescription for excessive menstrual bleeding (menorrhagia):

'को विश्वसिति मतं य न्निहन्ति चार्वाकनास्तिक्यम्
कः प्रत्येति यदाखोर्हन्ति प्रदरं पुरीषमिति'
'*ko viśvasiti mataṃ ya nnihanti cārvākanāstikyam*
kaḥ pratyeti yadākhorhanti pradaraṃ purīṣamiti' [53]

'Who believes that the atheism of Carvaka can be dispensed with?
Who believes that the feces (*purīṣa*) of a mouse (*ākhu*) can destroy menorrhagia (*pradaraṃ*)?'

By comparing the mistaken belief that Carvaka's materialist philosophy is irrelevant, to the anticipated disbelief in the efficacy of mouse feces as a treatment, Gumani attempts to justify his prescription. This reference to Carvaka is accompanied by parallel references to Vedanta, yoga, and bhakti throughout the *Jñānabhaiṣajyamañjarī.* While mouse feces is a rare case in which animal matter is cited as a tonic, Gumani mostly draws upon a wide range of medicinal plants, several of which are endemic to the Himalayas.

Nowhere in the *Jñānabhaiṣajyamañjarī* does Gumani specifically refer to the Kumaun Himalayas, yet at times his herbal prescriptions index the mountain climate and flora. His verses include references to the climate in which therapeutics must be sourced, such as the use of honey harvested in the winter to cure fevers caused by an aggravation of the *vatta* humor (wind). As a cure for an aggravation of the *pitta* humor (which represents fire and heat), he prescribes a decoction made of fumaria indica, a flowering herb from the Himalayas (*parpaṭa kvāthaḥ*). This delicate herb, identifiable by its clusters of pale-pink and white flowers, is found up to altitudes of

[53] Ibid., 44.

2,400 meters above sea level across the Central Himalayas. Other Himalayan *jadi butiyan* listed in the *Jñānabhaiṣajyamañjarī* include *śatāvarī* (asparagus recemosus), *viśavā* (aconitum heterophylim), and *kuṣṭha* (saussurea lappa). In addition to medicinal herbs, Gumani lists rare faunal and mineral materials traded across the trans-Himalayas including musk (*kastūrī*) and borax (*ṭankṇa*). Some of these herbs and ingredients, including *viśavā* (known in the mountains as *atis*) and *kuṣṭha* (or *kuth* in the vernacular), were central to the Tehri Durbar's attempt to cultivate medicinal plants on a large scale in the early twentieth century. Yet, Gumani did not exclusively rely upon the flora of the mountains and several herbs listed in his text are endemic to more tropical climates, such as *guñjā* (abrus precatorius or rosary pea) and *arka* (calotropis procera or rubber bush).

Juxtaposing the *Jñānabhaiṣajyamañjarī* with Gumani's vernacular poetry reflects his intimate familiarity with both Ayurvedic medicinal plants and the produce of the mountains. He carefully notes when ingredients for medicines need to be crushed into powders or churned into decoctions. As a cure for childhood illnesses (*bālaroga*), he prescribes *viśavākaṇābdaśṛṅgīcūrṇaṃ* or a powder (*cūrṇa*) of *viśavā* (aconitum heterophylim), *kaṇā* (piper longum or long pepper), *abda* (cyperus rotundus or nut grass), and *śṛṅgī* (pistacia integerrima or pistachio). His *pahari* poetry similarly reflects his sensuous knowledge of the crops and food of particular parts of the Kumaun Himalayas:

> 'Banana, lemon, walnut, pomegranate, sugarcane,
> orange, ginger and curd in abundance…
> Big cakes of rice powder fried in clarified butter
> This is what they eat, the people of Gangawali'[54]

[54] Charu Chandra Pande, '*Says Gumani*' (Nainital: PAHAR, 1994).

While Gumani observed several medicinal plants during his twelve years of wandering, he was no less immersed in the floral and culinary worlds of Kumaun. Indeed, Gumani's works suggest his dependence upon the kitchen garden and village market rather than larger bazaars for herbs.

Furthermore, Gumani's intimate dependence upon the landscapes of Kumaun can be gleaned from his poetic denunciations of the ecological impact of colonial rule.[55] While Gumani inventoried therapeutics and ailments in the early nineteenth century, colonial officials in Kumaun did not engage with Ayurvedic practitioners from the mountains nor did they portray any interest in Gumani's *Jñānabhaiṣajyamañjarī*, though his poetic compositions were subsequently published as 'specimens' of the *pahari* dialects. Gumani's trajectory therefore reflects the ways in which Ayurvedic practitioners remained rooted in rural mountain life in the early colonial Central Himalayas. Nevertheless, towards the turn of the nineteenth century, the Tehri Durbar and elite Indian merchants from the plains began to transform the social worlds of Himalayan herbs and displace Ayurvedic knowledge from the mountains.

The Tehri Princely State and the Vanaspati Karyalaya

The previous section of this chapter discussed the short-lived colonial effort to inventory and cultivate indigenous medicinal herbs from the mountains at the Saharanpur and Mussoorie botanical gardens in the early nineteenth century. While Royle's *List of Materia Medica, obtained in the Bazars of the Western and Northern Provinces of India* (1832) surveyed mountain herbs from the distanced site of the bazaar, botanical expeditions by Lieutenant-General Richard Strachey and J. E. Winterbottom comprehensively mapped the flora of the Central Himalayas decades later. Strachey and Winterbottom's journey through Kumaun and into Tibet in 1848,

[55] Gumani's subversive verses are quoted in chapter 2.

yielded a collection of 2,000 species which were subsequently supplied to metropolitan herbariums. Their *Catalogue of the Plants of Kumaon* (1852) includes species of medicinal plants, such as aconitum heterophylim (*atis*) and saussurea Kunthiana (*kuth*), but does not note their uses. Moreover, towards the turn of the century the colonial government's interest in indigenous medicinal plants had completely given way to an emphasis on commercially valuable timber. By the 1920s, the publications of official Forest Conservators, such as A. E. Osmaston's *Forest Flora of Kumaon* (1927), deliberately overlooked herbs and shrubs from alpine meadows.

From the late nineteenth century onwards, whereas the British government of Kumaun paid scant attention to the value of medicinal herbs and roots from the mountains, the Tehri Princely State was formulating novel plans to raise revenues on herb collection and to cultivate medicinal plants on enclosed alpine meadows. The Tehri Durbar began intervening in the customary collection and trade in medicinal plants across Garhwal in the 1870s. The village level consumption and collection of medicinal plants was pervasive across the Central Himalayas and the nineteenth-century trade in plants had connected the mountains with the trans-Himalayas and the plains. Merchants from Dehradun and Mussoorie customarily exchanged cloth, utensils, and cash for medicinal plants and other animal products collected by villagers. At higher altitudes, Bhotiyas conducted a two way trade in medicinal herbs and roots. Marchha and Johari-Shauka traders exchanged grain for wool, borax, and herbs from Tibet. Bhotiyas subsequently sold Tibetan herbs, as well as the *jadi butiyan* which they collected from alpine pastures, across village markets in the middle Himalayas and the Terai. Maharajah Pratap Shah, who reigned from 1878-1885, sought to put an end to this trade in medicinal herbs. Pratap Shah's attempt to introduce scientific forestry in Tehri Garhwal precipitated a series of *dhandaks* (uprisings) across the state during which the boundary lines of protected forests were destroyed and forest officers were abducted.

Consequently, his initial prohibition on the sale of medicinal plants was subsequently lifted, though the Durbar continued to exact customs duties on the trade in *jadi butiyan*.[56]

Beyond attempting to regulate and exact revenues on the de-centralized rural trade in medicinal plants, in the early twentieth century, the Durbar established a separate department to explore the economic potential of Himalayan herbs. The Indian States Administration Report for Tehri Garhwal State in 1920-21 outlined the Durbar's plans for Himalayan herbs:

> 'Since the state enjoys various climates ranging from 12,000 to 14,000 ft. above sea level, the territory abounds in many useful medicinal herbs. It was, therefore, arranged to get a State student trained in Ayurvedic colleges at Delhi and Calcutta. On his return from the colleges after passing the Ayurvedacharya and LAMS examination, he was engaged by the Agricultural Bank to explore and collect herbs and to find a market for them.'[57]

The Vanaspati Karyalaya, or the 'office of flora,' was thus established with the intention of marketing Himalayan *jadi butiyan* with the aid of Ayurvedic 'experts' recognized by institutions based in the plains. Rather than drawing upon the plural worlds of medicinal plant knowledges from the mountains, the Durbar set out to train Karyalaya staff at Ayurvedic colleges in Delhi and

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[56] Atul Saklani lists concessions made by the Durbar following the shooting of 17 peasants protesting forest policies in Rawain in 1930. 'Apart from the use of minor forest products, like roots, medicine, etc., shift farming was also allowed in some of the areas subject to certain regulations', he writes. Atul Saklani, *The History of a Himalayan Princely State* (Delhi: Durga Publications, 1987): 133.
Also, see Shiv Prasad Dabral on the Durbar's initial policy of contracting out the collection of medicinal herbs. Shiv Prasad Dabral. *Uttarakhand ka Itihas vol.6* (Dogadda: Veer Gatha Press, 1976), 465.

[57] Bhawani Dutt, 'Indian States Administration Reports Tehri Garhwal State 1920-1921,' IOR/V/10/2023, British Library [p. 3].

Calcutta. Indeed, the final aim of the department was to monetize the value of Himalayan medicinal plants by packaging them as Ayurvedic commodities for markets in the plains. As the Durbar's report continued, following initial experiments, the Karyalaya's 'staff will be strengthened, if the herbs find a good and speedy sale.'[58]

The Tehri Princely State's project of commercializing Himalayan herbs was a unique initiative within British India. The Vanaspati Karyalaya did not have a counterpart in the neighboring Kumaun Division and unlike the Durbar's Forest Department, the Imperial Forest Department did not engage in the cultivation of Himalayan herbs. Doctors at imperial institutions did make suggestions to research the potential of indigenous medicinal plants, yet their proposals were largely unheeded. R. N. Chopra, a Professor of Pharmacology at the Calcutta School of Tropical Medicine, emphasized the potential value of Himalayan herbs in a lecture delivered at the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1923. Chopra underlined the utility of Himalayan plants such as Atropa belladonna (*angur-i*-shafa), Juniper (*arar*), and Gentian kurro (*kutki*) for Western medicine. Chopra noted that 'the action of drugs can be tested scientifically and exactly only when its active principles have been extracted' and doing so 'requires laborious work.' Yet, 'little provision' had been made for research into indigenous drugs by the colonial government. Chopra therefore called upon 'rich and patriotic Indians' to contribute instead.[59] Nevertheless, such plans to research the potential of Himalayan medicinal plants for the pharmacology of Western medicine were slow to take off.

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[58] Ibid.

[59] 'Indigenous Drugs: Suggested Lines for Research,' *Times of India*, July 16, 1923, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Times of India.

Whereas the colonial government was increasingly reluctant to research or manufacture indigenous drugs, the Tehri State's Vanaspati Karyalaya sought to profitably tap into a burgeoning market for Ayurvedic tinctures.[60] In 1910, over a dozen Ayurvedic firms competed in an expanding market for drugs, including the formidable Bengal Chemicals and Pharmaceutical Works, Sakti Ausadhalya, and Kalpataru Ayurvedic Works.[61] By 1928, the Vanaspati Karyalaya had established its own pharmaceutical works for the preparation of Ayurvedic tinctures at the foothill town of Muni-ki-Reti. To gain credibility for its operations, the Karyalaya reinforced hierarchies of expertise by recruiting Ayurvedic doctors recognized by plains-based institutions rather than rural practitioners from the mountains. Indeed, the Annual Reports of the Tehri Durbar emphasized the need to replace the 'village quack *vaids* by trained Ayurvedic physicians.'[62]

The foundation of the Karyalaya and its project of commercializing Himalayan herbs must further be understood within the context of the increasing standardization and professionalization of Ayurveda from the early twentieth century onwards. Strict colonial restrictions on indigenous medicine, through the passage of the Medical Registration Acts of the 1910s, mobilized Ayurveda and Unani Tibb practitioners to form professional committees, colleges, and exams. The Indian Medical (Bogus Degree) Bill of 1915 strictly defined biomedical science as the 'western methods, of allopathic medicine, obstetrics and surgery, but does not include the homeopathic or Ayurvedic

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[60] On the British Indian Government's reluctance to manufacture indigenous drugs see Anil Kumar, 'Indian Drug Industry,' in Pati and Harrison ed. *Health, Medicine, and Empire* (Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2001).

[61] Ibid.

[62] Devendra Datt Raturi, 'Annual Administration Report of Tehri-Garhwal State for the Year 1932-1933,' IOR/V/10/2024, British Library.

or Unani systems of medicine.'[63] The purpose of the bill was to prevent 'unqualified persons' from assuming titles which suggested that they were Western medical practitioners even though they practiced Ayurveda, tibb, or homeopathy. The Medical Registration Acts not only delimited the use of the title 'doctor,' but further threatened Western doctors who collaborated with indigenous practitioners with deregistration. As David Hardiman argues, 'modernizing *vaids* and *hakims* reacted to this onslaught by setting up their own Ayurvedic and Unani Tibb colleges that provided a paper qualification and thus a modern form of professional identity.'[64] In addition to establishing medical colleges, practitioners of indigenous medicine rallied together to lobby the government through the All India Vedic and Unani Tibb Conference, first convened in 1910.

While colonial regulations were driving the professionalization of indigenous medical practitioners in the 1910s, the passage of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms (1919) and the shift to a diarchic mode of government in the 1920s accelerated the systematization of Ayurveda. Diarchy entailed the limited bifurcation of power by granting self-government at the provincial level. Local governments were consequently given responsibility over health, education, agriculture, and road upkeep. In the United Provinces, for example, limited self-government led to the establishment of the Board of Indian Medicine in 1921. The Board of Indian Medicine oversaw the registration and certification of *vaids* and *hakims. Vaids* who verified their Licentiate in Ayurvedic Medicine degrees were thus initially allowed to add the qualification L.A.M. (Bd. Of Indian Med.) after their signatures. It is in this context of increasing professionalization and

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[63] Quoted in Berger, 'From the Biomoral to the Biopolitical: Ayurveda's Political Histories,' 53.

[64] David Hardiman, 'Indian Medical Indigeneity: From Nationalist Assertion to Global Market,' *Social History* Vol. 34, No. 3 (2009), 275.

standardization that the Tehri Princely State dispatched officers of the Vanaspati Karyalaya to the plains to pass the L.A.M. examination.

By drawing upon recognized Ayurvedic 'experts,' the Vanaspati Karyalaya expanded its efforts to collect and sell medicinal herbs across the 1920s. In 1927, the Karyalaya collected a 'very large quantity of medicinal herbs of different species' and 'canvased by means of advertisements in foreign countries for their sale.' Within India, the Karyalaya invited tenders from local dealers. While the collection and sale of Himalayan herbs generated a revenue of Rs.18,294 by 1928, 'large quantities still remained undisposed of,' forcing the Durbar to restructure the aims of the Karyalaya a year later. The Durbar's Forest Department was subsequently entrusted with the collection of medicinal herbs, while the Vanaspati Karyalaya was exclusively tasked with the preparation of Ayurvedic medicines. By involving both the Karyalaya and the Forest Department, the Durbar sought to expand its efforts to commercialize Himalayan herbs:

> 'There are possibilities of extension as demand for Himalayan medicines grows. The possibilities of increasing income from sale of medicinal herbs in the state cannot be exaggerated.'[65]

While the Karyalaya would focus on manufacturing herbs into Ayurvedic tinctures through its pharmaceutical works at Muni-ki-Reti, the Forest Department would begin the mass-plantation of medicinal plants on enclosed alpine meadows.

The Durbar's expanded plans relied upon the classification and enclosure of alpine meadows as 'wastelands' in which value was yet to be realized:

> 'The Durbar is desirous of utilizing its two thousand sq. miles of grassy Alpine area from which *practically no income at present can be derived*. For this purpose a start has been made in growing Himalayan herbs in these areas, which are in great

[65] Bhawani Dutt, 'Indian States Administration Reports Tehri Garhwal State 1928-29,' IOR/V/10/2023, British Library [Pg. 25-26].

> demand in Indian and Foreign markets. Large patches of land were brought under regular cultivation in which Kut (Sausiria Lappa), Atis (Actonitum Hytrophilum) and various kinds of Aconites were planted. Hitherto these herbs were of indigenous growth in these areas scattered among other plants and weeds, making collection a matter of great expense and difficulty.'[66]

The indigenous growth of medicinal plants in high-altitude meadows had long been studied and utilized by mountain dwellers across the Central Himalayas. Far from 'Alpine wastelands,' high-altitude meadows had rich cultural and religious value for mountain dwellers. In Garhwal, alpine meadows are known as *bugyals* from the Garhwali word for soft grasses (*bug*). The fresh meadow grasses, which sprout after the snows melt, were long considered to be the favored food of sheep and goats. The trans-altitudinal, agro-pastoral rhythms of mountain life made *bugyals* a crucial part of the mountain economy, and customary village boundaries regulated the use of alpine meadows to protect against the over-grazing of these delicate ecosystems (see fig. 2). Aromatic plants, medicinal roots, and grasses (such as the scented *jambu*) from *bugyals* were collected and traded at lower altitudes. Elaborate myths about forest spirits (*ari acheri*) in the *bugyals* mediated social access to high-altitude pastures. Villagers were forbidden to enter *bugyals* with shoes on, while in some cases, access to meadows was restricted by caste. In the Niti Valley, the meadows surrounding the Nanda Devi mountain are considered to be the gardens of the Goddess Nanda Devi. Villagers are thus prohibited from gathering flowers, herbs, and roots from these meadows until after the Nanda Devi fair. During festivals, the meadow goddess is offered flowers such as the *brahma kamal*. Far from alpine wastelands, the *bugyals* of Garhwal are thus storied landscapes sedimented with deep historical value for mountain dwellers. The Durbar's project of deploying

[66] Ibid., 26.

the Forest Department to enclose meadows and cultivate herbs thus elided the cultural and social value of *bugyals* for mountain dwellers.

Paralleling this abstraction of the landscape, the labor of mountain women- who were largely responsible for collecting *jadi butiyan*- was replaced by the undercompensated labor of *coolies* in the Forest Department's Himalayan herb plantations. Consider this report about experimental saussurea lappa cultivation in the Gangi forests of the Bhilangana Valley:

> 'One trained gardener with 2 coolies continued to raise plants in seed beds, and transported them in the forest. The total cost incurred during the year was Rs.375 and the area stocked up to date is 4 acres over which 50,000 seedlings were planted.'[67]

Similar processes of cultivation were underway in the Tehri Division, where 'the area under cultivation and the quality of seeds soon were both considerably increased' by the 1940s.[68] Projects of plantation at times involved the transplantation of herbs from one part of the mountains to another. As the Durbar's Annual Report for 1937-38 relates, 'three thousand more root bulbs were collected from the Jumna Tons Forest Division and planted in Gangi during the year under report.'[69]

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[67] I D Saklani, 'Annual Administration Report of Tehri Garhwal State 1939-1940,' IOR/V/10/2025, British Library [Pg. 29].

[68] I D Saklani, 'Annual Administration Reports of Tehri-Garhwal State 1942-1943,' IOR/V/10/2026, British Library [Pg. 13].

[69] Uma Datt Dangwal, 'Annual Administration Report of Tehri Garhwal State 1937-1938,' IOR/V/10/2025, British Library [Pg. 17].



Fig 2. A roadmap of the entryways for travelers to the Dayara bugyal in Garhwal. The map includes surrounding villages dependent upon the bugyal. Customarily the Dayara bugyal has been shared by shepherds from Rainthal and Barsu.
[Photograph taken by the author]

The Durbar's project of cultivating Himalayan herbs on enclosed alpine pastures thus involved three processes of abstraction. Firstly, the cultural value of *bugyals* was elided by the Durbar's enclosures and concomitant plans to 'utilize the produce of the alpine areas on a commercial scale.' Secondly, the gendered labor customarily involved in mountain herb collection was displaced by the role of Ayurvedic 'experts,' 'trained' gardeners, and *coolies*. Lastly, the complex ecology of *bugyals* was uprooted to accommodate monoculture plantations of particularly valuable herbs such saussurea lappa and artimicia maritama. Indeed, the Durbar's project of herb

cultivation not only enclosed the landscape but further fetishized the value of medicinal plants. In the late 1920s, the Durbar planned 'to establish a museum of various kinds of herbs and plants growing in the state.'[70] Such proposals superimposed the knowledge of botanists and Ayurvedic experts onto the textured social worlds of Himalayan herbs.

The trajectory of the Tehri Durbar's Vanaspati Karyalaya thus gestures towards the burgeoning commodification of medicinal plants from the Himalayas. The medicinal herbs and roots collected and cultivated by the Durbar's Forest Department were initially supplied to the Vanaspati Karyalaya for the production of Ayurvedic tinctures. In 1929, the medicinal plants supplied to the Karyalaya included over nine mounds of *gugal*, 29 seers of *mashi*, 25 seers of *atis*, 9 seers of *salam misri*, and 35 seers of *kawri*. Control over the manufacture and sale of Ayurvedic medicines using these Himalayan herbs was assigned to two experts- Pandit Parama Nand Kaviraj and Vaidya P. Vishnu Dutt Shastri. As opposed to the wide list of powders and decoctions described in Gumani's *Jñānabhaiṣajyamañjarī*, Kaviraj and Shastri oversaw the production of a more modest set of therapeutics recognized across canonical Ayurvedic texts taught at plains-based colleges. Yet, the total value of the medicines prepared by these officials of the Vanaspati Karyalaya exceeded the amount of medicines that they managed to sell. By 1930, the money gained by the Karyalaya from the sale of medicines had fallen to Rs.6,078 compared with Rs.8,319 in the previous year. In contrast, the total value of medicines produced amounted to Rs.16,263. Subsequently, as the 'maintenance of the Vanaspati Karyalaya did not afford much prospect of financial gain,' the work of producing and selling Himalayan, Ayurvedic medicines was 'handed

[70] Bhawani Dutt, 'Indian States Administration Reports Tehri Garhwal State 1928-29,' IOR/V/10/2023, British Library [Pg. 25-26].

over to Vaidya Pandit Vishnu Dutt Shastri who agreed to work on 25% commission on the sale of medicines already in stock.'[71] Nevertheless, the dissolution of the Karyalaya paved the way for a wider private market in the preparation and sale of Himalayan medicines.

From the 1930s onwards, the Tehri Durbar's Forest Department supplied collected and cultivated herbs to private firms in the plains. Even though the Vanaspati Karyalaya's effort to manufacture and market Ayurvedic medicines ended, the Durbar's collection, plantation, and sale of Himalayan herbs continued unabated. The Durbar's Annual Report for 1933-34 anticipated that:

> '*As pharmaceutical factories grow in the plains, demand on the medicinal herbal resources of the state is bound to increase*, of which there have already been indications. To meet the growing demand, the state has not lagged behind in planting and cultivating in a systematic way, any herbs that will grow in the varying conditions of climate and soil which obtain in the State.'[72]

The Durbar further entered into collaborations with pharmaceutical firms to ascertain the potential value of medicinal herbs. While the Durbar had first attempted to test herbs at the Forest Research Institute in Dehradun with uncertain results, in the 1940s, the Durbar's Forest Department dispatched collected herbs to 'different firms for testing their use in the manufacture of medicines' and began exporting the approved herbs outside the Princely State.[73] Parallelly, the range of Ayurvedic pharmaceutical companies marketing Himalayan medicines expanded over the course

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[71] Mahesh Sharan Raturi, 'Annual Administration Report of Tehri-Garhwal State 1931-1932,' IOR/V/10/2024, British Library [Pg. 14].

[72] Jamuna Swarup Casshyap, 'Annual Administration Report of Tehri Garhwal State 1933-1934,' IOR/V/10/2025, British Library [Pg. 13].

[73] I D Saklani, 'Annual Administration Reports of Tehri-Garhwal State 1940-1941,' IOR/V/10/2026, British Library [Pg. 18].

of the early decades of the twentieth century. The contemporary multi-national firm, the Himalaya Drug Company, was established at Dehradun in 1930, while the Sivananda Pharmaceutical Works was started at Rishikesh in 1945. The Kali Kamli Wala Kshetra of Rishikesh also operated an Ayurvedic Sewa Samiti for the manufacture and distribution of medicines.

The burgeoning commodification of Himalayan herbs not only relied upon monopolistic processes of collection and plantation carried out by the Durbar's Forest Department, but further rested upon material as well as symbolic references to the Himalayas as a source of healing. At times, advertisements for Himalayan medicines underlined the authenticity of the mineral and herbal ingredients used by dismissing versions of the same medicine traded by mountain dwellers. For instance, Harisankar Sastri, of the Himalayan Depot at Haridwar, confidently claimed to trade in 'genuine sila-jatu' in contrast with 'the bazaar stuff.' Sila- jatu is 'a fluid exudence from rare mineral ores on sequestered heights of the Himalayas and is an inevitable cure for all sorts of seminal discharges and urinary derangements,' Sastri explained. Yet, unlike the sila-jatu sold 'by ignorant Nepalese to befool the credulous public,' Sastri assured readers that 'mine is the real article.'[74] In other instances, advertisements brandished miraculous therapies solely on the basis of vague references to Himalayan ingredients. C. D. Pandit & Co., recommended Aurfesil pills 'for vim, vigor, and vitality.' Their advertisement for Aurfesil pills succinctly explained that 'these pills contain powerful, nerve restorative herbs, iron and other ingredients from the Himalayas.'[75] Thus, even brief references to the Himalayas served as means of proving the efficacy of medicines.

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[74] *Amrita Bazaar Patrika*, February 1909, World Newspaper Archive.

[75] *Times of India*, October 1933, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Times of India.

By the early decades of the twentieth century, longstanding valuations of the Himalayas as a source of medicinal herbs thus assumed a new form. Whereas early colonial Ayurvedic practitioners from the Central Himalayas, such as Gumani Pant, continued to be immersed in rural and vernacular contexts, by the late colonial period, Ayurvedic expertise was increasingly conflated with professional certification from plains-based colleges. The Tehri Durbar not only dismissed rural practitioners from the mountains as 'quacks,' but further relied upon Ayurvedic doctors with qualifications from the plains. Whereas the *Jñānabhaiṣajyamañjarī* included a wide range of herbal tinctures to cure a variety of physiological and spiritual ailments, the Vanaspati Karyalaya's manufactured medicines relied upon an attenuated list of Himalayan herbs, medicinal recipes, and ailments. In the 1940s, the Durbar attempted to formally replace village doctors with 'trained Ayurvedic physicians' and establish Ayurvedic Aushadhalayas (dispensaries) to supply manufactured Ayurvedic medicines to mountain dwellers.[76] Whereas early colonial Ayurvedic practitioners from the mountains, such as Gumani, would have sourced herbs from the kitchen garden, alpine meadow, or village market, by the late colonial period, the commercialization of Himalayan herbs resulted in processes of enclosure and mass-plantation which abstracted the labor and knowledge of mountain dwellers.

The Tehri Durbar's plans to mass produce Himalayan herbs were thus entangled with scientific forestry and the dispossession of local rights to the commons on the one hand, and with the expansion of a bourgeois market for Ayurvedic medicines on the other hand. The late colonial commodification of Central Himalayan herbs was further inflected by intangible valuations of the

[76] I D Saklani, 'Annual Administration Reports of Tehri-Garhwal State 1940-1941,' IOR/V/10/2026, British Library [Pg. 3].

Himalayas as a signifier of healing. In the 1920s, Ayurvedic practitioners, such as Haridas and Kedarnath, distinguished themselves through their Himalayan travels, even while their pharmaceutical enterprises were increasingly distanced from the labor and knowledge of mountain dwellers. Furthermore, advertisements for herbal and mineral remedies, such as C. D. Pandit & Co.'s Aursefil pills or Sastri's Sila-jatu, made claims to efficacy by evoking the Himalayas as the source of pure and authentic medicinal ingredients.

As Ayurveda was becoming increasingly standardized in response to colonial regulations in the 1910s, nationalist histories harkened back to Ayurveda's allegedly Himalayan and Hindu origins. Works such as the Maharaj of Gondal's *Aryan Medical Science* (1895) elided the historical ascendancy of Ayurveda in predominantly Buddhist periods of South Asian history by claiming an exclusively Hindu provenance for indigenous medicine.[77] An article on 'Ancient Hindu Medicine' in *The Leader* not only claimed Ayurveda as the 'medical system of the Hindus' that 'is as old as their civilization,' but further emphasized its Himalayan origins. The author claimed that the 'oldest existing work on Hindu medicine,' the Atreya Samhita, was written on 'the slopes of the Himalayas' where Atreya taught more pupils. The article in *The Leader* affirmed that 'we can trace the rudiments of medicine rising in two or three tiny streams from the slopes of the Himalayas.'[78] Indeed, the commercialization of Himalayan medicinal herbs in the early twentieth century not only involved the displacement of rural Ayurvedic practitioners and the enclosure of

[77] Nationalists obfuscated the fact that several classical Sanskrit Ayurvedic texts date from periods of Buddhist ascendancy in the subcontinent. Dominik Wujastyk, *The Roots of Ayurveda: Selections from Sanskrit Medical Writings* (London: Penguin Classics, 2003).

[78] 'Ancient Hindu Medicine,' *The Leader,* March, 30, 1916, World Newspaper Archive.

alpine meadows but also relied upon more intangible references to the mountains as a historic site and signifier of healing.

Part 3: Commodifying Relations between the Himalayas and Healing in Rishikesh

Just as the Tehri Durbar was conscripting Ayurvedic practitioners trained in the plains to prepare tinctures for the Vanaspati Karyalaya, officials of the Princely State were calling for the incorporation of yoga into school curriculums to improve the health of male students. At the Pratap Boarding Highschool for aristocratic boys, 'yogic forms of breathing (Desi Kasrat) exercises were also practiced according to Shastric injunctions under a well educated Pandit.' The Princely State's Annual Reports relate how 'the general health of the boarders was reported to be excellent due to regular *Sandhyopashan* and Yogic *asanas*.' Whereas boys were trained in postural yoga and breathing, at the Durbar's main girls' school (*kanya pathshala*) 'special attention was paid in giving necessary instructions in needlework, cookery, and hygiene.'[79] The Princely State's curricular experiments not only reflect the gendered structure of education in Garhwal but further gestures towards the increasing medicalization of yoga in the early twentieth century. As Joseph Alter argues, the trajectory of yoga in late colonial India can be summed up as 'the historical transmutation of philosophy into physical education, public health, and institutionalized medical practice.'[80]

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[79] Devendra Datt Raturi, 'Annual Administration Report of Tehri-Garhwal State 1929-1930,' IOR/V/10/2024, British Library [Pg. 31].

[80] Joseph Alter, *Yoga in Modern India: The Body Between Science and Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 4.

While the Tehri Durbar's curricular experiments demonstrate how yoga was being rearticulated as public health in the Garhwal Himalayas, the Himalayas- as both a place and a symbol- played a significant role in the reinvention of modern yoga.[81] As Alter explains:

> 'The sage lost to the world in the Himalayas is an extremely powerful reference point in the search for authentic yoga, and it is a reference point that had played an important role in the development of modern yoga. This is not because the sage-lost-to-the-world has been found, but because men like Swami Rama, Shri Yogendra, Swami Sivananda…among countless others, have all gone in search of the sage. *Most significantly, they have returned, and through religious reform movements, research centers, clinics, and retreats such as the Divine Life Society, the Himalayan Institute, the Yoga-Niketan Trust, and the Yoga Institute, they have defined modern yoga.* '[82]

The mythical resonance of the Himalayan sage and the centrality of the mountains to the itinerary of modern yoga was central to the expansion of the foothill settlement of Rishikesh in the early twentieth century. As the case of the Vanaspati Karyalaya demonstrates, small towns in the

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[81] An extensive body of literature has traced the colonial trajectory and transnational origins of modern psychosomatic and postural yoga. Elizabeth de Michelis locates the origins of modern yoga in Swami Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga* (1896), while Mark Singleton traces the influence of eugenics and physical culture upon the development of modern *asana* practices. See Elizabeth De Michelis, *A History of Modern Yoga: Patañjali and Western Esotericism*, Reprint (London: Continuum, 2008) and Mark Singleton, *Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Posture Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). As Nile Green argues in his study of 'Hindustani' meditation manuals, 'in the same way that colonial India witnessed Sufi meditation move from the more closed sphere of manuscript and oral instruction to the open access of the printed and purchasable text, the doctrines of Yoga similarly shifted from a circumscribed realm of initiatic and caste membership to the printed public sphere.' See Nile Green, 'Breathing in India, c. 1890,' *Modern Asian Studies* Vol. 42, No. 2/3 (2008), 289.

[82] Alter, *Yoga in Modern India*, 17-18.

Himalayan foothills, such as Muni-ki-Reti and neighboring Rishikesh, were emerging as favored sites for the manufacture of Himalayan herbs into Ayurvedic tinctures. At the same time, Rishikesh's liminal position between the plains and the mountains was being capitalized by proponents of modern yoga, such as Swami Sivananda, who cast the town as a portal into spiritual and physical healing. This section of the chapter shows how Rishikesh played a central role in the modern commodification of the relationship between the Himalayas and healing in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Situated on 'the right bank of the Ganges, on a high cliff overlooking the river,' the town of Rishikesh features in late colonial travelogues and yoga literature as the gateway to the holy sites of the Central Himalayas and 'a university of an ancient type,' attracting streams of ascetics and yogis in pursuit of somatic and soteriological wisdom.[83] At an altitude of some 1,120 ft. above sea level, compared with the lofty heights of the Himalayan *bugyals* which tower over 10,000 ft. above sea level, Rishikesh is definitively a foothill town. Yet, in late colonial literature, Rishikesh is frequently cast as 'Himalayan,' just as its jungles and riverbanks appear as a palimpsest of stories about the yogis of the Himalayas. For instance, in her early-twentieth-century travelogue, Sister Nivedita observed that in Rishikesh, '*amongst some of the most beautiful scenery of the Himalayas*, just at the rapids of the Ganges are hundreds of straw huts in which live Sadhus…leading lives of simplicity, order, and learning.'[84] In *Ghumakkad Swami,* Rahul Sankrityayan similarly explains how scores of devotees from across India arrive at Rishikesh to

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[83] East India Railway, 'Hardwar and Rishikesh' (Calcutta: Railway's Press, 1928), 5.

[84] Sister Nivedita, 'A Pilgrim's Diary,' *Complete Works Vol. I* (Calcutta: Ananda Publishers, 1967), 404-406.

seek the whereabouts of the yogis of the Himalayas.[85] One such *sadhu,* Swami Sivananda, set up a modest hut (*kutir*) at Rishikesh in 1924 which rapidly expanded into the sprawling Divine Life Society. Sivananda fashioned himself into a veritable 'voice of the Himalayas' by penning books and narrating radio broadcasts with this title.[86] Alongside the Divine Life Society, institutions such as the Kali Kamli Wala Kshetra and individuals such as Walter Evan-Wentz attempted to establish Ayurvedic works and yoga schools in the city. Indeed, during the first decades of the twentieth century, Rishikesh grew from being a cluster of seasonal hermitages into a favored site for the construction of the modern yoga *ashram*. Rishikesh's purportedly 'Himalayan' landscape played a central role in its modern expansion.

The Himalayan foothills have historically been woven into the life-worlds of mountain dwellers through the seasonal practices of pastoralists. When the Ayurvedic practitioner , Swami Haridas, arrived at Rishikesh in 1911, he tapped into the symbiotic relations between ascetics and *pahari* herders which had long shaped social life in Rishikesh. In the jungles of Koyal Ghati, towards the banks of the Ganga just south of Rishikesh, Haridas built a bamboo treehouse for his practice of yoga using the help of seasonal *pahari* pastoralists. While he spent his days immersed in meditation and breathing exercises, his shepherd friends supplied him with fresh milk and grain. The scattered practice of solitary ascetics had for long characterized life in Rishikesh. As Haridas

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[85] Sankrityayan, *Ghumakkad Swami,* 47.

[86] Swami Sivananda, *Voice of the Himalayas* (Shivanandanagar: Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy Press, 2000 [7th edition]). For secondary scholarship on Sivananda, see Sarah Strauss, 'The Master's Narrative: Swami Sivananda and the Transnational Production of Yoga,' *Journal of Folklore Research* Vol. 39, No. 2/3 (2002): 217-241.

discovered during his sojourn, no single body of practices or canon of texts defined the variegated approaches to yoga in Rishikesh. Haridas read the *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha*, *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā*, and the *Ṣaṭ Cakra Nirūpaṇa* before seeking the tutelage of a forest-dwelling *yogi* of Rishikesh. Sankrityayan relates how Haridas spent months quietly observing the *yogi*, Swami Satyananda, as he practiced various *asanas* (postures) under the shade of a medicinal Kampallika Tree. After several weeks of being watched and followed, the *yogi* begrudgingly acknowledged Haridas's presence and shared his knowledge of *asanas*. Haridas's search for elusive *yogis* seemingly confirms Joseph Alter's assessment that yoga had 'always been an esoteric discipline taught mainly through oral tradition,' despite the existence of a rich history of texts and commentaries. During his six months stay at Rishikesh in 1930, the scholar of yoga Mercia Eliade also encountered a diverse array of ascetics.[87] He observed an ascetic who shadowed monkeys in search of healing roots and tubers as well as a female ascetic meditating on a bed of ashes. These diverse ascetics dwelt in makeshift huts (*kutirs*) after obtaining permission from the Mahant of the Bharat Mandir who controlled the majority of land in Rishikesh. Yet, with the expansion of modern yoga *ashrams*, pharmaceutical works, and dispensaries, the social fabric and physical landscape of Rishikesh was gradually being transformed at the expense of seasonal herders and this diversity of ascetic practitioners.

Ayurvedic Pharmacies in the Himalayan Foothills

The remaking of Rishikesh unfolded through alliances and negotiations involving modern Hindu institutions and the colonial government. In 1905, the Superintendent of Dehradun had first called upon the owners of three large *dharamshalas* (pilgrims' rest houses) in Rishikesh to

[87] Strauss, 'The Master's Narrative.'

contribute towards the maintenance of 'a few sweepers' for the sanitary upkeep of the town.[88] These *dharamshalas*, including the Kali Kamli Wala Kshetra and the Punjab-Sindh Chettra, mainly catered to pilgrims traveling to Garhwal. As noted in chapter 3, the Kali Kamli Wala Kshetra played a central role in curating Himalayan pilgrimages to the glacial heights of Kedarnath and Badrinath. Yet, subsequent official reports observed the persistently unsanitary conditions in Rishikesh despite efforts to involve *dharamshalas* and concluded that 'it is hopeless to expect the Mahunt or anyone else to do anything.'[89] In response to a question posed about sanitary concerns in Rishikesh by Madan Mohan Malaviya in the United Provinces Legislative Assembly, the government played a more proactive role by dispatching a Hospital Assistant to the town during the annual spring festival (*dikhauti mela*).[90]

As the government of Dehradun worked towards gradually expanding medical infrastructures in Rishikesh, it increasingly relied upon institutions such as the Kali Kamli Wala Kshetra despite their initial failures. During the *dikhauti* fair, the doctors and dispensaries of private *ashrams* were compelled to aid the government appointed medical officer. The Kali Kamli Wala Kshetra's dispensary, the Ayurvedic Sewa Samiti, was further granted government aid worth Rs.5,000 annually. The government's reliance upon private religious institutions to oversee health

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[88] Letter to the Commissioner from Superintendent, 30 September, 1907, 'Sanitary Conditions in Rishikesh,' Box No. 72, File No. 36, Uttarakhand State Archives.

[89] Letter from Additional District and Sessions Judge, March 1908, 'Sanitary Conditions in Rishikesh,' Box No. 72, File No. 36, Uttarakhand State Archives.

[90] 'Copy of Question Asked by the Hon Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya at the Meeting of the Local Legislative Council held at Naini Tal,' 17 August 1907, 'Sanitary Conditions in Rishikesh,' Box No. 72, File No. 36, Uttarakhand State Archives.

and hygiene thus encouraged the expansion of Ayurvedic dispensaries in Rishikesh. As a 'government aided institution under a trust,' the Kali Kamli Wala's Ayurvedic Sewa Samiti had twelve branches by 1930. The Ayurvedic Sewa Samiti even successfully petitioned colonial officials to gain permission to use restricted drugs in the preparation of Ayurvedic tinctures. Representatives of the Ayurvedic Sewa Samiti argued that they would limit the use of cannabis (*bhang*) to the preparation of *dhak-shad-asab*, a tonic used to treat hill diarrhea.[91] Alongside the Kali Kamli Wala Kshetra, Swami Sivananda's Divine Life Society established an Ayurvedic dispensary and pharmaceutical works in 1945.

Just as the Tehri Durbar established a pharmaceutical works for the Vanaspati Karyalaya in the foothill town of Muni-ki-Reti, in neighboring Rishikesh, the colonial government's reliance upon religious institutions for the maintenance of health and hygiene in the town stimulated the expansion of private Ayurvedic pharmacies and dispensaries. By 1927, the Kali Kamli Wala Kshetra was operating an Ayurvedic school at Rishikesh with free board and lodgings for students. The Kshetra sought the advice of the Public Health Department in expanding its *ashrams* and gardens for the cultivation of medicinal herbs. Radhay Lal, the head of the Kshetra, requested the recommendations of the Director of Public Health in expanding *ashrams*, segregation huts, and dispensary buildings. Lal asked if the Director of Public Health 'might also be good enough to advise us where herbs and other medical shrubs are to be planted, so that it may serve as a sanatorium for the old and weak persons and patients who might come there to take scriptural and

[91] 'Supply of Bhang to Baba Kali Kamli Wala,' 1930-31, Box No. 5, File No. 62, Uttarakhand State Archives.

medical advice.'[92] Drawing upon the recommendations of the colonial Public Health Department, agents of modern *ashrams* in Rishikesh thus sought to refashion the town into a veritable spiritual sanatorium, where travelers could seek 'scriptural and medical advice.'

The Modern Yoga School in Rishikesh

Paralleling the expansion of Ayurvedic pharmaceutical works and dispensaries, the founders of modern yoga schools were attracted to Rishikesh for its proximity to the Himalayas and the Ganga. In the 1920s, the American anthropologist Walter Evan-Wentz, collaborated with a *sadhu* of Rishikesh to establish a 'school of yoga philosophy' in the Himalayan foothills. Wentz had a protracted fascination with the ostensibly universal sacredness of mountains that inspired the completion of his final book, *Cuchama and Sacred Mountains*, in 1965. In *Cuchama and Sacred Mountains*, Wentz drew parallels between the Hindu, Buddhist, and Native American reverence for mountains. Two decades earlier, Wentz proposed to establish his own research center, the Himalayan Yoga-Vidya Ashrama, in the mountains of Almora. Yet, his first experiments with establishing *ashrams* in the mountains began in the foothills of Rishikesh. As Wentz relates, he 'first visited Birbhaddar during the winter of the year 1918, in order to come into intimate contact with such Indian ascetical fraternities as make the Rishikesh country their renowned center.'[93] Under the tutelage of Swami Satyananda, Wentz lived in a grass hut in the area collecting 'fresh

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[92] Letter to the Superintendent of Dehradun from Radhay Lal, 24 April, 1929, '200 Acres of Land Granted to Baba Kali Kamliwala at Bhirbhadra,' Box No. 11, File No. 4, Uttarakhand State Archives.

[93] Letter to the Superintendent of Dehra Dun, 5 June, 1925, 'Grant of Land to Mr. Evan-Wentz for Establishing a Yoga Vidyalaya at Birbhadra, Rishikesh,' Box No. 27, File No. 19, Uttarakhand State Archives.

data concerning the various sadhu societies represented at Rishikesh and additional information about yoga.' Wentz and Satyananda first decided to petition the colonial government for land to establish a 'small yoga school' in the area in 1920. For Wentz, the school would allow him to conduct further research to 'discover how far the psychology and physiology of India, especially the applied psychology such as I conceive yoga largely to be, is capable of rational interpretation in the language of the psychology and physiology of the West.'[94]

While Wentz's School of Yoga Philosophy was thus conceived of as a site for the scientific study, or 'rational interpretation,' of yoga as a system of 'applied psychology' and physiology, he was drawn to Rishikesh precisely for its seeming remoteness from modernity. As Wentz conveyed in his 'Plans for the Foundation of the School of Yoga Philosophy of Birvadra, near Rishikesh,' that he forwarded to the Superintendent of Dehradun while petitioning for land, 'no school of yoga philosophy can be founded in or near a town, nor by a railway.' Instead, he maintained that 'a jungle solitude, as remote as possible…alone is suitable.' The ideal *ashram*, Wentz explained, 'must be a pure site…it should be on or very near pure running water and in a locality where nature is pleasing to the eye and where there are towery retreats.'[95] The forests of Bhirbadra near Rishikesh met all of these criteria, in Wentz's estimation, but to gain control over land in the area, he underlined the allegedly 'unused' and unsanitary conditions of the tract. Indeed, the founders of modern yoga *ashrams*, such as Wentz, fashioned themselves as agents of improvement. Wentz

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[94] Ibid.

[95] 'Plans for the Foundation of the School of Yoga Philosophy of Birvadra, near Rishikesh,' 1920, 'Grant of Land to Mr. Evan-Wentz for Establishing a Yoga Vidyalaya at Birbhadra, Rishikesh,' Box No. 27, File No. 19, Uttarakhand State Archives.

observed that though Bhirbadra was in 'the midst of unused grass and wasteland,' by constructing his yoga school there, he could make the area valuable. At his yoga school, Wentz proposed to drain swampy land, plant eucalyptus trees to counteract malaria, and grow gardens to safeguard against soil erosion.

Agents of modern yoga schools petitioned the colonial government for land in the Himalayan foothills by deploying the racial logic of 'wastelands.' By casting Bhirbadra as an 'unused wasteland,' Wentz elided the social history of the landscape. With the late-nineteenth-century enclosure of Protected Forests, the grazing rights of marginalized peasants and seasonal herders in Rishikesh had already been restricted. For this reason, the Superintendent of Dehradun attempted to allocate the forests of Bhirbadra, situated on the fringes of Rishikesh, to 'lower' caste *chamar* herders in connection with the *taungya* scheme in the early twentieth century. Like the Ayurvedic college and medicinal gardens of the Kali Kamli Wala Kshetra, Wentz's yoga school was carved out from the land allotted to resettle displaced herders. The School of Yoga Philosophy was thus demarcated through complex processes of enclosure that entailed the exclusion of marginalized pastoralists. Furthermore, Wentz's attempt to make his school site into a 'model of Western sanitation' not only elided the scores of pastoralists who depended upon the forests of Rishikesh for fodder and fuel but further normalized segregation within the *ashram* (fig. 3). While five-acres within the yoga school had been allocated to Indian students, Wentz lobbied for more land to establish a European quarter. As Wentz explained to the Commissioner of Meerut, 'the nature of Europeans would like plenty of space, each for his own little bungalow and garden.' He hoped to 'sanitarily' house himself in a separate bungalow within the European Quarters before pursuing further construction on the school site. Though Wentz successfully acquired additional land in Bhirbadra, his School of Yoga Philosophy was short-lived. The trajectory of Wentz's

school nevertheless demonstrates how the expansion of the modern yoga *ashram* in late colonial Rishikesh was founded upon racialized processes of enclosure and exclusion.

As a small town, civic arrangements and municipal funds in Rishikesh were managed under the government appointed Notified Area Committee (NAC) from the 1920s onwards. Board members of the NAC were overwhelmingly drawn from religious institutions in the town, such as the Kali Kamli Wala Kshetra. Rishikesh's NAC was tasked with overseeing hygiene and public health in the area through the supervision of sweepers and the passage of sanitary regulations. Consequently, the Ayurvedic dispensaries and doctors of private *ashrams* were deployed to cater to the needs of pilgrims. During the spring festival of 1935, the Superintendent of Dehradun recommended that the 'dispensary of the Kali Kamli Wala Chettra with its permanent vaid' should address medical requirements in the Satya Narain area of Rishikesh. The Superintendent suggested that the manager of the Kshetra, Baba Mani Ram, would need to 'instruct the vaid at the above dispensary to pay special attention to any infectious diseases.'[96] While the NAC worked with the Superintendent of Dehradun to conscript private dispensaries to distribute medical aid during religious fairs, it was also tasked with hiring more permanent sweepers and sanitary staff in Rishikesh. Though undercompensated sweepers petitioned the NAC for additional pay, they were instead disciplined with fines. During preparations for the *mela* of 1933, the sanitary inspector dispatched to work with the Rishikesh NAC compiled a 'list of sweepers who have been fined for

[96] B.J.K. Hallowes, Superintendent of Dehra Dun, 'Orders for Dikhauti Fair of 1935,' 2 April, 1935, 'Reports on the Medical and Sanitary Arrangements made at Rishikesh in connection with the Barni and Dikhauti Fairs,' Box No. 108, File No. 2, Uttarakhand State Archives.

not discharging their duties well and for disobedience.'[97] Demanding additional pay was cited as a grounds for 'disobedience.' The dominance of largely 'upper' caste agents of religious institutions and *ashrams* in the Notified Area Committee, and the wide-ranging municipal responsibilities of the NAC, suggest how hierarchies of caste and class were inscribed within public health measures in late colonial Rishikesh.

The byelaws passed by the Notified Area Committee of Rishikesh further demonstrate how the expansion of pilgrims' rest-houses, yoga schools, and Ayurvedic dispensaries in the town was premised upon moral and medical notions of hygiene and improvement which led to the exclusion of seasonal pastoralists and marginalized peasants. In 1921, the NAC prohibited shooting and fishing on the right bank of the Ganga, while in 1939, the NAC decided to impose the Cattle Trespass Act in the Rishikesh area to fine herders who brought livestock within town borders.[98] At times, the NAC's byelaws generated debates about the conflicting requirements of ascetics and sanitary regulations. The new building byelaws of 1944 restricted the areas in which ascetics could construct impermanent huts and additionally mandated that 'all buildings to be erected or re-erected must be pucca or katcha-pucca' so as to ensure that new buildings were constructed using

[97] 'Reports on the Sanitary and Medical arrangements for the adhkumbh fair 1933 along the Pilgrim Road from Satnarayan to Lachmanjhula: Appendix E.' April 19, 1933, 'Reports on the Medical and Sanitary Arrangements made at Rishikesh in connection with the Barni and Dikhauti Fairs,' Box No. 108, File No. 2, Uttarakhand State Archives.

[98] 'Fishing Prohibition in Rishikesh,' 1921, Box No. 39, File No. 5, Uttarakhand State Archives, and 'Cattle Trespass Act in Rishikesh,' 1938-41, Dept. XXIII, File No. 68, Uttarakhand State Archives.

stable and enduring materials.[99] These building byelaws sparked a minor controversy within the NAC and a 'sadhu member' of the committee requested that the 'cellars for meditation if constructed may be exempted from the operation of byelaws dealing with ventilation.'[100] The sadhu's objections were overruled on the grounds that 'fresh air benefits the sadhus as much as others.' In other cases, the NAC lobbied against sanitary regulations prescribed by the District Magistrate of Dehradun. In 1940, the NAC rejected a proposal to relocate burning and burial grounds from the town area to the outskirts.

Thus, the late colonial expansion of Rishikesh into a veritable spiritual sanatorium, where travelers could seek 'scriptural and medical advice,' was enabled through alliances between the colonial government and the representatives of religious institutions such as the Kali Kamli Wala Kshetra. With the expansion of Ayurvedic pharmaceutical works, dispensaries, and yoga schools in Rishikesh, the Himalayan foothill town became central to the modern commodification of relations between the Himalayas and healing. While Ayurvedic pharmacies in Rishikesh and neighboring Muni-ki-Reti were tasked with transforming Himalayan herbs into tinctures, Ayurvedic dispensaries based in Rishikesh, such as the Ayurvedic Sewa Samiti, distributed medicines to cure ostensibly Himalayan illnesses, such as hill diarrhea. The proximity of foothill towns to the Himalayan uplands partly explains why they became entrepots for Himalayan herbs and medicines. In Rishikesh, the expansion of dispensaries was further stimulated by the colonial

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[99] 'Byelaws to regulate the construction of buildings,' 19 June, 1944, 'Draft Building Bye-Laws of Notified Area, Rishikesh,' Box No. 65, File No. 68, Uttarakhand State Archives.

[100] 'Notified Area Committee Resolution No. 7,' 16, January, 1944, 'Draft Building Bye-Laws of Notified Area, Rishikesh,' Box No. 65, File No. 68, Uttarakhand State Archives.

government's reliance upon private religious institutions to oversee health and hygiene in the area. The annual grant of government aid to the Ayurvedic Sewa Samiti, as well as the Kali Kamli Wala Kshetra's reliance upon the advice of the Public Health Department in planting medicinal herb gardens, reflects the ways in which interactions between the colonial government and private religious institutions shaped infrastructures of healing in the town.

Just as the Kali Kamli Wala Kshetra and its Ayurvedic Sewa Samiti sought to re-make Rishikesh into a site of refuge for travelers seeking both 'scriptural and medical advice,' proponents of modern yoga were drawn to the foothill town to establish schools and *ashrams*. For Walter Evan-Wentz, the forests surrounding the foothills of Rishikesh appeared to be an ideal site for a yoga *ashram* as here, 'nature is pleasing to the eye' and 'there are towery retreats.' Yet, to acquire land in the area, Wentz cast Bhirbadra as an unused wasteland and fashioned himself into an agent of improvement. The case of his School of Yoga Philosophy therefore demonstrates how the foundation of modern yoga schools around Rishikesh was premised upon processes of enclosure and exclusion. Whereas the foothills of Rishikesh had historically been frequented by seasonal *pahari* pastoralists and a diverse range of ascetics, the expansion of yoga schools, pharmaceutical works, and Ayurvedic dispensaries gradually transformed the social fabric and physical landscape of the town. Indeed, medical and moral discourses about propriety and hygiene converged to re-make Rishikesh into a site for physical and spiritual healing.

Conclusion

This chapter has traced the commodification of relationships between the Himalayas and healing in the early twentieth century. While historians have examined colonial imaginaries of the Himalayas as a salubrious site for physical and racial regeneration, little attention has been paid to the ways in which Indians approached the mountains as a site and signifier of healing. I have

suggested that imperial landscapes of health in the colonial Central Himalayas implicated both colonizer and colonized within 'interlocking understandings and practices, and often within radically asymmetrical relations of power.'[101] While the mountains became a favored site for the establishment of hill stations as racially exclusive sanatoriums, colonial medical topographies of Kumaun were inflected by native understandings of the environmental causes of diseases like goiter. Just as early colonial hospitals relied upon Himalayan medicinal herbs as materia medica, towards the late colonial period, Indian elites flocked to the salubrious heights of hill stations. The exchanges between colonizer and colonized which shaped imperial landscapes of health in nineteenth-century Kumaun and Garhwal continued to determine the commodification of relationships between the Himalayas and healing in the early twentieth century. While the commercialization of Himalayan medicinal herbs in the Tehri Princely State drew upon both scientific forestry and Ayurvedic expertise, the colonial government's reliance upon religious institutions to oversee health and hygiene in Rishikesh stimulated the expansion of dispensaries in the foothill town.

As a site and signifier of healing, the Central Himalayas were reconstituted into a 'fetishized commodity' in the early twentieth century.[102] The circulation of Himalayan medicinal herbs, as well as more intangible valuations of the mountains as a source of spiritual healing, were thus bottled, packaged, and abstracted from the life and knowledge of mountain dwellers. In contrast, early colonial associations between the Himalayas and healing had exceeded binaries of hills and plains, as well as local and trans-local. The case of Gumani Pant and his 'ornament of

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[101] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes,* 8.

[102] Mitchell, 'Imperial Landscape,' 15.

knowledge and healing,' the *Jñānabhaiṣajyamañjarī*, suggests how Ayurvedic practitioners remained immersed in the rural and vernacular worlds of the mountains in the early nineteenth century. The *Jñānabhaiṣajyamañjarī* includes prescriptions for a wide-ranging array of mental and physical ailments which included herbal ingredients from the hills and the plains. The commercialization of Himalayan herbs towards the turn of the century increasingly undermined the knowledge of *vaids* from the mountains, as well as the work of mountain women who had customarily collected herbs. The Tehri Durbar's Vanaspati Karyalaya instead conscripted Ayurvedic 'experts' with degrees from plains-based colleges to prepare mountains herbs into tinctures, while the Durbar's Forest Department relied upon undercompensated gardeners and *coolies* to cultivate profitable herbs on enclosed alpine meadows. Similarly, the expansion of Ayurvedic pharmaceutical works, dispensaries, and yoga *ashrams* in the foothill town of Rishikesh was premised upon spatial practices of enclosure and exclusion which marginalized seasonal pastoralists from the mountains. The commodification of relationships between the Himalayas and healing in the late colonial period thus unfolded through the circulation of ideas, knowledge, and herbs across the mountains and the foothills as well as constructed hierarchies of bodies and expertise.

Geographical imaginaries of the Himalayas as a site and signifier of healing continue to hold sway in the post-colonial context. While the Tehri Princely State played a pioneering role in the mass-plantation and production of Himalayan medicinal herbs, shortly after independence the government of Uttar Pradesh commissioned surveys of the indigenous drugs of Kumaun and Garhwal. Today, the Uttarakhand Forest Department works with the Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam and the Bhesaj Sangh to effectively control the collection and marketing of medicinal plants. Indeed, just as in colonial Tehri Garhwal, in present-day Uttarakhand, Himalayan medicinal

herbs are being abstracted from the labor, livelihoods, and knowledge of mountain dwellers. While Rishikesh has been modeled into the 'yoga capital of the world,' the Uttarakhand Government is currently formulating plans to make Kumaun and Garhwal into destinations for 'medical tourism.' The state's tourism minister has argued that medical tourism 'needs to be developed in the state' as 'the environment here is naturally suitable for all types of medicine and many types of herbs are found in Uttarakhand.'[103] Whereas elites from across the subcontinent and beyond thus continue to partake of commodified associations between the Himalayas and healing by purchasing indigenous medicines and traveling to mountain *ashrams*, the wellbeing, medical knowledges, and livelihoods of mountain dwellers continues to be marginalized.

[103] 'Uttarakhand Government to Develop State as Medical Tourism Hub,' *Hindustan Times,* October 8, 2020. https://www.hindustantimes.com/dehradun/uttarakhand-govt-to-develop-state-as-medical-tourism-hub/story-WqjI0vwLM3i2tN1erhG0fK.html

Conclusion

On the 7th of February 2021, masses of rock and ice collapsed from a glacier on the Nanda Devi mountain peak triggering a calamitous flood on the Rishi Ganga River in Garhwal's Chamoli District. As glaciers melt with rising temperatures due to climate change, their weakening walls sometimes precipitate avalanches and floods, such as the Rishi Ganga incident. In the Himalayas, the rate of glacial melting has doubled since the year 2000, and the risks of floods and landslides has grown correspondingly.[1] The Rishi Ganga flood claimed the lives of at least 204 people and starkly exposed the man-made dimensions of ostensibly 'natural' disasters. As Ravi Chopra, an environmental activist and scientist from the region, puts it, though landslides and floods might be a part of the rhythms of the environment, 'disasters happen when *we* do something stupid.'[2] In the case of the Rishi Ganga floods, anthropogenic climate change coupled with the hapless construction of hydroelectric dams in the Himalayan paraglacial zone- a debris and moraine riddled region from which glaciers have historically receded- created the conditions for a catastrophe.

While hydroelectric dam projects have been touted as engines of development, and climate change mitigation measures that complement the transition away from fossil fuels, Chamoli residents have long campaigned against the ecological hazards and false economic promises of

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[1] Chelsea Harvey, 'Deadly Himalayan Flood Shows Perils of Mountain Warming,' *Scientific American,* February 10th , 2021, https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/deadly-himalayan-flood-shows-perils-of-mountain-warming/

[2] Vijayta Lalwani, 'Uttarakhand Floods,' *Scroll.in,* February 9th, 2021, https://scroll.in/article/986331/uttarakhand-floods-disasters-happen-when-we-do-something-stupid

such projects. The Vishnuprayag Hydroelectrical Project, one of three dams that suffered extensive damage in the recent floods, was originally opposed by veteran activists of the Chipko Movement in the 1970s. Nonetheless, despite opposition, the Vishnuprayag Project was given a new lease on life through World Bank funding in the 1990s.[3] On the banks of the Rishi Ganga, the 'Bhotiya' residents of Reni Village had struggled against yet another hydroelectric scheme without success.[4] Now, they are bearing the consequences of the flood as their fields and livestock have been washed away, while the lives of destitute laborers working on the dam have been sacrificed for the benefit of private companies. The Rishi Ganga disaster tragically dramatizes the intersectional harms and unequal claims of the climate crisis. It not only calls attention to questions of environmental justice, but further foregrounds the urgent need to redefine human relationships with place. Indeed, placing the Rishi Ganga floods within the wider history of environmental change in the Central Himalayas only confirms how ecological crises are at their root social, cultural, and imaginative problems. In this conclusion, I sketch out the implications of spatial history by delineating the webs of relations that weave together histories of ecological change, dynamic processes of place-making, and the future stakes of geographical imaginaries.

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[3] Shekhar Pathak and Hemant Dhyani, 'Himalayan Policy for Uttarakhand,' in Assessment of Environmental Degradation and Impact of Hydroelectric Projects During the June 2013 Disaster in Uttarakhand,' Chaired by Ravi Chopra, April 2014, Report Submitted to the Ministry of Environments and Forests, GOI, 198.

[4] C.P. Rajendran, 'Why we already know the Rishi Ganga flood was a 'sooner or later' event,' *The Wire*, February 8th, 2021, https://thewire.in/environment/uttarakhand-rishi-ganga-power-project-flood

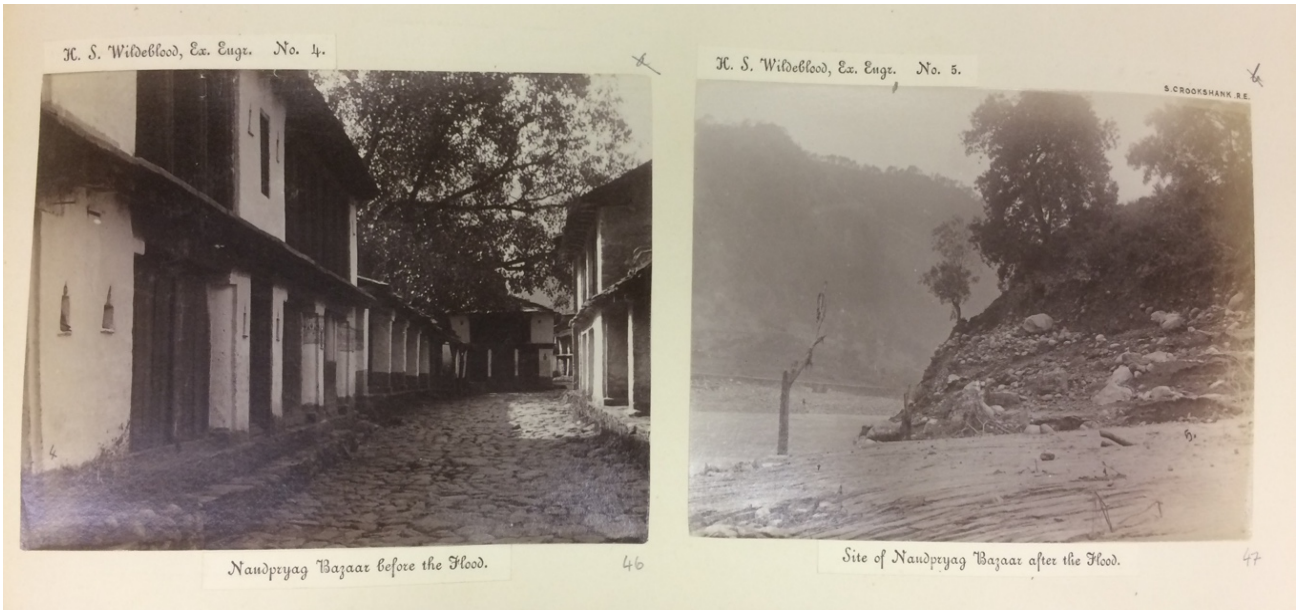
On the 6th of September 1893, a landslide near the village of Gohna in the northern reaches of British Garhwal dammed the Birahi Ganga River. The landslide was accompanied by a 'deafening noise and clouds of dust which darkened the neighborhood and fell for miles around, whitening the ground and tree-branches like snow.'[5] Villagers observed that a hill close to the Birahi had collapsed during the monsoon, consequently stopping the river's flow towards its confluence with the Alakananda River. The blocked waters of the Birahi formed a lake that threatened to burst at any time. One year after the landslip, the walls of the lake breached, inundating the Alakananda Valley downstream to Haridwar. Photographs taken before and after the Gohna flood of 1894 portray the scale of the event. Once crowded bazaars were left buried in rubble and water. In the towns of Srinagar, Nandaprayag, and Karnaprayag the flood had 'swept away all vestiges of habitation.'[6] At the erstwhile Garhwali capital of Srinagar, the meandering curve of the Alakananda River swelled alarmingly and the 'effect of the torrent swirling furiously' across the banks of the town was reportedly 'terrifying.'[7] Were it not for precautions taken by the

[5] *Selections from the Records of the Government of India in the Public Works Department, No. CCCXXXIV, Public Works Department Serial No. 30: Papers relating to the Landslip at Gohna in British Garhwal'* (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, India, 1896), 4.

[6] Ibid, 23

[7] Ibid, 23.

Public Works Department to forewarn pilgrims and villagers, the Gohna flood was likely to have led to a tremendous loss of life.[8]



Title: 'Nandprayag Bazaar Before and After the Floods'
[© British Library Board, Photo 15/ 7 (46-7), Visual Arts
Photographed by Henry S. Wildeblood, Elgin Collection, British Library, London.]

The Gohna floods had a lasting imprint on physical as well as imaginative geographies of the Central Himalayas.[9] In the wake of the flood, hegemonic imaginaries of the mountains as a site for improvement sedimented more firmly upon the landscape, whereas older associations between Garhwal and subversive ascetic traditions further eroded. Having witnessed damage wreaked by

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[8] In contrast, in the Rishi Ganga disaster, laborers working on dam construction downstream from the flood were not alerted in time to evacuate. Environmental activists in Uttarakhand have criticized the government's criminal negligence in failing to issue an early warning for evacuation.

[9] For a reading of hurricanes, 'semiotic breakdown,' the assertion of political power, and the popular imagination see Lauren Derby, *The Dictator's Seduction* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009), 66-108.

the Goodyar Tal flood of 1869, that caused considerable damage to property and drowned 'a large number of pilgrims and others,' members of the Public Works Department were swift to respond to the Gohna floods. The publications of the Public Works Department narrated the story of the Gohna flood as the triumph of colonial officials who labored against the alleged ignorance of natives protesting evacuation orders. Hidden behind the paternalistic discourse of such reports is a parallel story about colonial valuations of property over life, as the floods left government officials scrambling to safeguard bridges, boats, timber stores, and the recently constructed Ganges Canal at Haridwar.[10]

In the meanwhile, Hindu reformists rehearsed racialized discourses about hygiene to claim that the inundation of ostensibly unsanitary *pahari* pilgrim towns was a blessing in disguise. Swami Vivekananda's disciple, Sister Nivedita, described the Gohna flood as 'a great epoch-maker' affirming that, 'one cannot but mourn the loss of historic remains of priceless interests, but at the same time one suspects that, from a sanitary and cleansing point of view, this flood may have done more good than harm.'[11] The fact that the floods did not submerge and subsequently 'cleanse' villages at higher altitudes elicited regret rather than relief. For Nivedita, the unhygienic conditions of pilgrimage towns, such as Pandukeshwar, dominated by allegedly filthy 'Bhotiya' communities located upstream from the floods, was lamentably untouched by the deluge. Just as colonial tropes of improvement and racial ideas of purity were shored up by the floods, other imaginaries of the mountains subsided. At Srinagar, for instance, a cave believed to have been the meditation site of the legendary *yogi* Gorakhnath was submerged and the once commonly noted

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[10] *Papers relating to the Landslip at Gohna in British Garhwal*, 39.

[11] Sister Nivedita, 'A Pilgrim's Diary,' *Complete Works Vol. I* (Calcutta: Ananda Publishers, 1967), 414.

practices of Nath *yogis* traveling along the pilgrim road in Garhwal consequently retreated to the margins. While in 1886 Atkinson noted that Gorakhnath's meditation cave at Srinagar was a significant pilgrimage destination, by 1924 George Weston Briggs 'found nothing of consequence' at the site. In his mammoth study of the Nath *yogis,* Briggs observed that even though the cave had been excavated after the Gohna flood it was subsequently 'neglected by pilgrims.'[12]

Thus, after the landslip at Gohna, flood waters carved new channels as well as new barriers for geographical imaginaries- ways of seeing, sensing, dreaming of, and acting upon landscapes- of the Central Himalayas. As in the case of Gohna, the social, cultural, and imaginative dimensions of ecological crises were starkly on display in the aftermath of the devastating Kedarnath floods of 2013. In June of 2013, a glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) near the source of the Mandakini River at Kedarnath claimed an official total of 5,000 lives, and an unofficial toll of 12,000 lives across Uttarakhand. The unregulated expansion of tourist infrastructures for pilgrims, as well as the construction of hydroelectric dams, exacerbated the scale of the disaster. The floods most severely impacted landless Dalits in Garhwal as well as migrant laborers from Nepal. Yet, the Kedarnath tragedy did not result in the regulation of tourist infrastructures, or in any substantial measures towards environmental justice. Instead, the floods were used to justify Prime Minister Narendra Modi's project of building an 'all-weather highway' connecting the *chār dhāms* of

[12] George Weston Briggs, *Goraknāth and the Kānphata Yogīs* (Calcutta: YMCA Publishing House, 1938), 80.

Garhwal. Widely critiqued by environmental activists across the Central Himalayas, the *chār dhām* project has evaded standard procedures to obtain environmental clearances.[13]







Top and Bottom Left: The Alakananda Hydroelectricity Project in Srinagar that displaced 476 families in 14 surrounding villages, many of whom have not yet received compensation. Right: Illegal muck dumping resulting from

[13] As Siddharth Agarwal notes, the 900 kilometer long project has been broken down into 53 segments, thereby circumventing the legal requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment. Siddharth Agarwal, 'Char Dham Road Project: Stairway to Heaven or Highway to Hell?' *Firstpost,* August 1st, 2018, https://www.firstpost.com/long-reads/char-dham-road-project-stairway-to-heaven-or-highway-to-hell-4866301.html

ongoing roadworks on the Srinagar-Rudraprayag Road as a part of the Char Dham Pariyojana. Overall, the project will lead to the loss of 690 acres of forest and 55,000 trees.[14]

[Source: Photos taken by the author in October 2018.]

Deforestation, dumping, and blasting for roadworks has not only damaged the fragile ecosystems of the high mountains but has also adversely effected groundwater access and flood risks for villagers. [15]

The Gohna, Kedarnath, and Chamoli floods reveal how ecology, culture, and society are braided together in fraught and complex ways. To varying degrees, the causes and consequences of these ecological crises have been determined by hegemonic organizations of place and the social relations that constitute place. For instance, the successful state response to the Gohna floods was tied to colonial interests in securing infrastructures of extraction in the mountains. In the case of the Kedarnath and Chamoli floods, economic gains from pilgrimage and hydroelectric dam construction were privileged over the interests of mountain villagers and ascetic activists who had campaigned against environmentally destructive dams and roadworks.[16] The inextricability of ecological events, geographical imaginaries, and power laden dynamics of place-making was not

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[14] 'Villagers Threaten to Shut Down Power House over 'Due Compensation,' *Hindustan Times,* July 29th, 2018, https://www.hindustantimes.com/dehradun/villagers-threaten-to-shut-down-power-house-over-due-compensation/story-lPqXdMLQL6JgfeeCqVsdvJ.html

[15] Mallika Bhanot, 'Char Dham Pariyojana: A High Risk Exercise,' *The India Forum,* 26th September, 2000, https://www.theindiaforum.in/article/char-dham-pariyojana-high-risk-engineering-exercise

[16] For instance, G. D. Agrawal's (Swami Sanand) fast in protest of dams ended in his death. See Purnima S. Tripathi, 'Death of a Ganga Activist,' *Frontline,* November 9th, 2018, https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/article25307436.ece

lost to activists and scientists from the Central Himalayas who called for a moratorium on dams in the aftermath of the Kedarnath flood of 2013.

As members of the Ravi Chopra Committee, scientists and activists from Uttarakhand envisioned alternative ways of organizing place and travel in the mountains. Alongside a turn away from hydroelectric projects, they called for the constitution of community controlled 'Cultural Eco-Zones' as well as payments to mountain dwellers for their ecological services. Their report further proposed dramatic alterations to tourism to the region, including the reversion from 'pilgrim road' back to a pilgrim landscape, in which travelers can walk across variegated routes towards the glacial sources of the Ganga and Yamuna Rivers.[17] While the Rishi Ganga flood testifies to the ways in which the committee's recommendations have gone unheeded, the committee's report is nonetheless noteworthy for its alternative geographical imaginaries of the mountains. By recommending changes to the control over land and rivers, as well as to the sensibilities of travel to the mountains, the members of the committee recognized floods as social, cultural, and imaginative problems as well. Like the cases of the Gohna, Kedarnath, and Chamoli floods, the preceding chapters have demonstrated how power laden valuations of place and nature are central to the making, unmaking, and remaking of physical landscapes as well as social dynamics. The imbrications between environment and culture, as well as place and power, which shaped the trajectory of these floods, are also at the core of this dissertation. The remainder of this

[17] Shekhar Pathak and Hemant Dhyani, 'Himalayan Policy for Uttarakhand,' in Assessment of Environmental Degradation and Impact of Hydroelectric Projects During the June 2013 Disaster in Uttarakhand,' Chaired by Ravi Chopra, April 2014, Report Submitted to the Ministry of Environments and Forests, GOI, 219.

conclusion maps out the implications of *Race, Caste, and Modern Imaginaries of the Himalayas* for the historiography of modern South Asia as well as for the future oriented search for ecologically and socially just geographical imaginaries of the Central Himalayas.

Geographical Imaginaries and the Relational Approach to Place

Spatial history takes geographical imaginaries, or the 'spatial forms and fantasies through which culture declares its presence,' as its object of inquiry.[18] If place can be defined as a dynamic web of relations weaving together humans, nonhumans, landscapes, stories, and gods, then geographical imaginaries orient shifting processes of place-making. Taking the dynamic interplay between the scene and script of historical narratives as its point of departure, spatial history collapses binaries of nature and culture, geography and history. Through the lens of spatial history, then, the meaning of ecological events cannot be isolated from the cultural politics of place-making. Indeed, the analytic of the geographical imaginary calls attention to the intentionality involved in fixing the meanings of places as well as the unequal social relations constituting environment and landscape. To put it differently, spatial history exposes geography as a 'socially constructed and maintained sense of place.'[19]

The analytic of the geographical imaginary is further grounded upon a relational approach to place and personhood. Within this framework, the identities of places and people are perceived

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[18] Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History* (New York: Knopf, 1988), xxii.

[19] Edward Said, "Invention, Memory, and Place," *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 2 (2000): 180.

to be 'forged in and through relations (which include non-relations, absences, and hiatuses).'[20] By refusing essentialist notions of identity, the relational approach to place and personhood enjoins us to ask how embodied differences have been produced spatially. As explorative yet restrictive 'sense making fields' in which humans cultivate their relations with the material world, nonhumans, and human 'others,' geographical imaginaries have the potential to articulate, reinforce, as well as challenge embodied social differences. In his study of the 'racialization of space and the spatialization of race,' George Lipsitz delineates white and black spatial imaginaries in the United States. He deploys these spatial imaginaries as metaphorical constructs which 'reveal actual social relations.' He argues that in contrast with the 'white spatial imaginary,' with its preference for pure spaces and private property, the 'black spatial imaginary' turns 'segregation into congregation' by 'privileging use value over exchange value, sociality over selfishness, and inclusion over exclusion.'[21] Lipsitz cautions that in his framework, neither blackness nor whiteness is 'reducible to an embodied identity.' Just as all white people do not 'consciously embrace the white spatial imaginary, and not all whites profit equally from their whiteness,' he notes that 'not all blacks consciously embrace the black spatial imaginary,' though they are all subjected to it.[22] Lipsitz study suggests that though spatial imaginaries cannot be mapped uncritically onto specific social groups, they are produced through different embodied experiences of place and are also

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[20] Doreen Massey, 'Geographies of Responsibility,' *Geografiska Annaler Series B. Human Geography Vol. 86, No. 1* (2004): 5

[21] George Lipsitz, 'The Racialization of Space and the Spatialization of Race,' *Landscape Journal Vol. 26, No. 1* (2007): 14.

[22] Ibid., 13-14.

productive of different social and spatial relations. In analyzing the social and ecological consequences of modern imaginaries of the Himalayas, I have similarly attempted to reject essentialisms and instead map the dynamic interdependence of space and subjectivity. Indeed, I have suggested that the demarcation of social distinctions along the lines of race, caste, and gender were central to projects of enclosure in the colonial Central Himalayas.

Geographical Imaginaries and South Asian Historiography

The historiography of modern South Asia has extensively evaluated the spatial implications of colonial encounter, from complex critiques of the Permanent Settlement and the institutionalization of private property in land, to studies of the ideological repercussions of scientific cartography on imaginations of the nation.[23] *Race, Caste, and Modern Imaginaries of the Himalayas* attempts to contribute to this literature by foregrounding the social consequences of the cultural conceptions of landscape borne out of exchanges between colonial epistemologies and high Hindu traditions. Just as native intermediaries were indispensable to the production of colonial spatial knowledge across the nineteenth century, colonial medical and sanitary discourses were central to the remaking of Himalayan pilgrimages as well as longstanding associations between the Himalayas and healing. Whereas members of Almora's 'upper' caste, official class adopted colonial notions of improvement to laud agrarian expansion in the mountains, Dalit activists and members of Almora's municipal board petitioned the government to seek land rights

[23] Ranajit Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal: An Essay on the Idea of Permanent Settlement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1963) and Sumathi Ramaswamy, *The Goddess and the Nation: Mapping Mother India* (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2012).

as well as more secure agrarian tenures. The spatial history of the modern Central Himalayas thus cut across binaries of colonized and colonizer.

The analytic of the geographical imaginary foregrounds the role of aesthetics, affect, and sensation in place-making. I have proposed that the body and the senses participated in the assertion of colonial control over land in the Central Himalayas. As argued in chapter 2, far from a 'natural' quality of the vast mountain terrain, the sublime had a murky social history. The evocation of the sublime in early colonial discourse from the mountains not only legitimated colonial control over Himalayan peoples and places, but further participated in the demarcation of racial differences. Paying heed to questions of corporeality and affect in the aesthetics of landscape thus confirms Donald Moore, Jake Kosek, and Anand Pandian's contention that contingent constructions of 'race and nature reach far beyond biology and ecology, science and state' to craft 'interior landscapes of sentiment and selfhood.'[24] Through the aesthetics of the sublime, the difference between colonized and colonizer, as well as male and female, was not so much calibrated through a scale of reason or knowledge as through one of sentiment and sensation.

Entangled understandings of race and nature were not only mobilized by colonial officials but also by colonized elites in the Himalayas. In chapter 1, I explained how the Tehri State's prose of counter-insurgency, following its brutal repression of the Rawain *dhandak* in 1930, drew upon the trope of wildness to criminalize the peasants of Rawain as 'savages' and 'dacoits.' Not only did the trope of wildness serve as a means to justify forest enclosures as a part of the Durbar's

[24] Moore, Kosek, and Pandian, 'Introduction: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nature,' in *Race, Nature and the Politics of Difference*, ed. Donald S. Moore, Jake Kosek, and Anand Pandian (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 11.

'civilizing mission,' but it also elided the manifold meanings of land which motivated peasant resistance. In North-Western Garhwal, the jurisdiction of territorial gods determined values of land as much as the subsistence practices of shifting cultivators and pastoralists in the region. While the Tehri Durbar mobilized racialized colonial tropes of 'wildness' and 'waste' to defend forest enclosures, elite Indian imaginaries of the Central Himalayas as a 'Hindu holy land' and a historic site of healing were also premised upon processes of social exclusion and spatial enclosure. As chapter 5 notes, the mass plantation and commercialization of Himalayan medicinal herbs by the Tehri Durbar in the early twentieth century entailed the elision of the social values of alpine meadows (*bugyals*) as well as the displacement of the medical knowledges of mountain dwellers.

The study of the cultural politics of place-making in the colonial Central Himalayas also contributes to scholarly debates about the relationship between the colonial and pre-colonial periods, as well as literature on changing configurations of caste in modern India. A reading of Rudra Deva's sixteenth-century *Śyainika Śāstra* suggests how in the pre-colonial period, the connoisseurship of hawking calibrated caste status but did not codify boundaries between nature and culture. In contrast, the sublime aesthetics of imperial hunting in the nineteenth century not only demarcated racial difference but further legitimated colonial control over an abstracted realm of nature. While an analysis of Gumani Pant's early-nineteenth-century *Jñānabhaiṣajyamañjarī* reflects the distinctive relations of place and health, as well as spiritual and physical well-being, that characterized Ayurvedic medical knowledge in the mountains, it also foregrounds the ways in which the early-twentieth-century commodification of relations between the Himalayas and healing was increasingly severed from the labor, livelihood, and knowledge of mountain dwellers. While contextual studies of the *Śyainika Śāstra* and the *Jñānabhaiṣajyamañjarī* thus gesture towards the changes wrought by colonialism and capitalism, by mapping how pre-colonial systems

of agrarian slavery and Brahmanical control over land structured colonial processes of place-making, I have also emphasized continuities across the colonial divide.

Indeed, I have sought to assess the extent to which the cultural politics of place-making under colonial rule contributed to the spatial reproduction of caste-based exclusions. The analysis of pilgrims' imaginaries of Garhwal presented in chapter 3 demonstrates how caste exclusion was routinized through sanitary regulations and temple legislation in British Garhwal and Tehri Garhwal respectively. To some extent, this aligns with Ramnarayan Rawat and K. Satyanarayana's contention that 'modernity has reinforced caste Hindu society's commitment to exclusionary regimes that rely on religion and the social values of Hinduism,' though I have instead suggested that the 'social values of Hinduism' are not homogenous and were reshaped, if not entirely defined, by the colonial context.[25] While several studies have focused on the ramifications of the decennial census on caste politics, the links between caste and colonial spatial knowledge has been less explored.[26] In chapter 4, I have argued that the maps and gazetteers drawn up by colonial officials relying upon 'upper' caste intermediaries, elided the ways in which the mountain commons were produced through caste and gender specific forms of labor and knowledge. Lastly, the chapters of this thesis reflect the persistent role played by the Tehri Princely State in reinforcing spatial and social exclusions. While the Tehri Raja used his proximity to the temple of Badrinath to defend caste-based slavery in the 1830s, a century later, the Durbar deployed the legal expertise of Hindu

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[25] Ramnarayan Rawat and K. Satyanarayana, ed., *Dalit Studies* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016): 19.

[26] For example, Bernard Cohn, 'The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia,' in *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays* (Delhi: Oxford University Press).

nationalists such as Madan Mohan Malaviya to make a claim to Badrinath and defend historical practices of untouchability. The career of the Tehri Durbar thus confirms Manu Bhagavan's contention that the princely states were a 'crucial plank in the platform of Hindutva and a critical, if vastly understated and little understood, element in the making of modern India.'[27]

Geographical Imaginaries as Terrains of Contestation

Elaborating upon Edward Said's framework of 'imaginative geography,' the geographer Derek Gregory defines space as not only a 'domain but also a 'doing.'' Imaginative geography posits geographical representations and the performance of place in a mutually constitutive and circular relationship. As Gregory writes, 'we might think of imaginative geographies as fabrications, a word that usefully combines 'something fictionalized' and 'something made real,' because they are imaginations given substance.'[28] Following Said and Gregory, I have followed the material effects of hegemonic imaginaries of the Central Himalayas. In chapter 3, I delineate the conjunctures which remade pilgrims' imaginaries of the Himalayas and resulted in the packaging of the *chār dhām yātrā* in Garhwal. The convergence of interests between modern religious institutions, 'upper' caste *paharis* controlling temple properties, the publication of printed guidebooks, and colonial sanitary concerns all served to privilege the bourgeois, 'upper' caste Hindu male as the normative pilgrim by the beginning of the twentieth century. As chapter 4 demonstrates, the close relationship between geographical imaginaries and the interests of power is evidenced by late-nineteenth-century gazetteers as well. In his monumental *Gazetteer of the*

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[27] Manu Bhagavan, 'Princely States and the Hindu Imaginary,' *The Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. 67, No. 3 (August 2008): 885-886.

[28] Derek Gregory, *The Colonial Present* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 17.

Himalayan Districts (1881-86), the entomologist Edwin Atkinson used the 'principle of locality' to naturalize colonial enclosures and to cast *paharis* as products rather than producers of their environment. Atkinson's *Gazetteer* has had a protracted effect on the spatial history of the Central Himalayas as it was cited by Kumauni nationalists as well as advocates for the foundation of a separate mountain state of Uttarakhand in the post-colonial period.

While I have focused on hegemonic imaginaries of the Central Himalayas, given that the identities of places are always unfixed, and multiple, dominant imaginaries are also 'sites of social contest.'[29] Thus, in the early nineteenth century, the subversive verses of Kumauni poets satirized the spatial impacts of East India Company rule, thereby rejecting the sublime aesthetics of colonial reports, surveys, travelogues, and hunting journals. Whereas the physiological sublime complemented colonial authority over Himalayan landscapes, Gumani Pant's poetry associated the advent of colonial rule with the disorder of the landscape: '*angrezon ne Almora ka naksha auri aur kara* (the British turned the map of Almora topsy-turvy).'[30] Along with descriptions of landscape, physical control over space was also subject to contestation. In early-twentieth-century Kumaun, anti-caste activists objected to official policies of enclosure as well as 'upper' caste imaginations of the commons. Their petitions resulted in the reallocation of enclosed forest lands to Dalits in the 1930s.

These contradictions between hegemonic and alternative geographical imaginaries of the Central Himalayas continue to unfold in Uttarakhand today. On the one hand, contemporary

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[29] Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, 5.

[30] Charu Chandra Pande, '*Says Gumani*' (Nainital: PAHAR, 1994): 25.

journals, such as the *Himalaya Journal,* rehearse the colonial aesthetics of the sublime by portraying the mountains as a site for intrepid travelers and mountaineers to hone their masculinity. On the other hand, the Garhwali environmental activist Chandi Prasad Bhatt, uses the Garhwali word '*pyanku*' to emphasize the sensitivity of the landscape. '*Himalay andar mein kamzor hai* (the Himalayas are internally weak),' Bhatt relates, suggesting that just like a child wails when scolded, the mountains unleash catastrophes in response to the human abuse of the environment.[31] In Bhatt's perspective, then, rural imaginaries of the mountains engender practices of ecological care rather than the display of masculinity. Yet, such rural imaginaries of the mountains are also riddled with contradictions. Consider the writings of another acclaimed Garhwali environmentalist, Sunderlal Bahuguna. In his *Dharatī kī Pukār* ('Call of the Earth') Bahuguna bemoans the poverty of modern approaches to water consumption and instead extols traditionally conserved springs (*dhārā, naula*).[32] He laments the fact that urban denizens in the West, with their purifying water filters, will never be able to appreciate how water imbibes the organisms and textures of specific places. In the mountains, Bahuguna observes, water from different springs varies in its medicinal qualities as well as in sensations of coolness and sweetness. However, Bahuguna's sensitive writings about traditional systems of water conservation ignores how access to spring water continues to be restricted along caste lines in Garhwal.[33] Geographical imaginaries in the present-day Central Himalayas continue to act as sites of domination and resistance, therefore.

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[31] Chandi Prasad Bhatt in discussion with the author, 18th May 2019.

[32] Sundarlal Bahuguna, *Dharatī kī Pukār* (New Delhi: Radhakrishna, 1996): Pp. 22-28.

[33] For example, see Amitangshu Acharya, 'Managing 'Water Traditions' in Uttarakhand', in *Water, Cultural Diversity, and Global Environmental Change*, ed. B R Johnston et al. (UNESCO, 2012).

Geographical Imaginaries and the Future

Perhaps the most significant advantage of the analytic of the geographical imaginary and the relational approach to place is that these frameworks emphasize the interdependence of self and other, as well as local and trans-local. The relational approach to place collapses the nested hierarchies of the local, the national, and the global. As Doreen Massey writes, 'the particularity of any place is, in these terms, constructed not by placing boundaries around it and defining its identity through counter-position to the other which lies beyond, but precisely (in part) through the specificity of the mix of links and interconnections *to* that 'beyond.''[34] Evaluating how colonial encounters transformed both cultural conceptions and phenomenological experiences of the Central Himalayas thus suggests the co-construction of the colony and the metropole, the margins and the center, and the self and the other.

Acknowledging the interdependent constitution of place arguably widens geographies of political responsibility. In her study of the politics of globalization in London, Doreen Massey asks, 'what is, in a relational imagination and in light of the relational construction of identity, the geography of our social and political responsibility?'[35] Massey argues that political action which lacks a relational understanding of the construction of locality is necessarily inadequate. For instance, the attempts made by London's progressive Mayor in the early 2000s to celebrate the city's diversity and oppose the privatization of public infrastructures remained oblivious to 'the daily global raiding parties of various sorts, the activity of finance houses and multinational

[34]Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 5.

[35] Massey, 'Geographies of Responsibility,' 6.

corporations, on which the very existence of the place, including its mixity, depends.'[36] A truly progressive politics, Massey contends, would instead directly confront London's complicity in reproducing global inequality. So, in response to her question about the geographies of political responsibility, Massey suggests that if we consider the 'conditions of existence' of the local in terms of its relations of dependence upon the trans-local, then 'we are responsible to areas beyond the bounds of place not because of what we have done, but because of what we are.'[37]

We might extrapolate from Massey's profound insights into geographical responsibility to consider the implications of this dissertation's critique of geographical imaginaries of the Central Himalayas. Massey proposes that responsibility begins with acknowledging the web of relations, extending within and beyond the 'local,' that constitute place. In other words, a place-based politics must begin with reflexivity about one's own position vis-à-vis the other humans and nonhumans comprising that place. In the modern Central Himalayas, the ideas about nature, value, and the body articulated by colonial and colonized elites from within and beyond the mountains oriented material processes of place-making that had life-shortening consequences for humans and nonhumans alike. So, the conditions of possibility for the Himalayan sportsman's apprehension of the sublime was the near extirpation of the *moonal* pheasant, while the safety and security of the bourgeois Hindu pilgrim was ensured at the expense of precarious Dalit and *coolie* labor. These ideas about nature, value, and the body continue to impact the mountain landscape, whether it is in the form of the widened *chār dhām* 'all-weather' highway or hiking tours of meadows. Undoing the life-shortening consequences of modern imaginaries of the Himalayas therefore entails

[36] Ibid., 15.

[37] Ibid., 16.

questioning the hegemonic ideas about nature, value, and the body which continue to shape experiences of the mountains.

To further consider the geographies of political responsibility, we might return to the case of the recent floods in Uttarakhand. Scholars theorizing the interdisciplinary field of the environmental humanities have argued that 'environmental imaginaries,' or ideas about nature, 'very significantly impact how we deal with environmental crisis.' In light of cascading contemporary ecological crises, they propose '(re)instating an imaginary of curiosity, care, and concern.'[38] This dissertation cautions that the future oriented search for such environmental imaginaries of 'curiosity, care, and concern' must account for darker histories of cultural conceptions of nature which continue to shape the contemporary. For instance, environmental activists from within and beyond the mountains celebrated Garhwali environmental imaginaries in the wake of the 1970s floods and the Chipko Movement against deforestation that followed. However, the call for community control over mountain resources has not yet translated into access to land or the dignity of labor for marginalized castes and genders. The response to the present floods cannot be an uncritical celebration of an essentialized local or a romanticized commons, therefore. The Rishi Ganga floods further foreground the unequal grids connecting the Central Himalayas to regions beyond; to the powerlines that leave the mountains in the dark while transmitting electricity to metropolises in the plains.[39] These unequal relations stretch back to the

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[38] Astrida Neimanis, Cecilia Asberg, Johan Hedren, 'Four Problems, Four Directions for Environmental Humanities', *Ethics & the Environment* Vol. 20, No. 1 (Spring 2015): 82.

[39] Hydroelectricity accounted for 21% of India's energy supply in 2014. Per capita energy consumption and supply remains far larger in urban compared to rural areas. As Khandekar, Buechler, Sen, and Scott find in

nineteenth century, when colonial and colonized elites alike crafted hegemonic imaginaries of the Central Himalayas as a site outside of modernity to project fantasies of improvement and spiritual healing onto the mountain landscape.

A future oriented engagement with geographical imaginaries of the Central Himalayas must therefore reconcile with fraught histories. Indeed, we might ask how the Garhwali environmentalist Sunderlal Bahuguna's celebration of the sensuous relations between body and place enlivened by traditional water systems in the mountains might be re-enlivened and redirected through a feminist politics of the commons. As Silvia Federici writes, an anti-capitalist, feminist politics of the commons demands the struggle for 'collective re-appropriation' as well as the 'collective struggle against all that divides us.'[40] As Federici suggests, to 're-enchant the world,' we must first undo material and cultural systems of caste, gender, and racial oppression which continue to fragment embodied experiences of place. Such a politics begins by acknowledging the 'interdependence of things,' D. R. Nagaraj argues, so that we can begin to widen our circle of 'emotional concern' to include human and nonhuman others.[41] By exposing the interconnectedness

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their study of dams in the Bhilangana basin in Garhwal, the benefits of hydroelectric projects 'are skewed in favor of urban populations and hydropower developers.' See Stephanie Buechler, Debashish Sen, Neha Khandekar, and Christopher Scott, 'Re-Linking Governance of Energy with Livelihoods and Irrigation in Uttarakhand, India,' *Water Vol. 8, No. 437* (2016): 18.

[40] 'No common is possible unless we refuse to base our life and our reproduction on the suffering of others, unless we refuse to see ourselves as separate from them. Indeed, if commoning has any meaning, it must be the production of ourselves as a common subject.' In Silvia Federici, *Re-Enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons* (Oakland: PM Press, 2019), 110.

[41] D. R. Nagaraj, *The Flaming Feet* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2010), 73.

of place and personhood, nature and culture, as well as history and geography, perhaps the analytic of the geographical imaginary can guide future oriented struggles to widen our circles of concern.

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