CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Not much is known about the early history of Simla Hill States. It appears that the princes of adventurous zeal, owing to territorial greed and Muslim tyranny, initially forayed these hills and established themselves on varying territories in accordance with their might.¹

Prior to the appearance of the Sikh, the Gurkha and the British, the history of the Simla Hill States for many generations seems to have been one of continuous petty warfare between two or three of the larger States, with suzerainty over the smaller States. Bilaspur was constantly at war with Nalagarh and Bashahr with Keonthal and Kullu, Keonthal with Sirmur, Sirmur with Gahrwal. All the smaller independent chiefs had acknowledged a certain degree of subordination to one or other of these more powerful States. The nature of the conditions binding upon the lesser chiefs was different in every case, and in no case did a superior resume for himself the lands of a subordinate.²

While the petty wars among the hill chiefs were ongoing, there arose a formidable power in Nepal called the Gurkhas. They extended their dominions greatly during the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. Amar Singh Thapa, the Gurkha leader, occupied Kumaon, Garhwal, Sirmour and even touched Kangra. He was ousted from Kangra
by Sansar Chand and Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab in 1809. After the ousting, Amar Singh established himself at Arki, the capital of Baghal State. Then he turned his army in 1810 to Jubbal, Balsan and Bashahr and occupied the whole area between the Kali Nadi and the Sutlej river.³

The Gurkhas remained in occupation of the Hill States for about a decade and proved hard and grinding masters. They adopted repressive measures to realise revenue and procure provisions. Many families fled across the Sutlej on their approach, and the tract exhibited the greatest marks of devastation and depopulation.⁴

People were tired of the harsh and tyrannical Gurkha rule. They united themselves and took stand against them. The British government also came to their aid in 1815 A.D. The Gurkhas were compelled to leave the country. But British aid was actually a political trap. They compelled the local rulers to sign certain treaties according to which the paramount power of these rulers passed on to the British Government of India.

The Simla Hill chiefs appear to have enjoyed almost complete independence ever since their first establishment in these hills. They were apparently too insignificant to arouse the jealousy or attract the avarice of the Delhi emperors; and they had the wisdom, while fighting freely amongst themselves, to avoid giving offence to their all powerful Muslim
neighbours, at whose mercy they would have been deemed necessary or desirable.\textsuperscript{5}

Prior to the occupation of tract by the British, these States were known as Bara Thakuraies and Athara Thakuraies. These Thakuraies were established by James Baillie Frazer, who was a civilian with a unit of British troops who fought against the Gurkhas in the Anglo-Gurkha war of A.D. 1815. He has provided the following list of these Thakuraies:\textsuperscript{6}

**Bara Thakuraies**

(1) Keonthal (4) Kunihar (7) Mehlog (10) Kotgarh
(2) Baghal (5) Bhajji (8) Koti (11) Theog
(3) Kuthar (6) Dami (9) Kiaree (12) Baghat

**Athara Thakuraies**

(1) Jubbal (6) Rawin (11) Dodra Kawar (16) Ghund
(2) Balsan (7) Karangla (12) Saree (17) Bharoli
(3) Kumarsain (8) Tharoch (13) Ratesh (18) Seelee
(4) Khaneti (9) Morni (14) Koti
(5) Delath (10) Beja (15) Mudhan
Another list of these Thakuraies has been given by Captain C.P. Kennedy, who was the Superintendent of the Hill States from 1822 to 1835. This list included:

1. Keonthal
2. Baghat
3. Baghal
4. Kuthar
5. Kumarsain
6. Bhajji
7. Mehlog
8. Dhami
9. Koti
10. Kiaree
11. Kunihar
12. Mehlog
13. Tributaries of Keonthal

Athara Thakuraies

1. Jubbal
2. Kotgarh
3. Balson
4. Rawin
5. Khaneti
6. Karangla
7. Delath
8. Balsan
9. Theog
10. Dodra Kawar
11. Theog
12. Ghund
13. Punder
14. Bharoli
15. Beja
16. Shangri

Tributaries of Keonthal was sold to Balsan
There was also a third list of the Thakuraies which had been given by Captain R. Ross, who was the first Political Agent of these Thakuraies. In the above mentioned records and other literature written upto 1830, the twelve and eighteen Thakuraies listed separately were called by the names of Bara Thakuraies and Athara Thakuraies respectively. There were discrepancies in the lists given by James Billie Frazer, C.P. Kennedy and R. Ross. Frazer includes the Thakuraies of Kotgarh and Theog in the list of Bara Thakuraies, which were spread in the upper hill valleys whereas Capt. Kennedy includes them in Athara Thakuraies. The Thakurai of Kumarsain, located in the upper hill valley, had been included in the list of Bara Thakuraies by Capt. Kennedy and Capt. Ross whereas Frazer mentions it in Athara Thakuraies. The major discrepancy in the list of Capt. Ross was that he only includes fourteen Thakuraies in the list of Athara Thakuraies.

The Bara Thakuraies were spread in the lower Simla Hills and the Athara Thakuraies were in the upper hill valleys of the river Sutlej, Pabbar and Tons.
Athara Thakuraies

(1) Jubbal

Among the Athara Thakuraies some were of considerable size and importance, particularly Jubbal. Tradition has it that before the 12th century, the ancestors of the rulers of Jubbal were rulers of Sirmour. They belonged to the Rathore clan of Chandravanshi Rajputs. Their shifting from Sirmour to Jubbal is accounted for in the following manner. Ugra Chand, the Raja of Sirmour had a summer palace at Soonpur, which is known as Hatkoti, on the right bank of the Pabbar river. While he was having a pleasant time in the company of his three sons, he had to go back to Sirmour on State business. Leaving his family behind, he went thither, but owing to the rains, the river was in flood. His capital Sirmauri Tal was swept away by the flood in Giri river, and he and his principal officers found watery graves, and there was none to carry the news to the royal children. A prince of the Jaisalmer house, present there at the time, on pilgrimage to Badrinath, asked his son Sobha to march and occupy the vacant throne. Soon he was installed on the gaddi by the priests of the principality and thus the country was once for all lost to the descendants of Ugra Chand.

The three sons of Ugra Chand - Kuran Chand, Mool Chand and Duni Chand became the founders of the States of Jubbal, Sari and Rawin in the Giri and Pabbar basins.
At the time of the Gurkha invasion, Jubbal was a tributary of Sirmour, but during the occupation it became separated in 1815. Rana Puran Chand was granted an independent *sanad* by the British. The *sanad* prescribed the maintenance of 70 *begaris* at the permanent service of Government. This condition was subsequently commuted to the annual tribute of Rs. 2520. The area of Jubbal was 288 sq.mile, and the population according to the census of 1921 was 21,172 and the revenue Rs. 1,90,000.

**Balson and Ratesh**

Balson was for many years a tributary of Sirmur. At the time of the Gurkha invasion, it was, however, subordinate to Kumarsain. Thakur Jagraj assisted the British forces, his principal exploit being the capture of the Nagain fort with an army of a hundred Gurkhas, which he handed over to General Ochterlony. At the close of the war he was granted an independent *sanad*. Jagraj again behaved with loyalty during the mutiny when he sheltered and entertained several European refugees from Simla. In acknowledgment of these services he was given a *khillat* in 1858 and the hereditary title of Rana was conferred on the chief of Balson.

The area of Balson was 51 sq. miles, the population according to the census of 1921 being 61,000 and the revenue Rs. 84,000/-.
Ratesh

Thakur Hira Singh of Ratesh in the Simla Hills was a feudatory of the Raja of Keothal and was one of the smallest of the semi-independent rulers of these small States. Before the Gurkhas came, Ratesh was a flourishing little duchy but when General Ochterlony swept these hills, the ruler, Kishan Singh was a boy of six or seven years of age, an exile at Sirmour, and there was no one to look after his interests. Keonthal annexed four of the Ratesh parganas and the remainder was seized in 1820 by the Rana of Balson. Subsequently, the Keonthal Raja was forced by the British to restore the territory to the State of the Ratesh Thakuraies. However, the parganas swallowed by Balson were not restored to Ratesh by the British or the British were so obliged to Balson for the latter's help against Gurkhas and subsequent, unswearing loyalty that Balson retained what it had grabbed.

The area of Ratesh was 12 sq. miles, the population according to 1921 census was 499 and revenue Rs. 625/-.

Delath Thakuraies

Delath was a tributary of Bashahr, paying Rs. 150/- per annum to the Raja in acknowledgement of his supremacy. The wazir of Bashahr was also entitled to receive an allowance of Rs. 30/- from the Thakur of Delath whose gross income was only Rs. 550/- per annum. The chief at the time, Thakur
Narendra Singh, exercised full powers, but sentences of death required confirmation by the Superintendent, Hill States. He had married a daughter of the late Thakur Sarn Chand of Kanethi.

The family was an old one, and was held in high respect by the people of the Simla Hills.

Kanethi

Kanethi was situated between Narkanda and Kotgur. When Uggar Chand died, Sansar Chand got Karangla and Sabir Chand and Jai Singh came to Khanethi and started by jointly ruling Kumharsain, Khanethi, Kotgarh and Kotkhai. During the Gurkha invasion, Thakur Rasal Chand fled to Bashahr and received shelter and assistance from the Raja. This circumstance was asserted as furnishing the sole ground for any claim over Khaneti by Bashahr at the end of the Gurkha war.

The area of Khaneti was 100 sq.miles, the population was 2,575 and the revenue Rs. 4000.

Kotkhai Thakuraies

Kotkhai was bounded by independent States, on the north by Bushahr, on the south by Keonthal, on the west by Keonthal, Kumharsain and Balson and on the east by Darkoti
and Jubbal. It forms one of the Athara Thakuraies, and was formerly subject successively to Keonthal and Bashahr.

Theog, Madhan and Ghund Thakurai

Theog, Madhan and Ghund had a common origin. The traditional account holds that a Chandel Rajput of Jaipur, who made a pilgrimage to Badrinath, taking fancy to the hill country, settled at Ram Serai in Garhwal. He afterwards moved to Bilaspur, and had four sons, all of whom founded petty principalities. Janjan Singh founded Ghund, the second son founded Madhan and the eldest son, Jaśi Chand founded the State of Theog.²⁰

Theog

Jaś Chand came from Bilaspur some centuries ago and settled at Theog, north-east of Simla, becoming a feudatory of the Keonthal chiefs. The Keonthal Raja had no power of interference so long as the Thakur was not in arrears with his tribute. The latter exercised full criminal and civil jurisdiction within the limits of his States, but capital sentences required the confirmation of the Superintendent of Hill States.²¹

Thakur Bhup Singh, great grandfather of the then chief, Padam Chand was removed in 1856 for misconduct and his son
Hari Chand appointed in his stead. A grant of Rs. 500/- per annum was made to the father who died ten years later.

The area of Theog was 144 sq. miles, the population was 5,654 and the revenue Rs. 10,000.

Madhan

Madhan or Kiari lay between 31°12'N and 77°21' and 77°26'E.

The Thakur of Madhan, who was a tributary of the Keonthal Raja, ruled over half-a-dozen small villages between Phagu and Matiana to the north of the road between Simla and Kotgarh. The then chief Thakur Randhir Chand succeeded his father on the 31st December, 1905.

The area of Madhan was 9 sq.miles, the population was 3,704 and the revenue Rs. 6000/.

Ghund

The State was a Thakurai, but the late chief Bishan Singh, who died in 1907, was only designated Tikka, because he failed to pay to the Raja of Keonthal the nazarana due for his installation. His son Ranjit Singh had come of age, but had not yet been given control of the State. Disorders rendered it necessary to appoint a Government Manager at the death of
Tikka Bishan Singh (seventeenth generation from Janjan Singh) to carry out a regular settlement, and otherwise put things straight.25

The area of Ghund was 28 sq.miles, population was 1927 and the revenue Rs. 2000/.

Tharoch

Tharoch was formerly a part of the Sirmour State. At the time of the expulsion of the Gurkhas, its chief was Thakur Karam Singh. He, however, was old and infirm and the administration of the State was in the hands of his brother Jhobu. On Karam Singh's death in 1819 the State was granted to Jhobu, with the obligation to supply 8 begaris imposed by the sanad, being later commuted to an annual cash payment of Rs. 288. Jhobu was accused of being guilty of misgovernment in favour of his son Syam Singh. As to a result he was made to abdicate in 1841 when the State was incorporated in Jubbal. In 1843, however, it was restored to Ranjit Singh, son of Karam Singh on his agreeing to continue the annual payment of Rs. 288/-.26

Ranjit Singh died in 1871 and was succeeded by his grandson Kidar Singh. He died in 1902 and was succeeded by his minor son, Rana Surat Singh, who was formally vested
with powers in 1908. In 1929 the personal title of Rana was conferred on Thakur Surat Singh.\textsuperscript{27}

The area of Tharoch was 75 square miles, the population according to the census of 1921 was 4200 and the revenue Rs. 1,30,000/-. The State was liable to the operation of the nazarana rules upto 1911 when on the occasion of the Coronation Darbar all such levies were abolished.\textsuperscript{28}

Dhadi

The ruling family was a branch of that of Tharoch and it is surmised that the Dhadi village may once have been part of Tharoch State.\textsuperscript{29}

At the time of the Gurkha war, we find no mention of Dhadi and it was in all probability subordinate to the original State of Rawin. After the establishment of British rule in these hills, the district officers of Simla seem to have looked upon Rawin and Dhadi as British territories held by hereditary jagirdars. Dhadi was included in the settlement of Rawin made in 1841 by an amin, Kum Das, under the orders of Mr. Erskine, Superintendent, Hill States, and in the memorandum attached it was noted that the Mian of Dhadi was subordinate to the Thakur of Rawin. In 1866, a dispute of forest ownership between Rawin and Dhadi was settled by Colonel Lawrence as though the contending parties were on equal terms.\textsuperscript{30} In 1891,
when Mr. Coldstream held his enquiry into the status of Rawin and Dhadi, the former preferred no claim to superiority over Dhadi and the Government's final decision was that the two States were independent of one another, though nominally feudatory to Jubbal.\(^3\)

The annual income of the State was Rs. 1200/- from all sources. Of this amount Rs. 900/- was the forest tilte, leased in 1879 to the Forest Department of the United Provinces, and included in Jaunsar Division of the Dehradun district.\(^2\)

The area of Dhadi was 25 sq. miles, the population was 247, and the revenue Rs.1400/.

**Sangri and Koti Thakurai**

Sangri was situated on the left bank of the Sutlej, above Kotguru, and near Kumharsain.\(^3\) Sangri was originally a tributary of Bashahr, tribute being realized by Raja Man Singh of Kullu some time during the first half of the eighteenth century. In 1803, it was seized by the Gurkhas, but in 1815 it was restored to its chief, Bikram Singh, who died in 1816 and was succeeded by his son Ajit Singh, who died childless in 1841.\(^4\) Jagat Singh, an uncle of Ajit Singh and brother of Bikram Singh, should then have succeeded, but as he was an imbecile, the chieftainty passed to his son, Ranbir Singh. On the latter's death in 1844, Jagat Singh, the imbecile was
recognised as chief but the State was taken under management and so remained until Jagat Singh's death in 1876.  

The area of Sangri was 16 sq. miles, the population according to the census of 1921 was 3200, and the revenue Rs. 7500/-. 

Bara Thakurai 

Keonthal Thakurai 

Keonthal Thakuraies comprised the five petty States of Koti, Theog, Madhan, Ghund and Ratesh, each paying a small annual tribute, though in many aspects practically independent.

The State had been held by the then ruling family for many generations. The family was Rajput and the family surname was Sen. They suffered the Gurkha invasion early in the present century in common with the other Hill chiefs. Sansar Sen, great grandfather of the then Raja, was born in exile at Suket, where his father took refuge until rescued by the British in 1814.

The area of Keonthal state was 116 sq.miles, and the population was 22,499 and the revenue Rs 1,00,000/-. 

Bhagal Thakurai
The ruling family traces its descent from Aje De, a Panwar Rajput, who came from Ujjain and carved out for himself this kingdom in the hills. The Gurkhas overran the State between 1805 and 1815 and for seven years the then chiefs, Rana Jagat Singh, lived in exile in Nalagarh. After the Gurkha campaign, he was restored by the British Government, and confirmed in possession of his State by a sanad, dated 3rd September 1815, which bound him to assist the British with troops in time of war, and to keep his roads in order. This sanad was enforced with one modification, which was that an annual tribute of Rs. 3,600 was accepted in lieu of begar or forced labour.

Jagat Singh was succeeded by his son, Sheo Saran Singh, who died in 1840 and was succeeded by his son Kishen Singh. In 1860, a Khillat was conferred upon him in recognition of his services during the mutiny. Men of his State helped to guard the road from Jullundhar to Simla at a time when an attack at Shimla by the mutineers at Jullundhar was apprehended.

In 1877, Kishan Singh was succeeded by his son Moti Singh, who died a few months later, after which his cousin Dhain Singh succeeded him. In 1904, Dhain Singh was succeeded by his son Bikram Singh, and he in 1922 by his son Raja Surender Singh born in 1909 yet powers. The State was administered by a Manager.
The area of Baghal was 124 sq. miles. The population, according to the census of 1921, was 25,000 and the revenue Rs. 1,00,000/-. The State was liable to the operation of the nazaran rules up to 1911, when on the occasion of the coronation Darbar all such levies were abolished.4

Baghat Thakurai

Baghat Thakurai was one of the twelve Thakuraies. The tract to the north and east of Solan is drained by the Asni Khad, a tributary of the Giri and the rest of the State by the Gambhar and other tributaries of the Sutlej.5

The house of the Baghat, a Rajput family came originally from Dara Nagri in the Deccan, acquiring the State by conquest. The family name, once Pal became Singh. The ruling house had experienced many vicissitudes of fortune. Being an ally of the Bilaspur Raja, Rana Mohinder Singh remained in possession of his territory under the Gurkha rule. He remained loyal to his friends during the Gurkha war and lost five parganas in consequence, which were made over to Patiala. The remaining three lapsed to the British on his death in 1839 without issue.6

The area of Baghat was 28 sq. miles, the population was 1927 and the revenue Rs. 2000/.
Bhaji Thakurai

Bhaji Thakurai lies on the left bank of the Sutlej, due north of Simla. The founder of this State came from Kangra and acquired possession of State by conquest. 65

The Gurkhas overran the country between 1803 and 1818. They were repulsed by the British Government and the Rana of Bhaji Ruder Pal, grandfather of the Rana, was confirmed as ruler of the State by a sanad under the usual conditions of rendering service in times of war. It was under this sanad that the Rana held the State while he enjoyed powers of administration similar to those of other Simla Hill chiefs. 66

The Bhaji was 96 sq.miles, the population was 13,309, and the revenue Rs. 25,000/.

Koti Thakurai

The Koti State adjoins Simla on the east. It was bounded on the north and east by Bhajji, on the west by Patiala, British Simla and Keonthal, and on the south too by Keonthal. Its area was 44 sq. miles and population in 1901 was 7959. 67 Rana Raghbir Chand was a feudatory of the Keonthal chief. His grandfather received the title of Rana for services rendered during the mutiny. His father Rana Bishan Chand assisted in guarding the station against the approach of the Nasiri Battalion of Gurkhas, whose behaviour at Jutogh, when ordered
to proceed to the plains, brought them under the suspicion of disloyalty, and he afterwards gave shelter to many Europeans who had left Simla."

**Dhami Thakurai**

The Dhami State lies to the west of Simla about six miles from Jutogh. The Rana was a Rajput, his ancestors having fled from Rajpura near Patiala and settled at Dhami, when Shahab-ud-din Ghauri's invasion of India took place in the fourteenth century. The State was originally a feudatory of Bilaspur but became independent after the expulsion of the Gurkhas in 1815. The *sanad* of independence was granted to Rana Gobardhan Singh, who at the age of twelve fought under General Ochterlony against the Gurkhas. The Rana's loyal services in the mutiny were acknowledged by a remission of half the State tribute of Rs. 720/- for his lifetime.

The area of Dhami was 26 sq.miles, the population was 4,505, and the revenue Rs. 10,000/.

**Mehlog Thakurai**

The Thakurs of Mehlog were Rajputs and had established themselves in the Simla Hills for some hundred of years. The founder of the State came from Ajudhya and eventually settled at Pata, which had been the capital of the State for twenty one
generations. The State used to pay tribute to the Mughal Emperors through Bilaspur. It was occupied by the Gurkhas from 1803 to 1815. During the Gurkha occupation Thakur Sansar Chand of Mahlog took refuge in Nalagarh. He was restored in 1815. The obligation to supply 40 begaris imposed by the sanad was later commuted to an annual cash payment of Rs. 1,440/-.

Sansar Chand, to whom the sanad was granted, died in 1849 and was succeeded by Dalip Chand, who was followed by Thakur Raghunath Chand.

The area of Mehlog was 43 sq. miles, the population was 8,968, and revenue Rs. 25,000/.

Kunihar Thakurai

On the expulsion of the Gurkhas, Thakur Mangreoo Deo was confirmed in the chieftaincy of Kunihar. Mungree Deo died in 1816 and was succeeded by his son, Kishan Singh, who died in 1866. Kishan Singh was succeeded by his son Tegh Singh, who died in 1905. Tegh Singh was succeeded by his son Hardeo Singh, who was born in 1898. Thakur Hardeo Singh succeeded as a minor and received ruling powers in 1917.

The area of Kunihar was 80 sq. miles, the population, according to the census of 1921 was 2000, and the revenue Rs. 18,000/.
**Kuthar Thakurai**

In early times Kuthar seems to have been tributary in turn to Nalagarh and Bilaspur. At the time of the Gurkha invasion it was however tributary to Keonthal. During the Gurkha occupation, Rana Gopal Singh took refuge at Manimajra in the Ambala district. He died on his way back to Kuthar at the end of the war and the State was conferred on his son Bhup Singh. The *sanad* granted to Bhup Singh prescribed the maintenance of 40 *begaris* at the service of the Government. This number was later reduced to 30 and was commuted to an annual cash payment of Rs. 1,000/-.

The area of Kuthar was 20 sq.miles, the population was 4,195, and revenue Rs. 16,000/.

**Beja Thakurai**

Beja was a small State of four sq. miles lying on the western slopes of the Kasauli hill.

On the expulsion of the Gurkhas, the State was restored to Thakur Man Chand. The obligation to supply 5 *begaris* imposed by the *sanad* was later commuted to an annual cash payment of Rs. 180. This was reduced by Rs. 56/- per annum in 1892, as compensation for a small area of land incorporated within the Kasauli cantonment.
The area of Beja was 4 sq.miles, and population was 1,131 and revenue Rs. 6000/.

Mangal Thakurai

The Mangal State lay on the bank of the Sutlej, near Bilaspur, to which it was once a tributary. The Rana was declared independent in 1815 after the expulsion of the Gurkhas. He exercised sovereign powers subject to the usual political supervision of the Superintendent of Hill States.¹⁵

The area of Mangal was 12 sq.miles, the population was 1227 and the revenue Rs. 900/.

After the expulsion of the Gurkhas in 1815, by the British Government with the help of the chiefs of Hill States, these States came under the protection of British Government. The Hill States were formed in accordance with the British Government's decision to restore as far as possible, the position of affairs existing at the beginning of the Gurkha occupation, with the reservation of the States to be independent of one another and subject to the British Government.⁶⁰

The British Government granted sanads to the chiefs of the Thakuraies. The Thakuraies of Kumarsain, Balsan, Kuthar, Mangal and Dhami were constituted into separate chieftainships and granted independent sanads while the
Thakuraies of Khaneti and Dealth were conferred upon the State of Bushahr. The Thakurai of Rawin and Dhandi were given to Jubbal and those of Koti, Theog, Madhan, Ghund and Ratesh to Keonthal. The States in which the cantonment and forts of Subathu, Kotgarh and Rawin were situated were, however, retained by the British Government.

The following were the dates of the sanads granted to the Thakuraies and the names of their chiefs:

1. Bilaspur Raja Maha Chand 6th March, 1815
2. Baghal Raja Jagat Singh 3rd Sept., 1815
3. Kuthar Rana Bhup Singh 3rd Sept., 1815
4. Baghat Raja Mohinder Singh 4th Sept., 1815
5. Bhajji Rana Ruder al 4th Sept., 1815
6. Dhami Goverdhan Singh 4th Sept., 1815
7. Mehlog Thakur Sansar Chand 4th Sept., 1815
8. Beja Thakur Man Chand 4th Sept., 1815
11. Nalagarh Raja Ram Singh 20th Oct., 1815
12. Jubbal Rana Puran Chand 18th Nov., 1815
13. Shangri Rana Bikramjeet Singh 16th Dec., 1815
14. Mangal Rana Bahadur Singh 20th December, 1815
15. Darkoti Rana Sutes Ram 1815
16. Kunihar Thakur Mangan Deo 1815
17. Kumarsain Rana Kehar Singh 7th Feb., 1816
18. Bushahr Raja Mohinder Singh 8th Feb., 1816
19. Tharoch Thakur Jobhu 31st Jan., 1819

By these sanads the chieftaincies of the Hill states were put under certain obligations towards the British Government. They were to allow free passage to the British Government, and to the British merchants and their goods in their territories. They also had to furnish begaris and construct roads and repair old ones in their respective territories. The bigger States were bound to join the British army with their armed retainers and hill porters when called upon to do so at the time of war. They were required to redress the grievances of their people, promote their welfare and improve the working conditions in general and to ensure the safety of the roads. The chiefs exercised full ruling powers in their respective territories but the capital punishment passed by the chiefs was required to be confirmed by the Superintendent Simla Hill States before it was carried out.  

Darkoti was the only Thakurai, which was not under any obligation in respect of begar or supplies for the use of British troops. 

Bushahr was the only State from which an annual tribute of Rs. 15,000/- was exacted (Sanad No. III) by the British Government on the restoration of the States to the Hill chiefs. In 1847, this tribute was reduced to Rs. 3,945/- as a compensation for the abolition of transit duty. 

After the establishment of British control and influence in this region, twenty eight Hill States came to constitute the Simla Hill States. The following were the Simla Hill States:

(1) Bilaspur (Kahlur)

(2) Bushahr

(3) Delath  
(4) Khaneti  
(5) Nalagarh (Hindur)  
(6) Keonthal

(7) Koti  
(8) Theog  
(9) Madhan  
(10) Ghund

(11) Ratesh  
(12) Jubbal

(13) Kumarsain
These States were placed under the supervision of Lieutenant Ross, the Assistant Political Agent posted at Sabathu. He was followed by Capt. Charles Pratt Kennedy who remained Political Agent from 1822 to 1835. After Capt. Charles Pratt Kennedy, Col. Tapp became Political Agent. The
Political Agent was redesignated as Deputy commissioner of Simla and Superintendent of Simla Hill States, subordinate to the President, Delhi (and after 1911, Ambala). From 1858 to 1935, the Deputy Commissioner of Simla was also *ex-officio* Superintendent of twenty eight small hill States, known as Simla Hill States. From October 1936 till August 1947, the Simla Hill States were placed in direct relation with the Government of India. The Political Agent, Punjab Hill States Agency stepped into the shoes of the Superintendent, Hill States. This was the crucial and last phase of British Paramountcy.66

II

In the foregoing pages, an overview has been given from the eighteen Thakuraies in the upper Simla Hills which existed in British times beginning from 1815 to 1947. It should, however, be noted that these Thakuraies were not created by the British, but in fact existed for varying spans of time prior to the coming of British and consolidation of their paramountancy through the years. The paramount power made no significant changes in their structure and administration. The changes they carried out pertained to altering the feudatory relationship of certain small States with the big States or they removed certain rulers for reasons of misgovernance, appointing in their place their sons, brothers of kith and kin, never violating the so-called royalty paradigm.
The very fact that there were so many Thakuraies by the standards of Rajasthan, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh small, medium and large though not extensive in area shows that in terms of social history life and culture remained essentially localised. The outlook of the people inhabiting these States, small, medium and large was primarily localised which reflected in the institution of the worship of the village devtas - a custom which fortunately continues to this day. The writer of this dissertation has had many opportunities to talk to scores of elderly people who lived in the States during these times. The writer was told that the people of different States used to be jealous of one another with each State inhabitant asserting the superiority of his or her State. They indulged in criticising other states no end. Though this assertion of superiority and shadow talk, a favourite pastime has disappeared with the abolition of the States and their integration into what is called Himachal Pradesh, but the residual effect of this fractured, fragmented legacy still continues. This localism, in fact sub-localism should be noted because in the neighbouring Punjab, the Punjabis do not split themselves socially and culturally into such fragments. To this day we have not experienced the genuine emergence of a Pan-Himachal mystique or outlook.

It must, however, be stated that with the undisputed rule of the paramount power the localised Himachalies from 1815 to 1947 began to realise though dimly or in a crepuscular way, that there existed beyond the narrow confines of their small
States a big wide world. With the passage of time and especially with the coming up of the Praja Mandal movement, which began to challenge the arbitrariness of the local rulers on one hand and begar, in particular, and the might of the British empire on the other, the localised awareness received here and there a few pulversing blows. Hundreds of Himachalies fought in the First World War and the Second World War and naturally, upon returning home, they had an impacting loosening effect on the rigid local mores.

Another positive effect of the Paramount Power in the history of Simla Hill States, is that it put an end to skirmishing, feuding and 'sabre-rattling' on the part of the Rajas and Ranas. For centuries the chief feature of the State's history was the perennial triangular contest between Keonthal, Sirmour and Bashahr in the course of which first one and the then another became supreme, and in turn lost its position. Such past times became a thing of the past. Perhaps, the origin of the stone pelting affair, described on page 211, lies, speaking historically, in the conflicts among the Rajas and Ranas before British rule which granted a degree of autonomy.

To encapsulate, the British Raj definitely made a dent on the insular localism of the inhabitants of Simla Hill States. It sliced and cut into the local culture - its customs and mores. As time passed, the impact increased, people being exposed to the movement of the British and Indian traders and to outsiders. The dwellers/inhabitants realised that outside the
narrow boundaries of their claustrophobic States, there was the big, wide world out there.

The British Raj has to be welcomed not only because it rid Simla Hills of the tyranny of the lawless, despotic rule of the Gurkhas, but also because it ensured an overall uniformity of law and administration.

III

Popular Movements in Simla Hill States

Hill people have always resisted the alien elements and internal oppression. Raja Bidhi Chand of Kangra organized a confederation of all the hill chiefs between Jammu and Kangra in 1588-89 A.D. against the supremacy of the Mughal Emperor Akbar, which resulted in rebellion. In 1594-95, there was another rebellion against the oppressors led by the Rajas of Jasrota and Jaswan. Nurpur's chief, Raja Basu, his son Raja Jagat Singh and grandson Raja Rajrup Singh also revolted against the Mughal authority of Akbar, Jahangir and Shahjahan respectively. Such rebellions were of frequent occurrence among the hill chiefs.67

Revolt of 1857

The 1857 War of Independence had its echoes in these hills too. Raja Shamsher Singh of Rampur Bashahr refused to pay tribute, offered no aid and even refused ordinary supplies.
Only the non-availability of troops prevented the Deputy Commissioner of Simla from coercing him. He, however, recommended that the Raja be deposed, and that the State be taken under direct British management.

In 1857 a battalion of British army stationed at Jutogh, which mainly consisted of hill Rajputs and Gurkhas, revolted against their British officers. Subedar Bhim Singh also revolted along with his platoon at Kasauli and reached Jutogh. The British, then living at Shimla, panicked. Ultimately, the revolt was crushed. Subedar Bhim Singh was sentenced to death but he escaped to Rampur. On hearing of the failure of revolt, he committed suicide. All these events slowly and steadily aroused a feeling of patriotism among the hill people.

Hill States people also took up arms against slavery and feudalism. There were many instances of the people revolting against the rule of terror and injustice. In 1859 the people of Rampur Bushahr revolted against the high-handedness of the government officials in recruiting forced labour. In 1876, the people of Nalagarh rose against the atrocities committed by Ghulam Qadir Khan, the minister of the State. In 1883 and 1930 the subjects of Bilaspur revolted against the rule of oppression, injustice and high handedness by the State officials. In 1905, the people of Baghal State too revolted against their chief.
In 1939 a session of All India State peoples conference was held at Ludhiana in which it was decided to form 'Praja Mandals' in the hill States. As a result of these steps a general awakening grew among the hill people. Praja Mandalas were organised in Chamba, Mandi, Bilaspur, Bushahr, Jubbal, Sirmur and other small hill States.

IV

Dhami Firing Tragedy

Soon after the formation of various Praja Mandalas, the Dhami Praja Mandal decided to test its strength. It passed resolutions asking for abolition of begar, reduction of land revenue by fifty percent, and grant of civil liberties. The resolutions further demanded the establishment of a responsible government in Dhami and removal of the restrictions on the State subject.

The people of the small State of Dhami united and formed an association named 'Prem Pracharini Sabha Dhami State' in 1937. Initially, this organisation worked for the social upliftment of the masses, but after two years changed into a political organisation under the name 'Dhami Riyasti Praja Mandal' (13th July 1939) and shifted its centre from Dhami to Simla for political activities.

The Dhami Praja Mandal, under its leader Sita Ram, presented a charter of demands before its ruler Rana Dalip Singh, which, however, was rejected. Later, a deputation led by
Bhag Mal Sahota marched towards Dhami on July 16, 1939 for the realization of their demands. The Dhami Rana arrested Bhag Mal near 'Ghang Ki Hatti'. The confrontation between Praja Mandalists and the Dhami ruler led to the Dhami firing tragedy, resulting in the death of two persons and injuries to many others.

The Dhami firing tragedy proved a turning point in the hill people's struggle for social and political reforms. The national leaders, Pt. Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi, were informed about the tragic happenings who condemned the firing and directed the Standing Committee of the Congress and All India States People Conference to hold an enquiry. The Enquiry Committee presided over by Lala Duni Chand, Advocate gave a number of suggestions.70

Whatever the other results of the Dhami firing tragedy might have been, it cannot be denied that the tragic event exposed the miserable conditions not only in Dhami State but in the other Hill States also. The event occupies an important place in the growth of social and political consciousness against the Hill State rulers and British imperialism.71
Praja Mandal Movement

Bilaspur

Unrest amongst the agriculturists, was invariably a potent cause of development of political consciousness and excessive land revenue generally acted as an igniting spark. The first land revenue settlement in 1905 had already doubled the incidence of land revenue as compared to that in the adjoining British territories of Kangra and Hoshiarpur District. There were other grievances too, such as high rates of nazaran, fishing licence fee and other taxes, indiscriminate policy of forest officers and high-handed behaviour of the revenue staff who were publicly accused of molesting village ladies. As a result of the failure of the authorities to satisfy the people, the unrest took the form of an organised rising against the unjust and unfair imposition of the council.

Postwar political developments in India and the return of Indian National Army personnel to their homes in the State had its repercussions. A few young men from the State stealthily attended the Udaipur session of AISPC, and, on their return tried to secretly enlist members of 'Bilaspur Rajya Praja Mandal' which had been organised by the people of the State working and living in Simla. It issued a number of tracks and pamphlets pinpointing the deterioration of the situation as a result of the absence of civil liberties in Bilaspur.
Bashahr

The people of this State too, as of other States, were burdened with numerous levies and executions. In general such burdens were tolerated. However, in rare circumstances, people would organize a 'Dujm' (Satyagraha) to register their protest against some State officials and also to express their resentment at unredressed grievances.

The 'Himalaya Riyasti Praja Mandal' was organised in December, 1939, and was made responsible for directing the activities of the political and social workers in numerous Hill States. To rouse people, it undertook to organise public meetings at different places in various Simla Hill States, publish tracts and pamphlets, collect data about injustices on the hill people to represent their case before the Political Agent and the Rajas and Ranas through deputation and memoranda, and encouraged people to refuse to pay unjust taxes and perform Begar.

A Wazir of a State wrote, "They were advised by the Praja Mandal people that the kolies should go to jail and die for the cause, but should never yield to the prescribed begar."

Entry of Praja Mandal workers began to be banned by the Ranas of small States like Ghund, Theog, Balson, Baghal, Bhajji, Beja, Darkoti and Keonthal under the pretext that the policy of their State was that no outsider should be allowed to represent the case of their State subjects.
The Bashahr Praja Mandal was reactivised after its long hibernation in 1945. During this period, other organisations like 'Bushahr Sudhar Sammelan', 'Sewak Mandal, Delhi' and 'Bushahr Prem Sabha' were also organised by the people of Rampur Bushahr. The Bushahr Praja Mandal launched a satyagraha in March 1947.79

A Prem Pracharni Sabha, Dhami State' was organised in 1937. It converted itself into 'Dhami Riyasti Praja Mandal' on 13th July, 1939. These resolutions asked for the abolition of begar, reduction of land revenue by fifty percent, recognition of Riyasti Praja Mandal, Dhami and the grant of civil liberties.80

VI

Kunihar

A few public spirited men who raised their voice against the highhanded ways of the Rana in 1920, were charged with sedition and were imprisoned. On their release in 1928, these workers shifted to Simla and carried on their work from there. A Praja Mandal was organised in 1939 at Simla which decided to move into the State territory. 'The Kunihar Praja Mandal' was declared an unlawful body by the Rana on 13th June, 1939. A deputation waited upon the Rana on 8th July, 1939, to acquaint him with their demands. The Rana decided to accept the demands and agreed to preside over a meeting of the Praja Mandal on 9th July, 1939. Not only the people of Kunihar but
also of Dhami, Bhajji, Nalagarh, Mehlog and Baghal also attended. The General Secretary of Simla Hills Riyasti Praja Mandal, were present at the meeting. The 'Rana' publicly declared the acceptance of the demands. In this largely attended meeting, the Kunihar Praja Mandal was recognised and declared lawful and given the authority to nominate members on the said committee.

Namol Tragedy

The workers of the newly organised Praja Mandal lost no time in rallying the people and launching a formal agitation against the State authorities for the protection of their fundamental rights. The workers, led by Pt. Padam Dev, Sada Ram, N.D. Shastri, Daulat Ram, Shyamanand, Thakur Dutt Shastri and others marched from Simla to Bilaspur State to present their case before the Raja. But on the State boundary, they found their way barred by a force of about three hundred strong militia with Raja Anand Chand as its head. The processionists were attacked and beaten mercilessly.

The agitation for a democratic set-up in Bilaspur, however, continued. On 2nd December, 1946, the Bilaspur Praja Mandal leaders submitted a memorandum to the Raja requesting the latter to end the policy of repression and to introduce reforms in the State, failing which a satyagraha would be launched. A report was also sent to the All India
States People's Conference about the atrocities of the Raja and the deteriorating situation in the State. 

**Pajhota Andolan**

Apart from the Praja Mandal, some Kisan leaders, inspired by the ongoing Quit India Movement, formed a Kisan Sabha for the protection of the economic interests of the cultivators. The workers of the association, led by Lakshmi Singh, Vaid Surat Singh and ChuChu Main etc., organised protest movements in the forms of satyagraha and non-cooperation. Their main demands included: (i) improvement of farmers condition by providing agricultural facilities; (ii) democratisation of administrative machinery; and, (iii) the establishment of a responsible government in Sirmour.

The kisan movement, started under the leadership of Vaid Surat Singh in October, 1942, was popularly known as the Pajhota Andolan.

The Pajhota Andolan was so well organised that the State imposed martial law in the Pajhota area. The people were hunted down, harassed and beaten in several villages. The Pajhota Andolan was both agrarian as well as political in nature. Its political stance in particular, found ready sympathy and assistance from the Praja Mandal leaders. In all probability, the leader of the Kisan Sabha only wanted the redressal of their grievances directly by the ruler, but the
latter's powerful advisors misled him into the false belief that the agitators were bent upon humiliating him."

To refer again to the Praja Mandal activities, the demand for self-government in Sirmour gathered momentum around 1945 when the leaders of the Himalayan Hill States Regional Council and Simla Riyasti Praja Mandal attended a large conference at Nahan on 24-25th August, 1945 and passed a resolution asking the Sirmour chiefs to associate people in the State administration. Due to the mounting pressure from the praja mandalists, the ruler finally agreed to the formation of a Rajya Parishad.

The State, however, through a clever legal manoeuvre, debarred several voters on the basis of a mandatory year's continuous stay in the State. The Praja Mandal leaders sent reports to the All India State People's Conference for further guidance for the State agitation. It was decided by the Praja Mandal to boycott the constitutional reforms of the Rajya Parishad. The campaign for a democratic set-up and removal of the ruler, continued till 13th March, 1948 and finally the goal of the merger of Sirmur State in Himachal Pradesh was achieved after the merger document was signed in the presence of about thirty thousand people.

The unpleasant chapter of the despotic and autocratic rule of the hill chiefs thus ended mainly due to the effort of the Praja Mandal leaders and workers.
The last ten pages or so provide a fast paced survey of the Praja Mandal Movement, its groundwork being laid during a 1939 conference held in Ludhiana. Under this aegis, the Praja Mandal Movement became a part of the freedom struggle, giving a clarion call to the people in the Simla Hill States people. The subject of this dissertation is the rise and revolt against begar, injustices, and iniquities of the local Rajas. In the hills the first Praja Mandal Movement was formed in Bashahr from where it spread to Nalagarh and Bilaspur respectively, but after the Dhami firing incident the spark turned gradually into nearly a conflagration, i.e. the movement became well-nigh pervasive, and in due course the Praja Mandal became not merely a forum for majority rights but also, as already mentioned, an integral part of the freedom movement of India. The history of Simla Hill States from 1857 to 1947, shows that the Simla Hill States passed from a dark-age under the rulership of chieftains to a certain measure of protection with the British and finally a massive awakening with a greatly larger All-India identity.
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