CHAPTER-IV

SOCIETY, CULTURE AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

1. Inhabitants of Kangra

A census of Kangra district was conducted in 1850. What attracts attention is that the districts was very well populated. Cultivation could not be pushed much more and even the steeper areas had been ploughed. Barnes writes that, ‘Kangra was more densely inhabited than Panipat, Amballa, Rohtak, Gurgoan at that time.’ Kangra was predominantly agricultural and almost entirely Hindu in comparison to other districts of Punjab. The proportion of non-agriculturist in the British Northern-Western Provinces was forty per cent of the total population, but in Kangra the non-agriculturists were less than twenty two per cent. Furthermore, Hindus constituted ninety three while the Muslims only a little more than seven per cent of the total population.

2. Castes in Kangra

In Dehra, Rajputs along with the Rathis and Thakurs, comprised over a quarter of the population. In Hamirpur they were less that one-third. Interestingly, most of the good plain land in Dehra was occupied by the Ghirths, who made up nearly one-fourth of the population. In Hamirpur the Ghirths made up one-sixth of the population. The majority of the Brahmans were agriculturists and were fifteen per cent of the population in Dehra and twenty seven per cent in Hamirpur. The pressure of the population on the land was heavy, and amounted to 762 persons per square mile

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1 Barnes, Kangra SR, 1850, p. 35.
2 Ibid; pp. 35-36.
3 Shuttleworth, SR Dehra and Hamirpur Tehsils, 1910-15, pp. 3-4.
cultivated in Dehra and 710 in Hamirpur. The nature of the soil was poor and the possibility of extending cultivation in the hill tracts was limited. For this reason large number of buffaloes, goats and sheep were kept. The wool of the latter was used for clothing. The cotton produced locally was small in quantity and poor in quality. Brahmans who did not plough the land occupied a higher social position. The Brahmans everywhere were arranged into classes according to notions of purity. In pre-colonial times the raja was considered the source of all honour. The social classification was done on the basis of religious advisors.

2.1 Brahmans and Rajputs

Lyall's report divided the Brahmans into two grades. Earlier, Barnes had not divided Brahmans on the basis of whether they ploughed the land or not, but Lyall felt it would be more accurate to regard refraining from ploughing as the differentiating factor. Many Brahmans families were too proud to plough, but most of them did all other kind of agricultural work. The same was quite true also for the upper caste Rajput families.

The Brahmans of Kangra Proper were nearly one-seventh of the total population. The upper class Brahmans held land even though they did not cultivate it. They also lent money and occupied village offices such as that of lambardar or patwari.

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4 Ibid; p. 4.
5 Barnes, Kangra SR, 1850, p. 35.
7 Kangra DG, 1924-25. p.157. The population of Brahmans in Kangra Proper was 1,00,527 in 1911 and 1,07,085 in 1921.
8 Ibid; p.160.
The Rajputs numbered 52,285 in 1852. Members of the princely ruling houses belonged to the caste classified as Rajput. The ruling chiefs were divided along clans. The names were usually derived from the name of the area over which they once ruled. For instance, the Nurpur family was called Pathanias. The name Pathania was derived from Pathankot the region they controlled. The Dadwals were from Dada, a fort on the Beas that belonged to Siba, from where they had separated. The Katoch clan appellation of the Kangra rulers was derived from the ancient name of the principality.

The population number of Rajputs is not very clear because the demarcation between Rajput and Thakur in Kangra is not clear. The descendants of the princely families were known by the title of mian. A mian was required to follow four fundamental practices. First, he was not to drive the plough. Secondly, was never to give his daughter in marriage to a social inferior. Thirdly, he should not accept money

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10 Ibid; p. 37.

11 *Kangra DG, 1924-25*, p.161. In the census of 1911 and of 1921: 1,05,773 and 1,07,143 people respectively returned themselves as Rajputs although in 1901 as many as 1,54,046 had been recorded. The latter total had included Rathis also.

in exchange for betrothal of his daughter. Lastly, the women in his household were to observe strict seclusion.\footnote{Ibid; p. 37.}

The distinction between different classes of Rajputs became evident at social gatherings. The superior class of Rajputs did not sit at meals with the \textit{hul-bah} or plough-driver, as some Rajputs were called. Many of the latter categories did not appear at public assemblies to avoid embarrassment. Barnes argued that the most probable reason for this was that the legitimate weapon of the Khashtriya was the sword, while the plough was the symbol of a lower caste. The use of the plough, therefore, was a reunification of the privilege of caste.\footnote{Ibid; p. 38.}

A class of Rajput that also enjoyed distinction in the hills were the descendents of ancient petty chiefs, or Ranas. The \textit{mians} were allied with the Ranas. The principal families were those of Churi, Gire, Kunheare, Puthiar, Hubrol, Gumbar, Dadwal and other localities. The Ranas followed the practices of the Rajputs.\footnote{Ibid; p. 39.}

\textbf{2.2 Rathis and Ghirths}

The Rathis constituted a large population.\footnote{Ibid; p. 40. The population of Rathis in Kangra were 1,01,860 souls in 1850, during first land revenue settlement.} They were essentially agriculturists and were found throughout the Nurpur and Nadaun \textit{Parganas}. In poorer up lands where agricultural conditions were difficult and hard labour was required, the Rathis dominated. They were careful farmers, but their women did not work in the fields. They avoided wine and were extremely temperate and frugal in their habits.\footnote{Ibid; p. 40.} The Rathis were simple mannered, good at agriculture, familiar with the use of arms,
They prevailed throughout the Palampur and Hamirpur tehsils. The Ghirths formed a considerable part of the population. Another name changs was used for Ghirths in the Haripur and Nurpur Pargana. The sub-divisions amongst Ghirths were very extensive. They predominated in the valleys of Palam, Kangra and Rehlu. They were also scattered in every other part of the district and often possessed the most fertile lands. The Ghirths did not wear the janeo or thread of caste. Bride-price was a practice amongst the Ghirths and a widow was expected to marry her husband’s brother.

2.3 Bojkis and Gosains

Barnes notes in his settlement report that he had never met Bojkis in any other part of India, and that they were inhabitants only of these hills. According to him, the Bojkis were not Brahmans, even though they were the hereditary priests of the famous temples of Kangra such as Jawalamukhi, Naina Devi, Baijnath etc. They wore the janeo or thread of caste and they inter-married only among themselves. Bojkis ate flesh and drank wine. Barnes says that they were constantly involved in litigation in the courts.

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18 Ibid; p. 40.
19 Kangra DG, 1924-25, p. 168. The numbering of Rathis amounted 53,820 in 1911 and 51,057 in 1921. A local proverb gave a less favourable version of the Rathis character, 'kala kharppa dungi choi – Rathis mitr na karega koi.' The Rathis is like a cobra erect, or a deep stream, let no one make a friend of him.
20 Barnes, Kangra SR, 1850, p. 40. The total number of Ghirths in the district in 1911 and 1921 were 1,19,279 and 1,16,759 respectively.
22 Barnes, Kangra SR, 1850, p. 37.
Among the religious sects of the hills, the most interesting were the Gosains. They were to be found mainly in Nadaun and Jawalamukhi. However, they were scattered in small numbers throughout the district. The Gosains were very enterprising and engaged in trade. They possessed a virtual monopoly over the opium trade. The opium was bought in Kulu and carried down to the plains of Punjab. Gosains were expected to follow a strict life of celibacy. They were to recruit ranks by adopting disciples or chelas from other upper castes who were willing to allow their sons to become Gosains. In reality, however, the strict rules were seldom observed. All the Gosains got married. They were sub-divided into smaller communities (akharas), each with a recognized head or Mahant. Regarding succession to the community headship ‘when a mahant felt that his end was near, he elected one of his disciples, by word of mouth, to succeed him as the best and fittest of them all to be the head.’

2.4 Gaddis and Gujars of Kangra

The Gaddis were another social group of Kangra. Their houses were located on the mountain range that divided Chamba from Kangra. Their villages were situated at a height of 3,500 to 4,000 feet up to 7,000 on this range. The term Gaddis was a generic name and was applied to the Brahmans, Khatris and a few Rajputs and Rathis who lived in this area. The majority of the Gaddis were Khatris. The lower castes in the area were not called Gaddis, but were known by the names of Badi, Sipi, Halli etc. Gaddis were an agro-pastoral community and most of their wealth consisted of flocks of sheep and goats. Gaddis often cultivated a winter crops (wheat) in Kangra and returned to Chamba with their flocks. There they grew the summer crop at Bharmour.

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23 Ibid; p.41. The population of Gosains were 1,226 in 1911 and 1,220 in 1921. According to the Gazetteer of Kangra District in 1924-25.

24 Ibid; p. 42.
The people classified as Gaddis wore the janeo or thread of caste. Barnes was of the opinion that they were much stricter in Hindu customs than many other groups.\(^{25}\)

The Gujars of the hill area were quite different from the Gujars of the plains. The former were an exclusively pastoral group and hardly ever cultivated land. While Gaddis kept flocks of sheep and goats, the Gujar’s wealth consisted of buffaloes. These people lived on the fringes of forest and maintained themselves by selling milk, ghi and other produce of their herds. Gujars were found all over the Kangra district. A few Hindu Gujars were found towards Mandi; but they were a small sect compared to the Muslims.\(^{26}\)

3. Subordinate Castes

The lower castes were many and were categorized as Chamars, Bhangis, Seraras, Dumnas, Julahas, Kirnks, Chanals, Koli etc. Apart from the vocation, their names suggest that these castes were also found in position of village police (chowkidar). In that capacity they were called Girouks (karaunks) and Batwals (barwala) and constituted a separate class. Their duty was to collect collies, forage for supplied, report occurrences, and to obey any order issued by the head man.

There was also a class of labourers or kamas who were classified as out castes. They ploughed and worked on the fields of the rich landowners or those castes who did not plough the fields themselves. The condition of these kamas was almost similar to slaves. They got bread to eat, and a few clothes a year. This social group was always first impressed for begar (forced labour) and had also to carry loads and provide grass for the camp of government officials on tour. In the hills the

\(^{25}\) Ibid; p. 42.

\(^{26}\) Ibid; p. 43.
exploitation of these castes was noted by Barnes to be much greater than any other place. They were subjected to inhuman treatment of untouchability in private life but also in public institutions. According to custom, their houses were not to be larger than a certain size, nor were they to be higher than one floor. The men were barred from bearing long hair. In their marriages, the bride was required to travel on foot and not ride in a *jhampan* (Chair) as was the norm in every other caste. Certain musical instruments such as the *duful* (drum) and the *nikara* (trumpet) were prohibited.27 Most of the untouchable lower castes often cultivated land. They were employed as plough man and field labourers by the upper caste Rajputs and similar castes who did not cultivate the land with their own hands. Among their other village duties they carried torches and the bridegroom’s *palanquin* at weddings. For this they received fixed fees.28

Among the lower castes the Dumnas, called Dums in Chamba, were the Chuhras of the hills. Their occupation was to work in bamboo, and make sieves, winnowing fans, matting grass rope and generally all the vessels, basket screens, furniture and other articles ordinarily made of bamboo. An interesting point noted in the *District Gazetteer* is that the Dumna hardly ever become a Muslim or Sikh. Yet he was classed as a Hindu, even though an outcaste, and not allowed to draw water from wells used by the ordinary Hindu population.29 The Chanal was another caste of menials in the hills. The names Dagi and Chanal seem to be used to denote almost all the low castes in the hills. Lyall observed that the Dagis were classified as second class Gaddis though they probably belong to a different caste altogether. He argued

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27 Ibid; p. 40.
29 Ibid; p.182.
that they bore the same relation to the Kanets of Bangahal that the sipis, badis and halis (also classed as second class Gaddis) did to the first class Gaddis. Chanal may have been ‘the modern form of Chandalla, the outcaste of the hills, so often mentioned in the Kalhan Rajtarangni and elsewhere’. 30

Another lower caste that could be found in Kangra was that of Chamars. They, known as masands, were illiterate people to serve prohits and conducted ceremonies on nuptials as well as on funeral occasions. None of the Chamar castes however, would perform a ceremonial function without consulting a Brahman. 31

Jogis who were 5,026 in number in 1911, and 4,921 in 1921 in the Kangra region, lived by begging. They also engaged in agriculture. They married only amongst themselves alone. 32 The Labanas were found in ten or twelve villages of Nurpur tehsil, especially in the Andaura taluqa, in a few villages of Palampur and Dehra and in two of Kangra tehsils. They were engaged in the trading of cows and oxen. As elsewhere their hamlets were called tandas (caravan). 33

4. Commercial and Trading Communities

The commercial and shop keeping groups amount to a rather small number: only 15,487 persons in 1850. In this category were included Khatris, Mahajans, Kaiths, Karars and Sudhs. The Khatris were most widespread and richest. Kaiths belonged to the Vaisya or commercial caste and were similar to Mahajans who wore the janeo or sacred thread. Peculiarly, Barnes notes that all these castes gave large sums of many

30 Ibid; p.183.
31 Ibid; p.161.
32 Ibid; p.176.
33 Ibid; p.184.
for brides, and that their matrimonial arrangements were the most complicated and
difficult of all systems in the hills.\footnote{Barnes, Kangra SR, 1850, p. 41.}

5. Artisans

The artisans of the district comprised goldsmiths, carpenters, blacksmiths and stone
cutter. They totalled 44,297 persons. The sonars or goldsmiths of Kangra were skilful
workmen, and could cleverly imitate even the most elaborate examples of European
ornaments. The carpenters were generally well acquainted with their trade. The word
butara was derived from but, a stone. The occupation of breaking and fashioning
these stones had given rise to the butara castra, who were to be found in every town
of note through out the hills.\footnote{Ibid; p. 41.} In the year of 1850 the four castes of Brahmans,
Rajputs, Rathis, Ghirths constituted more than three- fifths of the total population. In
the remaining two-fifth were included all the artisans and shopkeepers, the different
rates, religious sects of Jogis and Gosains and the Muslims inhabitants of the
districts.\footnote{Ibid; p. 40.}

6. Food

The staple diet of the people was maize and wheat. In the rice growing valleys,
however, they subsisted for much of the year on rice. In the poorer uplands the
coarser grains of mundul (millet) and saunk formed a portion of their diet. Maize was
a favourite grain and was constantly consumed from September till May. In the rice
growing areas the clean unbroken rice was reserved for sale and the chipped pieces

\footnote{Barnes, Kangra SR, 1850, p. 41.}
\footnote{Ibid; p. 41.}
\footnote{Ibid; p. 40.}
were kept for their own use. Similarly, unmixed wheat was rarely used by the poorer people. The pure wheat was sold to grain dealers, while mixed barley and wheat, often sown together, was used for home consumption. The agricultural classes ate three meals a day, i.e. *naohari* in the morning, *dopahari* in the mid-day and another meal in the evening called *baili*.

In many parts of the hills, fish formed a part of the food. On festivals a goat was killed and was considered superior to mutton. The finer rock salt of the Punjab was not used as much as the Mandi salt from the Gumma salt mines.

The consumption of tobacco was common and was a very favourite drug. Men and women were both addicted to it. In the higher social groups the women did not, however, use it. According to Barnes, the Ghirths and other lower castes consumed large amounts of wine. The upper class did not openly admit to its use. Only the Bhojkis and Gaddis amongst the better placed castes were ‘notorious drinkers’.  

7. Marriage Custom

The customs of marriage are an important indicator of how the social system of the society functioned. As a general rule the giving of one's daughter to a groom of a lower castes was unacceptable. In the hills, it was the father of the boy who sent a person to search for bride for his son, while in the plains it was the girl’s father who had to search for a husband for his daughters. Among the Rajputs of Kangra, each class of Rajputs married the daughters of the social class that was immediately below his own. The lower class of Rajputs than married the daughter of Rathis and Thakurs

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or even Ghirths. There may be some truth in the proverb that: *satvin piri ghirtini ki dhi rani ho jaati* (in the seventh generation the Ghirth’s daughter becomes a queen).

Amongst the *mians*, however, the brides were never obtained from the Ghirths. The men, did nevertheless, go a step lower in social scale to get a wife for themselves. Rajputs of a high status were paid large amounts to marry, because the sense of pride prevented an upper caste Rajputs from marrying his daughter to any other than a man of equal or rather superior family to his own.

In the Kangra area the Kaits and Mahajans intermarried, though the former were ranked as *Sudras* in the plains and the latter as *Vaisiyas*. In Gaddi villages, the Khatris, Rajputs, Rathis and Thakurs all intermarried. In fact, in some places for instance Kukti, in Bharmour, Brahman Gaddis intermarried with Khatri Gaddis. The Gaddis gave dower in two form viz; *saj*, which went to the husband and *phulori* which was *istridhan* (or the wife’s sole property). Even in the *Kangra Gazetteer* of 1924-25 the same custom has been emphasized, especially amongst the Brahmans and Rajputs, i.e., a man must always take a wife from a lower and give his daughter to a higher caste. Social thinking made a great difference between giving a girl and taking a girl. Throughout Kangra district, infant marriages were also customary. The only exception to this were the very high-caste girls for whom it was difficult to find a suitable match. Quite interestingly, the lowest castes were as strict in this regard as the upper ones. Some common kinds of marriages, especially among the lower classes, can be noted.

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41 Ibid; p.70.
7.1 Exchanges (atta satta ka nata)

These were some times quite complicated. \( A \) will promise his daughter to \( B \) on the condition that the latter would give his to \( C \), who again promises his daughter to \( A \). Some times these could be five or six links in such a chain. \( A \) breach of promise on the part of even one person could throw the whole arrangement into confusion, and even more so if some of the promises in this chain had been fulfilled.

7.2 Labour

The bridegroom-elect had to bind himself to work for the bride's family sometimes even for as long as nine to ten years. This was, it has been suggested, probably a very ancient custom.

7.3 Money

A bride-price could be paid depending upon the circumstances of the family. This was often a cause of debt and acted as a hindrance to marriage. Many marriageable men had to go without wives because of the exorbitant demands that were made by the parents of eligible women. Sometimes they had to mortgage the ancestral land and pay the demand.

7.4 Dham or Pun Betrothals

In such marriages no payment or exchange of any kind was made. These marriages were comparatively rare among the lower classes.

7.5 Jararphuki

There was peculiar system of marriage which was recognized by many of the castes in Kangra. The ceremony was called jararphuki (jhindphuk in Chamba). The bride and the bridegrooms set fire to a brush wood walked around the burning brush wood and
then the ceremony was complete. The Gaddis, it has been suggested, brought this ceremony from Chamba.42

7.6 Jhanjrara Ceremony

The balu or jhanjrara method was adopted when a widow was re-married. The essential part of the ceremony was when the woman once again wore her nose - ring that she had discarded at the death of her previous husband. Amongst Ghirths a drinking party marked the ceremony. A goat was often slaughtered on the occasion. Middleton mentions that earlier the ceremony used to be very simple, but then it became a matter of much display as in the case of an ordinary marriage. For example, the beating of drums and the playing of musical instruments that was rarely witnessed earlier, now became increasingly common.43 The civil courts of the district always recognized Jhanjrara marriages as valid among Rathis, Thakurs, Ghirths, Jats and the lower castes. Rajputs did not recognise the Jhanjrara ceremony.44 However, widow remarriage was allowed, although there was strong feeling against marriage with the husband’s elder brother. Preferably, the marriage was to be with the devar or with one who stood in the same footing as a devar e.g. with the husband’s uncle son.45

8. Upanyana or Investiture

The investiture of a Brahman or Rajput with the janeo represents his formal admission into the ranks of his caste. It has been argued that in pre-colonial times only persons permitted by their rajas to wear the janeo were the Brahmans and mian

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43 L. Middleton, Customary Law of the Kangra District (excluding Kulu), Lahore, 1919, p. 46.
44 Kangra DG, 1924-25, p.141.
Rajputs. All the other castes were rigorously denied the privilege. Persons violating this rule were punished with great cruelty. It has been argued in the Kangra Gazetteer that due to the influence of British rule the janeo was worn now even by Thakurs and Rathis without fear of objection on the part of their social superiors.\textsuperscript{46}

\textbf{9. Customs of Inheritance and Legitimacy}

Customarily, in Kangra Proper the eldest son (jheta beta) sometimes got as jhetunda a share of the property that was greater than the share of the other sons. This extra share could be a field, a cow or ox, or any other variable thing.\textsuperscript{47} This custom, however, died out and ceased to exist in 1925.\textsuperscript{48} Amongst the Gaddis the eldest son got a twentieth of the paternal estates as jhetunda in excess of the others, but in return was saddled with an extra twentieth of the family debts, if any.\textsuperscript{49} Even here the practice fell into disuse and by 1924-25 only few families followed this custom.\textsuperscript{50}

In cases where there were sons by more than one wife, the chundavand and not pagvand rule was followed. According to this custom the first division of the inheritance was made upon the mothers, and thereafter upon head of sons. This rule of chundavand according to Lyall was found universally among all castes of Kangra Proper. The Gaddis were an exception, and a large section of them followed the rule of pagvand.\textsuperscript{51} The Katoch Rajputs of Palampur tehsil also followed pagvand.\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid; p.136. Even Ghirths had begun to wear the sacred threads, but the higher castes protested against this move adopted by the Ghirths.
\textsuperscript{47} Lyall, Kangra SR, 1872, p.70.
\textsuperscript{48} Kangra DG, 1924-25, p.136.
\textsuperscript{49} Lyall, Kangra SR, 1872, p.70.
\textsuperscript{50} Kangra DG, 1924-25, p.136.
\textsuperscript{51} Lyall, Kangra SR, 1872, p.70. Pagvand was a word derived from pag, a turban, and connotes the rule according to which an estate is distributed in equal shares amongst the sons and corresponds exactly to the phrase per capita, chundavand was derived from chunda,
Amongst Indauria Rajputs it was asserted that all sons inherited an equal share of the "bas" or residential property but the remaining, which were known as "chaudhar" went to the eldest son as "chaudhari". However, the "chaudhari"'s interest in the "chaudhar" estate appears to have existed since the time of traditional rulers. Under the princely rulers, the "chaudhar" was hardly more than the right to certain liberal fees on the rents in kind which went to raja. Under the Sikhs the rents were leased to the "chaudharis" for a fixed sum and the profit or loss had to be borne by the "chaudharis".  

10. Pichlag

The sons of a first husband, who accompanied their mother to her second husband's house or who were born their in – were not entitled to a share. This was a general rule. However, the Gaddis and Kanets appeared to hold that a man takes a widow as wife who was not the time enceinte, the child born will be reckoned his child and not "pichlag".  

11. Chaukandu

This was peculiar to the hills. He was the son of a widow born within the four walls of her deceased husband's house. He was, it was sometimes said at first allowed a share in the property of his mother's husband. However, there were very few instances of

[which means the hair braided on the top of the head and means equal division as between the groups of sons by each wife. If a person leaved five sons from 2 different wives, A, B and C from one wife and D and E from the second wife, according to the pagvand rule of succession all the sons will inherit equally, while according to the chundavand rule A, B and C from one wife will inherit one half and the other half will go to D and E from the second wife.](http://punjabrevenue.nic.in/cust19.htm)

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53 Ibid; p. 136.
54 Lyall, Kangra SR, 1872, p.72.
such regular succession. All castes strongly opposed chaukandu’s right to claim a share in the property of his mother’s husband. If the widow had a son before she gave birth to a chaukandu, he then sometimes gives a share to their half-brother out of his compassion or because he lived with them and contributed to the bread-earning capacity of the family.\footnote{Kangra DG, 1924-25, p.141.}

12. Adoption of Son

All castes agreed that a man could adopt a son belonging to his own gotar or clan. But a man usually made a will in favour of a kinsman or son-in-law who had lived with him and helped to cultivate his land, rather than adopt an outsider.\footnote{Ibid; p.144.}

13. Widow’s Rights

With regard to a widow’s right to inherit, the Rajput, Brahmans, Khatris, Mahajans etc; agreed that she could hold it for life on condition of chastity. The Kanets of Kothi Sowar explicitly argued that so long as she continued to reside in her late husband’s house, she could not be dispossessed even if she openly permits another man to live in the house with her. This was the practice also amongst the Ghirths and other similar castes in Kangra, though they did not admit to this so openly. With regard to a daughter, all castes were of the view that in the absence of sons an orphan daughter has an interest in property similar to that of a widow as long as she remains unmarried. The common view was that a daughter or her children could never succeed by simple inheritance to landed estate in preference to kinsmen of the father however remote. However, in reality, Lyall observed that daughters had occasionally been allowed to inherit the property. Moreover, in default of sons a father could by formal deed of gift bestow acquired land on a daughter or her children. In such a case the gift...
could not be questioned by the objections made by kinsmen too remote to perform *shradh* or offer the *pind* to a common ancestor. According to this, the power to object was limited to the descendants of the donor’s great-great grandfather for the worship of ancestors was not carried further.\(^5^7\)

All the tribes stated that they made no distinction between ancestral and self-acquired property in connection with the succession of daughters. On this question self-acquired property went to the daughter in preference to collaterals. In absence of sons, widows and mother, unmarried daughters succeed to ancestral property also and retain possession with the same limited power as a widow enjoys until marriage, when succession passes to the collaterals.\(^5^8\)

14. Distribution of Vands

Sometimes *vands* were so small that they were insufficient for the work of one plough. The custom that existed in 1913 had been in existence since pre-colonial times. By this system if a man had four sons and only one *vand* it went to the youngest son. If he had two *vands* it went to the two youngest sons and so on. The eldest got some extra cattle or moveable property as *jatunda*. The eldest son got an extra field or an extra share of moveable property with the permission of the others as *jatunda* or *sardari*. The remaining property was shared equally by all. Middleton said that in 1913 there was a general feeling in favour of equal distribution but the younger sons objected to such a change. The *vand* distribution of the *Kothi Sowar*, part of Palampur, however, gave way to an equal distribution as the eldest son no longer worked for the raja as was case in pre-British days.\(^5^9\)


\(^{58}\) *Kangra DG*, 1924-25, p.144.

15. Sex Ratio Statistics

The proportion of women to men in Kangra Proper in 1911 was 904 over 1,000 as compared with a ratio of 817 over 1,000 for the whole district. The ratio was exceeded only in Kulu 1,001 over 1,000. The female ratio has not shown any decided tendency to rise; it was 919 in 1881, 922 in 1891, 925 in 1901 and there was a set back to 911 in 1921. In 1921, however, the ratio rose to 946, the highest hitherto recorded. These figures were for the whole district.\(^\text{60}\)

There were a large number of high caste Rajputs who could not give their daughters in marriage to anyone of a lower sect. This was probably one of the important causes of female infanticide in pre-British times. Coldstream, who was Deputy Commissioner of the district in 1875 wrote, ‘I think that the custom of female infanticide is by no means extinct. It is, however, practiced in a much more scientific method than in former days. The women described how a female relative of her had advised her to starve the child, roll over it, fling it about, and if these methods had not the desired result, give it some opium.’\(^\text{61}\) Not entirely convincingly, the Kangra Gazetteer argues that ‘female infanticide had become almost extinct due to what it calls the spread of humane ideas.’ Another reason for the decline in female infanticide according to the Gazetteer is the argument that there was an increase in the custom of sale of girls.\(^\text{62}\)

16. Struggle between Ghirths and Rajputs

An important social struggle took place between Ghirths and Rajputs in 1924-25. The Ghirths rose in revolt against the social restrictions imposed by the Rajputs, which the Ghirths had earlier accepted. However, the Ghirths now asserted their right to beat

\(^{60}\) Kangra DG, 1924-25, p.133.

\(^{61}\) Ibid; p.134.

\(^{62}\) Ibid; p.134.
their drums when they passed in front of Rajput houses, they often refused to clean and wash the vessels in which the Rajputs have taken their food and also refused to carry the palanquins of the latter. Many Ghirths who sought to assume a higher-status started wearing the scared thread (janeo). As a result the Brahmans refused to perform the sacred ceremony for them. The Ghirths further asserted a claim to a larger share of the produce which the Rajputs landowners refused to recognize. Ghirth cultivators refused to pay the landlord’s the share known as karda which was always paid in the past out of the tenants share in addition to the usual one-half. Because of this resistance of the Ghirths numerous fields were left uncultivated. There is no information with us as to how this struggle was resolved.

17. Begar System in Kangra

The earliest information on begar has been provided by Barnes. He wrote that in the hills, merchandise and goods were carried on mules, bullocks, canals by a class of people who earned their living by this carrying trade. The usual method of carrying other things, such as baggage and timber, was by human labour. While non-cultivating Brahmans and Rajputs were always exempt from doing manual carriage work, the burden fell upon the purely agricultural castes. Even amongst these castes there were different grading of begaris. The most difficult tasks was the carriage of loads i.e. pund begar. Peasant castes that did not wear the janeo (i.e. were of low caste) were expected to do this work. The lighter begar (or sat bahuk) of carrying messages, letters or parcels which could be conveyed by hand was done by persons slightly higher in the caste hierarchy of the peasantry. The third kind of begar was to provide wood and grass for camps and this work was done by chamars and other outcastes who were considered too impure to carry loads. Barnes drew up a list of

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social groups that enjoyed absolute immunity, and those who were subject to different kinds of begar. Whenever a dispute arose about begar the register categorizing the begar obligations in the village was consulted.\footnote{Barnes, Kangra SR, 1850, pp. 67-68.}

There were also variations in the different taluqas regarding begar. For instance, in Nurpur, during pre-colonial times, the normal demand for porters (kacha begar) was met by the kamins or people of the lower castes. For special needs (pakka begar) all landholders excluding the upper caste had to perform the task. On the other hand in Kangra caste mattered less, and begar was more a burden on the land that each landholder not specially exempted had to carry. Gujars herdsman holding land were generally exempted from carrying traveller’s baggage in return for supplying milk and butter. But they carried planks and beams for constructing government building. In most taluqas the turn to do begar (pala) was calculated on each hearth (chulla) and not on each head. Two brothers who lived together look only one turn.\footnote{Lyall, Kangra SR, 1872, p. 148.}

Anderson tells us in his land revenue settlement of Dada Siba in 1881-82, that there were three kinds of forced labour recognised in Siba jagir e.g. making and repairing roads and bridges, govt. begar, rajas begar. In the first no payments were made on account of it. The second form consisted of carrying loads, providing supplies and arranging for officials and travellers who came into the state. According to the rajas begar, a certain number of men must perform in turn certain duties principally connected with the rajas own house hold. These men were entitled to daily rations while they were employed.\footnote{Middleton, Kangra Tehsil SR, 1915, pp. 31-32.}
The *begar* system was abolished in Kangra Proper in 1884. For some time the landowners were required to perform *begar* even afterwards because it was thought only unpaid labour had been abolished and not fully-paid labour.\(^67\)

In fact even in the early 20\(^{th}\) century, the lower castes did not always resist demands for labour that were made on them. Gradually the lower social groups resisted the demands and regulations placed on them by the upper castes and old rules of village governance were not possible to retain. This change required better arrangements for the supply of provisions, labour and conveyance. Therefore, the government sanctioned the appointment of contractors at the *tehsil* level in the entire district who arranged for labour.\(^68\)

**18. SOCIETY AND SOCIAL CULTURE IN KULU**

In Kulu region different kinds of caste classification existed as in Kangra, the difference was less deep among the castes as seen in Kangra portion. I think this was due to the remoteness of that area. The description of different castes existent in Kulu region were as given below:

**18.1 Brahmans and Rajputs**

Apart from a few families who functioned as priests or *purohits* to the rajas, the Kulu Brahmans differed very little in appearance, dress or customs from the cultivating caste of Kanets. They owned 6 per cent of cultivated land and average size of holding was 3 per acres.\(^69\) This was also true for most of the Rajputs barring a few who were related to the raja. Lyall, in fact noted, that both Brahmans and Rajput frequently

\(^{67}\) *Kangra DG, 1924-25*, p. 359.

\(^{68}\) Ibid; pp. 359-60.

\(^{69}\) Diack, *Kulu SR, 1898*, p. 6. 

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married Kanets girls. Such wives were known as srit in distinction from lari or wife of the same caste and married through a regular biah ceremony.  

18.2 Kanets  
The bulk of the inhabitants (61,655 were Kanets who owned 66 per cent of the total cultivated area in Kulu. They were exclusively agriculturists and shepherds and were industrious and thrifty cultivators. The average size of a Kanets holding was 4 acres of cultivated land. The Kanets seem to occupy the same position as was occupied by the Rathis of the main Kangra area. Just as the Rathis explain their lower status due to the use of plough by them or to their being the offspring of Rajputs by sudra women, the Kanets claim to be the children of local women of the hills by Rajputs who had come up from the plains.  

18.3 Gosains, Behragis, Nath and Thavi  
Originally the Gosains and Behragis and Naths were more in the nature of religious sects. However, they had for long taken up secular profession and were secular people and cultivating their land themselves like other peasants. The original Behragis in Kulu appear to have come from the plains; however, those present in colonial times were descendants of Kulu Brahmans or Kanets who had become the disciples of the original immigrants. The Thavi were builders and masons and ranked above the Dagis but below the Kanets.  

18.4 Subordinate Castes  
The Dagis were regarded as an impure or kamin caste. They were also commonly called Kolis. The majority of this low-castes people were returned at the 1891 census

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70 Lyall, Kangra SR, 1872, p. 98.  
71 Diack, Kulu SR, 1898, p. 6.  
72 Lyall, Kangra SR, 1872, p. 97.  
73 Ibid; p. 98.
as Dagis in Kulu and Koli in Saraj. They were 29,013 in number and owned 8 per cent of the cultivated area. They owned 2 acres per holding cultivated land in Kulu area. However, in dress and customs they do not differ materially from Kanets, except that they were generally poorer.\textsuperscript{74} In Saraj area they were commonly called \textit{bethus}. However, \textit{bethus} is not a caste. A Dagi, Koli or some other group could also be a \textit{bethu}. Another low castes existed in that area that was Chamars and Lobars. They had been classed separately in Kulu and were more likely Dagis who had taken up these tasks. However, by colonial times other Dagis avoided eating with the Lobars. Chamars ate the flesh of cattle that had died a natural death. The Dagis carried the palanquins when used at marriages. The Lohars and Chamars also worked in iron and leather for the Kanets and were paid for this work by certain grain allowances by the upper caste people.\textsuperscript{75}

The population of Kulu Sub-Division as returned in 1868, 1881 and 1891 are mentioned below:

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Name of Tract & Population in the Different Years & & \\
\hline & 1868 & 1881 & 1891 \\
\hline Kulu Proper & 90,313 & 1,00,259 & 1,05,651 \\
\hline Lahaul & 5,970 & 5,760 & 5,862 \\
\hline Spiti & 3,024 & 2,862 & 3,548 \\
\hline Total & 99,307 & 1,08,881 & 1,15,181 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Table No. 4.1}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{Source: Diack, \textit{Kulu SR}, 1898, p.5.}

According to available figures, the population of Kulu Proper increased by 11.5 per cent between 1868 to 1881 and 5.9 per cent between 1881-1891.\textsuperscript{76} In the

\textsuperscript{74} Diack, \textit{Kulu SR}, 1898, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{75} Lyall, \textit{Kangra SR}, 1872, p. 98.

\textsuperscript{76} Diack, \textit{Kulu SR}, 1898, p. 5.
census of 1891 a total of 1,05,651 souls was counted. Of these 55,100 belonged to Kulu tehsil (excluding Lahaul and Spiti) and 50,551 to Saraj tehsil.\(^7\)

19. The Case of Malana

Malana is a large village located in narrow valley of a tributary of the Parvati river. The village lies at a height and there is no other village near it. The village was difficult to access from Kulu. It formed a phati or division of the Naggar Kothi and had a huge area, which, however, was largely uncultivable, uninhabitable waste. Between Naggar and Malana lies the Malana pass which was usually shut by snow for several months in the year. At the time of Lyall's report about forty to fifty families lived in Malana. They were mostly Kanets but a few were of the Dogri (out houses) castes also. None of the Malana men could read or write, though they claimed they could keep accounts from memory. The people of Malana were under the influence of Jamlu devta from whom they had to obtain permission for any activity. If any sadhu or beggar visited Malana, the people gave him food and a blanket if he wanted it. The Malana people intermarried amongst themselves only, and had little connection with the Kulu area. Jamlu devta was greatly feared during the time of the rajas. As a result Malana became a village of refuge, from which no criminal could be taken back if he managed to reach Malana.\(^8\)

20. Village Sites and Houses

The houses were generally detached and grouped with disregard for method. The plan for their arrangement naturally depended on the nature of the ground on which they had to build. The ground floor of the house had no windows and usually used for stalling cattle. The timber for building the house was obtained by the landed

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\(^7\) Kangra DG, 1898, p. 35.

\(^8\) Lyall, Kangra SR, 1872, pp. 100-101.
proprietor free from the forest, as he was entitled to it. The timber was cut in the forest with the help of friends and relatives. The only worker who was paid in cash in addition to his board was the mason or Thavi. During the time of Lyall he was generally paid Rs. 15 or 20 till the completion of a house. Houses were sold at prices varying from Rs. 100 to Rs. 300 in 1925.\textsuperscript{79}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{A_typical_Kulu_Village.png}
\caption{A typical Kulu Village}
\end{figure}

21. Food

For most of the year the people of Kulu ate two meals a day, i.e. breakfast (kulari) and supper (baili) at sunset. In the summer, when the days are longer, a third light midday meal of wheat or barley bread (dopuru) was also eaten. The staple food of the people consisted of cakes (baturas) or chapattis made of barley flour in summer and of maize or kodra or buckwheat flour in winter although wheat flour was also eaten. It was regarded as luxury. Most of the wheat was sold to pay the revenue. Poppy seed was sometimes added to the cakes to flavour them. Rice was a common article of food in the kothi in which irrigated land was available for the cultivation of paddy.\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{79} Kangra DG, 1898, pp. 30-32.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid; p. 32.
In colonial times the consumption of potatoes seems to have become quite widespread. They were boiled and then stirred in oil or ghi with a spring of pharu (a wild herb like asafoetida). Yams (kachalu) were browned over the fire and eaten.

The dietary habits of the people were determined by local influences. The flesh of the pig was eaten only by the lower-castes, and mainly by those who were situated along the Sutlej river.\(^1\) The flesh of the goats and sheep was eaten by the higher castes, except Brahmans more frequently. Metal vessels and dishes were owned and used by upper classes. Platters made of rhododendron wood were in pre-colonial times used by all the classes; later these were found to be used only amongst the lower castes of the Outer Saraj area.\(^2\)

22. Marriages Ceremonies

Lyall mentions in his settlement report that there were three kinds of marriage ceremonies in Kulu region. The first was the bedi biah which was the ordinary Hindu form. Second was the ruti mania in which four or five men went from the house of the bridegroom to the bride’s house. The bride was dressed up, a cap was put on her head and she was then brought home to the bridegroom. The third was Ganesh puja, a form used by Brahmans, Khatris, Suniars while marrying a Kanet. The bridegroom would send his priest and relatives to the bride’s house where the worship of Ganesh was performed and then the bride was brought home.\(^3\) Apart from these three types of marriage ceremonies another ceremony was performed at both houses. This was called lai lui. The young man’s plaid is tied in a knot with the bride’s dupatta and the

\(^1\) Ibid; p. 34.
\(^2\) Ibid; p. 34.
\(^3\) Lyall, Kangra SR, 1872, p. 98.
two garments knotted together were carried round the altar on which the worship of Ganesh has been celebrated.  ^

In Kulu the betrothal ceremony was a simple one. The father of the boy visited the father of the girl with some small presents. An exchange of promises was made and the girl’s father agreed to part with her in consideration of a certain sum of money from the boy’s father. After the marriage a feast (*dham*) followed. A goat was sacrificed by a specially selected guest and a present of the goat’s flesh sent to the *negi* or head-men of the *kothi*.  

23. Polyandry

Polyandry was common throughout Saraj and also in parts of Waziri Rupi. It was also a norm among the inhabitants of Malana. It has been suggested in the *Kangra Gazetteer of 1898* that the grain produced in Malana was insufficient for providing enough for the Malana people, and corn had to be annually imported. It was therefore, for this reason that the practice of polyandry may have arisen.  

It has been well described by Lyall as ‘a community of wives among brothers who have a community of other goods.’ In such a situation if the brothers and their joint family after them remained together the question of succession was not very difficult. However, if any of the brothers or any of the sons wanted to separate from the joint estate, the question of succession and share became a problem for the courts to resolve. The rules arising from such cases according to custom have been diversely stated. Firstly, it has been said that the woman was considered the wife of the eldest brother, and all the children

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^ Kangra DG, 1898, p. 37.

^5 Ibid; pp. 36-37.

^6 Ibid; p. 38.
were considered his children. Secondly, the women was allowed the liberty to state which brother was the father of her child and the succession was decided in accordance with her allegations. The general rule of inheritance more commonly accepted however, was that, 'of three or more brothers who posses one wife in common, the eldest was deemed the father of the first born son, the second brother the father of the next born and so on, so much so that even where there was strong reason to believe that the paternity was otherwise, this rule has been known to be adhered to.'

24. Rules of Inheritance

The norm for inheritance in Kulu among all castes till 1870 was pagvand. In Kulu this was called mundevand, i.e. all legitimates sons of one father inherited an equal share of the family property irrespective of the number of sons born of each wife or mother. The basis of this rule was that amongst the Kanets and some other lower castes, the real custom had so far been to regard every son by a woman kept and treated as a wife was legitimate. In the same way among the same classes, a pichlag (posthumous son) called ronda in Kulu, born to a widow in the house of a second husband was considered the son of the second husband. A widow could not be deprived of her life tenure in her husband’s estate for want of chastity, so long as she did not leave the house to go away to live in another man’s house. It was a common opinion in Kulu that a father could, by formal deed of gift made during his lifetime give his estate to a daughter in the absence of a male heir without the consent of next of kin. Lyall further suggested that it was unlikely that a distant kinsman could have claimed against a daughter even without a gift. It was also acceptable that a ghar-jawai (son-in-law) be

taken into the house. After a time he became entitled to succeed as a kind of adopted son without proof of gift.\textsuperscript{88}

25. Education

The state of education in Kulu was very poor during colonial times. While literacy amongst women was almost unknown, even among men education was very backward. In the census of 1891 only 74 out of every 10,000 males were returned as under tuition and only 358 were able to read and write. It has been argued that the hamlets were so small and scattered that it was impossible for the children in most of them to attend the government schools or even to be taught by Brahmans. As a result the primary schools at Naggar and Jagatsukh as well as the zamindari school at Manikaran were badly attended. The middle school at Sultanpur was relatively more successful. This was because children of the town people of Sultanpur chose to attend school. Also there were more advanced pupils from Saraj. English was not taught in the Kulu middle school and no native of Kulu had yet had the enterprise to send his son to be taught the language at any of the English schools (Dharamsala) in the district. The forty persons who were returned at the 1891 census as having a knowledge of English were all Europeans or officials.\textsuperscript{89}

26. \textit{Begar} System in Kulu

While Barnes had described the nature of \textit{begar} in Kangra Proper, Lyall had done the same for Kulu. In most taluqas of Kangra the turn (\textit{pala}) for \textit{begar} was calculated on each hearth (\textit{chula}), not on each head. Two brothers who lived in one house took only one turn. In Kulu the turn for \textit{begar} was on each full holding or \textit{jeola}.\textsuperscript{90}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{89} \textit{Kangra DG}, 1898, pp. 53-54.
\textsuperscript{90} Lyall, \textit{Kanga SR}, 1872, p.148.
\end{flushleft}
The British changed some of the rules for *begar*. The introduction of a road cess in place of the forced maintenance of roads probably brought some relief to the people who earlier provided *begar*. New arrangements for the supply of labour, fuel and fodder at all road stages also probably reduced the demand for *begar*. The British officials were of the view that due to these changes the peasants in Kulu were better off than those in neighbouring states. Though *begar* had always been extracted from the peasants, the reduction of the amount of *begar* implied in reality a reduction of the amount of land revenue. It seems the colonial official did not make an attempt to calculate its implication for land revenue assessment.\(^9\)

*Begar* was discontinued in Kangra Proper and other areas of the Kulu subdivision in 1896, but it continued in Rupi. *Begar* was of three kinds in the Rupi *Jagir*. The first was unpaid forced labour for the *Rai* at his palace and for the carriage of luggage during his tours to the *jagir*. The second kind required peasants to supply a hay, other raw material and handicraft products free of charge. Finally, *begar* also required the provision of labour to the *Rai* for his haunting expedition in the *jagir* area.\(^2\)

After that, Anderson, the Deputy Commissioner Kangra re-examined the question of *begar* in Rupi *Jagir*. The heavier kind of *begar* was stopped and some kinds were permitted. A monetary calculation was made of the value of *begar* that was abolished and that which was permitted.

During the settlement of 1945-52 it was argued that *begar* had been abolished in Rupi *Jagir*. It was also pointed out that *begar* was a degrading imposition.

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Moreover, it was illegal under the Constitution of India. As a result the right of the rai to begar under the mumla-waguzar-baiwz-begar was abolished.\textsuperscript{93}

27. SOCIETY AND SOCIAL CULTURE IN LAHAUL AND SPITI

Due to the remoteness of the areas, the customs and social culture of Lahaul and Spiti were quite different from those in Kangra and Kulu. They had their own customs, which were similar to Ladhakh territory. In fact, Spiti had a different social set up from Lahaul region. These areas are open for only six months in the whole year due to heavy snowfalls.

27.1 Population of Lahaul

The population of Lahaul increased from 2,535 in 1855 to 5,790 in 1868. The huge increase has been explained by careful enumeration. There was also a natural growth of population apart from a small amount of immigration from Zanskar and other areas to the north-west. The caste-wise distribution was: Thakurs 216; Brahmans 502; Kanets 4,566; Dagis 360; Lohars 277; Bararas 10; Suniyars 3; Hensis; 17. The Thakurs were the jagirdars and their offshoots. According to British records they were beginning to claim Rajput origin even though they were more likely to have had a Bhotia or Mongolian origin.\textsuperscript{94} The Brahmans were found in Pattan, and had originally migrated from Chamba and other areas to the south. While most Kanets in Lahaul had a Mongoloid ancestry, many who settled in Pattan were probably descendants of Kanets settlers from Kulu and Bangahal. The Dagis largely came from Kulu in pre-colonial times. They acted as musicians for the temples and also in some monasteries. A few Lohars were found who acted as blacksmith while the Baragis

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid; p. 38.

\textsuperscript{94} Lyall, Kangra SR, 1872, p. 122.
were the basket-makers. The Hensis were professional musicians and their daughters acted as dancing girls.

Every winter many of the Kanets of Pattan, spent their time washing for gold at Cheling in Ladakh or in the Zanskar river. They paid a tax of one or two rupees per head to the Ladakh government for this and earned an average of four tolas of pure gold in a season.\(^\text{95}\)

### 27.2 Social Customs

In Lahaul, fraternal polyandry or the taking of wife of one woman by several brothers was a recognized institution. This social practice was quite common and the colonial administrators were of the view that it was a method of preventing the fragmentation of family property. In Spiti, however, polyandry was not acceptable. Here only the elder brother was permitted to marry while the younger ones became monks. In Spiti, if a man wished to divorce his wife without her consent, he had to return to her all that she had brought with her. Apart from this, he also had to give her a field or two by way of maintenance. After a divorce a women was free to marry when she pleased. It appears likely that these practices of marriage, that were so specific to Lahaul and Spiti, enabled the peasant holdings to remain integrated and economically viable. In an area that was so hostile to agriculture, it was probably important to avoid the fragmentation of landed property.

### 27.3 Ceremonies Connected with Agriculture

There were certain ceremonies in Lahaul that were connected with the cultivation of fields. It was common practice for a lama, to use astrological calculation to indicate the auspicious day to start ploughing the land for the agricultural season. This

\[^{95}\text{Ibid; pp.122-23.}\]
invariably fell between 8th and 22nd May. After the fields were ploughed and sown, a procession, led by a lama, went around the fields. Two drums were beaten as the procession proceeded and some of the men in it carried religious books on their backs. Thereafter, the people in the procession feasted on cakes and chang in the field near the village. The food was supplied jointly by all the landholders. The purpose of this ceremony was to ensure the sprouting of the sown seeds. Once this was over, the water-course for irrigating the fields was repaired. Even on this occasion a sheep was offered up to the Iha, a deity which is supposed to take special care of the irrigation channels.96

The sprouting of seeds called for another ceremony. Small branches of the pencil-cedar were struck in different parts of the field and incense was burnt. Members of the family sat down to eat and drink and also say a few prayers. They prayed that each grain that had sprung up, should produce many ears. At the ripening of the crop, a goat or sheep was killed to honour the Iha. At times, some villages held horse-races. It was only after the 'grain ripening' ceremony that cultivators could cut even grass or anything green with a sickle made of iron. To do so earlier would anger the field-god, who would then send frost to destroy or injure the harvest. If, therefore, a farmer of Lahaul wanted grass before the harvest sacrifice, he had to cut it with a sickle made of the horn of an ox or sheep or tear it off with his hands. Infringement of this rule were previously severely punished. During colonial times a fine of one or two rupees was levied. This went to jagirdar or village headman. The iron sickle can be used once harvest season was declared open by the performance of the sacrifice.97

96 Ibid; p. 129.

97 Ibid; p.129.
27.4 *Begar* System in Lahaul

The *begar* (forced labour) prevailed in Lahaul was very heavy, the area was used by many travellers and British officials. That area was surrounded by high snowy mountains. The tracts of Lahaul was open only for six month in a year. In these six months, all work had to be done by people and the officials. The demand of *begar* was equally distributed on each *jeola* (holding). It was not easy for the families to provide *begar* according to demand because hardly any man was free to do this. They were engaged in carrying on trade between Tibet and Kulu.⁹⁸

For the repairs of roads, a man was demanded from every house for the carriage of travellers baggage and a man was taken from every *jeola*. Every group of each *kothis* repaired certain lengths of road. The four *kothis* of Rangloii commonly undertook the carriage from Lahaul to Rohtang pass into Kulu. The same way was taken for the work of Janskar, Bara Lacha, Kukti passes the ten *kothis* of Gara and Pattan had put themselves on a common roaster. Each *kothi* kept an account with the other *kothis* of its contributions and within each *kothi* each *jeola* or holding kept an account with the other *jeolas*.⁹⁹

It was the custom in Lahaul that each *kothi* appointed by vote an elder to represent the *kothi* in the committee of *begar* accounts land was called *siyanu* and got six rupees in cash per annum from the common account and he himself was free from all *begar*. His other important work was to collect and store supply for travellers land kept account of it. He was assisted by two men selected every year in each *kothi* under the name of *talabdar*. However, they got no payment for it but were freed from *begar* while in office. Even in Pattan there were some *dagii* families who held *chetis* or small

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⁹⁹ Ibid; p.111.
allotments of land rent-free from the state on condition of stacking wood at certain halting places and carried palanquins. However, they were not liable to carry baggage or cross the passes.\textsuperscript{100}

\textbf{27.5 Thakur's Begar in Lahaul}

In Lahaul even some services were rendered to the Thakur's in Ghumrang \textit{Kothi}. Firstly, on certain days each \textit{jeola} furnished one man to work on the Thakur's \textit{garphan} land. The Thakur supplied food and drink only to the man who rendered the \textit{begar}. Those who did not come, paid the Thakur annually the sum of one rupee under the name of \textit{besti} money. Secondly, each \textit{jeola} had to stable and feed for six winter months one of the Thakur's horses. As the Thakur did not have many horses, two \textit{jeola} divided between them the care and charge of one horse. Thirdly, each \textit{jeola} annually carried eight or nine \textit{patha} (sixteen pounds) of rice (a light goat or sheep) from the Kulu Valley to the Thakur's house in Lahaul. Lastly, all landholders of the \textit{kothis} of Lahaul annually provided in turn, a certain number of men who supplied fuel to the common quarters of the \textit{kothi} at Akhara bazzar in Kulu for the men bringing fuel for general use, a payment of six rupees each was made. This amount was raised by a rate on all the \textit{jeolas} of the \textit{kothi}. In Ghumrang each year four \textit{jeolas} furnished four men for this duty and they carried loads for the Thakur, when he travelled to and from his house to Akhara bazzar. They also provided fuel while he remained there.\textsuperscript{101}

\textbf{27.6 Religion in Lahaul and Spiti}

In Spiti the only religion was Buddhism. In Lahaul it was a mixture of Hinduism and Buddhism. The latter religion dominated in the villages of the Chandra and the Bhaga

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid; p. 112.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid; p. 110.
while Hinduism predominated in the Pattan Valley of Chandra-Bhaga. In 1891, it was estimated that of the 4,092 inhabitants were Hindus and 1,869 were Buddhists.  

27.7 Monasteries in Lahaul and Spiti

There was also an economic connection of the people with the monasteries. For example, the Guru Ghantal monastery located on a mountain above the point of confluence of the Chandra and Bhaga rivers, sent a tribute of the value of Rs. 30 (half in cash and half in goods) every year to the abbot of the Togna monastery in Ladakh. This was then forwarded to the Kangri Donjan, near the Mansarowar Lake in Tibet, and from there to the monastery of Pangtang Dechinling in Bhutan alias (Lo) of which abbot bears the title of Nawang Namgial. This tribute was important because the landholders of Lahaul, excluding a few Brahman families, paid a fee of about a rupee to this monastery on the death of a member of the household and reaffirmed their link with the institution.

Moreover, in autumn the nierpa (treasurer), along with some of the monastery tenants in attendance, travelled across the whole area and collected a customary fee called

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*dubri* (consisting of one *patha* of barley) from every landholding.\textsuperscript{103} The main source of income of the five Spiti monasteries was the *pun* or assigned grain rents (mentioned above), because the rent-free land of the monasteries was very small. The monasteries themselves were, however, extensive buildings situated on high ground at a distance from the villages.\textsuperscript{104}

\textbf{27.8 Custom of Inheritance in Lahaul and Spiti}

Amongst the Thakurs of Lahaul, the custom of primogeniture prevailed. The eldest son succeeded after the father's death. As long as his brother's lived with him, they were maintained and called little Thakurs. When they established separate households, they got a small allotment (*garhpan*) under the name of *dotoenzing* or younger son’s land for supporting themselves. In Pattan, where Hinduism predominates, the holdings were a bit larger and more productive. Here, many brothers married separately and divided the house and lands. In such families if a brother died without an issue, his share always went to the brother’s with whom he had lived jointly, or to the brother’s issue. No claim could be made by the separated branch of the family. Most interestingly, if there was no son to inherit, a daughter could succeed her father’s entire estate in preference to his nephews, or other male family members. But the condition was that she should not have married before her father’s death and settled down to live on her husband’s holding away from home. If she is married and living with her husband in her father’s house, she can inherit all his property.\textsuperscript{105}

The Spiti family has followed the system of primogeniture. The eldest son succeeded in the lifetime of his father. As soon as the eldest son married a wife, he

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid; p. 129.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid; pp. 129-30.
\textsuperscript{105} Kangra DG, 1898, pp. 13-14.
succeeded to the family estate as well as the ancestral dwelling, or the big house (khang-chhen). The head of the family was known as khang-chhen-pa. On his succession the father retired to a smaller house (khang-chung) and was now called khang-chung-pa. A specific plot of land was allotted to his maintenance. He now had nothing how to do with the family estate and its management. His younger sons, the brother’s of the khang-chhen-pa were sent in their childhood to Buddhist monasteries. Only if the khang-chhen-pa failed to have an issue, did one of the brother’s then abandoned monastic life and took his eldest brother’s place in the family.

Even when the younger sons became monks, they got as maintenance the produce of a field that was set aside as da-zhing (from dawa another word lama). Unmarried daughters of a landholder were entitled to maintenance from the head of family. He had either to let them live in his house on equal terms with his own family or give them a separate house and plot of land. The daughter forfeits her claim only if she went away to live in another man’s house. Many women continued living in their father’s or brother’s houses and remained spinsters. Their chances of marriage was small, as all younger sons became monks, and monks are bound to celibacy. Bigamy was only allowed when the head of a family who had son, or expectation of getting one by his first wife, married again. Though monogamy is the norm in Spiti. Polyandry is practised among the dutalpas and among the buzhans who were the descendants of the monks of the Pin monasteries. The latter required no vow of celibacy from its members.

106 Ibid; p. 82.
108 Ibid; p. 84.
27.9 Population of Spiti

In 1868, the population of Spiti was counted at 3,024. The number of women was only two more than men. Earlier, in 1855 the population had been counted at 2,087. This increase was mainly due to the better enumeration. Otherwise, the population increase was rather slow due to the property all going to the elder son who was allowed to marry. Little migration occurred from Tibet.\textsuperscript{109} In Spiti there was no discrimination in eating and drinking and therefore, no caste in the formal Hindu class. Nevertheless, the landholding class (called Kanets) did not intermarry with the Lohars nor the Lohars with the bedas. The Kanets here were ethnically Bhotias and constituted the whole population with the exception of about 100 Lohars and 46 bedas in the year of 1868. The Lohars, whose Tibetan name zoh, were skilful smiths; they made pipes, tinder-boxes, bits, locks and keys, knives, choppers, hoes, ploughshares and chains.\textsuperscript{110}

The Spiti men bought old cattle from the neighbouring Lahaulis and slaughtered them in autumn to meet their requirements for the six months of winter. Lahaul appears to have come under Brahmanic influence by British times. The colonial records suggest that cattle were not slaughtered there (except perhaps in some villages at the head of the Bhaga Valley and even there it was done secretly). However, each house killed five or six sheep at the beginning of the winter. The flesh of these sheep was dried and could be kept good for many years. The principal food of the Lahaulis was buck-wheat. It was boiled whole and eaten as gruel. It could also be roasted and made into flour, which was then baked into cakes or mixed with \textit{chang} (bear) and made into dumplings.

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid; p.123.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid; p.123.
Houses in Lahaul and Spiti were quite different in appearance from those of Kulu and Kangra. They were two or three storeys high, but had flat roofs. The lower storey was used for cattle, horses, sheep and goats while the upper one had the living rooms of the family. The Lahaul houses were smaller and less effort went into building them compared to the houses of Kulu.  

27.10 Caste in Spiti

In Spiti, there is no explicit distinction of caste in the Brahmanic sense. Some menial and artisan classes such as the garas or blacksmiths were regarded as distinct caste by the ordinary agriculturists of Spiti. The blacksmiths are allowed to use the common pipe only through stems provided by themselves. The bedas correspond to the hensis of Kulu and were outcastes. They lived by begging, making whips for the Spiti men and bracelets of shell for the women. They attended weddings as musicians along with the blacksmiths. Blacksmith did not eat with them or take their women as wives. While caste was almost unknown in Spiti, there were tribal divisions such as: Nandu,

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111 Ibid; p.125.
Gyazhingpa, Khyungpo, Lonchhenpa, Henir, Nyekpa. Marriage was forbidden within the tribe, but one tribe intermarried quite freely with another.\footnote{Ibid; pp. 92-93.}

27.11 Begar in Spiti

The custom of begar was the same as in Lahaul. Roads repairs were performed by the tulfa-kang-chumpas or regular landholders. For carrying letters or traveller's baggage across the pass too, the regular landholders alone were liable. A roster of duty was kept though landholder often got a dotul or other dependent to go in his stead. However, the latter could refuse to go unless paid handsomely.\footnote{Ibid; p. 117. As an instance of the price paid to a substitute. Lyall tell us that he fixed for the journey from Kibbar in Spiti, over the Parangla pass to Rupshu in Ladakh viz. three rupees cash, two khal or about 50 lbs. barley meal a large pot of butter, five or six ounces of tea, a pair of boots, the loan of sheep to carry the porter's cloths, food, etc.} Unlike the people of Lahaul and Kulu, the Spiti people were not great load-carriers and on such occasions they collected all ponies and yaks and the load to be carried by porters was divided into small pieces as far as it was possible.\footnote{Kangra DG, 1898, p. 100.}