CHAPTER - III

PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

In the lap of the Himalayas in the northwestern corner of India there exists a small valley called Lahaul. The word Lahaul presumably is composed of two Tibetan words: Lah + Yul, Lah means “god” and Yul means “The land”. Thus Lahaul means “The land of gods, or the abode of gods”.

Tibetans called it Loh Yul, which means “the southern land”, since it lies to the south of Tibet. Another possibility is that it could have been La-Yul. The word La in Tibetan means “pass” and La-Yul would therefore mean “the land surrounded by passes”. The valley of Lahaul is surrounded by high mountains on all sides. The only way to get in to the valley is through one of the passes- Rohtang adjoining Kullu, Baralacha adjoining Ladakh, and Kungti pass adjoining Chamba. Deep down among lofty mountain ranges there flourishes a valley called Lahaul, situated between 31.44 N and 32,59,57 N latitude and between 76.46.29 E and 78.41.34 E longitude. The average altitude of the valley is about 10,000 feet above sea level. The valley of Lahaul is surrounded by the district of Kangra and Kullu in the South, the valley of Spiti and Kinnaur to the east, Ladakh and Zanskar to the north, and Chamba and Kishtwar to the West.

However the most interesting point is that neither the people of Lahaul, nor the Tibetans, nor the Ladakhis call this valley Lahaul although all the meanings given above are derived from Tibetan. The people of Ladakh and Tibet call it Garja or Garsha. The people of Lahaul call it Swangla. There is no specific meaning for any of these words, apart from their use as proper names. Of course, it is possible to derive any number of meanings by
breaking the words in the syllables, as done before. In Lahaul particu
in the pattan valley, the word Swangla is also used to denote the Brahi
of Lahaul. This could indicate the Brahmins were the original settle
the valley. The name Garsha has been used in Pali Buddhist litera
where it is mentioned that the famous Buddhist missio
Padmasambhava visited and preached Buddhism in Zahore(Mandi)
Garsha (Lahaul).

Thus word Lahaul thus seems to have been used in the neighbouring v:
of Kullu and consequently in the rest of India where it entered the H
Urdu, English and other languages as a proper name. In the book ‘His
of Punjab Hill States’ Hutchinson and Vogel state that in olden times I
was ruled by Rana’s and Thakur’s. In Lahaul also, several petty cl
called Ranas and Thakurs existed. With a few exceptions, most of t
 petty chiefs were directly or indirectly under the Rajas of neighbor
states of Kullu, Chamba, or Ladakh for the major part of recorded his
At times all these states have claimed to have dominated La
simultaneously, only indicating that each perhaps held a part of it.
Ranas and Thakurs exist even today, but with the title as a surname (°
The earliest of these petty chiefs in Lahaul seem to have existe
Triloknath in Chamba-Lahaul and at Gyamur of Tod Valley. From
Gyamur or later Kolong, the Thakurs ruled a part of Lahaul until
independence of India.1

Hutchinson and Vogel and also Harcourt2 mention that the Ranas
existed in Tindi, Salgraon, Lote and Gus (Gushal), in Lahaul. They
add that chief among them was the Rana of Triloknath, whose barony

1 Hutchinson, J. and Vogel, J., The History of Punjab Hill States (La
Punjab Government), 1933.
2 Harcourt, A. F. P., The Himalayan District of Kooloo, Lahoul and
comprised of the greater part of Chamba-Lahaul which his family had possessed from time immemorial. The others seem to have been established at a much later stage and in different periods. They further add that the baronial families seem to have also existed in Kardang, Barbog and Darcha.

Gyamur and Triloknath seem to have been independent more often than the others, especially in the earlier periods. Since it has been difficult to establish the exact dated of existence of these Ranas and their association with specific kingdom. The traceable history of Kullu begins much earlier than the other states. Therefore it is possible that most of Lahaul was under Kullu in its earlier days, though there is no mention of it anywhere. It is also possible that the two extreme corners- Triloknath and Gyamur were each independently ruled by these Ranas while there was not much population or other activity in the area in between the two territories, and therefore no one had real claim to it.

Lahaul is first mentioned in Kullu chronicle during the reign of Rudra Pal, the 18th Raja of the Pal dynasty in Kullu. This seems to the sometime between 400 and 500 A.D. During this period Rajendra Sen, the Raja of Spiti, attacked Kullu and defeated Rudra Pal. At that time Chamba is said to have seized Lahaul from Kullu.

Kullu from the time of Rudra Pal to the time of his son Hamir Pal, had been paying tribute to Spiti. Hamir Pal’s son Prasidh Pal the 20th in the Pal line- however, refused to pay this tribute, which was 6 annas cut of each rupee of revenue, which means 6/16th of the total revenue of Kullu. His opposition to the Spiti chief resulted in a battle, in which chet Sen the Spiti king was defeated. This battle according to the ‘History of Punjab Hil States’ must have been fought somewhere near Rohtang. Prasidh Pal also
recovered Lahaul from Chamba. In Chamba Meru Varman was succeeded by Mander Varman and Kantar Varman, very little is known about them, from which it can be assumed that they were weak and thus during the reign of one of them Lahaul was lost in Kullu. After suffering defeat from Kullu, Spiti was invaded by Gyamur Orr. In this fight Chet Sen was killed. The ruler of Gyamur is said to have then granted some villages to Chet Sen’s son as jagir. He also returned three villages to Sansar Pal of Kullu, who assisted him in this battle. In Kullu, who assisted him in this battle. In Kullu, Sansar Pal was succeeded by Bhog Pal. His claim to the throne was contested by his brother Vibhay Pal. A war ensued between them, resulting in Bhog Pal’s death. Vibhay Pal was succeeded by Brahm Pal. This Raja left no legitimate son. On his death the Rajas of Chamba, Suket, Busher, Kangra, Bhangal and Ladakh are supposed to have agreed to name Ganesh Pal, an illegitimate son of the Raja, as his successor. During all these periods Kullu must have been very weak because at some point Chamba took over Lahaul. Survam Varman or Lakshmi Varman are the most likely victorious Rajas of Chamba.

It seems that during Sahil Varman’s reign all Lahaul was part of Chamba, including the Gahar and Tod valleys, as there is no evidence otherwise. The battle was fought at Rohtang which indicates that Rohtang must have been the border with Kullu. The Chamba forces had built a fort at the feet of Rohtang pass on Kullu side, perhaps at Marhi or Rahla. When Raja Ganesh Pal was ruled, the Kullu forces accepted the defeat and peace was concluded. The Kullu people, however; were only looking for an opportunity to drive the invaders back. Thus the whole truce was just a trick. They invited the Chamba forces, also known as Gaddi Army, to a social gathering ostensibly to celebrate the truce. The place was fixed near Kothi on the other side of the river Byasa. The river at this place is barely a
stream, but flows through a narrow gorge at a depth of more than 100 feet
with solid rocks on both sides. A simple bridge made out of wooden planks
spanned the gorge. A night in the midst of the feast some men from
Kullu went to the bridge, removed the planks. After the party the
unsuspecting and mostly drunken Chamba forces returned to their fort. As
they crossed the bridge, many of them fell through, silencing the band and
those that remained then fled. Thus nearly the entire Chamba army
stationed at this fort was destroyed. By the end of 9th century, central Tibet
became involved in endlessly protracted hostilities. Around 900 A.D. Kyi-
de-Nimagaon, a descendant of the old Tibetan dynasty was forced to flee
across the Myum pass into West Tibet. Only about one hundred followers
accompanied the refugee prince in exile. His livelihood depended on the
good will of the local rulers of West Tibet. He was however, well received
by the king of Purang. Within a short period Kyi-de-Nimagaon, with the
help of the king of Purang, became not only the master of West Tibet but
also of Ladakh to the west, and Zanskar, Spiti and Lahaul to the South.
However, this Kingdom could not stay intact very long. Around 930 A.D.
presumably after Namagaon’s death, his kingdom was divided among his
three sons, The eldest son Palgyi-gon received Guge and Purang, while the
third son Dretsuk-gon was given Zanskar, Spiti and Lahaul. Rgya (Gya)
was the frontier town between Ladakh and Lahaul-Spiti, apparently the
border between the first and the third son. The Lahaul mentioned here must
be mainly the area which we defined as Gyamur, i.e. the Tod and Gahar
valleys. It is possible that a part of the Pattan valley also came under the
sway of this king. This gave a chance to the people of Ladakh and Zanskar
to migrate to this valley.3

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3 Dasgupta, K. K., *Tribal History of Ancient India* (Calcutta: Nab Bharat
Around that time in Kullu, Hast Pal’s son Hasher pal declared independence from Suket. His son Santosh Pal then conquered Baltiston, killing Muhammad Khan, the chief of Baltistan, Tej Pal’s son Uchit Pal then invaded Tibet. Thus it seems that Kullu might have seized most of Lahaul from the Ladakhi domination. Chamba had constant pressure from Kashmir and thus was not in a position to maintain control over Lahaul.

About 1080 to 1110 A.D. Lhachen Utpala, sixth in the dynasty established by Kyi-de-Nimagaon, invaded Nyungti (Kullu) through Lahaul. In this battle the Raja of Kullu lost and was forced to conclude a treaty in which he promised to pay tribute in zo and iron. Harcourt et al. presume that since there were no zo in Kullu. They must have come from Lahaul. The agreement was written such that as long as Tre-tse the glacier of Mount Kailash did not melt away, or Ma-phan, Lake Mansarovar, did not dry up, the tribute must be paid. According to the history of Ladakh this treaty remained in force until the reign of Senge Namgyal, who ruled in the mid 17th century. The Kullu history, however, puts the attack of Lhachen Utpala around 1125 to 1150. It further adds that the next Raja Sikander Pal, around the end of the 12th century, sought help from Delhi came in person with an army. He passed through Kullu, and went on to conquer Gyamur, Baltistan, Ladakh and Tibet as far as Lake Mansorover. All of them had to pay tribute to Delhi through the Raja of Kullu. The Raja of Kullu was thus restored to his dominion. A major part of Lahaul was taken over by Lhachen Utpala, along with Kullu. However, it must have been restored to Kullu when the king of Delhi came through.

Vijay Varma, the Raja of Chamba again gained power around 1175 A.D. and invaded Kashmir and Ladakh. It seems that he might have taken over at least Chamba-Lahaul and the Pattan valley. This was the period when
Muhammad Gouri repeatedly attacked India, and Prithvi Raj, the king of Delhi, pardoned each incursion until his 17th attempt, that time, due to the defection of Jai Chand, the king of Kanauj, Prithvi Raj lost; and thus the Muhammadans attacked Ladakh and Lahul through Kashmir. Ladakh had already been attacked by the Mongols in 1207 and had accepted the suzerainty of Ganghiz Khan (Changez Khan) and his successors, it seems that neither Ladakh nor Lahaull were ever ruled by Mongols or the Muhammadans, Graves and dead bodies found in Lahaull must substantiate these attacks, since Hindus and Buddhist do not bury their dead.

Bhadur Singh who completed his father’s work of extending the kingdom by eliminating the Ranas and Thakurs. Between 1532 and 1559 Bhadur Singh reversed the earlier situation of Lahaull’s being under Guge or Ladakh. He first captured Teenan or the Gondhla valley and then expanded towards the Gahar valley. The Teenan chronicle called him the Dharma Raja, meaning the king of virtue and justice. Bhadur Singh appointed Tsering Angrup, however being Buddhist, actually favoured Ladakh. During Partap Singh’s reign Trashi Gyapo of Barbog was the foremost chief of those parts of Lahaull which were attached to Kullu. It is felt that if not the whole of Pattan, at least the area beyond Jahlma and Chamba-Lahaull must have been a part of Chamba at that time.4

The Raja Jagat Singh, whose reign from 1637 to 1672 was one of the most notable of Kullu history. During Jagat Singh reign a major portion of Lahaull was within the Kullu kingdom. At the beginning of the 17th century the Buddhist Gyalpo Jamya began extending his territory. He captured Spiti, but there is no mention of his capturing Lahaull. Later he was, however attacked and defeated by Ali Mir of Balistan. Taking advantage of this, Spiti and other outlaying prounces revoluted and regained partial

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4 Ibid.
independence. After Jamya’s death, his son Senge Namgyal overcame the Baltis. He again conquered Spiti in about 1635. Senge Namgyal is reputed to be Ladakh’s only king who pursued on ambitious policy of aggrandizement, Not only was he a great warrior, but also a great patron fo Buddhism. He founded many monasteries including Ladakh’s famous Hemas gompa. He granted land estates to Lamas and their establishments. It is believed that some of the monasteries in Lahaul and Spiti also might have been established at that time. At least the Tod and the Gahar valleys of Lahaul may have been captured by Ladakh at this time, even though Harcourt thought that the Gyalpos never actually ruled Lahaul.

Senge Namgyal was succeeded by Ris Son De-den Namgyal in 1645 who ruled until 1675. In 1663 Aurangzeb, the Mogul ruler, threatened Ladakh with war. De-den Namgyal, having no hope of victory, immediately surrendered and recognized Mogul suzerainty. In 1673 when Aurangzeb was involved with the Afridi Chieftain Akhmal Khan, De-den Namgyal took advantage of this situation seizing, Purig and the Shyok valley. Like his father he also extended his kingdom to include Nubra, Drass, Purig, the lower Shyog valley, Guge, Purang, Rudok, Spiti, Upper Kinnaur, Zanskar and Lahaul. The Lahaul mentioned here must be only the Tod valley directly, while most of the other parts were with Kullu. In the Gahar valley, though the Barbog Thakur had an inclination towards Ladakh, it was formally under Kullu.

In 1671 the Mongols, under the leadership of Golden Tsewang attacked Lahaul, which was known as the attack of Seoge.’ It is believed that they remained in the area for only a couple of years. This Mongol force is supposed to have stormed the Kolong fort. After that they crossed the Bhaga river and attempted to capture the Gondhla valley on their way to attack Kullu.
A misfortune, however struck them and most of the force was annihilated in an avalanche near Ropsang in Gondhla valley. Human bones are said to have been found even in recent years in a place called Rolang thang, where this disaster occurred. Perhaps this place was named Rolang thang only after this disaster, since the word “rolang” means the rising of the dead.

Evidently these Mongols did not reach the Pattan valley. In 1672 after the retreat of the Mongols, Raja Budhi Singh, son of Raja Jagat Singh of Kullu seized the opportunity to influence the people of Lahaul, Budhi Singh married the daughter of the ruler of Kishtwar, on the occasion of which he himself went to Kishtwar through Lahaul. Evidently most of Lahaul, especially the Pattan, Gahar and Tod valleys were under Guge at that time. Buddhi Singh tried to convince people to throw away the Yoke of Guge and give allegiance to Kullu.

By the later part of 17th century the Guge Buddhi Singh and later Man Singh of Kullu tried to capture most of Lahaul. On the other side, Chatter Singh of Chamba acquired considerable influence in the Western part of Lahaul, Later Lahaul out of Guge’s clutches. Thus for sometime Triloknath and rest of Chamba-Lahaul along with some part of the Pattan valley came under Chamba. For many years a nominal tribute was regularly demanded a part of which consisted of twelve large dogs. At the same time certain leading men were accustomed to levying certain dues, such as home made woollen clothes, ropes etc.

The Gondhla valley, Gahar valley and a part of the Pattan valley were under Kullu. The Tod valley which for most other times remained either independent or under Ladakh and Guge, was also annexed to Kullu by Man Singh. During his reign, from 1688 to 1719, Kullu once again became very
powerful, comprising Upper Lahaul, Bara and Chhote Bhangal, Kotgarh, Kumharsen, Balson, Shagri and the area up to Shimla to the south, besides the Kullu valley itself, an area totaling at least 10,000 square miles. Sometime around 1689-90, Man Singh of Kullu and Chatter Singh of Chamba made an agreement to make Thirot in Lahaul a permanent demarcation between the two states. Thus from that time onwards the area beyond Thirot remained under Chamba and therefore was called Chamba-Lahaul, while the area to the east of Thirot remained under Kullu and was called Kullu-Lahaul, though the word Kullu was not commonly attached to this part of Lahaul.

The Thakur of Barbog was the regent of the Kullu Rajas for the Gahar Valley. These Thakurs however were inclined towards Ladakh due mainly to their being Buddhist, and also perhaps due to an earlier obligation incurred by Ladakh’s permitting settlers to migrate to the Gahar valley. Nono Chhogan was the chief of the Tod valley ad the Thakur of Gondhla was in charge of the Gondhla valley. Both of these chieftains submitted to Kullu’s authority and as a result, received Jagirs and the title Thakurs. Raja Man Singh also married the daughter of the Gondhla Thakur. Man Singh reign came to a tragic end. He had fallen in love with the wife of the Rana of Kumharsen. The Rana enticed the Raja to come to Sirikot across the Satluj rivers, where he had armed Busheris waiting to kill him. Thus his reign came to an end in 1719.

After Man Singh death, Raj Singh succeeded to the throne. After Raj Singh, Jai Singh, Tehri Singh and Pritam Singh succeeded each other in Kullu. During Pritam Singh’s time, in about 1800 A.D., a Lahaul contingent fought a war for him against Mandi at Bajaura. They used the banner of Ghepan, the chief deity of Lahaul.

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The British hardly ever fought for territory; instead they conquered by stealth, taking piece by piece through negotiations. After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Sikhs also became comparatively weaker, while British influence increased. In the treaty of March 9, 1846. Gulab Singh, the Dogra Raja of Jammu was recognized as an independent ruler by both Sikh’s and British. The Sikhs were forced to cede the territory between the rivers Byasa and Sindh (Indus) to the British including Kashmir and Hazare. The British in turn transferred them to Gulab Singh for the sum of 10 million rupees. This deal was later changed. The British wanted to keep Kullu and Mandi, Lahaul followed the fate of Kullu. In fact the change was made to keep Lahaul, for the sake of trade with Tibet. A week later the treaty was formalized in greater detail, and signed by Gulab Singh and the British Government in India. Gulab Singh was guaranted all the hilly or mountain country including Chamba, which took Chamba-Lahaul along with it.6

The part of lahaul that came under the British, previously a part of Kullu, included the Gondhla and Gahar valleys, Tod valley up to Darcha, and the Pattan valley up of Thirot. This part was henceforth called British-Lahaul also and made a part of Tehsil Kullu which in turn was made a part of the Kangra district. The total area of Lahaul that came under British control was reckoned at 2255 square miles.

Captain Hay was the first Assistant Commissioner of Kullu. Bali Ram, the head man of Lahaul was given the title of Negi. Somehow it seems difference erupted between him and the British Government and Bali Ram was forced to relinquish the position, though it was claimed that he himself declined it. As a result Tara Chand of Kolong was made the Negi of lahaul.

The British Lahaul was divided into fourteen kothis. Each kothi was assigned a Lambardar (the head man) and a chowkidar known as krounka. The duties of the Lambardar were to collect the land revenue and make arrangement for visiting officials by providing horses for their use, hay for the horses and porters to carry their luggage. The porters were paid four annas per day. The duties of chowkidar were to assist the Lambardar in making all those arrangements and informing the public when any official visited the area. He also kept a record of births and deaths in his kothi. The wages of the Lambardars and Chowkidars were paid by the public in the form of grain. The Negi of Lahaul was also an honorary magistrate who was vested exofficio with powers of a subordinate magistrate, second class. He could therefore imprison a criminal up to one month and fine or entertain civil suits of up to fifty rupees. Tara Chand Negi was allowed twenty-five rupees per month to establish the office. Tara Chand resided at Kolong. Tara Chand was succeeded by Hari Chand as Negi of Lahaul in 1876. He was conferred with the title of Wazir of Lahaul. He exercised the entire administration of Lahaul until 1914 when Amar Chand took over from Hari Chand and was appointed as Jamadar in the British Indian army with five Lahaulis under him. He was given a title Rai Bahadur in 1917. This began the tradition of Thakrus joining the Indian army. He died in 1921 while his son Abhe Chand was still a minor, therefore the administration was vested upon his younger brother Mangal Chand. He was the last ruler of Lahaul before the independence of India.

Occupation and Livelihood

The primary occupation of the people within the valley of Lahaul is agriculture. There is hardly any family which does not possess some land. Only a few families of blacksmiths and goldsmiths do not possess any land.

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at all. Under the joint family system some family members may be farmers while others may be engaged in business or some service.

As such their occupations are not confined to any one particular profession. At present professional opportunities for young men range from medicine, engineering, administrative services to all other government jobs. Nevertheless, farming has been the backbone of the valley since time immemorial. The type of terrain, the attitude of the valley, the shortage of rain fall and the excessive snowfall make the life very tough indeed. The question of mere survival forces these people to extreme hard work up to sixteen hours a day, no matter how rich or poor, young or old, they may be. One might pause to ponder as to how these people, especially the women, can work so hard day and night tirelessly, without a day off in their schedule. Nature has forced them to be diligent and punctual as laziness or delay can prove fatal. An untimely snowfall can sweep away a whole years effort in a few hours.

From time immemorial these people have learned to be self reliant and self-sufficient. When the snow falls and farm work is not possible, they spin and weave. Every household maintains sheep for well as well as for manure for the fields. Besides sheep, they keep cows for milk and bulls to plough the fields. These cattle are essential for the farmers, who have relied upon organic farming for centuries. Thus they produce by themselves most of the items needed for living. The members of the family engaged in business or service simply supplement the family income while maintaining the joint family system which is the key to the success of the people of this valley. Whether one likes it or not, one has to work hard if one wants to live in this valley and survive.
Map 3.1
Position of Himachal Pradesh in India
The farming is totally dependent upon irrigation and thus they are not at the mercy of the rain. So far there has hardly been any mechanization, although it is quite evident that it is the only solution to alleviate such hard work, which future generations may not be willing future generations may not be willing to put in. The trend of running after government service is gaining popularity where it seems a lot of people are paid simply for sitting on their chairs.
The farming is limited to a very few crops. Kuth, Potatoes, Peas, Grains and Hops are some crops grow in the valley.

Kuth:- Much of the credit for the prosperity of this valley goes to this crop. As the older people used to say, the modern, young, educated people should be thankful to Kuth. Kuth is an herb which grows in only a very few places in the Himalaya and only at a particular attitude. There is an opinion that this herb is the same as Cassia, mentioned in Bible. Prior to 1962 dried Kuth roots were exported to China. Nobody really knew what the Chinese did with them.

Potatoes:- A present potatoes have become the main cash crop and the most profitable produce of the Lahaul valley. The attitude makes it the best quality seed potato that one can produce and as a seed it is being supplied through out India.

Grains:- Among the food grains, wheat, barly and buck wheat were produced here earlier. Barly and buckwheat constituted the only dual crop that can be produced in one season in this valley. The period April to July was used for barly, while July to September was used for the buckwheat crop. The transition period from one crop to the other was very critical.

Even difference of a few hour in the time of sowing sometimes makes a difference whether one reaps a crop or not. The month of October is very uncertain as far as snow is concerned. Many times people lose their crop due to an early snow fall. Buckwheat is used for pancakes, which is staple food. There was time when a stock of buckwheat pancakes could be found in any house at anytime. Since buckwheat is not grown in significant quantities anywhere else in India, One cannot find it anywhere in the Indian market. For the reason the people of Lahaul have to produce their own. Barly is mainly used for making Yud or Sattu. Yud is flour made
from roasted barley and since it does not have to be cocked again. It can be mixed with tea or butter, milk and eaten without further cooking. This makes a very good companion for travelers. Barley is also used in making Chhang or Chakti, a local drink. Of late these two crops also are not seen much in Lahaul fields.

Hops:- In Lahaul many farmers grow hops, but in small quantity mainly because of the lack of proper marketing Hop plant (Humulus Lupulus) is a creeper that produces green flowers shaped somewhat like a solidly filled rose bud, but more rounded in shape. It turns yellowish when over ripe. These flowers are used in beer as a bittering or flavouring agent as well as a preservation. In fact it was originally used as a preservative, but over time its tingling bitter taste and aroma became the typical flavour of beer. The hop flowers are dried, compressed into pellets and then sold to the breweries. The varieties of hops cultivated in Lahaul are the Hybrid and Late Clustor.

Religion

There are only two religions in Lahaul Buddhism and Hinduism. The religious influence on Lahaul have often stemmed from political influences that is they reflected the religious persuasion of current ruler. Since Lahaul has changed hands among the rulers of Kullu, Chamba, and Ladakh quite frequently, there has been a considerable mixing of religions and beliefs in lahaul.

In India those Hindus who do not like to confine the word Hindu to a narrow sectarian religion, condiger Buddhism a part of greater Hindu society, portraying it as one of the many off shoots of Hindu philosophy. Perhaps nowhere else this belief may be practically true as in Lahaul. Most people accept Hinduism and Buddhism equally in Lahaul. Many people
may claim themselves to be on both sides at the same time and may not like to be dissociated from either one.

Buddhism has remained the prime religion of Ladakh during most of its known history. Buddhism in Lahaul has been mainly influenced by Ladakh, which in turn was influenced by Tibet.

In Lahaul about 90 percent of the Gahar and Tod valleys, about 20 percent of Gondhla and Ranglo valley about 5 percent of Pattan valley and almost none of Chamba, Lahaul except the Mayar valley, consider themselves to be Buddhists. In Mayar again, more than half of the population is Buddhist. Hinduism is one of the most ancient religions in the world whose founding is not attributed to any particular individual as such. Because of its long history, it has gone through many reforms, rejuvenation and reorientations at different stages. The result is many different subsects or beliefs or modes of worship and a way of performing certain rituals and customs or perhaps simply the culture of a particular society.

The Hindu religion is like an ocean which absorbs everything yet it remains as it is. Thus in Lahaul also approximately 90 percent of the Pattan valley almost 100 percent of Chamba Lahaul (except Mayar valley) 70 percent of the Gondhla valley about 5 percent of the Gahar valley and perhaps half a percent of the Tod valley consider themselves Hindus.

**Scheduled Tribes of Lahaul & Spiti**

The Bodh, bhot or chazang, as they were called are primarily distributed in Spiti valley of Lahaul and Spiti district. They are a scheduled tribe and have been enumerated along with Jad, Lama and Khampa, the total population of which according to 2011 Census is 12457. Though the history of Bodh is not available, yet according to an account by the natives,
those people of Tibet who came and settled here in the past i.e. prior to 1962 are called as Bodh or Bhot, whereas those who came after 1962 are known as Tibetans. According to another more plausible view the people are the followers of Buddhist Faith and hence are called Bodh.

The Bodhs live in an inhospitable terrain with little vegetation as the area falls in the arid zone. Spiti is referred to as the cold dessert of Himachal Pradesh. It has a very scanty rain fall. Stone boulders and loose rocks keep falling all over and on small patches of terraced fields, which are usually near river beds. Bhoti is the dialect spoken by the Bodhs among themselves and their script is also Bhoti, but with outsiders they speak in broken Hindustani and the literate among them can also converse in English. Some of them can write in Devmagri and English scripts. The male Bodhs wear kera or cholu with woollen trouser and pattu on their waist. The females put on cholu and jeptan (a shawl around the shoulders). Each Bodh house has a darsho (flag) in the courtyard to ward off evil eyes that are cast on the house by invisible spirits. The staff is also a typical identity of Bodh household.

The Bodhs are non-vegetarian, taking all kinds of edible meat. They also eat yak and cow meat. They are very fond of locally brewed drink called chhang and arak, which are distilled in almost every house. Their staple food consist of thukpa and momo which is made from maida and mutton. Occasionally they also take pulses, rongi, green vegetables and tubers. Fruits consumed are chulli, bahemi, grape and like. Fresh milk is available in a small quantity and is usually kept for the infants. The adults take fresh milk occasionally. Mostly powered milk is used in the preparation of sweetened tea. Salt tea is also taken frequently. Tobacco is chewed and smoked by both men and women. Special food and delicacies are cooked.
on festive occasions, but on solemn occasions non-vegetarian food and drinks are avoided.\textsuperscript{8}

The Bodh is a generic term and is applied to people of the Buddhist faith. They are divided into six classes, viz., Lama (the priest), Nono (the ruling class), Kharpan (the wazir of the king), Chazang (Rajput Bodh, the agriculturist class), Zo (blacksmiths) and Hesi (musicians). This division is on the basis of occupational specialization. The majority of the Bodhs calling themselves as Rajputs, are agriculturists and constitute the bulk of population. The Zos and the Hesi/Beta are included in the list of scheduled castes of the state. The chief function of these social division is to regulate marriage except in case of Lamas who observe celibacy.

Endogamy is the rule of marriage, with the exception of the Kharpan and the Nono. Marriage within the village is not looked down upon. Cross cousin marriage is not frequent, nevertheless it is practiced, while parallel cousin marriage is totally absent. They also do not marry blood relatives. The most popular form of acquiring mate is by reje (marriage by negotiation), the other form being khindum (love marriage). Monogamy is the general rule except in sections of population of Pin Valley and the area around Tabo where fraternal polyandry is practiced. Junior sororate marriages are however practiced with the consent of the first wife. In the event of wife being unable to give heir to the family, the husband can opt for a second marriage, in which the first preference is given to sami nomo (wife’s younger sister). There are no symbols of marriage among the Bodhs now, but in earlier times, a phiroza (turquoise stone) tied on the forehead of women signified her marital status.

Dowry was prevalent, depending on the economic status of the bride’s parents. This was usually in kind and consisted of churu (a cross between yak and a cow), horse and galicha (carpet). This is no more practised. Nowadays, voluntary gifts are given, but not demanded. The rule of residence is patrilocal, the girl after marriage goes to live in the house of her husband who moves in to the big house called khang chen. In some families where there are no male issues in a family, the daughter’s husband is invited to look after the in-law’s property and stays in the house. He is known as makpa. Che-che (divorce) is also possible in the community. The common grounds for divorce are adultery and incompatible nature of the husband and wife. It is permitted with social approval. No compensation is paid by any party, and either of the couple can divorce the other. The children, if any born to the couple, have the option of going to either of the parents. In case the child is an infant, he or she stays with mother. Widow, widower or divorcee remarriage is also possible among the community. A marriage between a widow and her husband’s younger brother can also be solemnized. In that event, the latter have to leave the gompa and live a family life. For this the consent of the rinpoche (Avtari Lama) is obtained, who also levies a fine on such persons leaving the gompa.

For the maintenance of Law and order in the community, each village has a traditional council called armi, which has a gadpo (headman) and lepha (village guard), who also acts as a messenger. Both the officials are elected to the post by voice votes. This system exist even in today and is only for the Bodhs. The composition of village council is homogenous and its function is of social control and to prevent any infringement of prescribed social norms. The offences that come up before the gadpo usually relate to

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² Ibid.
adultery and disrespect for traditional norms. The imposition of penalty on the offender is in cash or kind.

Similar to gadpo and lepha the Lamas also have a system of social control for the gompa. This is headed by a nominated Lama who is the chief, locally rinpochie, also occasionally referred to as Avtari Lama. He is assisted by the group of 10 to 12 elected Lamas for a period of three years and known as chisowa. The function of rinpochie and chisowa is to manage the affairs of the gompa. In the event of any Lama living the gompa to lead a married life the permission is to be granted by this panchayat after imposing cash fine. Adulterous relations between a Lama and Chomo (Nun) are frowned upon and result in excommunication from the religious institutions. However they may ultimately marry and settle down to family life. In Buddhism there are four sects Geylulapa, Nenginapa, Kargyutpa and Dulpa with a number of branches. Among the residents of the Spiti valley a combination of both the red and Yellow exists. The most learned of Lamas usually belong to the yellow sect and are called Bara Lama or Giani.

The Bodhs are a village deity known as Yu-la who is worshipped and propitiated by all for the welfare of the village. Every Buddhist household has a Darsho (long pole) fixed in its courtyard with cloth tied around it. This is kept to ward off evil eyes from being cast on the families. The sacred centres are the gompas, especially the one at Ki and Tabo, which are pilgrim centres for the Buddhists. The Lamas are the sacred specialists for the community. They also do tana-mana (exorcism), are also prepared and given by the Lamas to ward off the evil eye.

The attitude of the Bodhs towards the various developmental plans being enforced by the Governmental agencies is quite favourable. Though the
village is sparsely populated, nevertheless even in this remote area three high schools exist, one each at Kaza, Rangrik and Tabo, which also have free hostel facilities. Besides, there are plenty of primary-level schools and Bodh now send their boys to schools. In the event of ailments, they first resort to home-made remedies, then to the tana-mana of the Lamas, and if still not cured, they go to allopathic dispensaries. The deliveries are conducted at home by experienced women of the community. The older generations is averse to the idea of the small family norm, but the younger generation now uses contraceptive devices for regulating the family size.

Drinking water is available in the village through pipeline, which receives its supply from melted ice and kuhl. This supply is maintained only for four to five months in a year. In winter, when all water sources are frozen the water is supplied in jerricans at the rate of Rs. 35 to 40 per jerrican. Those who cannot afford melt the ice for water. The Bodhs have received employment against the reserved quota, and also other posts. A few of the people have also received loans under self-employment schemes.

Wood and kerosene are the usual sources of fuel for cooking. Chemical fertilizers such as CAN and phosphate are used by farmers. Hybrid varieties of seeds have improved the yield of the farmers. Insecticides and pesticides are not much in use. Mid-day meal and nutrition are provided to school going children and expectant and nursing mothers. Banks, though existing in the valley at the sub-divisional headquarters, do not find favour with the locals. Public distribution system through government reports is present and people avail themselves of the facilities.

The Swangla is a scheduled tribe exclusively living in the Pattan valley tract, along the Chandra Bhaga in Lahaul-Spiti district. It is a generic term which includes Brahman and Rajput groups. According to the legend,
when Taimur conquered this part of the country, he drove the Buddhist out and occupied the territory, and the people came to be known as Swangla from ‘Swanl’, the earlier name of the area. These people have originally migrated from Sangla valley in Kinnaur, which was subjected to Tibetan oppression. The Swanglas occupy the remote and inaccessible tract along the banks of Chandra Bhaga. Along with the Swangla, the other communities living with them are the Lohar, Sipi and Dagi which are the scheduled castes. They live on flat lands or on hills slopes near water channels.

There are two types of languages spoken by the Swanglas. The first is Manchhad, which is Tibetan and Hindi mixed, and is spoken by the Brahmans, Rajputs and Swanglas. The other is Chianli, which is spoken by the Sipi and Lohar. Bhoti too is prevalent but is spoken only by the Bodh inhabitants of the valley. Yet another dialect known as Tinan is spoken in the Sissu area. It is worth mentioning that the linguistic researches indicate that in earlier times (200 B.C.), the country was inhabited by an aboriginal tribe, in language and perhaps also in stock analogous to the Munda-speaking tribe of Bengal, Bihar and central India. Hindi is commonly spoken with the people of other communities. The literate use Devnagari and English for written communication.

The Swangla wear the same dress as other in the valley. The male wear cholu the woolen trousers and females put on cholu and shawl around the shoulder. The swanglas are none vegetarian, and they take meat of sheep, goat or chicken. Their staple food consists of wheat, beans, chapatti and pulses. Millet baked bread chilra is also commonly taken. A recent trend is their inclination towards eating rice, which is purchased. Satled buttered

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tea is very popular and is often taken at regular intervals. The intake of non-vegetarian food increases in winters nearly every day. Milk in its actual form is taken by infacts only.

The elders take milk in tea, and its by-product like curd. Edible roots and tubers which are locally available in the jungles or grown in kitchen garden are also consumed. Fruits are seldom consumed as they are not available. There is a moderate consumption of green vegetables which are grown by almost all the families in their kitchen gardens, besides potato which is widely grown in the area. Chhang is consumed almost daily by men. The women also take alcoholic drinks occasionally. This is usually distilled at home but sometimes purchased from the market.

As mentioned above, Swangla is generic terms and is used for Brahman, Rajput and Rana, living in Pattan valley, the Brahman are said to have come from Chamba to serve as official and family priests at religious functions in the temples and in the houses of Rana and Thakur. For the reason, the Swangla Brahman are also called pandit. The other communities like Rathi, Hali, Lohar, Sipi and Chanal, though living in the valley, are not yet included in the term Swangla. The Brahman occupy the most prestigious position in the hierarchical order, followed by Rana and Thakur. The chief function of these groupings is to regulate the marriage alliances, and the basis for differentiation is purely occupational, the Brahman being the priestly class and the Ranas, the Rajputs, ruling class. Besides these groups there are two other groups, the Garu and Mundro which are believed to have come up as a result of Rajput marrying a Bodh and Rajput marrying a girl of socially lower strata.

Endogamy at the class level is prevalent, with everyone marrying within their respective classes. Marriage outside one’s own social class is not
recognized, and all such persons are ostracized. Cousin marriage is totally prohibited. Marriage is also prohibited within three degrees of relationship both on father’s and mother’s sides. Earlier the girl was usually ordered then the boy. The boys were generally married at the age of 15, where is the girls were between 20-25 years. However there is now a reverse trend, with the boys getting married at 18 and the girls at 16. There are various modes of acquiring mates among the Swanglas, marriage by elopement, rusa-te-byah, exists where the boys and girl fall in love with each other. Kua-byah (marriage by capture) is also practiced when the boy develops a liking for a girl. But the parents are unwilling. The boy forcibly picks up the girl with the help of his friends and brings her to his house.

Fraternal polyandry was the usual practice of marriage, with the modification that one wife cannot be shared by more than three brothers. But recently polyandry is giving way to monogamy among the educated. Tsud-thvagchi (divorce), a distorted form of the Bhoti word thagchod-pa, is permitted. It takes place with social approval. The couple holds are a thin thread that signifies the breaking of matrimonial bonds. The role of the woman in the Swangla society is very important. She carries out all the economic activities in the agricultural fields. She even ploughs, weeds and harvests the crop. She collects fodder not only for the immediate use of the cattle, but also stacks it for use in winters. Similarly she collects fuel, both for immediate use and also for winters. She also takes part all socio-religious and social festivals. Her role in the family management is also very important. A son preferred to a daughter especially if it happens to be the birth of the first child. Pre-natal restrictions are observed by the expectant mother.

Six months after birth, chhati is celebrated, wherein the child is fed with cereal food for the first time. On completion of one year the kratrichti
(tonsure) ceremony is observed. The dead are cremated, with the death rites being performed by the eldest male member in the house. The unburnt portion of bones and ashes are immersed in the river. The period of pollution is observed for 13 days, when purificatory rites are observed. The major economic resources of the community have been and are land and agriculture. The land is jointly held by the family, in order to avoid fragmentation. Presently the Swanglas instead of devoting more land to the production of cereal crops, devoteed it to the production of cash crops like potato and hops.

The cereal crop produce is barely sufficient for self-consumption. The cash crops potato and hops which are widely grown, do find a market outside the valley through local cooperative society on partly deferred payment. For the maintenance of social norms in the community, the Swanglas have a traditional council of their own headed by a Sehna (chief), and assisted by four other elected members by a voice vote. The community professes Hinduism though some of them also have converted to Buddhism. Those professing the Buddhist faith belong to the Gelugpa sect. Those professing Hinduism propitiate their dead ancestors as their family deities, and their blessings are invoked on all family festivals for the well-being of the members.

The major sacred centre of the Swangla is Manimahesh in Bharmaur tehsil of Chamba district. The major fair is the Triloknath fair celebrated by them in the month of August-September.  

Among the various development plan they avail themselves facilities of free education, books and stationery, scholarship and uniform. Today there is no family in the valley which does not send their children to school.

\[11\] Ibid.
There is one primary school in every village. Their attitude towards allopathic medicine and health care is favourable. In the event of illness, ayurvedic medicines are tried after allopathic medicines. Drinking water through natural streams is available. In winters, when the streams are frozen, ice is melted to make water. With reservation policy of the Government many have got jobs through the reserves quota. Roads do not exist in most of the villages. Post office facilities are also available at some distance. Firewood and kerosene are the usual fuel sources. Generally people use only organic manure for crops, but for potato they use a hybrid variety of seeds and chemical fertilizers. The mid-day meal scheme for schools going children is availed of, wherein nutritional food is made available to children in the 0-5 age groups and nursing and expectant mothers under the Integrated Child Development Scheme. The facility for food and ration is available at Government depots, where it is provided at subsidized rates.

**Ranas and Thakurs-The Local Rulers of Lahaul**

Ranas and Thakurs in Lahaul valley were in essence, the practical rulers of the various sections of the valley. However, but for a few occasions, they were not totally independent rulers; instead they were the representative or the regents of the Rajas of either Kullu, Chamba or Ladakh. At times they were the subject to one while paying tribute to the others. Since it has been difficult to establish the exact dates for each of these Ranas. Hence they are individually listed here without attempting to place them exactly. Except for a handful of them, none of the other families maintained any family history at all. Only the folklores and word-of-mouth passed from generation to generation are the sources of this collection.
The Ranas of Triloknath

The Rana of Triloknath seem to be the most prominent among all the Ranas or Thakurs of Lahaul. Even though at present they are known as Thakurs, in early written documents they appear as Ranas. This family has existence in Lahaul since time immemorial, yet the present generation does not know much about their own background. They believe that their ancestors came from Jammu. The District Gazetteer claims that they settled in a place called Tundeh in Bhamour and later crossed the Pangi range and came to Triloknath before the idol of Triloknath was set up at that location. However, from the folklore it seems that Tundeh was the original name for Triloknath itself, which was changed after the establishment of the temple.

These Ranas ruled over most of the Chamba-Lahaul. They were independent at some times while, being under the Rajas of Chamba at others. They were never directly controlled by Kullu or Ladakh, although they had several encounters with them. A mention of their independence also appears in the history of Kashmir when they helped Bhikshachar regain the throne of Kashmir in around 1112 A.D.

The Ranas of Margraon and Salgraon

The Ranas of these places are also known as Thakurs today. The Ranas of Margraon are related to the Ranas of Triloknath through marriages. Whether they actually ruled the people or not is hard to say. If they did it would only have meant sharing part of the territory of Ranas of Triloknath. Nevertheless these Ranas possessed fairly big land holdings. It is said that they owned the biggest single piece of flat land- called Seri- in the whole valley of Lahaul. It used to be ploughed by six pairs of bullocks at the same time. Despite their being illiterate and underdeveloped, one could see a royal tinge on their faces, particularly by the moustaches of these Thakurs.
The way they talked bore witness to their having belonged to the ruling class. Not much is known about the Thakurs of Salgraon. They are supposed to be the cousins of Ranas of Triloknath and perhaps acted directly under the Rajas of Chamba.

The Thakurs of Barbog

The Thakurs of Barbog were originally called Jo. These Thakurs acted as the chiefs of the Gahar valley, mostly under the Kullu Rajas. This may have been the arrangement when the Gahar valley was under Kullu, while the Tod valley was either independent or was under Ladakh. As a result the Gahar valley could not be ruled by the Kolong or Gumrang Thakurs. The Barbog Thakurs might have acted as chiefs under the rulers of Ladakh as well, when Ladakh took over this area. The term Jo is of Ladakhi or Tibetan language, while they were called Thakurs by the Kullu Rajas. Even while under Kullu, They had an inclination towards Ladakh, mainly due to religion. This ultimately became the cause of their ouster from power. Bilchung was the last Thakur of Barbog. He was a Buddhist, while the Kullu Rajas were against Buddhism. This made Bilchung turn his back on Kullu, at which the Kullu Rajas stripped him of his powers. Barbog genealogy dates back to Tsering Angrup, who was a contemporary of Raja Bhadur Singh of Kullu in the 16th century.

The Ranas of Kardang

Although there is no written document available, a ruling family is believed to have existed at Kardang. It is also that at one time kardang was the biggest village in Lahaul. This must have been a long time ago when all the other village were much smaller. Evidently, Kardang has not grown very much since then. Alexander Cunningham, who passed through Lahaul in the 1860s, also pointed out that Kardang was the largest village. It is not
known today which of the present families belonged to historical Ranas, or if they vanished altogether.

The rule of these Ranas must have been very tyrannical. Even today in one ceremony called Halda, the people of Keylong yell war cries and curses at the Kardang Ranas, saying, “Kardangpe Rana-e shosha haisha”. Haisha is a gesture for biting, and shosha means heart. Thus they yell towards Kardang saying that they would bite the heart of Kardang Ranas. Since Rana was a title mostly used in Chamba, while Thakur was used in Kullu and Jo in Ladakh, it is assumed that the Kardang Rana represented the Rajas of Chamba when Gahar valley came under them. Perhaps most of Gahar valley- especially the villages of Keylong and Beeling- resented this, and as a result they started this tradition of crying curses at the Ranas of Kardang and Gushal.

**The Ranas of Gushal**

The Rana family still exists in Gushal village. In most earlier books by Moorcroft, Cunningham, Harcourt, and others, Gushal has been called Gus. Obviously they must have picked up this word from Gahar or Tod valleys. The Gushal Rana was the representative of the Rajas of Chamba. There are a very few traces of Buddhism in the left bank of Chenab, from which we can infer that there was little influence of Ladakh or Guge in the left bank. It seems that they had never been controlled by Ladakh. Whatever little influence there is, it might be due to marriages and some late settlers. Besides the lack of Buddhist influence on the left bank, other evidence for concluding that this area was not under Ladakh is the river Chenab itself. This is a big river- swift and cold- quite impossible to cross without a bridge. Building a bridge to span a couple of hundred feet is not easy. Even until recently only a couple of suspension bridges, locally called tcham,
made of manila twigs existed. Crossing these bridges was a test of one’s courage. Most people would not dare take even a step on it because of its swinging motion. Geographically and culturally also, it seems that Gushal might have been the extreme end of Chamba territory for most of its history. During times when the rest of the Pattan valley on the right bank was tossed around among Ladakh, Kullu or Chamba, the left bank might have remained under Chamba consistently. Later when Kullu took over this part, they confiscated the Gushal Rana’s copper plate, which was given to them by the Rajas of Chamba. These Ranas were related by marriage to Chamba.

There are a few folklore and stories about these Ranas. In one story it is said that a festival called Yor was celebrated in Gushal. In the festival, they had a musical instrument called Pown, but nobody knew how to play it. The instrument is like a two-sided drum, but it was not supposed to be played like a drum. The celebration was incomplete without playing this instrument, causing the Rana’s head to split in seven pieces. When all efforts to play it failed, a beautiful pigeon appeared on the roof and started singing and flapping its wings rhythmically. People watched it carefully and by copying the tune found a way to create similar sound on the pown. Slowly the Rana’s head healed. Since that time, Yor was celebrated all over Lahaul until it lapsed sometimes in the 1940s. In this celebration they used masks, called mohras, to cover their faces like Halloween masks.

The Ranas of Lote

Hutchison and Vogel as well as Harcourt mentioned that Ranas existed in Lote. It seems that they must have existed a long time ago, since no one today knows anything about Lote Ranas except for traces in stories and hearsay. A trace of a fort existed in Lote or Lope, as it is called locally. It is said that there were two forts, one on each side of Lote Nallah. They were connected with iron chains, such that one could open or close the doors of these forts from either side. One side of the nallah where one of the forts was supposed to have been, has the name Charu-bog, the fort-hillock.

There is no documentary evidence as to which of the present families living in this village descended from the Ranas. One possibility is that the ancestors of the Bhutungru family might have been the Ranas. The reason for this conjecture is that in earlier times these families are said to have resided in Bhanlope, which means the upper Lote, where the fort existed. Later they moved down where the present village is located, perhaps to escape the floods or even the avalanches as this location is prone for it. It is also believed that the Ruringba family, residing in a village on the other side of Lote nallah, acted as the priests to these Ranas. Both the Bhutungru and the Ruringba families hold a considerable amount of land.

It is presumed that if this conjecture is true then these Ranas must have been under Chamba, because of the title Rana. Also when Chamba lost this area to Kullu in the 18th century for the final time, it might have resulted in their loss of title and power, and after a few generations it was forgotten altogether. If the first conjecture is not correct then another possibility is the family named Shasni living in this village. The word Shasan in Hindi or Sanskrit means rule. The Kullu Rajas traditionally awarded this title to those who had performed some extraordinary deed for them. One such
award, mentioned earlier, was given to a man named Rampati of Chamba for arranging the marriage of three Kullu princesses to Partap Singh, the heir of Chamba throne. This award was in the form of big land holdings. It is said that one of the ancestors of Shasni families was also given this award. It is possible that because of this title there was confusion about the existence of Ranas in Lote. 14

**Chambak Wazir**

There is not a single reference to the Wazir of Chambak in any available document; nor is anything heard of their having ruled any area at all, yet someone must have given them this title as they are still addressed by it. There is a story of these Wazirs having fights with the Rajas of Kullu. One of the Kullu Rajas once visited Lahaul. He met two brothers of the Chambak Wazir family at a place called Kwang. The Raja told them that he had heard a lot about their brave deeds and expressed his desire to witness some. There was a yak grazing in a field across the river. Pointing at the yak, the Raja told them that if they could shoot that yak with the very first arrow, he would be convinced and they would be rewarded. If, however, they could not do so, then they would be punished. Accepting the challenge, one of the brothers picked up his bow and arrow, shot and killed the yak right there. The Raja was dumb founded and at the same time worried. So he came up with a scheme. He asked them to join him for dinner that night, where they would receive their reward. At the party, they were only two among a room full of Raja’s own people. Instead of

14 Ibid.
rewarding them, they tried to kill them there. One of them tore apart the roof of the house and escaped, while the other one was killed.\textsuperscript{15}

**The Thakurs of Kolong (or Gyamur) and Gurmang**

The Thakurs of Kolong ruled some parts of Lahaul for a long time. If our conjecture that this Gyamur Orr is none other than Gaymur in the Tod valley of Lahaul is correct, then the existence of the ruling chiefs there goes further back than written history. This conjecture is supported by the fact that part of the ruling Thakur family still resides in Gyamur, while the other part resides at Kolong. The names of these earlier chiefs are not available anywhere. One name, Boldor, of the Kolong chiefs was discovered by Mr. Howel in an inscription on an old stone. Another name, Tsepar Namgyal, a contemporary of Raja Parbat Singh of Kullu-some time around 1575 A. D. appears. These names do not appear in the family tree that later Thakurs compiled. Out of that family tree the earliest name that appears in the Kullu history is that of Nono Chhogan, who was a contemporary of Raja Budhi Singh around 1700 A. D.

Dr. A. H. Francke of Tibetan Archaeology, who was also associated with the Moravian mission in Lahaul, collected and compiled the chronicles of these Thakurs. In his book Antiquities of Western Tibet, he wrote that the asked Thakur Amar Chand of Kolong to show his family chronicles. Amar Chand gave the chronicle to Francke and told him that his father Hari Chand had compiled it from old documents and further updated it. This document was in Urdu, a copy of which still exists in Lahaul. Not satisfied with this, Francke again in 1906 tried to obtain the original document, nonetheless, he found that the original document was simply a pedigree in

Tibetan. Francke’s opinion was that this document also was compiled not earlier than 1680, and therefore doubted its accuracy.16

The chronicle claimed that the family came from Bhangal, which was a part of Kullu kingdom at that time. According to the chronicle: “... there existed two independent ruling families of Pals and Raos, controlling various mountain districts. About 800 years before the chronicle was written one of the Pals had became very powerful, defeating the remaining rulers of Pals and Roas (Ranas). At that time one man, Rana Nil Chand-alias Thakur Chandla Surat of Surya Vansi, Kashatriya caste-who was the ruler of Kolong in Bhangal escaped to Lahaul, where he used to go for hunting. He came to Ajay Pal Totiya, who was an independent ruler in one area of Lahaul. This Totiya Thakur had a daughter but no son; therefore he took Nil Chand as his son – in –law. After Totiya’s death Nil Chand became the ruler of the Totiya’s territory. He called his territory Kolong, in memory of his former home Kolong in Bhangal. This territory was reported to extend from Lingti in the east to Jagilwari in the west, about 60 miles in length with frontier at Kothi Thari, and about 20 or 30 miles from north to south. Then it went on to list nine successors of Nil Chand from Surat Chand to Dyal Chand. They were all independent rulers. During the time of Fateh Chand, the successor of Dyal Chand, the Raja of Tibet took possession of Lahaul, which continued for about one hundred years down to the rule of karam Chand. During this time lamas and gurus were introduced in this country; that is why the names of ancestors since karam Chand appear to be Tibetan. Later during the reign of Man Singh in Kullu, Lahaul came under Kullu. The chronicle further mentions that although it was the family custom that the eldest brother should become the ruler. Since Nono Chhogan and Singe were equally powerful the territory was

divided between the two. They were both Jagirdars under Raja Man Singh. Singe took possession of Gumrang and Nono Chhogan took Kolong. From thereon the two branches of the family appear in the tree.

**The Thakurs of Gondhla**

The Thakurs of Gondhla were the regents for the Rajas of Kullu during most of their known history, ruling the Gondhla valley. They might have represented Ladakh also at those times when it dominated them. Dr. Francke notes that this is the first time the word Rana appended to a Tibetan name was found by Miss Duncan in the Teenan (Gondhla) chronicles. The chronicle says that the family was established by Rana Pala from Guge. Hutchison points out that the word Pala is just the Tibetan word Dpal, where the letter ‘D’ is silent. Here again it may be suspected that the source of the title Rana might have been Chamba during a period when this area came under its control. Dr. Francke tried to obtain the Teenan chronicle, but did not succeed. So in 1908 he sent Miss Duncan, who was also attached to Tibetan Archaeology, to obtain it. She somehow succeeded in convincing Hira Chand Thakur to let her borrow it. This chronicle was in Tibetan, so miss Duncan had to get it copied and translated. Thakur Mangal Chand translated a major portion of it, but left out a portion which listed the name of guest who attended the death ceremony of chief Hariya, thinking that it was not important. Francke, however, was not satisfied. He wanted each and every word of the chronicle. Since Miss Duncan had died in 1909, he asked his Hatsache, who was in charge of the Moravian mission at keylong, to send his munshi (clerk helper) Zodpa to procure it again. To the utter frustration of Francke, Zodpa stopped his translation even earlier than Mangal Chand had.

17 Ibid.
The chronicle entitled ‘Golden Mirror’ begins with a mantra, “Aum-mo-Aum swati sidham”. It then pays homage to Buddha and his teachings, to the holy religion which purifies from attachment, to Amitabh revealed as Dharma Kaya, to Avalokiteshvara who as Sambhog Kaya serves the good of the world to Padmasambhava who as the Nirman kaya subdues the eight demons. The homage continues on to includes Sron-batsman-zangpo, an incarnation of Khromner, and to the goddess Kongo, and to the goddess Kongo, and to the goddess Kongo, and to the goddess Kongo, and to the goddess Kongo, and to the goddess Kongo, and to the goddess Kongo, and to the goddess Kongo, and to the goddess Kongo.

It next states that among all the countries the most eminent country is Burgyal-bod (perhaps Tibet). The holy religion spread particularly in this snowy region, while the extremely lofty palace of the capital Magarsa (Kullu) was held by the great religions king Bhadur Sigh. In this castle Nal-rtse (of the Gondhla Thakur) the most eminent in the country, there lived a family of undefiled origin called Hod-gsal, which was descended from the gods. It originated at Lcagsmkhar in Gunde (Guge?). The chronicle next lists the names of the members of this family starting with Rana Pala. This chronicle was composed at the time a Chhorten was being built in the memory of chief Hariya after his death. At the end of the chronicle it adds that the chief of Teenan (Gondhla) said that Gunde is situated in Bir Bhangal and his ancestors came from there. Perhaps the name Gondhla was derived from the word Gunde at some later stage, but it is difficult to say if Gunde was really Guge. Dr. Francke did not believe this last assertion. He felt that the origin was Tibetan and the word Gunde was Guge. In his opinion both Kolong and Teenan Thakurs altered it simply to become closer to the Kullu kings by calling themselves Rajputs.18

18 Ibid.
A castle still exists in Gondhla, about eleven storeys high, built with small stones of uniform thickness of about two to four inches. Until sometime in the 1960s the living quarters of the Thakurs were attached to this castle. At present the Thakurs have built a new house and the living quarters attached to the castle were demolished. This castle was built when Raja Man Singh, who later married the daughter of Gondhla Thakur, ruled Kullu. It is said that the hands of the mason, who built this castle, were chopped off so that he could not build other like it. The Gazetter of Lahaul and Spiti attributes the building of this castle to Senge Namgyal of Gumrang. The Gondhla Thakurs also possess a considerable amount of land as their jagir. After the independence of India, Thakur Nirmal Chand, the younger brother, was made Daroga (excise inspector) for this area. The elder brother Fateh Chand also served as a member of Punjab Tribes Advisory Council. One branch of the Gondhla Thakurs settled in a nearby village called Khangsar. While they have never been rulers, nonetheless, they possessed a large land holdings. Rup Singh, a member of this family used to run a mule train for transportation, when there were no roads for vehicles in Lahaul. Justice William Douglas of U. S. High Court used his mules and horses when he visited Lahaul, Ladakh, and surrounding area in 1953. In his book Beyond the High Himalayas he called Rup Singh a man of strangely independent mood, who would not care for anybody.

Jahlma Thakurs

There are a couple of families of Thakurs in the village of Jahlma also, but there is no evidence that these Thakurs had any ruling power or held jagir etc. These Thakurs are presumed to be the cousins of the Gondhla Thakurs. Two members of these Thakurs-Shiv Chand, and Angrup each from a different house-hold at present-remained in the Punjab Tribes Advisory Council for Lahaul Spiti during the 1950s and 1960s.
Thakurs of Shashan

The village of Shashan or Sisu also has a Thakur family. Though there is no documentary evidence, yet it seems that these Thakurs led the people in this area. They might have ruled over these people under the name of a deity, Raja Ghepan, in earlier days. The reason for this supposition is that this deity is called the Raja, and is worshipped all over Lahaul even today, while there is no evidence of these Thakurs being the rulers. Also there was a tradition of having the deity, rather than a man, as the ruling authority, while the head man only served on behalf of the deity.

The Ranas of Linger

This might sound very funny to the valley’s present residents to say that Ranas existed in the village of Linger. This is a very small village, with only five or six families, on the left bank of the river Chenab, completely isolated from the rest of the villages. The nearest crossing for these people is either Gushal bridge about ten kilometers away, or the Jobrang jhoola, which has recently been converted to a suspension bridge, about six kilometers away. Both these bridges are connected with a path not wider than a foot on either side of the village. Yet there are stories about the Linger Ranas. These Ranas worshipped a deity named Jatadhar. They fought several battles with the Ranas of Gushal, but they never lost due to the powers of this deity. The Ranas of Guhshal were surprised about their defeat every time, since they were much stronger. Finally one day they came to know the secret. Before the next battle, the Gushal Rana went to the temple of Jatadhar and put a ring on her nose. This time the Linger Rana lost the battle. Exasperated, he went to the temple and he found the ring on the nose of his deity. Upset and angry, he hit the image with his
sword and cut a big chunk out of it. From that day on, the people of Linger no longer worshipped that deity.

**Origins and Transmigration**

Basically there had been three types of settlers. First those who invaded this area, conquered it and then settled here. Next those who escaped to Lahaul when their native areas were attacked. Finally those who came for business purpose or just for a visit and later settled here. This is not to say that every one in his valley came from outside, which is normally presupposed by the historians. There were probably living in this area from the time immemorial, before any history was recorded, and we shall start this section with those people.

**The people of Chamba-Lahaul**

The people of Chamba-Lahaul, that is around Triloknath, seem to be either the original inhabitants or the earliest settlers in this valley. We can go as far back as 300 B. C. in known history, the time when Alexander the great came out of Greece with the idea of conquering the world. After victories over some European and Middle Eastern countries, he proceeded towards India, were right on the northwestern frontier he faced a tough opposition from Porus or Puru. Even though Alexander won this battle, his army lost all hope of further conquest and turned back. It is possible that some of his people never returned and stayed here. The reason for such a conjecture is as follows. In the District Gazetteer of Chamba, it is written ,“In Bhardwan, Chura, Pang, Kullu and western Kumaon an ethnic strain related to eastern
Iran and Pamir Hindukush region (Galchas, Wakhis, Kafirs) can be recognized.”

Thakur Rup Chand, who travelled extensively in Afghanistan, Persia, Pamir and the Hindukush areas, also found many similarities. He is of the opinion that the Lahars (blacksmiths) of Lahaul must have come from Chatral. Apart from their physical resemblance, they are called Domb in that area, while in Gahar valley of Lahaul, they are called Domba, and in Gondhla valley they are called Dompha. Often historians trace the history of people from one place to another. I do not know if we can say the same thing about the people of Chamba-Lahaul, but under the light of the above resemblances, we might be inclined to conclude that these people are of the same ethnic background as the people of the Pamir and Hindukush regions. So far Lahaul is concerned, this basically covers the people of Chamba-Lahaul. At some later stage, however, some of them spread towards the Pattan valley, the other part of Lahaul. This, we shall further discuss along with other people of Pattan valley.

The People of Tod Valley

Another group whose history may reach far back in time are the people of Tod valley. There is no doubt that the origin of a majority of people of Tod valley is Tibetan. Besides their features and general looks, the language is more than 90 percent Tibetan, perhaps closer to the one spoken in the southern part of Tibet. There may be some influence from other dialects of Lahaul and also of other languages of India, mainly Hindi and Urdu, but this is insignificant. In the later part of its history, this area had usually been directly or indirectly dominated by Ladakh or Guge, off and on. Therefore there may not have been any particular periods when settlers

migrated in large groups. Instead there might have been slow trickles of migration. William Moorcroft has written that the fort at Kolong (the headquarter of Tod valley) was necessary to encounter and protect from the infiltrators. He also adds that later friendly relations or at least trade with Ladakh and Tibet was established, which might have given more freedom for migration. Even now the Thakurs of this valley have marriage relationship with the Raja of Ladakh. The people of Tod valley seem to have maintained their identity even though annexed to Kullu Kingdom or may be even to Chamba. The only influence on this area was the trend of changing the names from Tibetan Buddhist names to Indian Hindu names, and also a trend of joining the Indian army during British rule.

The People of Ranglo

Though not quite early settlers, the people of Ranglo are the included in this sequence mainly because of their origin. A majority of the people of this area also are of Tibetan origin, although perhaps from a different area than their counterparts in Tod valley. These people seem to be from Kham district in Tibet, from where many tradesmen came to conduct business between India and Tibet. These people did not maintain their identity quite intact. This might indicate that they did not migrate en mass, instead they came individually as a businessman or as a servant of some tradesmen, and intermixed with people already settled there. This area also experienced much influence from Gondhla valley as well as from Kullu valley resulting in a mixture of culture and dialect.

The people of Gahar Valley

The origin of most people of Gahar Valley seems to be Baltistani. The original people of Baltistan were Buddhists. During the 14th century Moslems extended their influence over Kashmir. Later in 1405 King
Sikander of Kashmir attacked Baltistan, and forced there people to embrace Islam. Some accepted it while other could not. Those who refused found the pressure intolerable and left Baltistan.

Most of those who left seems to have come to Lahaul and settled in Gahar valley, while others seem to have gone to the Sugnam Valley in Spiti. During that period a major part of Lahaul—particularly Gahar and Tod Valleys—was under Ladakh kings, who were themselves Buddhist; as such they might have allowed these people to settle here without causing them any problem. This might have been the obligation that cause the Barbog Thakur to remain faithful to Ladakh to the extent of losing his powers when this area came under Kullu. These people must have migrated en masse, for they have mentioned the identity fairly intact. The gristone vessels from Baltistan were quite common in Lahaul in earlier days; a sample of which can still be found in some houses. From the point of view of language, the dialects of Gahar valley bears great resemblance to that of Sugnam valley. If we remove the influence of Urdu and other aspects of Moslem culture from the Balti dialect, we can find enough resemblance with it also. There are some blacksmiths and goldsmiths in this valley. It is difficult to say that whether they also came from the same place along with others or if they came from different places.

**The people of Gondhla valley**

The groups described earlier have been of more or less unique origin and background, inspite of their mixing with other group at later stages. This is not the case with the people of Gondhla and Pattan valleys. In these areas there has been much intermixing of different races and bloods. The people of Gondhla valley seems to be the mixture of the people from Malana (a tiny ravine in the Kullu valley at the back of Naggar), Busher, Zanskar and
perhaps some from Ladakh as well. The following are the reasons for reaching to this conclusion.

**Dieties**

The chief deity of Gondhla valley is Ghepan, also called Raja Ghepan. The use of term “Raja” with the deities seems to indicate the acceptance of this deity as their ruler, rather than any human being. The chief deity of Malana is Zamlu, who is regarded as the elder brother of Ghepan. Every third year Ghepan is taken to Malana to visit and pay his respect to Zamlu. This clearly indicate the relationship between the people of Malana and Lahaul, especially the people of Ghondla valley. Now a question could be raised whether the people of Lahaul came from Malana or the people of Malana came from Lahaul. Here we can appeal to local tradition. Traditionally, the eldest brother maintains the family home and the younger ones leave for job or go into business. Also younger brothers go to pay respect to the elders, not the other way around. Calling Ghepan the younger brother who goes to pay his respects to Zamlu might be an indication that some people from Malana left to settle in Lahaul, particularly in Gondhla valley. Besides Ghepan, there are other deities in the Gondhla valley. There is a story that five other deities came along with Ghepan. Milang Tete settled at Gondhla village, Lung-khorbar at Khale, Tangjar at Piyukar, Gyungrang at Sakar, and Lhorang (which means blacksmith) settled at Rhaling. Ghepan, considered to be their leader, settled is Shashan or Sissu, as did the Thakur of Shashan. This must mean that this Thakur was the leader of these settlers. It is said that every third year these deities get together and a great celebration called ‘Kaisander’ takes place.

The language of Gondhla valley seems to be a mixtures of the languages spoken in Malana, Busher, Chamba-Lahaul, along with some Tibetan and
Zanskari. The Language can be one of the best sources for discovering people’s origin, if it has been properly maintained. Unfortunately this generally does not happen, especially if they did not migrate in large groups. Since the dialect of Gondhla valley is a mixture of several different dialects, we may conclude that the people of this valley did not migrate in a large group from a particular area, instead they migrated from several different places in small groups or individually at various times. When people migrate to establish new settlements, and have the opportunity to name them, they often repeat the name of the homes they left. America is full of such examples. In Lahaul also, the Thakurs of Kolong and Gondhla claimed to have done this. In the same manner there is a village called Phugtal in Gondhla valley, while the capital of Zanskar was Phugtal. Therefore some people of this village, if not all, must have come from Zanskar. This was later confirmed by Chaman Lal Phugtal who recalled hearing that his ancestors came from Zanskar.

The People of Pattan Valley

The Pattan valley of Lahaul has the maximum mixture of people. One of the major reasons is that this area has been most vulnerable and it has been tossed around among different kingdoms at different times, each leaving its own mark and its own group of settlers.

The Name Pattan

Pattan is not very old name and does not appear in too many documents. In 1841 a Jammu force of ten thousand men, under the leadership of Zoravar Singh attacked Tibet, but only about one thousand returned to Leh. Later, others who were taken prisoner by Tibetans, were also released. It is conceivable that some of these prisoners came to Lahaul from Tibet rather than going to Ladakh and then to Jammu. In this case they might have
called this area Pattan, after their own Pattan in Jammu. Moorcroft and Trebeck travelled through Lahaul in 1819-20. They never mentioned the word Pattan in their writings, while Harcourt travelling in the 1850s, used it a few times. This may tend to support the above conjecture.

Pattan in Urdu, however, means a flat land. The Pattan valley in Lahaul is slightly flater than rest of the valleys. It is also possible that it was called Pattan just because of that.

**Division by Caste**

The caste system in the Pattan valley certainly sheds some light on different groups of people with different backgrounds. One might try to discard this factor simply by saying that this is a typical Hindu caste system, yet if one analyses it a little deeper, one will find interesting background history behind it. There are three groups of people by caste – the Brahmin, the Kashatriyaor Bodh, and Harijans or chinal.

**The Brahmins**

The Brahmins of Pattan valley share the same origins as those of Chamba-Lahaul. They can be found only as far as Tholong village, and live mostly away from the main road. This may indicate that either these people were driven out of the main valley, or that they settled at a much later stage when this area again came under Chamba. The second conjecture is more likely since this area had been tossed around so many times. They might have spread from the Chamba-Lahaul area slowly at a very late stage when the main roadside area was already occupied. On the other hand, the Brahmin caste in Lahaul is called Swangla, and the valley of Lahoul itself is called Swangla in the local dialect. This might indicate that the Brahmins had already settled in this valley before the other settlers came, and the new
comers then gave the same name to the people as well as the valley of Lahaul.

The Brahmins consider themselves superior, called all others untouchable and refused to eat from their hands. Later some inter-married with others to produce a new class called Garu. The Garus did not consider Kashatriyas or Bodhs as untouchable. Thus with the exception of these Garus, others kept their caste identities intact.

**The Harijans**

The Harijans or Chinals, who were considered the servant class, can be divided mainly into two groups. The Chana or Chinal had a direct master-servant relationship with the upper class groups. The second group consisted of artisans-blacksmiths, goldsmiths, carpenters-who were not attached to a single master but rather performed their trades for everyone. The Chinals were not direct slaves or household servants. They performed certain menial jobs such as hauling away the dead animals, playing musical instruments at funerals, delivering messages of death to relatives, and so forth, for their specific masters. While they were not paid directly for doing these jobs, they did share in every festival or marriage or funeral or any other occasion, irrespective of whether their services were used or not.

This one-to-one relationship might indicate that some of the Chinals accompanied other settlers, especially the Ranas and Thakurs. However, their dialect, their facial looks, and some of their customs indicate their origin to be in Chura, Pangi, or other parts of Chamba; while some might have come from Kullu as well. The Harijans have their own story. They say that in the beginning a Brahmin and a Harijan were two brothers. When one of them started eating beef, the other brother called him dagee and branded him untouchable. Often this story is taken as a joke. Nonetheless,
the significance of this story might hold an insight into the ancient Hindu caste system of Manu. The story must mean that both the Brahmins and Harijans are Hindus and equal. When Manu devised the caste system, it was not meant to create untouchability, rather it was strictly a division of labour. He felt that it is far easier for a teacher’s son to become a teacher and a cobbler’s son to become a cobbler than for them to take up other professions. Later, people created untouchability, ignoring the very idea behind this division. The blacksmiths job was to make or repair tools. Since they were very few in number, they divided the masters among them-selves and were paid in kind at every occasion regardless of services rendered. Goldsmiths and silversmiths, unlike the others, were paid directly only for the work done. It was suggested that some of these blacksmiths might have come from Chatral and other northwestern frontiers. There is no other definite indication of their origin.20

The Kashatriyas or Bodhs

While this group considers itself to be Kashatriyas or Rajputs in the Hindu caste system, yet locally they are known as Bodh. The significance of the term Bodh seems to indicate their adherence to Buddhism, and in some cases their origin in Ladakh or Zanskar or western Tibet. This group seems to contain the greatest amalgamation of peoples of different origins such as Malana, Busher, Bir Bhangal, Kullu, Chamba and Bharmour, besides Ladakh and Zanskar. One of the reasons for this conclusion is the dialect, which is a mixture of the dialects of Chamba-Lahoul, Malana, Busher, Balti, Tibetan, and a little of Hindi and Urdu. It seems that the dialect of Chamba-Lahoul had been the base on which all other dialects have been superimposed. Writing in 1860s, Harcourt noted, “... within the last sixty or seventy years there had been a considerable immigration into

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Lahoul from Bara Bhangal, Chamba, Zanskar, and other parts of Ladakh.”

Certain families also remember being told that their ancestors came from Zanskar or Ladakh, although under today’s changed conditions they themselves do not believe it. The method of tracing the family roots is termed rhus—literally, the bones. It seems strange to equate the bones with roots rather than the blood. There is another term bhagyar, which also means family roots or blood relationship. It is considered important to know one’s bhagyar, as one is not supposed to marry within one’s own bhagyras. The influence of Buddhism in this area indicates that some people from Ladakh and Zanskar must have settled in this area probably during the 11th and 12th centuries when Lhachen Utpala invaded and controlled most of this area; and later during the 16th and 17th centuries when Senge Namgyal attacked and recaptured this area. As far as migration from Malana is concerned, it seems that most people settled in Gondhia valley while others might have moved to Pattan valley also. The reason for this conclusion is the commonality of the words between the dialects of Malana and Pattan valley. Also the deity Ghepan is honored in Pattan valley as much as it is in Gondhia valley. Another indication is that in earlier times, the people of Lahaul used to go to Malana to buy milk cows. It was believed that Kullu cows do not survive in Lahaul, while Malana cows were more suitable. Regarding migration from Busher, Harcourt wrote that the 1868 census reported 277 Buraras, or weavers from Busher. Evidently some of them must have settled there, while others came from Busher during the summer for temporary jobs in weaving until 1940s or 50s.

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In the villages of Gushal, Mooling and Bargul there are some families known as Gaddis. The Gaddis are generally the shepherds of Bharmour, some of whom still come to graze their sheep in Lahaul during the summer. It seems very likely that some of them might have settled permanently in Lahoul, and are still called Gaddis. Some of these families possessed large herds of sheep which they took to Sirmour and other places to graze during the winter. The Ranas of Gushal were related by marriage with Chamba, which might also indicate their having come from Chamba.

**Social Customs And Beliefs**

The family structure is usually dictated by the culture and traditions of a country or an area, although in some cases economics becomes the driving force in building those traditions. The family system in Lahaul has been more or less dictated by the circumstances and the economic conditions. Basically the joint family system-like the one prevalent in most Asian countries is in practice. In this system, living under one roof may not be the necessary criterion, instead common wealth is the foundation of a joint family. For example, there may be four brothers in a family. Out of these four only one may be living in the ancestral home, taking care of the ancestral property, while the others may be in some service or job or attending to some business away from home. Yet the parental home will always remain the nucleus for all of them. Farming is the main source of livelihood in this valley. As such some members of the family must stay at home, which often, though not necessarily, turns out to be the eldest brother. Now the question arises how this joint family system is maintained when everybody is living apart. Here the idea of a joint family system must be the common wealth rather than a common roof. The joint family structure is maintained when the ancestral property, which belongs to all the brothers equally, even though they live apart, is yet maintained intact.
without dividing and selling the shares. Besides the parental property whatever new property is acquired, even though it might have been acquired by only one or two members, is kept as a common property in name of all. Also whatever can be saved by any one of them after normal expenditures is pooled at one place, generally the parental home. No one claims anything as his own, instead when everything becomes "ours" rather than "mine", then the spirit of the joint family system is maintained healthily. This is not easy. It needs a tremendous amount of sacrifice and selfless feeling, since no two people are, the same or equal. As soon as selfishness creeps in, the whole structure collapses. Running a family system is like running a government. Every country needs a government and a head of the government to run it, no matter what system it is. As long as the head of the government is capable, strong and selfless, the country progresses and runs smoothly. Any time the head of government is weak, corrupt and selfish, the government collapses and the whole country is in shambles. Exactly in the same manner, maintaining a healthy joint family primarily depends on the head of the family. As long as he is selfless and strong enough to keep everything in order, the family runs well. As soon as he becomes selfish and starts treating his own children differently from the rest of the family, the division of family becomes inevitable and the joint structure crumbles.

Common understanding is another factor on which the joint family structure depends. This common understanding may also create exception to the rule of the eldest brother staying at home and acting as head of the family. This may be due to a greater interest in pursuing a profession, or he simply may not be capable of handling the burden such cases one of the younger brothers, the one most suited, will stay home and act as the head of the family. If any of the younger brother:
the father’s generation is still alive and young enough to hold the responsibility, he may automatically be chosen to run the family. The question might arise why the joint family system is necessary, especially if it is so hard to maintain. Every system has its own advantages and disadvantages. Yet under the circumstances the advantages overwhelm the disadvantages of the joint family system. There is a saying, “Ek mard khare kya, ek lakri jale kya?” This means, “How can a single man stand alone (in this hostile world) and how can a single log burn (in the fireplace)?”

Being alone in this hostile world makes it difficult not only financially, but also psychologically. When one cannot find anyone to depend upon or trust, one can become miserable and feel overpowered by helplessness. The feeling of incapability and fear can keep one from achieving many things which otherwise could have been done in a routine manner with a slight help or simple encouragement from another. Besides this the joint family system is of utmost importance when real property such as land is involved. Let us take an example. If a man owns sixty-four acres of land (which is close to the upper limit in India), he can make a fairly good living. If he has four sons and they divided the land, each would end up with sixteen acres. If this goes on for two more generations, each one in the fourth generation would end up with one acre, from which it is impossible to make a living. Yet if they wanted to hold on to it, it would need their full-time effort. Even if each of them had just two sons, it would take only two more generations to reach to the same situation. However, if the joint family system is maintained, only one or two need to take care of the land while others could pursue business or professional careers and thus the whole family is much better off. Divided they could not afford to build even a hut for each, but living together and pooling all their income they
could afford to build one decent house for everybody. This result can easily be seen all over Lahoul.

This was the financial aspect of it. Now let us consider other facets of this system. On the side of education, it costs a lot of money to send a child to college these days. In the case of a disjointed family system where everyone is on his own, a poor man cannot afford to send his children to college or even to school in some cases, and there is no one else he can turn to for help. Or suppose he could afford to send one child to college, but not all. Then a further disparity among the children would arise which would be difficult for a parent to bear. On the other hand in the joint family system if the father of a child cannot afford to send him to college or if he has died, the child's uncles, brothers or other family members would support his education. It would be an investment, for they know that whatever the child becomes, he would become a part of the family's resources and in turn their own. In the case of a disjointed family even the brothers do not help each other, because they know that as soon as they are grown up, and get married, each will be on his own and will not benefit from the others' education or wealth. This is the difference between the two adjacent valleys of Lahoul and Kullu. In Kullu the joint family system is not in vogue, which is one of the major reasons for the lack of higher education among the youth of Kullu. The joint family system has its own disadvantages. It is not very easy to get along, especially if all are living under one roof. Trifles can become big issues. Human beings are basically selfish by nature. No two people are the same or equal. If one who is better qualified or is capable of earning more than the others, but does not have a sense of self-sacrifice, justice and equality, then a rift is inevitable and everyone's life can become miserable. There is a saying that a brother can

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Ibid. 129
be your best friend or your worst enemy. So long as a healthy joint family is maintained there is no one else whom you can trust more than your own brother. At the same time if two brothers have a dispute over property no one can harm them more than they themselves harm each other.

Marriage System

It is my personal opinion that the marriage system in Lahaul is far better than those I have seen anywhere else, although it is admittedly far from ideal. It includes the best of both worlds, East and west. In the custom prevalent in most of India, the girl’s parents must find a husband for their daughter. Keeping an unmarried daughter at home is not socially acceptable. As such the parents must get all their daughters married come what may. This seems like a good idea, but it has become the root of another social evil. A huge dowry is frequently asked for, making marriage more of a business transaction than a life partnership of a man and a woman. In many cases it becomes impossible for the parents to afford the asked-for dowries that would allow all their daughters to marry reasonably decent partners. There may even be cases where a nice girl has to marry a hopelessly undesirable man just because she has to get married and her parents cannot arrange enough money for the dowry. The extreme of this evil is that from her very birth, a daughter puts her parents in a miserable state. At the same time, once married, divorce is almost impossible since it is considered unworthy of a respectable woman. This is the kind of social evil that women’s liberation must fight. It is only women who can do away with such things. In order to uproot such deep-rooted social evils, Indian women must first rid themselves of guilty feelings if they are not married, and abolish the social stigma on their unmarried sisters. After that they need to take the stand of preferring to remain unmarried, rather than marry a man who is interested in the dowry only and not in the woman. Women
will have to do these things themselves rather than expecting society as a whole or the government to do it. Laws cannot abolish such social evils. It seems that the custom in Lahoul blends the best side of both of the above systems. Here the engagement is arranged through the parents and the relatives. Boys and girls do not have to go out looking for their own partners and thus the woman’s honour is also preserved. Premarital sex or love affairs are greatly looked down upon.

Women in particular are very careful of their social status, and this automatically debars men from engaging in premarital sex. The women are further given a respectable status. It is not the girl’s parents who have to go looking for a boy, instead it is the duty of the boy’s parents to go and look for the bride, unlike the custom in the rest of India. The girl’s parents are requested with honour rather than being humiliated. The girl has full right to accept the offer or reject it. After the selection, both the parties have plenty of time to know and find out about each other before the engagement is finalized. Whatever is given as a dowry, is meant only for the girl. The boy hardly gets anything out of it other than a wife. This relieves the financial pressure on the girl’s parents and therefore a girl is never considered a burden. The best part is that since the dowry is not a consideration at all, the selection is mainly on the basis of the compatibility of the boy and girl and the family relationship. Last but not the least, although the marriage is always considered to be a lifelong partnership, yet if for some reason they can not get on together at all, then a divorce is perfectly acceptable and both become eligible for remarriage. Since the intention is always to have a lifelong partnership and both try their best, the divorce rate is perhaps less than five percent.
The Marriage Ceremony

The wedding ceremony also is unique in Lahoul. There are several different ways a marriage may be consecrated, depending upon the economic conditions, Unavailability of time, and the importance given to a particular marriage. The ceremony used also depends upon the customs of a particular area and its historical background. The most popular one is Mhore Byah, which means the ‘big wedding’. Generally the marriage of the eldest son is performed in this style, though not necessarily. If the parents could afford it, they would like to perform every marriage like this, but it turns out to be very expensive, and therefore it is avoided if possible.

MHORE BYAH, THE BIG WEDDING

Wedding Preparations

The marriage ceremony is quite involved. Arrangements for a huge amount of rice, wheat, ghee (purified butter), drinks and meat-wherever used-has to be made. The ceremony lasts four or five days during which the relatives, friends and all the residents of that particular village are invited. Thus in most weddings there could easily be a few hundred to a thousand people, depending upon the size of the village and the number of friends and relatives the family has. Two days prior to the wedding all the close relatives get together at the bride’s and the bridegroom’s houses respectively.\(^\text{23}\)

The Ceremony

On the day of the marriage, the bridegroom’s party leaves early in the morning in a marriage procession for the bride’s home. Prior arrangements

\(^{23}\) Ibid.
are made in which the bride’s side is asked how many people they would like to entertain in the bridegroom’s party, and also what time they would like to receive them. If the bride’s parents are rich and like to make a big show, then they ask for a large number, otherwise the party generally consists of twenty to thirty people. In modern times the procession is accompanied by a band. Also vehicles such as jeeps, cars, and buses are used. In earlier days the band did not accompany the party. When there were no vehicles plying this valley, the party used to go on foot the whole way, whatever the distance.

The party is led by an elderly man—often a distant uncle of the groom—called the Shirdar, followed by Bagtipa, who is somewhat like the best man at a Western wedding, but here the Bagtipa becomes the god-brother of the bride from then on. They are followed in turn by the bridegroom. These three men are dressed in a special marriage costume. Following them are the prescribed number of the groom’s friends and relatives. Along the way the party either dances with the band or sings some special marriage songs throughout. Thus singing and dancing the party reaches the bride’s house. There before they enter the house, a Gura sometimes performs a ritual to drive away all the evil forces that might have come along with the party, especially when they come singing and dancing and making all kinds of noise. Sometimes the medium feels it necessary to sacrifice a sheep or goat to pacify the demons and evil spirits. This is a horrible scene and it is presently being done away with. The whole day is spent there, eating, drinking, singing and dancing. While the singing and dancing is going on, the marriage ritual is performed in one of the rooms. The Bagtipa escorts the bride to a seat beside the bridegroom's and then rituals are performed, one of which is ‘forog charchi’. Forog is a king of crow, considered in
mythology to be a messenger. In this ritual an imaginary crow is sent in all the four directions to inform the whole world of the marriage.

By evening the party leaves for the groom’s house. Before leaving, the bride’s parents present dozens of dresses and ornaments for the bride as a dowry, which the groom’s cousins are supposed to carry home. Most of the people from the bride’s side go to see her off, forming a huge party called the Pichara party. This time it is their turn to sing and dance and make as much pomp and show as possible. Again similar songs are repeated. There are several songs describing the stories of various famous marriages. A song of the marriage of Lord Shiva and Parvati is also popular one. Thus, singing and dancing, the party proceeds, but this time with more pomp and show, especially because now the party is at least four times larger. On the way if the party happens to pass through other villages where there are relatives of the bride or the groom then these relatives have their own reception and offer flowers and drinks. On reaching the bridegroom’s house a similar ritual is repeated as the one at the bride's house. Along with those welcoming them, a Gura or a Lama does a ritual to pacify the evil spirits that might have tagged along with the noisy party.

The burden of all the arrangements falls on the shoulders of one senior and experienced man called the Sehnu, who acts as an advisor. He is expected to calculate all the supplies needed and estimate the number of people expected to be present, and super-vises the preparation of food, drinks and the seating arrangements. Those who drink liquor are seated in a different room, separated from the teetotalers. Separate arrangements are made also for women and children. Here it is the duty of the friends and relatives of the bridegroom to provide every comfort to the bride’s party. When everything is settled then dinner is served. After the dinner again some rituals are performed similar to those performed at the bride’s place. When
this is over then the bride and the groom remove the marriage costumes and return to their normal dress. This performance is called Shireri lhechi meaning the costume-removing ceremony. In olden times the bride had to put on jewelled collar called ‘dogar’ over her shoulders or neck. This dogar was a ring about six inches in diameter and three inches wide, studded with turquoise, garnets and other gems. It symbolized that the bride was no longer an independent girl, but that now she had a great responsibility of household on her shoulders. Nowadays since people have forgotten its symbolic meaning, and as a decoration it has little aesthetic value, it is not used anymore.

Luncheon arrangements for the next day and its expenses are the responsibility of the bridegroom's maternal uncles. At this luncheon the Shirdar (the leader), the Bagtipa (the best man), the Byohu (the bridegroom), the Byohuthiri (the bride), and the Byouthiri sathi (the bride’s mate) are expected to sit in their proper places, in that order. Later the same afternoon, all the presents-mostly cash or clothes-from the friends and relatives of the bride are collected. The money collected is entrusted to the bride’s father, who either loans it on behalf of the bride or puts it in the bank in her name. It is generally the responsibility of the bride's farewell party to sing, dance and have fun that whole day. Before dusk, the friends and relatives of the bride return home. They leave behind one woman, the bride's mate, to provide company to the bride in her new home. The farewell party goes back to the bride’s parents house and the party continues at both places. The next day the friends and relatives depart, but the close relatives are expected to stay one more day. The bride's companion stays with the bride until the day the new couple return to bride’s home to pay their respects to the bride’s parents. This is called Fairouni, which means the return visit (of the bride). The bride and the
groom also have to visit other close relatives. Only then is the whole marriage ceremony completed. The details described above are strictly from the Pattan valley. Certain rituals vary in each of the other valleys.

**Quachi Byah, The Small Marriage**

As one can see the Mhore Byah is quite involved and very expensive. It is very difficult for a poor man to meet such expenditures, particularly if he has several children. For such cases a less involved ceremony called the Quachi Byah is celebrated. For this wedding, many of the rituals and customs are almost identical to those of the Big Marriage. However, in this case fewer people are invited, usually only close friends and relatives. The residents of the village may also be invited for only a meal or so, or sometimes they may not be invited at all. In terms of the ceremony, the biggest difference is that the bridegroom sends his sister to the bride’s home with a small marriage party, rather than going himself. She is called the Mechami Byohu, literally the lady bridegroom. The bridegroom waits at home, but takes charge and replaces the lady groom when the marriage party with the bride reaches home. From thereon the rest of the ceremony is the same as in the case of big marriages.

**Koozi Byah**

There is another strange marriage custom, although not much used. This custom may be called marriage by kidnapping. The word Koozi literally means stealing. Although very rare, it is used in peculiar circumstances when the wedding has to be performed on very short notice without much preparation. One reason may be that the parents want the girl to marry someone else, while the girl prefers to marry the man who kidnaps her. For this wedding the girl is literally kidnapped by the bridegroom and his party. It may seem very awful and unbecoming of a gentleman, however that is
not exactly so. As a matter of fact this is a form of a love marriage. The girl is asked either directly by the boy himself or by some of her friends. When the girl has given her consent, she is given some money or jewellery as a token of their engagement, called Nya, literally, the nose. In most Indian languages, the word nose signifies honour or respect. There are several phrases connected with the nose such as “keeping the nose” meaning maintaining credibility or honour, and “cutting the nose” meaning to be discredited by doing some shameful act and so on. In the same context, accepting the Nya means accepting the offer of marriage or in other words a form of engagement.

Other than in the Gahar valley, this custom, if used, may mean that the girl’s parents were either not willing to consent to the relationship or it was suspected that they would never allow it. In that case the parents may not be aware of the engagement and the kidnapping may come to them as a surprise. However, in the Gahar valley often the parents do know and may be willing to give their consent also, yet often they pretend to be ignorant of it. Once this understanding between the boy and the girl is reached, if they can not have a proper ceremony for whatever reason, then a time and a place is generally fixed where the girl will be present under some excuse. These occasions may be either a fair or a celebration of someone else's marriage, from which the girl is then kidnapped.24

This may sound very strange, especially to the Western mind. If both are willing then why not just go and get married-why this kidnapping? There are two reasons. First, the girl has to show that she did not offend her parents and did not marry somebody against her parents will and secondly, the girl has to be careful of her honour. Offering herself to a man, even in marriage, is not considered very respectable.

Funeral Rites

We as humans are very well aware of the half cycle from birth to death, but are totally ignorant of the other half of the cycle, that is, from death to rebirth. Therefore the funeral service is supposed to guide the soul through its journey in the unknown after death or release from this physical body. Whether it believes that the soul returns in a cycle of rebirths or not, or waits for Judgement Day, every religion regardless of these beliefs has some provision for the departed soul. However, the most extensive study of this has been done by Tibetan Buddhism, where the book, Bardo Thodol, written by Padma Sambhava in the 8th century, deals with this subject. Bardo either means suffering, or between the two, that is between death and rebirth. Dr. Evans Wentz edited this book from the translations of Lama Kazi Dawa, and it is entitled as The Tibetan Book of the Dead. In Lahoul funeral ceremony is performed differently in different sections of the valley, based on religious persuasion and traditions carried from generation to generation. They may be grouped broadly into three categories-Buddhist, Lungpe Chhos and Hindu.

The Buddhist System

The Buddhist funeral ceremony is adopted not only by those who are currently Buddhists, but also by those who are in the category of Bodhs or Rajputs of the Pattan and Gondhla valleys. In other words it is common among all non-Brahmins and non-Harijans. This would seem to indicate that most of these groups were under the influence of Buddhism at one time or another. Later when their beliefs changed for all practical purposes, perhaps they could not find a ready replacement for the funeral ceremony, while their belief in having a proper ceremony performed by a qualified
person could not be dropped very easily. In the Gahar and Tod valleys, although there are several monasteries full of Buddhist monks, this ceremony is performed only by a few selected ones. In the Pattan valley there are only two monasteries one at each end of the valley. One of them is the Guru Ghantal monastery located on top of the hill between the rivers Chandra and Bhaga, while the other one is at Lindoor, at almost the other end of the valley. One Buddhist lama resides in each of these monasteries whose principal function is to perform this ritual. When somebody dies, the lama for that area is called. He and any others who may accompany him, bring several Tibetan Buddhist scriptures and instruments such as gNah (drum), Bugjal (cymbal), and Drillu (bell) along with them.

In this ceremony the corpse, after cleaning, is wrapped in colorful clothes and is laid on a carrier. In some cases they prefer to carry the body in a seated position, in which case a chair may be tied to the carrier. The lama chants the Mantras from the Bardo Thodol and goes round the corpse seven times chanting and playing the instruments. Also he performs a ceremony called yangkhug (Spyangku, as written in Tibetan), in which an effigy of the deceased is drawn on a piece of paper, which is later burnt. Besides helping the dead, the yangkhug is meant to protect the family’s fortune and keep its luck from being swept away along with the deceased. When the lama finishes his rituals, the corpse is carried to the funeral pyre and then set on fire by the closest kin of the deceased. Besides the ceremony performed by the lama, the Chinal or the Harijans also provide their own funeral music. There are ragas dedicated for such occasions, which are played on the flute, nyishan or nagara (a pair of drums) and also a poun (a different type of drum with a humming sound) where available. On the morning after the cremation the astu (remaining bones) from the funeral

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pyre are collected, wrapped in clothes and made to look like an effigy. Some simple rituals are performed after which the effigy is taken to Sangam, where the remains are scattered on the holy water. A few pieces are saved, which are taken to the holy river Ganges at some later date. So far as the ordinary masses are concerned, this is the end of the immediate funeral rites.

The Lungpe Chhos Ceremony

Among the Brahmins and the Harijans, the funeral ceremony is performed by a medium called the bhata. This is a family profession and in such families generation after generation one man, usually the eldest son, is designated and he performs all the mediumistic functions. Two such families, one from the village of Kirting, known as Kirbhata, and the other from the village of Joondha, known as Yombe-bhata have been well-known for a long time. Unlike the Buddhist lama, a bhata does not possess any books or scriptures from which to read. He recites mantras, which have been passed down from his ancestors.

The Lungpe Chhos is a deformed Shiva-Shakti doctrine. Accordingly most of their mantras relate to Kali or Shakti or Bhairav. Many of their mantras do not make much sense except perhaps as pure sound or through vibratory power, as suggested by Sir John Woodroffe, in his book The Garland of Letters. Goudan, or the donation of a cow-one of the best donations possible according to certain Hindu beliefs-also forms a part of the ritual but is not a necessary condition. In this ceremony a cow or a calf is taken three times round the corpse or the effigy, while the bhata chants the mantras. The cow is then donated to the bhata himself. There is no waiting period, unlike in the Tibetan Buddhist ritual, and the corpse is cremated as soon as the bhata has completed his rituals. The Chinals or the Harijans
also provide the funeral music as described in the previous section. Other than the substitution of the lama by the bhata, most of the rituals are the same as in the other system. The remains, in the form of an effigy are taken to the holy Sangam and to the holy Ganges. There is also a custom of composing eulogy, in the form of a song called sugili. It is not sung in all cases, but often it is a spontaneous volunteer effort on the part of some lady friends or relatives in praise of the deceased. There is a belief that when somebody dies, Yamraj, the god of death, sends two messengers called yamdoots, or locally called jamdwar, to fetch the deceased. There are some stories about having seen these jamdwars by some people.

Another story was told by the gura of Yangtozing who lived until the late 1930s or early 40s. It is said that one spring when he was training with the gura of Shansha village, the whole community had gathered in the house of Shoudas. Suddenly the gura of Shansha, named Dhombara, asked the people to be quiet and told them that the jamdwars were coming. Every one was surprised and looked at each other and wondered what the devil he was talking about. In the meantime the door opened and they saw a giant with long, flowing hair in the doorway. He was barefoot, though a pair of straw shoes, called poola, were tied to the tip of a steel rod he carried over his shoulders. The giant said to the gura, Dhal gura (greetings). Here is a gift for you from Yamraj. People saw an empty hand extended towards the gura. The gura received it in his cupped hands and put this 'nothing' in the fold of his round hat. He invited the jamdwar to sit down and join them for the meal, but he replied that he was not allowed to eat there. The jamdwar told them that he first had to go to the Sangam where he was going to take a bath and after that he had an invitation at Chanda’s house at Tandi. Saying this he left. People tried to find him, but he had vanished into thin air. The gura then asked his wife to get up very early in the morning and
clean the house as if for some special occasion. Everybody was surprised and could not understand what was going on. When they arose the next morning, the gura asked his wife to fetch his hat which was kept in a safe place overnight. When the lady brought the hat, to everybody's surprise there were three corn plants growing from the fold of the hat, even though corn did not exist in that area at all. There is another story about a case of mistaken identity. It is said that a deceased woman in the village of Dhwansha came back to life during her funeral. She then told the people how she was taken to Yamraj, where it was declared that she was not the right person. They put a seal on her body and sent her back. Later, people found another woman in the same village, with the same name, dead in her house.  

The Custom of Sanatan Hindu Dharma

This custom is not very old and also not very widespread. Around 1930 Rishi Brahma Prakash came to the village of Gushal and preached the Vedanta and Sanatan Hindu Dharma. The people of Gushal village and some neighbouring areas soon gave up all their orthodox beliefs in Lungpe Chhos, among other things they dropped the funeral ceremony and turned away from Buddhism also. From that time onwards the funeral ceremony is performed in their own way. Reading passages from the Bhagwat Geeta, the Vedas, and the Upanishads replaced other forms of mantra recital. The Shanti Pada, or the peace prayer from the Vedas also is recited. Often havan, the sacrificial sacred fire ceremony is performed. However, the Chinal or the Harijans still provide their own funeral music in this case as well. Most of the other rites are performed in more or less the same manner as by the Rajputs of the Pattan valley. The people here are perhaps not aware of the Garuda Purana where the funeral ceremony of Hindu custom

26 Ibid.
is supposed to be given in the Pret-khand section. This is supposed to be somewhat similar to the Bardo Thodol of Tibetan Buddhism and the Tibetan Book of the Dead. A couple of weeks after the funeral, the final rites of the deceased, called sama, is performed in all the above systems. In this the friends and relatives are invited and a meal and drinks are served. After that some marchu, deep fried bread, is distributed to every household taking the count of family members.

Languages or Dialects

It might sound fantastic that in the tiny valley of Lahoul with a population of less than 20,000, six distinct dialects are spoken. These dialects have a direct bearing on the history or the origins of the people. Harcourt named four dialects, namely, Boonan, Teenan, Manchat and Tibetan in his book Kooloo Lahoul and Spiti. Manchat is a dialect spoken in the Pattan valley, that is, in the kothis of Gushal, Tandi, Warpa, Ranika, Jahlma and Jobrang. Therefore I shall call it the Pattani dialect. It is also spoken in Chamba Lahoul, although with a very heavy accent and many, different words. Boonan is the dialect spoken in the Gahar valley, that is, in the kothis of Gumrang, Kardang, and Barbog. Teenan is spoken in the Gondhla valley, in the kothis of Gondhla, part of Sisu, and in parts of Khoksar kothi. I will call it the Bodh dialect, as it is called so in Lahoul. Besides these four dialects, the Harijans or the Chinals have their own dialect. All six dialects are spoken languages only. None of them has a script of its own, and so do not enjoy the status of true languages. Besides these local dialects, most people know Hindi, the national language of India. This is the only language with which an outsider can communicate with the Lahoulis. All educated people and more than 60 percent of the uneducated understand and communicate in Hindi fairly well. Of course one can also find a good number of people who understand or speak English as well.
The six dialects mentioned above are totally different from one another. To illustrate the distinctions, let’s take a couple of phrases and translate them into each of these dialects. For example, the phrase “come here” is translated as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pattani</td>
<td>der ata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gahri</td>
<td>thyag rah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teenan</td>
<td>ding antachi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodh</td>
<td>eru shog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinal</td>
<td>ithe ayi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lohari</td>
<td>ithi ayi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The phrase, “go home” is translated as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pattani</td>
<td>chungri ila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gahri</td>
<td>kyumang el</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teenan</td>
<td>chungkhai tl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodh</td>
<td>khangpa-la song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinal</td>
<td>ghare gachh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lohari</td>
<td>ghaire gah</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus one can see how much each dialect differs from the others. Very few people can understand or speak more than two of the dialects. Only a few rare individuals can speak or understand all six. The goldsmiths are often among these rare few, since they are few in number and have to deal with nearly everyone. The difference in the dialects and the problem of not understanding one an other often keep the people of each area or race aloof from the rest, almost as if they were in different countries. The Pattani dialect is most often understood by the majority and therefore it is used as the means of communication when two people speaking different dialects have to communicate with each other. Quite often the counting system or the numerics can be found to be fairly similar among various languages or dialects. However, in this case even the numerals are quite different.
The following table lists the numbers from one to ten in each of the six dialects to demonstrate this.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Pattani</th>
<th>Gahri</th>
<th>Teenan</th>
<th>Bodh</th>
<th>Chinal</th>
<th>Lohari</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>one</td>
<td>Iti</td>
<td>tiki</td>
<td>iti</td>
<td>chig</td>
<td>ek</td>
<td>ek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>two</td>
<td>juta</td>
<td>nyisking</td>
<td>niji</td>
<td>nyi</td>
<td>dui</td>
<td>dui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>three</td>
<td>shumu</td>
<td>sumi</td>
<td>shumu</td>
<td>sum</td>
<td>tri</td>
<td>tri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>four</td>
<td>pee</td>
<td>pee</td>
<td>pee</td>
<td>jih</td>
<td>chour</td>
<td>chor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>five</td>
<td>gna</td>
<td>gnai</td>
<td>gna</td>
<td>gnah</td>
<td>panj</td>
<td>pan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>six</td>
<td>trui</td>
<td>truee</td>
<td>trui</td>
<td>trug</td>
<td>chho</td>
<td>chha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seven</td>
<td>nyiji</td>
<td>niji</td>
<td>nyiji</td>
<td>dun</td>
<td>satt</td>
<td>satt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eight</td>
<td>ray</td>
<td>geyi</td>
<td>gyad</td>
<td>gyad</td>
<td>atha</td>
<td>ath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nine</td>
<td>koo</td>
<td>gui</td>
<td>koo</td>
<td>goo</td>
<td>nou</td>
<td>nou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ten</td>
<td>sa</td>
<td>chui</td>
<td>sa</td>
<td>chug</td>
<td>dash</td>
<td>dash</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pattani Dialect**

A dialect can be one of the best sources of information regarding the origin of people. It can also give clues as to whether the people migrated from another settlement en masse or individually. It also helps to determine which of the groups of immigrants were dominant, or who were the first to migrate. The dialect of the Pattan valley locally known as Changsapa Boli which we are calling Pattani, cannot be traced to any particular language or dialect found outside Lahoul. It seems to be a mixture, and many influences can be readily seen. This gives a clue that the people of the Pattan valley did not migrate as a group. Furthermore, the influence of the changing rulers on the dialect is also noticeable. The Pattani dialect is very well structured in syntax and grammar. Thus it is very easy to learn as compared to the other dialects. For this reason, although it is only the dialect of the Pattan valley, it is understood by about 80 percent of the people of Lahoul. As such, outside Lahoul, it is known as the Lahouli dialect. The dialect of Chamba-Lahoul, although considered to be the Pattani dialect with a heavy accent, may very well be the base language which has since been overlaid by succeeding layers of outside influences.
The difference between Pattani and the accent heard in Chamba-Lahoul may be much the same as the difference between British English and the English spoken in the Texas state of the United States of America. The languages or dialects which have influenced or contributed to Pattani are the dialect of the Malana village in Kullu, the dialects of Busher and Tibetan. One can also find in Pattani a few words from the Balti dialect. Recently many words from Hindi, Urdu and even English have crept in. Although there are many Tibetan words in Pattani

In earlier times modern, Western-style, education was not prevalent in Lahaul, and people learned Tibetan in the monasteries. The reason for the extensive influence of Tibetan Buddhism and its literature was its availability in Lahaul, where other schools did not exist. Those who had learned Tibetan continued to use its words and introduced other Tibetan nuances while speaking their native dialects. Further, it can be noticed that most of the Tibetan words in any of the dialects of Lahoul are pronounced more as they are written than they are spoken in Tibet. The introduction of literary words into a dialect is a natural tendency. In the same context one can see a number of Hindi, Urdu, and English words commonly used these days. Since the influence of these languages is recent, everyone knows that they are not original, yet they use them as if they can not complete a sentence without them. This happens with every language. For instance, since the British came to India, many Indian words like jungle, veranda, pucca, and so forth have entered English. The influence of the Busheri dialect is not very great. Some words are common; and also there is some similarity in the sentence structure, its tone, and the flow. Thus one can
conclude that either people migrated from Busher to Lahoul or vice-versa, or they had a common heritage.27

It is interesting to note that the grammar of the Pattani dialect is very similar to that of the Sanskrit, while there are hardly any Sanskrit words in the dialect. Starting with the number—like the Sanskrit and unlike most other languages—the Pattani has singular (ek vachan), dual (dwi vachan), and plural (bahu vachan). For example, in English we say, "He goes" for one man and then "They go" for more than one. In Sanskrit, "Sah gachhati" is used for one person, "Tou gachhata" for two, and "Te gachhanti" for more than two. Similarly, in Pattani it becomes, "Du yuwa" for one, "Doku yuatoku" for two, and "Dore yuwatore" for more than two persons. This is where a common mistake is committed by outsiders while speaking in the Pattani dialect. Again, like Sanskrit and unlike most other languages, pronouns have no gender in Pattani. For example, one should notice that in the example above, I used the word "man" in English, then the pronoun "he", while I used the word "person" in Sanskrit and Pattani for equivalent sentences. In this case, however, some other Indian languages—like Hindi—have the same syntax. Also like Sanskrit and unlike many Indian languages, in Pattani verbs do not indicate gender, which is also the case in languages like English. For example we use the word 'goes' for both men and women. Sanskrit and Pattani are the same, while most Indian languages like Hindi have separate words. For example, "Jata haF is used for a man and "Jati hai is used for a woman. Finally Pattani is structured like Sanskrit, without compound verbs. For example, ge ildeg (I went), ge yuwatag (I am going), and ge yoga (I shall go). To indicate number of persons also, "nyeku yuwatoshF (we two are going), and "nyere yuwatanF (we, more than two, are going)."

27 Dasgupta, K. K., *Tribal History of Ancient India*, op. cit.
**Teenan Dialect**

The dialect of the Teenan or Gondhla valley is fairly similar to that of the Pattan valley. Although many words are different, their phonetics and the sentence structure are similar. For that reason most people who speak this dialect also know Pattani fairly well, and use it to speak with people from other areas of Lahaul. Analyzing each word in a sentence, one will find each word significantly different in the two dialects. For example the phrase 'come here' in the Pattani is 'der ata\ while in the Teenan it is 'ding antachi'. The only commonalty is the base of the verbs 'ata' and 'anta', meaning 'come'. However, the syntax being fairly similar, they sound quite alike.

**Gahri dialect**

(The Gahri dialect—called Boonan by Harcourt and others—has phonetics very similar to those of the Tibetan dialects. However, there are very few words in common between the two. Perhaps not a single sentence in Gahri would match its Tibetan rendering totally .A partial knowledge of both Gahri and Tibetan is so confusing that one can hardly speak either of them correctly without mixing the words. The Gahri dialect is comparatively pure in itself. There is less influence of other languages and dialects on it, particularly compared to Pattani and Teenan. Harcourt writes that this dialect is half Tibetan as far as the words go and a separate language as far as the grammar is concerned. My opinion is on the contrary. While there are relatively few common words, the grammar has a fairly good similarity. For example both Gahri and Tibetan have only singular and plural cases— unlike Pattani and Sanskrit. Neither of them indicates gender in its verbs, unlike most Indian languages—nor gender in its pronouns, unlike English. In other words there are no equivalents for 'he' and 'she'. In order to
distinguish between a boy and a girl one would say that boy and that girl as
‘kho pucha’ and ‘kho porno’ in Tibetan and ‘thae bucha’ and ‘thae cheme’ in
Gahri. Andrew Wilson, in his book Abode of Snow writes, "It is of interest
to notice that there are remnants of what, for want of better phrase, may be
called an aboriginal language. It is called Boonan and resembles the
Tiberskad spoken at Sugnam in the upper Satluj valley. (Wilson seems to
be right. There are more words of the Gahri dialect in common with those
of the Sugnam valley than with any other language or dialect. Some of
these words are presented in 28

The people of the Gahar valley seem to have migrated from Balti
(Baltistan) when the Buddhists fled the Moslem invasion. The present Balti
dialect has half Urdu, one fourth Tibetan and only about one fourth of the
original Balti dialect. Discarding the Urdu and the Tibetan, if we compare
the original Balti dialect with the Gahri, we shall find quite a few words
common between them.

Bodh Dialect

The dialect of the Tod valley, which Harcourt and others called the
Tibetan, is basically a dialect spoken in some parts of south-western Tibet.
Tibet itself has many dialects, and since this is not the main, written
language of Tibet, therefore we can not call it Tibetan. For that reason
calling it the Bodh dialect, even though it indirectly means a dialect of
Tibet, for Tibet is called Bodh in Lahoul.

This dialect is very similar to, or nearly the same as, those spoken in Spiti,
Ladakh, Zanskar, some parts of Kinnaur, and even Bhutan, Sikkim,
Darjeeling and so forth. In other words most of the Buddhist areas in the

28 Wilson, Andrew, The Abode of Snow (London: William Blackwood and
Sons), 1914.
Himalayas use more or less the same or similar dialect. All of them have Tibetan as a basis, upon which the words of other dialects have been superimposed. Perhaps the grammar would be more or less the same.

The Bodh dialect of Lahoul seems fairly pure in itself. The other dialects of Lahoul seem to have had the least influence on it. Except for the Tibetan words found in other dialects, this dialect has no other words in common with them. It is comparatively easier to learn this dialect, especially compared with Gahri. Furthermore, if one can read or understand written Tibetan, one can converse in this dialect fairly well, even though many words are different.

**Chinal Dialect**

The Harijans of Lahoul, locally known as Chana or Chinal, have their own dialect, which I am going to call Chinal dialect. This dialect is quite similar to Hindi or Hindustani in its phonetics. They share many words in common, or words slightly deformed from Hindustani. While the words resemble those of Hindustani, its sentence structure is more like Sanskrit. For example, the sentence, "Where are you going?" is translated as "kothe gachhtuse?", which in Sanskrit is "kutra gachhasi?" The Sanskrit word kutra becomes kothe, while gachhasi is slightly deformed. At the same time there is a word kutre in this dialect also, which means 'what for' instead of 'where'. On the other hand the phrase "come here" is translated in this dialect as "ithe ayi", which seems closer to the Hindustani 'idhar aa'. In this particular case, however, Punjabi looks closer still with 'itthe aa'.

Grammatically, this dialect also does not have compound verbs, nor does it indicate gender with its verbs and pronouns, unlike Hindi and many other Indian languages. On the other hand, unlike Sanskrit, it does not have the case of two persons in its verbs. In fact, many words even do not
distinguish between singular and plural. Many words and phrases in this
dialect resemble Kulluvi, Chambiali, Pangwali, Padri and Balesi. For
example, a girl is called 'kui' in the Chinal dialect, the same is in Pangwali,
Padri, Balesi, and Bhadarwahi. But the boy is called 'matha', which while
not found in any of the above dialects, but is found in Mandiali. However,
there may not be very many phrases which may be common to all these
dialects. One reason for the commonalty among them may be that all are
based on Hindustani. According to linguists, all of these dialects belong to
the Indo-Aryan family.

Lohari Dialect

This dialect is spoken by the blacksmiths and goldsmiths of Lahoul.
Generally it is very similar to the Chinal dialect, especially in its phonetics,
yet quite a few words are different. For example, "Where are you going?"
is translated in Lohari as "kosori gahno?", while in Chinal it is "kothe
gachhtuse?" Many words appear in both dialects, but the major differences
are in pronunciation. Words which when transliterated into English may
start with 'j' or 'jh' in Chinal, but will start with 'z' or 'zh' in Lohari. For
example 'clay' in Chinal is 'jan', while it is 'zan' in Lohari. A similar
difference appears for the words written with 'ch' as in charm, or 'chh'. It
was suspected that Lohari dialect might be similar to the ones spoken in the
Pamir, Hindukush, or Chatral areas.