

^{la}
SOCIAL CHANGE AND MARRIAGE PATTERNS
IN THE NORTH WESTERN HIMALAYAS

(i.e. Churaha ^{la} Pangi and Ladakh)

B H A R P U R S I N G H B R A R

Presented for the degree of
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Abstract

I have suggested here a new approach based on power relations for understanding the social organisation in North India in general and in the North Western Himalayas in particular. The importance of marriage in defining the social structure is generally well recognised, But its direct involvement with power relations and widely different implications of this involvement for dominant and dependant sections of the population has not been explored so far. Marriage norms (for instance hypergamy) in a dominant section of the population or in a more developed area have the capacity to create exactly opposite norms elsewhere. Particular changes provide only dramatic illustrations of this phenomenon. What is normally referred to as traditional social organisation is far from being static or uniform. It is inherently dynamic and closely follows the changes in power relations. I have made it clear by working along three dimensions namely spatial, hierarchical and temporal.

This approach has given me a new way of looking at particular problems concerning stratification and social mobility, co-existence of widely different forms of marriages, marriage stability, kinship relations, position of women etc. In explaining the differences in particular values and practices in different areas, this approach is directly opposed to that of a culturologist who tends to stress the lack of interaction instead.

^N
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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Only a brief reference to the material is intended here. The approach will be made clear in the first chapter. The data was collected during five separate visits between February 1964 to April 1968. A total period of nineteen months was spent in the field i.e. ten months in Churaha - Pangri, five months in Ladakh and the rest at Chamba, besides a short visit to main Lahual. Between the visits, I have also been discussing various problems with Ladakhi and Chambial informants available at Delhi.

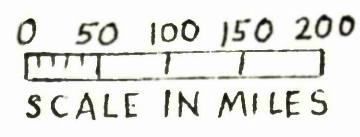
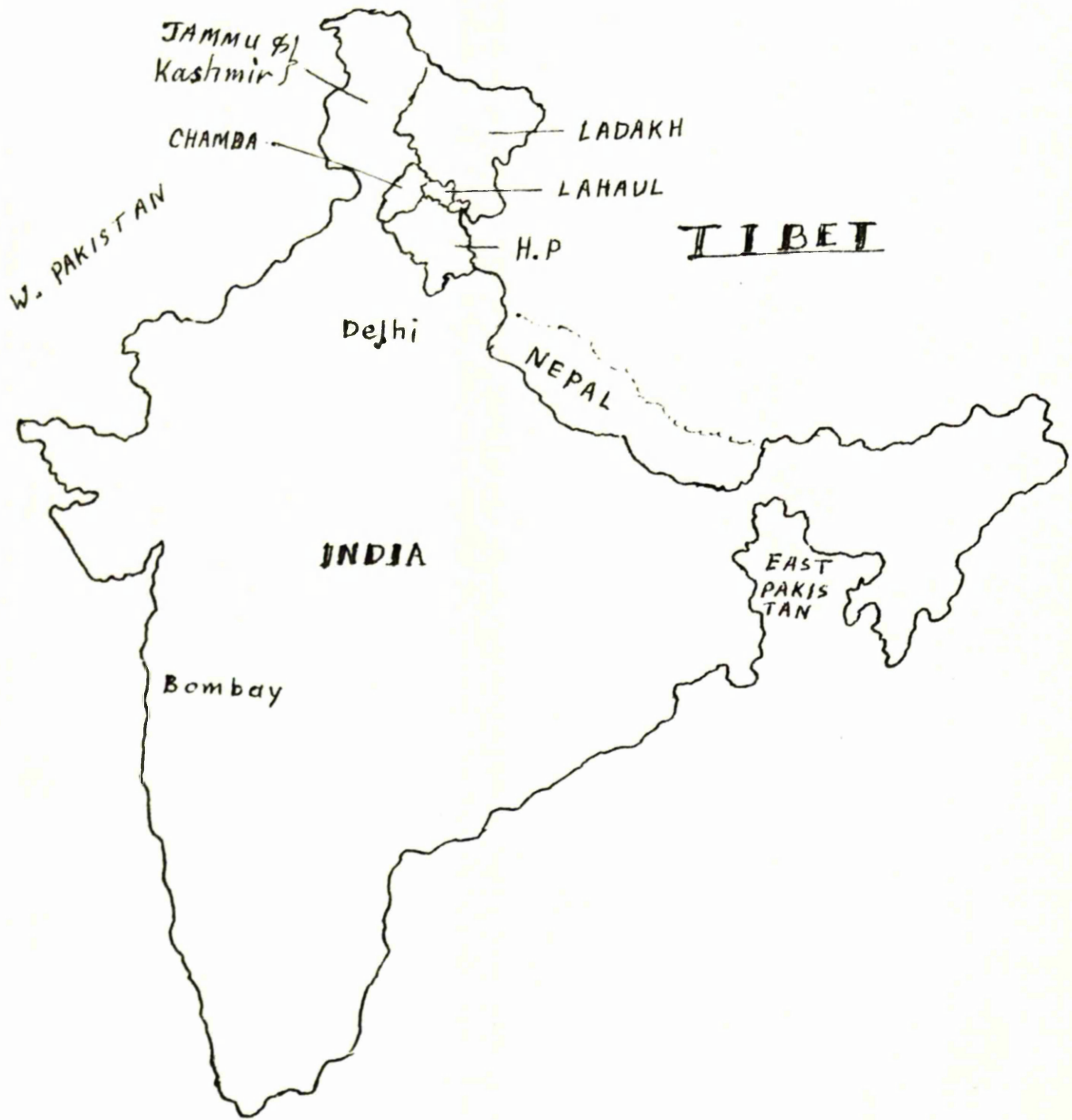
Originally I had settled down at Bharara a village in Churaha, for a usual village study. After some time I felt that the most significant problems in the area concerning particularly the forms and functions of marriage and social mobility cannot be explained within the confines of either the village or the area. It led me to explore the spatial, hierarchical and temporal dimension of the population in the region. It is not an easy task for a single handed investigation. At the same time I feel that the nature of the problems involved do not allow either a collaborative or a piece meal approach.

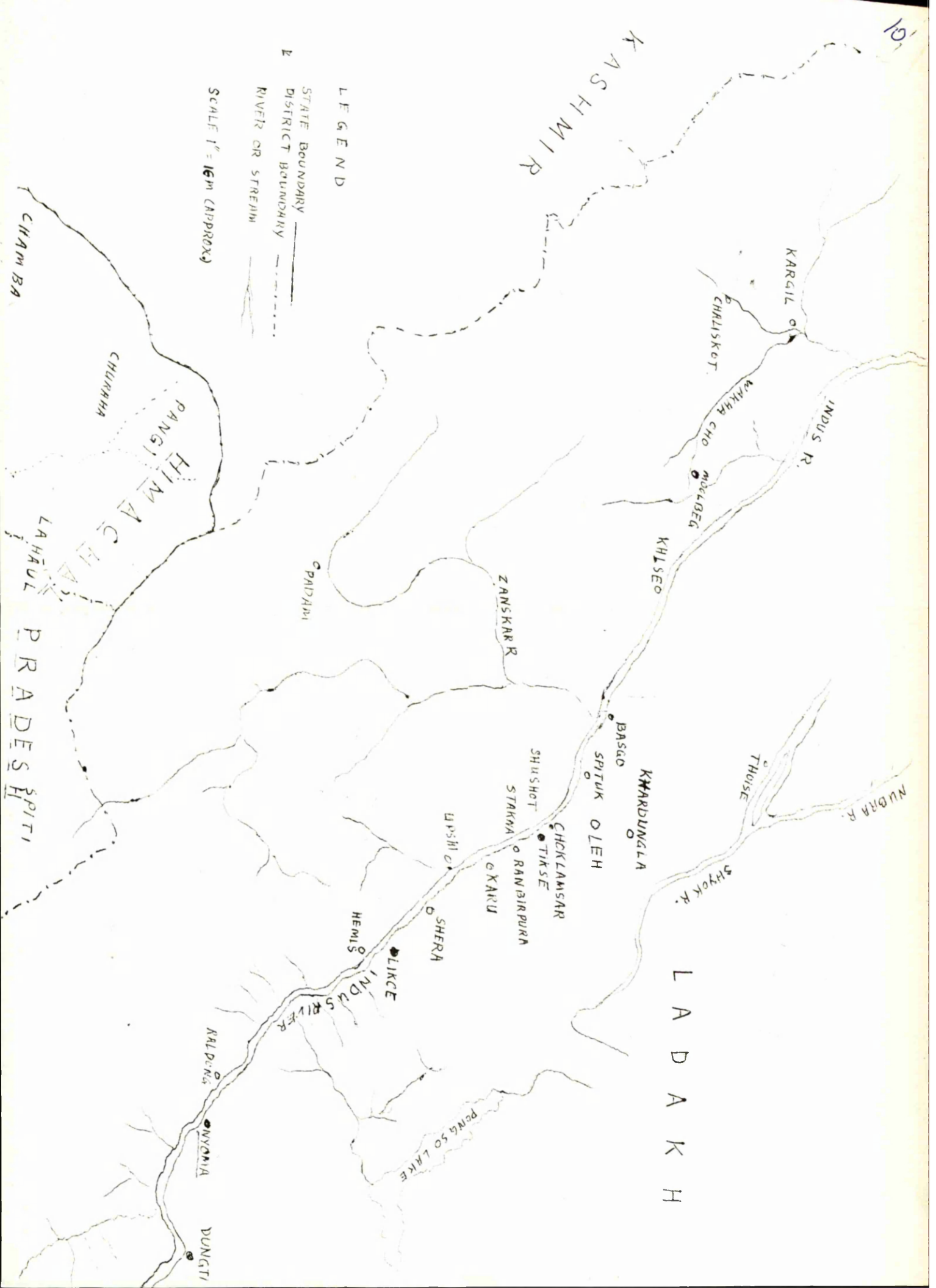
A prepared schedule for recording information about marriages, divorces, fate of children, life histories, composition of families, household economy etc., proved useful especially at earlier stages. But the most critical information emerged from geneologies, interviews participant observation and from listening to informal discussions

among the informants.

I have divided the discussion into eight chapters. The first chapter is intended to introduce the area, the economic changes it has undergone and a preliminary discussion of the sort of problems handled. The second chapter is more or less an abstract theoretically framework in which the essential differences between these areas and the Hindu mainstream can be understood. In this I have suggested a new way of looking at social mobility and the role of marriage in caste formation. The next two chapters deal with the basic data about one village in Churaha. The fifth chapter deals with the nature of caste borders in Churaha. Intercaste marriages, occupational changes and the dynamic nature of the symbols of distinction have been given a critical treatment. The sixth chapter deals with the wider hierarchies of power. In the seventh Chapter I have developed a precise relationship between hierarchy, hypergamy and endogamy. This is crucial to understand the development of a caste organised society. In the last chapter on Ladakh I have shown a vital relationship between polyandry and hypogamous practices in a hierarchy of power and prestige. From the beginning one of my contentions has been that marriage has a central role in the social organisation in this region. Political importance attached to marital exchanges, link the institution directly with power relations. Changes in the latter therefore affect the forms and functions of marriage. So that the local ideology, practices and values can be understood only by conceiving a model which is inherently dynamic.

000009





KASHMIR

LADAKH

LEGEND

- STATE BOUNDARY ———
- DISTRICT BOUNDARY - - - -
- RIVER OR STREAM ———

SCALE 1" = 16M (APPROX)

CHAMBA

CHURRHA

LA HAUL

PRADESH

PANGI HIMALAYA

PAIDAM

ZANSKAR R.

KHILSEO

KARGIL

CHALISKOT

WAKHA CHO

MOLLBEG

INDUS R.

THOISE

NUBNA R.

BASGO

KHARDUNGLA

SPITUK O LEH

CHCKLAMСAR

SHUSHOT

STAKNA

GKARU

UPSI

SHERA

HEMIS

LINGE

INDUS RIVER

RALPENGA

NYAMA

DUNGTI

PANGA SO LAKE

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JAMMU

LADAKH

LAHAUL

PANGI

CHURAHA

TISSA

BHARRA

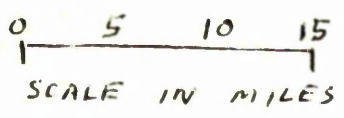
PANGI RANGE

● CHAMBA

BHATAYAT

BRAHMAUR

PUNJAB



CHAMBA DISTRICT

CHAPTER 1

The Perspective

The Region

Economic Changes

Social Consequences

Inter-Area Differences

Hindu Social Organisation

Hypergamy

Exogamy and Endogamy

Hierarchical Stratification

THE PERSPECTIVE

There are some powerful processes which have been influencing the social organisation in north India unequally in different areas. The assumption of a rather static model of uniform relevance for the traditional organisation is misleading. Differences in the value systems of different interacting parts of a population are not merely cultural variations but are closely related to these processes.

Here I intend to bring out the full significance of the essentially dynamic character of the principles of social organisation in this region. Students of North India are familiar with the fact of the enormous variety and the amorphous nature of the value systems in the population. What seems to be relatively persistent, however, is a set of certain principles of social organisation. I intend to demonstrate, firstly, that in the final analysis these principles are basically concerned with and continue to draw their sustenance from the regulation of marriage; and secondly, that the political and economic importance attached to the inter-group relation established through marriage, links these principles of social organisation directly to the distribution of power. As a consequence, the value attached to these principles varies along three dimensions, namely, spatial, temporal and hierarchical. Radical changes in a particular area, or a particular section of the population readily demonstrate this phenomenon and also establish

its importance in making their own contribution understandably distinct. For initial clarification of different problems I will illustrate my contentions briefly wherever necessary. A detailed analysis of the situations involved will follow.

The Region: In the areas south of Buddhist Ladakh and touching the boundaries of western Tibet, the contact between the Hindu and Buddhist populations is neither rare nor limited to economic activities. The mixing is spatially graduated, firstly due to the nature of geographical barriers, secondly due to the pastoral or semi-pastoral nature of an economy involving large scale migratory movements of shepherds. Inter-marriage between the followers of different faiths and the development of certain other vital social relations between them have been going on for a long time. The religious practices, in fact, are shared to such an extent that some writers have preferred to coin the term 'Hindu-Buddhists' to describe the main part of this population inhabiting the plateau of Lahaul. (Ibbetson, Maclagan and Rose 1919: 88). A similar confusion is reflected in the census records. (P~~o~~. Dist. Gaz. Vol XXXA part III 1917: 200). In the absence of any proselytising activity on the part of either religion and for certain other reasons to be discussed later, the question of being either Hindu or Buddhist is unreal to most of the population in Lahaul and is seldom rewarded with a clear-cut answer. In general, an individual's link with different traditions is mainly organisational and in Lahaul the principles of Hindu and

Buddhist social organisations overlap considerably. Spatially their relative importance differs in relation to the relative dominance of the two elements of the population. However, our primary interest lies in an area west of Lahaul.

To the west of Lahaul, the Buddhist element diminishes gradually and very little of it is represented on the western side of the Pangri Range (the mid-Himalayas). Western slopes of the Pangri Range now support a mainly Hindu population except for a fair sized Buddhist settlement at about 8,000' above sea level and situated on the way to a pass connecting the two sides of the range. This area, representing the western face of the Pangri Range and partially bounded on other sides by its lesser branches is drained by a tributary of the Ravi River. Popularly known as Churaha, geographically it covers the upper Ravi valley. Politically, for well over a thousand years, it has been a part of the old princely state of Chamba. At present, together with a small portion of Lahaul known as Chamba Lahaul and the valley of Pangri in between the two, it forms a tehsil of Chamba district, of Himachal Pradesh and is officially known as Churaha-Pangri. Chamba, the capital of the old state (now the district headquarters) is located in the lower Ravi valley, about forty miles away ^{by road} (to the south-west) from Tissa, the administrative centre of Churaha. The present population of Churaha - about sixty thousand - is more than twice as much as it was at the turn of the century. Sociologically, it has a fair amount of internal variation

and the population inhabiting the south western lower levels differs slightly less from other western Hindu areas than that occupying the upper slopes of the Pangri Range. Our statistical data based on a small group of settlements named Bharara (at 6,000') represents the situation in Churaha fairly well.

Economic Changes: The economic processes detailed below gradually changed the organisational position of the Churahis vis-a-vis Chamba and their eastern neighbours. In general it has been a shift to sedentary agricultural economy from the earlier semi-pastoral existence. This process was initiated in the first instance by certain administrative measures introduced by the newly appointed British advisors of the state during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The twin objectives of these measures were to increase the revenue of the state and to meet the growing demand for timber (mainly railway sleepers) and food grains elsewhere.

Private timber companies were introduced on a large scale. The new system of open auction adopted for the pastures led to their monopolisation by other richer transhumant groups residing outside the area. Improvement of communications within the state and without was given high priority and a separate department was set up for the purpose. Some important changes were made in the system of land tenure and in the methods of assessment and collection of revenue. For most of the cultivators, these changes ensured considerable indepen-

dence not only from certain intermediaries but also from the localised lineage groups. Clearing of new cultivable lands (nautor) hitherto restricted, was now officially encouraged. The processes set in motion by these measures have continued with increasing pace in the light of subsequent developments, especially during the last four decades; but the overall direction has been more or less the same.

Operations of the timber companies increased the availability of cultivable lands, which resulted either from the improved access to hitherto inaccessible tracts in the interior or from indiscriminate felling of trees on the part of timber contractors. These operations also improved the chances of local employment (mainly part-time).

The pressure on the available pastures increased with the sale of pasturage rights to the highest bidders. Adoption of a similar system of open auction in some adjoining areas and the comparatively recent loss of the traditional pastures of the Lahaulis located in western Tibet after the Chinese occupation, increased the competition in the whole region. The size of sheep flocks kept by the Churahis declined over time. At present, the relatively fewer numbers of sheep still kept by most households are either grazed in the adjoining wastes or are entrusted to a few individuals on payment, who still take the common flock of a settlement, or ^agroup of settlements, to traditional pastures across

the Pangi Range every summer.

The incentives for cultivating food crops have been growing constantly with the regular and sometimes sharp increase in prices. Increasing transport facilities also increased the remuneration for the cultivator. Introduction of some new Kharif (sown in summer) crops increased the possibility of double cropping and also checked the incidence of seasonal migration involving long absences. Originally, the sale of surplus was virtually impossible not only due to the lack of transport facilities but also due to certain restrictive elements in the official system of assessment and collection. For a long time, even after these initial changes, open sale to private traders was allowed only after meeting the state demand.

In the old system of land tenure, ownership rights in land were vested in the Raja. Collection of revenue, entrusted either to local officials or to the estate holders (Jagirdar) was in kind and in certain forms of forced labour (begar). The right of usufruct was not held by the actual cultivators but stood in the names of comparatively few individuals, listed as tenants of various status. A rent roll of such names was kept and was revised from time to time. The land could not be sold but these recognised users could either mortgage their rights or could employ others for actual cultivation. In either case the rent was paid against their names and the position of the actual cultivators was not secure. In those few cases where cultivators were

the descendents of the original tenant, this right was vested in the living head of the whole lineage group. The right to reclaim the culturable waste required prior permission of the State which was granted to particular favourites of the Raja or ^{of} the Jagirdars, who in turn employed cultivators for the purpose. So that in effect, the cultivators were bound either to specific individuals or to their lineage groups and were unable to expand their land resources individually.

Assessment of rent was not based on the actual size of the holding but on that part of the produce which was judged to be not absolutely essential for subsistence and for subsequent cultivation, thus providing little incentive for increasing the produce. Most of the burden of forced labour fell on the cultivators by virtue of their status, availability throughout the year and for their nearness to the approach roads.

In 1874 a detailed survey of agricultural lands was carried out by Col. Blair Reid and the actual land holdings of the cultivators were made the basis of assessment. Various forms of rent were gradually converted into cash. The system of forced labour was gradually abolished. Reclamation of wastes was encouraged. The cultivators could not be evicted so long as they paid the rent. But their tenancy status was not changed until after the abolition of the princely rule and the land did not come into the market until the last decade. Together with other factors, this restriction did not allow the pressure

on land to grow and its continuous availability for subsistence cultivation was thus ensured.

These changes and their subsequent implementation with growing regularity increased the freedom of the individual cultivator and offered positive inducement to new immigrants. Ready availability of timber and stone for building houses, plenty of rainfall reducing the need for artificial irrigation and general fertility of the new lands have all helped in the proliferation of small new settlements in Churaha.

The incidence of immigration into Churaha mainly from the western Hindu areas increased considerably during this period. Development of communications and increased transport facilities brought the Churahis increasingly closer to Chamba and other Hindu areas. But the contacts with the eastern Buddhist areas declined considerably due to the decrease in seasonal migrations.

Social Consequences: One way of linking such changes to their social consequences is in the words of Bailey:

" ... to postulate an antecedent state of affairs - in which ritual, political and economic behaviour are shown to be consistent with one another^{??} and then account for the accidents of government policy and economic changes." (Bailey 1962: 261).

Besides other difficulties in adopting this approach for this area, we are immediately faced with the fact that

it is not only the economy but the population of Churaha itself which has been changing considerably.

Immigration to Churaha is not a new phenomenon and dates back to the earliest available records. The new developments detailed above led to a sudden spurt in this influx, especially from the western areas. Immigrants from western Hindu areas were predominantly male and most of them contracted marriages with local girls. As will be shown later, this double pursuit of land and wives has been a reason for abandoning their areas of origin. This period also saw an increased emigration of the old feudal families to Chamba, the capital. Within Churaha itself, the settlers have been moving from lower to higher levels.

These movements checked the development of localised economic relations in general. It was the mobile artisan-cum-trader who came to be patronised and most of these came from outside Churaha. The local artisans mostly attached to the old feudal families could not count upon the continuous growth of a localised clientele. A better opportunity existed in shifting to cultivation - which most of them utilised.

From the histories of the settlers, it is clear that their origins in terms of areas, castes and occupations are diverse. Over time, individual distinctions tend to disappear and this is firstly due to inter-marriage and secondly to the general shift to a common occupation

of cultivation. These migratory movements have occurred in terms of individuals or small familial groups and not in the form of large groups who could set up exclusive settlements. So that the differences between the new and the old are not apparent even in terms of residential contiguity.

Certain distinctions in relation to social stratification will be discussed later and it will become clear that these cannot be explained merely in terms of the so called original ethnic distinctions. (Mckim Marriott 1960).

Immigration from the eastern areas in the past had been in terms of household groups. Much more significant is the arrival of individual women from these areas, brought in marriage by Churahi males. However, with the decline of contacts with the eastern areas, these movements decreased. In general a closer association with the eastern areas in the past is indicated in certain cultural aspects and in some popular legends describing the movements of local deities. For a casual observer certain traits in the Churahi dress, spoken dialect and some ceremonies look distinctive. But in the context of the region as a whole these do not point to any exclusiveness for Churahi culture and are significantly related to the adjoining areas on either side.

The economic and political conditions preceding the new developments are fairly well documented. Culturally

it has never been a closed society in any way significant to our purpose. Earlier patterns of seasonal migration brought the Churahis regularly into contact with the people inhabiting both the eastern and the western areas. This factor is often ignored when assessing the effects of relative geographical isolation in such areas. The new pattern of communication and the shift to sedentary existence did change, however, the pattern of cultural contacts and brought the inhabitants closer to western Hindu areas and away from the Buddhist population on the east. But some of the social consequences that followed were exactly the opposite of what a culturologist would normally expect. In certain forms of marriage its functions, its role in kinship regulation and its stability, the Churahis show over the last four decades a continuous divergence from the norms considered ideal at Chamba. This happened in spite of the fact that most of the immigrants during this period came from Chamba and other western areas and they have directly participated in this trend in the local norms away from the Hindu ideology and closer to what obtains in eastern areas.

Inter-area Differences: The cultural approach cannot account for such differences between two Hindu areas such as Chamba and Churaha. Berreman holds that differences between two Pahari (hilly) localities and between the Pahari areas and the plains result from what he calls 'cultural drift' caused by isolation. (Berreman 1960: 788-9; 1963: 350-1). Among some of the cultural traits which figure in his comparisons are bride price, divorce,

levirate, widow marriage, inter-caste marriage, polyandry, sexual laxity, etc. (Ibid 1960: 775-8). Majumdar seeks to explain such differences in terms of cultural survivals from a 'matriarchal matrix' thousands of years old (Majumdar 1962: 77). To Srinivas such practices would look like a case of delayed response to sanskritisation, a failure to adopt the sex code of the Brahmans (Srinivas 1962: 46). These theories can explain only some superficial aspects of styles of life. I will show that such differences pertaining to the regulation of marriage result precisely from inter-action between dominant and subdominant areas or classes of population and not from isolation. These are neither mere variations as sometimes exactly the opposite norms are held (e.g., the practices of dowry and bride price) nor always spring from different ideologies. These differences are inter-dependent and are traceable directly to the ideology of the dominant group or the dominant area. It is the economic and political dominance of Chamba over Churaha and not merely cultural nearness which is important to understand the trends in Churaha. A similar relation exists between different parts of the Buddhist society. It is the effect of these relations within the two societies which bring the Churahis and their neighbours on the east closer to each other in the regulation of marriage and kinship norms.

Hindu Social Organisation: In structural terms, the search for total consistency in different parts, in relation to these areas is not merely analytically impossible

but is positively misleading, as it tends to hide the dynamic character of the principles of social organisation. These principles of either the Hindu or the Buddhist social organisation are not geared to obtain total harmony in 'a society'. Society is an artificial^{it} of politics; and it is the dominant groups 'for whose benefit the whole of the rest of the system appears to be organised'. (Leach 1960: 9). Specifically relevant to our problem is the fact that these principles do not ensure spouses for everyone and rather reduce the chances of some. So much for social harmony. Differential strains created by the operation of these principles in different sections of the society, sometimes noticed in relation to modern political and economic processes are even more important to understand the dynamic aspects of the traditional setup, in which the actual differences in the distribution of power may be greater.

Some of the well known principles of Hindu social organisation in North India are:

1. The hierarchical stratification into castes, with varying emphasis on their political, ritual, economic and social roles.

2. Endogamy of the caste or the subcaste, especially with respect to the castes lower in status than one's own.

3. Exogamy of the near kin - actual or putative - traced through various lines of descent and affinity up to varying degrees.

4. Arranged marriage which is related to a marked tend-

- ency for linking the group affinally to other groups as high in status as possible. In most of the society it takes the form of hypergamy which may or may not remain confined to the caste borders.

In these principles, the lack of precision and uniformity and the apparent possibility of contradictions at certain points are characteristic. To understand this, the basic clues lie in the actual regulation of marriage and not in the super-imposed pollution observances. In actual practice, the value put on these principles individually and severally differs from class to class and between economically dominant and subordinant areas. This phenomenon is directly related to the strains inherent in the system and becomes conspicuous only at the extremes of the spatial and the hierarchical continua. Certain similarities in the sex and marriage code of the lower classes of the plains and the inhabitants of the hills sometimes reported (Rose 1919: 785-6) are not entirely incidental. In fact, Berreman himself has noted this phenomenon. (Berreman 1963: 167). Along both these dimensions in the total society, most of the dominant local groups in the plains represent only the middle rungs and do not markedly exhibit these strains. It is for this reason that our picture of the traditional and so called stable and consistent Hindu social structure, based on village studies, is imperfect. Now we will consider the operation of these principles in the dominant classes at Chamba and their effect on Churaha.

- We will take the last one first.

- Hypergamy: I find it a little misleading to define hypergamy as 'the custom according to which a man marries a girl belonging to the same division or to one which is only of a slightly lower status' (Karve 1953: 116). I am yet to meet an informant who will deliberately reject a bride for his son higher in status and accept the one lower in status if he can help it. The tendency of marrying up has a political content. It depends upon the situation, if the effort of linking the group with higher status groups succeeds through one's males or females. Hypergamy and hypogamy are two sides of the same coin - different results in different situations of this basic tendency. We must refer to other factors such as polygyny, polyandry, male celibacy, female infanticide, etc., to understand why it is hypergamy in certain situation (e.g., at Chamba) and hypogamy in others (e.g., Ladakh).

Whatever the historical reasons, a few factors related to hypergamy at Chamba are still open to observation. In the higher classes at Chamba polygyny is a desirable practice and has been so for a long time. Hutchinson also observed:

"Polygamy is the rule both in town and country, each man if he can afford it, having two or three and sometimes more wives. Polyandry occasionally common in hill tracts is believed to be almost non-existent in Chamba". (P.L. St. Gaz. Chamba Vol XXIIA 1904: 127).

- Besides more than one properly married wife - lari -

the practice of keeping additional servant-cum-concubines - rakhror - was also common and has started diminishing only recently under the weight of the new legislation. The noble families - the Mians and the Rajas often subscribed to the practice (almost universal for the rulers in old princely states of North India) of keeping scores of wives and concubines.

Most of the highest status families of Chamba try to marry their own daughters and sisters to equivalent or higher status spouses outside Chamba itself, i.e., in other state capitals or in the plains. Among those below this category, the desire to have affinal links with these powerful families can be fulfilled through daughters and sisters only. It has a chain effect on the hierarchically stratified society of Chamba. There is an acute competition for establishing these 'favourable unions' (Furer-Haimendorff 1960: 25). Individual polygyny at other levels provides further nourishment for this competition in the whole society.

Status and Hypergamy: In the old set^up, power was differentially distributed in terms of small familial groups at the top and followed a complex pyramidal pattern below. So that within the respective pyramids, the families enjoying higher status were normally fewer than one's equals, i.e., those competing for higher status husbands.

Within the higher caste groups of Chamba - Rajputs

^d
~~Al~~
 - and Brahmins - there are a number of grades defined in terms of hypergamy, order of salutation, ~~and~~ certain types of commensal relations, and other status co-relates of this competition for power sought through arranged marriages. The intensity of this competition can be gauged from the constantly increasing dowries which sometimes include immovable property (land, houses, etc.). Increasing amounts of dowry is the effect and not the cause of this competition as Srinivas appears to hold (Srinivas 1962: 48). In terms of gifts and services, even after the marriage the wife's agnates are always the givers. At Chamba it is the bride's parents who ceremonially beg for the match with a higher status bridegroom. The wife givers lower in status in actual practice are now considered so by definition. The superiority of the son-in-law and his agnates is not merely accepted but must be deliberately pronounced, for the prestige gained through this connection is directly related to the prestige enjoyed by the son-in-law and his group. To sit and dine as equals with him is bad manners and with his parents is even worse. In some more orthodox cases, the parents of a girl would abstain from eating at her place altogether. Their abstinence is the qualitative opposite of the restraint exercised by the boy's parents, who should neither visit too often nor dine as equals with their opposite numbers, their inferiors.

This situation is reflected further in the relation between wider groups of wife givers and wife receivers.

- Status differences, expressed through commensal relations and salutation between the different grades of a caste category at Chamba are often greater than those expressed between some higher and lower castes. It has some consequences for defining the lower boundaries of the caste. The higher status Rajputs and Brahmins^A of Chamba include the nobility, the royal priests, the priesthood of prominent temples, the landlords of various status and descendents of other power holders in the state. The lowest grades of these take wives from those Brahmins^A and (for economic reasons) Rajputs who start cultivating their lands themselves, but would not give their daughters in turn. At this level of hypergamous exchanges, the two caste categories tend to merge. The cultivator Brahmins^A and Rajputs are both willing to marry their daughters with either a Rajput or a Brahmin^A of higher status. Some of these cultivators of Churaha have descended from higher families of Chamba. They represent a crucial stage in the economic competition, for taking to the plough is not an easy decision for an orthodox Rajput or a Brahmin^A of Chamba. This sharp drop in their economic status, consequent incapacity to give large dowries and the difficulty of finding wives for their own males (for they are the lowest in the category) and the demands of the new occupation tend to remove them from the original status categories on the one hand and from Chamba to the villages on the other. The higher status Rajputs and Brahmins^A define them loosely as a single category and give the derogatory names of HalBah (one who ploughs), Rathi (the commoner, from rashtra =

- kingdom) or call them simply by the name of the area of ~~in~~habitation (e.g., Churahi). The hypergamous tendency is expressed also in terms of areas and spatial directions. In all these respects Churaha stands at the lowest rung of the hypergamous ladder as viewed by the higher status Hindus of Chamba. Rathis form the most numerous and the upper caste category of Churaha population.

Position of Women: As the capacity to secure proper husbands for the daughter~~s~~ and the sisters, has a direct bearing on one's status, the possibility of not being able to marry them at all is dreaded especially by the higher classes. Some of the effects are shown in child marriages, infanticide and the conspicuous differences between the ages of the spouses. The boys can wait, but not the girls. At Chamba, to marry a wife decidedly younger than oneself is a positive norm and to do the contrary is ridiculed.

Dowries and other conspicuous expenses apart, to secure a higher status husband, brides compete also in terms of chastity. Even a suggestion of lack of chastity may ruin the chances of a girl for contracting a desirable match, or may easily lead a married woman to be ordered back to her parental household. In both cases she remains for the rest of her life at her parents, a witness to their failure in this competition, a standing shame, further reducing the chances of subsequent marital alliances of the household, with the cumulative effect of
- bringing down the future status of the group. In the

- case of an adulteress being subjected to violence, the punishment is normally inflicted by her own agnates. Occasional beatings by the husband even for much lesser failings are tolerated by her group as 'proper', so long as the very severest sentence of sending her back is not executed. Her affinal home, secured for her at the first available chance, is her only proper home forever, whatever the subsequent crises in her life. The death of her husband amounts to her own social death. The popular use of the same word for a widow and a prostitute (randi) is significant. The interest of her group in keeping the marriage stable is far greater than that of her husband's.

Among the highest status families a strong stress is laid on confining the women indoors, ensuring strict privacy and avoidance of contact with various categories of males. Outside work belongs to men or to servants, not to women of the household. The married women are its property and the unmarried ones are the most important burden of the household, mere guests at their parents and marked from birth as paraya dhan (other's property).

Hypergamy and Lower Classes: As the brides go upwards, the problem for the poorest and the lowest status families within a caste category is not only how to marry their women but also how and from where to get wives. The concubines in higher families, either paid for or in the old days received as part of the dowry by the higher status

males, did not enjoy the rights of a proper wife (lari). The inheritance of their children was not recognised in the traditional code. More often they remained as servants in the household. But for the poor males who are unable to solicit a proper bride, to secure a woman on payment is the only solution. And these, although not considered properly married wives from the point of view of higher classes, are nevertheless their only wives and their sons the only heirs. This period in the history of poorer families, as indicated earlier, follows a particular stage in their declining fortunes when they have to take to the plough. The stress on primogeniture among higher classes have been contributing to their numbers. The majority of the immigrants, Brahm^ains and Rajpūts in Churaha, collectively termed as Rathis by the higher status Hindus of Chamba have come from such families. This process of changing the occupation, taking up residence in areas like Churaha and marrying local girls is not new. It is also recorded in the earliest settlement reports and Gazetteers, dating back to the last half of the 19th century and there is no reason to believe that it has not been going on before that. The recent changes in Churaha, however, enhanced this process significantly. Reports dealing with the origins of the Rathis invariably refer to the importance of marriages between the higher status Hindu males and local girls. (P. Dist. Gaz. vol XXXA 1917 part III p54). Hindu immigrants not directly coming from Chamba are in no way different in this respect. The practice of hypergamy is widespread in the adjoining Hindu areas. With a lesser intensity it prevails through-

out North India. Its strains in the adjoining plains are also evident. According to Karve: "In the Delhi and Punjab region, among poorer classes there is always a dearth of brides" (E. Karve 1953 p132). She has conjectured further that although infanticide is not practised, neglect of female babies may lead to the same result. But there is enough evidence to show that female infanticide is more relevant to the higher classes and its effects are transmitted to the poorer classes through hypergamy. The following comments of an administrator at Kangra, a district of old Punjab, in the immediate neighbourhood of Chamba are revealing:

"The result of this is that it becomes most difficult to obtain a suitable match for high born girls and there can be no doubt, I think, that the custom of infanticide is by no means extinct. In this case she was discovered, but it is most probable that there are many such which elude detection. The system adopted for prevention of the crime can only operate as a partial check as the families in which it is more usually committed are more or less influential" (Gazetteer of the Kangra Dist. 1884 vol I p62).

Dearth of Brides in Churaha: The implications of the dearth of brides for Churaha are of cardinal importance for understanding its social organisation and the impact of recent changes. It was pointed out earlier that Churaha at present occupies the lowest end of the hypergamous scale in spatial, economic and ritual terms. The loss of regular contacts with eastern areas means that its

own dearth of brides cannot be significantly passed on further east, even though a number of women from Lahaul and Pangi (across the Pangi Range) still figure in marriages with Churahi males. Besides, certain economic and political changes affecting Buddhist sections of the population in those areas reduced the surplus of available brides which normally results from the practice of polyandry. Coupled with an increasing influx of male immigrants, these changes have led to an acute competition for brides.

The Churahis are familiar with the superior marriage practise of their patrons at Chamba and quite a few can describe the details of the ceremonies as well, witnessed at first hand. Within Churaha itself, a marriage attended with some form of Sanskritic ritual involving communal participation is extremely rare. At Bharara, out of 279 marriages only 16 (5.73%) were accompanied by some form of sanskritic ceremonies. Over time, the incidence of such marriages shows further decline. Only 3 out of 84 (3.6%) occurred after 1959. These marriages considered superior and performed by those who can afford it, are known as Pun-Biah, i.e., no bride price is taken for the girl. In some cases, dowry was also given. Of the rest, 25.1% were in the nature of formal contracts between the parents. Agreed amounts of bride price were paid and whatever little ceremony in the form of a feast in some of them was introduced, was only at the boy's house after the transfer of the girl. Others, accounting for nearly seventy percent (69.16%) of the total were totally devoid

of ceremony. Of these 193 marriages, 153 were elopements, most of which were subsequently regularised by paying the negotiated amounts of bride price. The other forty were those in which an uxori-local husband was permitted under various conditions which range from being accepted after a period of service to positive inducement in the form of a written or unwritten promise of land transfer. In the latter case, it is either due to lack of male heirs or more often due to the fact that the girl's parents normally welcome her staying at her natal home for as long as she may (an exact opposite of the higher class Hindu values at Chamba). In the household economy of Churaha she is also an economic asset as a working hand. She can afford to wait for marriage. A maturer girl up to a certain age normally fetches a better bride price than a very young girl.

Chastity as understood by a Chamba Hindu is less relevant. Being a widow, an unmarried mother, or a divorcee are no obstacles to a girl's marriage. Proved fertility and the possibility of bringing previous children along makes her even more desirable. Other men's sexual advances towards one's wife lead to quarrels but such advances towards unmarried girls or women in general other than the wives of one's close agnates, are less resented. In the case of adultery leading to a quarrel between the husband and the wife, the crucial step of divorce is normally taken by the wife. If she goes to stay with the adulterer or with another man, the previous husband is paid the equivalent of the bride price. But

- if she goes back to the parents and does not marry for some time, he may lose both and often goes to plead either for her return or the repayment of bride price. Others formally or informally present at such pleadings take the charge of (actual or false) maltreatment levelled against the husband by the wife much more seriously than his own defences in which adultery is hardly mentioned at the time. In case the parents of the girl do not take a strong stand in this respect, they will simply suggest to the husband to take her back if she agrees to go. The use of force against a woman is neither approved nor is useful in the circumstances as there is nothing to compel her continuous residence at the husband's in future and reported bad temper in the husband reduces his chances of securing a new wife. The bride price is returned if the girl marries again and secures another bride price. If the man himself marries again before the remarriage of his ex-wife, his claim to compensation lapses.

Thus the interest of the wife's agnates in keeping a marriage stable is minimal. To a limited extent, it is displayed in uxorilocal marriages. A resident son-in-law is a useful helping hand. His rights including that of continuous residence and sexual access to the wife depend on her sweet will. His duties often reduce his position to that of a servant. The males opting for such uxorilocal situations are relatively poor and more often than not are new immigrants.

- A few better-off local families, temporarily resident

government officials, visiting traders, etc., often get local wives and marry their own women hypergamously at Chamba or beyond. Such desirable links through women are the first expressed choice for a Churahi parent too and are competed for. But the chances, in relation to the whole population, are very few and a number of such cases remain temporary. It is not uncommon for temporarily posted officials from outside to keep a local girl only for the duration of their stay. No ceremony is involved and the status of such a girl is interpreted as that of a wife by the Churahis but merely that of a concubine by the concerned outsiders (if not otherwise asserted as that of a servant which is increasingly becoming the fashion now, under the impact of the new service rules).

The desire for such hypergamous links is fulfilled temporarily or permanently only in a few cases anyway. The next best option, that is, keeping uxori-local husbands, also does not keep the marriages stable in many cases as the basic norms derived from the principle of patri-linearity are the same as at Chamba. The males in such cases move out as soon as they are able to possess some land or a better promise for it elsewhere. For them the pursuit is both for land and for wives and the former is better in the long run.

In a vast majority of cases, neither of the above stated desires of the girls parents is fulfilled even temporarily. So that their own interest in the stability of marriage in general is very little and the interest

of the male's agnates alone is unable to ensure this stability. ~~In the situation,~~ The concerned spouse's own choices are exercised much more independently of the groups in Churaha than at Chamba. In other spheres too, the relative independence from the group, enjoyed by a working individual in Churaha is far greater than at Chamba and it has been further strengthened by the changes in land tenure and secondly by the increased chances of getting new land. As opposed to the stress on arranged marriages at Chamba, in Churaha the initiative normally rests with the spouses. Among the higher Hindus of Chamba, in the rare case of a male forcibly carrying away a girl if he does not belong to a conspicuously higher and powerful family, both can be put to death if traced. Otherwise a marriage must follow even if the girl is not willing. In Churaha, if such a girl indicates her disapproval by refusing to eat at his place she must be allowed to go home at once as a norm.

The lack of interest felt or exercised by the wider groups in the Churahi marriages seems to be a crucial factor in its instability. It is in this particular respect that Chamba and Churaha stand near opposite poles. Ceremonial participation at marriages is a readily observable overt expression of this phenomenon. As opposed to the rare and extremely limited participation of one's kin, friends and neighbours in a Churahi marriage, Chamba is known for its dhams (marriage feasts) among other things. In case of some marriages among the highest grade Rajputs and Brahmins, at least one member of every house-

hold is expected to attend the dham. This participation is highly ritualised and the very next day everyone who attended the dham must also go through a purely ritual ceremony organised for blessing the marriage (tel sand).

The Hindus of Chamba do not recognise divorce. But among the Hindus of Churaha out of 279 marriages (at Bharara) 123 (44.086%) led to divorce. Of those terminated by death, 22 were followed by remarriage. In the marriages which survived till the time of observation, the potential for divorce can be put even higher as the divorce to marriage ratio over time has shown considerable increase over the last four decades, (~~63.095%~~) being 63.095% after 1959.

Before exploring further the nature and size of the groups involved, let us note another important divergence between the norms at Chamba and Churaha. Except for those few hypergamous relations contracted mostly with outsiders, the relative status of affinal households in Churaha is the reverse of that which obtains among Rajputs and Brahmins^a of Chamba. The status of the son-in-law and his parents is underlined as inferior at two occasions. During the crop-cutting season when the pressure on manual resources is maximum, the son-in-law or someone of his male agnates would often go to assist his affinal household and not vice versa. For soliciting a marriage, it is the boy's father or someone related to him who would go with gifts to the girl's household to beg for the match ceremonially. During the negotiations which follow,

relating to the bride price and future happiness of the girl, the arguments normally end only when the boy's party ceremonially put their headgear at the feet of the girl's parents. It is a well recognised gesture of inferiority in Churaha as well as at Chamba. But at Chamba it is the girls' parents who may do it.

Exogamy and Endogamy: Like hypergamy, exogamy also has its dynamic dimensions. The actual limits vary at different levels of a hierarchy and in different areas and as we will see presently, exogamous limits even in the higher classes have been widening over time. Two basic rules of exogamy are well known to the students of Hindu social organisation. One refers to the exogamy of the gotra whose members are sa-gotra to each other, i.e., they are thought to have descended from a common ancestor even when the actual links may not be known. The other is the rule of sa-pinda which excludes marriage between two persons related through a common male ancestor up to the 7th generation (exclusive of ego) in the fathers line and up to the 5th generation in the mothers line. Hutton observes:

"The gotra then, though normally an exogamous group within the endogamous caste or sub-caste, is very far from being a stable institution even among the Brahmans (Hutton 1951: 57-58).

Among the Pandits of Kashmir, Madan recorded the stated limits of exogamy as 1) known agnates, 2) sa-gotra and 3) M.Fa. gotra. But he observed that out of the two

categories of priests (Gor) and workers (karkun) into which the Pandits are divided, it is in fact the priests who do not avoid marriage even within their own gotra (Madan 1962: 18: 59). The reason they state is that due to lack of sufficient numbers they cannot find spouses.

The historical materials bear out the fact that the concept of gotra has evolved gradually over time and even the numbers of generations stated in the sa-pinda rule were smaller earlier. Karve concludes that at one stage, consanguinity was the only consideration and that the concept of consanguinity: "at first confined to cousins of the second degree, later embraced a larger and larger circle of relatives" (Karve 1953: 57). She, however, dismisses the references ~~to~~ brother-sister marriage in earlier literature rather unconvincingly (Ibid: 46).

In the lower classes and especially in areas like Churaha the abstract concept of a wider exogamous grouping like gotra loses its relevance. The general stress put on the so-called gotra exogamy in the literature on Hindu society may have been partly the result of our subjects' excessive concern with descent groups but it also shows how much we have drawn upon the middle or upper class values for generalising about Hindu social organisation.

In practice the idea of exogamy has very little to do with defining the boundaries of a group. It refers to a rather loosely defined and variously interpreted

field of kinship relations which extend or are thought to extend either through one's cognates or through the affines, along certain lines of unequal effectiveness. The possibility of defining the external boundaries of this field is further lessened by a number of rules which govern adoption, ~~class~~ interaction, co-residence, etc. The idea of exogamy is further modified by hypergamous practices to such a degree that its use for defining a group is minimal. In a hypergamous situation, the motivation for exogamy is not merely to prevent incestuous relations but also to enhance one's status by extending one's field of kinship relations upwards. Besides, the value put on exogamy differs in relation to particular marriages involving the boys and the girls in a household.

The political value attached to arranged marriages is seldom lost on the parents. At Chamba even to marry two sons in the same household means the loss of a possible additional dhir (a support or a side). Like hypergamy, exogamy has also a basically political character. The norms that express it emerge out of actual practices and over time these norms are either strengthened or compromised according to the capacity for contracting marriages as far away from the near kin as possible. Thus, among the higher classes in well populated and long established areas like Chamba the exogamous limits are always wider than in the lower classes and in areas like Churaha.

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A Mian's ideal statement of exogamous limits.

The following must be excluded for marriage:

1. own āl (patrilineage)
 2. āl's of one's barādari as well as all those āls who bear a common gotra name. (The most prominent gotra names of Mian Rajputs at Chamba are: Kashyap, Bhardwaj, Deval, Atri and Uttam. Incidentally, the first four of these names are also the most prominent gotra names among the upper class Brahmans.)
 3. M.B.'s āl
 4. F.W.B.'s āl
 5. F.B.W.B.'s āl
 6. F.M.B.'s āl
 7. F.F.W.B.'s āl
 8. M.M.B.'s āl
 9. F.F.M.B.'s āl
 10. Persons related through known male ancestors of M. and M.M.
 11. Descendents of known female agnates of one's male ancestors.
 12. Agnates of F.Z.H., M.Z.H.
 13. Agnates of Z.H. (for a boy)
 14. Agnates of B.W. (for a girl)
 15. Co-residents of the Mohalla (locality)
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F. = father; M. = mother; B. = brother; Z. = sister;
H. = husband.

At Chamba the nearest equivalent of a patrilineal clan is known as āl. These āls are often named either after localities or some historical events associated with the ancestors. A number of patrilineally linked āls sometimes form a bharadari (brotherhood). But this concept of bharadari is often extended to include all those local āls which are thought to enjoy the same status even when the patrilineal links between them are absent. For a high class Brahman or a Rajput no marriage should occur within a bharadari. For a girl's marriage, the āls linked through female affines of the household as far as known and all other bharadaris or āls inferior in status must be excluded. Those sharing the same locality of residence or some other field of close interaction (~~but not much higher in status~~) are also excluded.

In the lowest grades of Brahm^ains and Rajputs of Chamba, the concept of bharadari loses its significance. The āl is more important. One's āl is always exogamous but the āls linked through female affines (which are still excluded for a girl's marriage) including the mother's āl do often provide wives for the boys.

In Churaha this concept of āl also disappears though certain āl names are still associated with some groups. These names (often derogatory in literal translation) are more often applied to these groups by others. A much smaller unit of cognates is exogamous. Higher Hindus of Chamba will often assert that these Churahis, just like some Shudra groups at Chamba, feel no shame

in marrying their near kin such as one's M.B.D., F.F.Z.D., F.B.W.Z., Z.H.Z.,[⊕] etc. In Churaha, the actual exogamous limits along affinal lines shrink even further and the divorcees from the previous generation (e.g., F.^W.~~B.~~^{D.}) can also be married. Territorial exogamy is non-existent. Out of 279 marriages at Bharara, 58 were performed between persons of the same locality. The exogamous patrilineage, more or less localised, is known as bhialti. It includes only the remembered links. The largest bhialti represented at Bharara includes 18 households, 13 of which belong to Bharara itself. The greatest depth of a bhialti at Bharara at the time of the latest marriage of one of its youngest males (geneologically) could be traced up to the fourth ascending generation. Partly responsible for limiting the size and depth of the local patrilineage in Churaha are the migratory movements mentioned before. Abstract notions of wider patrilineal links are irrelevant for a Churahi marriage. Quoting the authority of a Brahmin^a from a neighbouring settlement some residents of Bharara claim a particular gotra (~~Qan~~) name, Gaur. But when asked about the gotra names of their affines the explanation is that the others are also Gaur, but of different varieties which remain unnamed.

Thus the differential value put on the principle of exogamy has the effect of widening the limits in the upper classes and more established dominant Hindu areas like Chamba and of shrinking them in lower classes and fringe areas. This tendency has obvious consequences for

⊕ (Z = sister. c.f. Fox 1967:185)

- defining the endogamous limits. It is mainly the middle classes who seem to escape the strains arising out of the interaction between these two principles of exogamy and endogamy. Their marital links often remain within the area sub-caste. For the highest groups such as the upper grades of Brahmins and Rajputs of Chamba who try to establish marital alliances with equally high or higher status groups elsewhere, it is the wider caste which is relevant. Some of them even crossed the religious boundaries. But in the lower classes and fringe areas such as Churaha where the area of choice decreases constantly, the difficulty of finding spouses which tends to shrink the exogamous limits, also puts a strain on the endogamous limits as well and leads to the merger of originally endogamous units.

The higher classes have the positive capacity to widen the endogamous area spatially by linking with powerful groups elsewhere and can also afford to shed some of their less fortunate ^{local} members, whereas the lower classes can only exercise the negative option of merging with other poorer local groups. Most descendents of the old petty chiefs of Churaha known as Ranas and other locally powerful families who were later given superior titles, merged with the higher classes of Chamba. In the present Churaha population we witness the constant pressure for merging a number of (well remembered in some cases) endogamous boundaries. Changes in the economy and migratory movements, having considerably enhanced these trends, dramatically illustrate the opposing character

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of these two processes between Churaha and Chamba. Even the Brahmans of Churaha face desanskritisation after the improved communications with the so called sanskritised society of Chamba. Imitation of Chamba society does not help a Churahi in getting a spouse. Contacts with the hypergamous society of Chamba rather increase this basic problem in Churaha. Such problems straining the principles of exogamy and endogamy persist even in the heart of Hindu society. The following observation from central India is significant:

"The fact seems to be that not too many questions are posed if the marriage is especially necessary - such matches usually take place between the very poor (who may not be able to find mates) or the rich (where financial considerations are paramount). There is also a general shortage of girls and the boys' family may often be tempted to simplify the rules of exogamy" (Mayer A.C. 1960: 203).

In an area of observation, limited both in the scale and the nature of the population, such practices can be easily passed over as tolerable degrees of deviance but in a wider context they affect the general norms of particular areas and sections of population differentially. A similar relation between different but economically and politically inter-dependent areas (hinted at earlier) is apparent in the interpretation of the principle of hierarchical stratification of castes.

- Hierarchical Stratification of Castes: Economic

differences within Churaha are of a much lower order than at Chamba. Most of the present population are subsistence cultivators. Numerous groups of erstwhile artisans, menials, wandering ascetics, etc., now possess sufficient land for subsistence. Only a few isolated households, to which the terms Lohar (smith), Chamar (shoemaker) are quite often interchangeably applied, do not always have enough land. Frequent changes in their occupations, spatial mobility and inter-marriages are all responsible for them being considered as a single category by others. Most of the jobs usually associated with special occupation groups, the Churahi cultivators do either individually for themselves or some of them more skilled than others may do for the rest on payment. These include weaving, carpentry, masonry, sewing, skin cleaning, herding, providing music at ceremonies, etc. A number of necessities, such as utensils, implements and ornaments are bought from mobile traders who visit a number of local fairs (jatars) held in Churaha, just after the harvest. Even for removing the dead cattle a Churahi (unlike the Chamba Hindus) would prefer to help himself instead of covering a few miles of hilly tracks in search of a menial. At life crisis ceremonies, none of the specialists is finally indispensable.

A few junior branches of the erstwhile landlords, besides some traders, still reside in Churaha. Those who could afford ~~it~~ have been taking up residence at Chamba from time to time. Some very recent developments, only a few years old, have brought some wealthier

- individuals into the area, particularly at Tissa the Tehsil headquarters, and at certain other places along the new Chamba-Tissa road; but so far they are of limited relevance to the situation under discussion.

A number of caste names are either used or claimed or just exist only in memory. But for marriages, besides the small group of lowest status menials who freely intermarry, the rest are divided into two broadly endogamous categories. The most numerous upper category is collectively known as Rathis. It includes all those who claim to be Brahm^ains or Rajputs, or Gosains or just Rathis. The second endogamous category is collectively called the Aryas. They also remember some previous names such as Megh, Hali, Sipi, Jogi, Koli, etc., and immigrants bearing such names are readily absorbed into this category. But most of them claim their origin from marriages between higher status Rajput men and Arya women. A number of inter-caste ~~hypergamous~~ marriages between the ~~first~~ two categories are adding to their number even now. Barnes and Lyall, the reporters of the 19th century, describe the first category (Rathis) itself in similar terms such as: "The offspring of a Rajput father by a Sudra mother would be styled a Rathi and accepted as such by the brotherhood" (Barnes and Lyall 1883-4: 1: 88). The present lines of ritual stratification are not very old. I do not presume here that the ideology of ritual stratification itself is so new to Churaha as the bearers of this ideology had been coming to Churaha for a long time. My reference is only to the present alignments

into three identifiable endogamous strata. This has been directly influenced by firstly, the changeover to sedentary economy and secondly, the growing economic and political independence of local groups. Other implications of this phenomenon will be discussed later.

One of the consequences of this relative closure of these recognisable categories has been to distribute, to some extent the strains resulting from the dearth of brides among the different strata. In this way, endogamous ideas in their own turn act as partial checks to ~~the~~ hypergamy; and where the endogamous caste groups are more rigidly defined (due to other reasons which will be clear later) as in the plains, the practice of hypergamy seems to be confined within the castes, at least in the local context. But howsoever modified in this way, the overall relevance of the total class structure for understanding the effects of hypergamy is clear from the different kinds of strains felt at the highest and the lowest levels. The persistence of this practice within the caste (i.e., among ritual equals) rather illustrates the importance of the secular criteria for hypergamous marriages. In a given area, the intensity of hypergamy is broadly related to the inequalities in secular status.

At Chamba, in spite of the fact that classical Sanskrit ideology and the Brahman priests received lavish patronage under the Hindu Rajas, the secular inequalities established (as noted earlier) a number of grades within the Rajput and Brahman categories which are now defined not only

in terms of hypergamy but also in certain commensal practices. It is rather the lower boundaries of the castes which are more vaguely defined.

In Churaha, on the other hand, hypergamous marriages in general are far fewer and more often than not are between locals and outsiders. Within the present caste categories, the identities of different original caste groups are progressively lost under the strains issuing directly from the dominant society at Chamba, mentioned earlier in relation to hypergamy, exogamy and endogamy. This process and the essential fluidity of the situation can be gauged from the struggles of certain familial groups (especially some local Brahmins^a and a few Rana families and some menials) to maintain or enhance their social status. In terms of the category as a whole, the status consciousness and the symbolic acts to improve the collective status is relatively new and as we shall see later, it goes contrary to the first kind of struggle on familial or smaller group levels. As to how both these phenomena go on side by side, we will have a glimpse of the situation in relation to those groups who prefer to be called Brahmin instead of Rathi.

Besides being conscious of the relative superiority of the Rathis over the Aryas and that of the latter over the menials, Churahis also recognise the overall superiority of the Brahmans and Rajputs of Chamba. Some of them until recently were their landlords and still extend various forms of patronage informally. The temples which

are revered for their Sanskritised mode of worship are also located at Chamba. In the small local temples of Churaha, where the forms of worship involve spirit possession and blood sacrifices, the composition of the groups of mediums and other officiants is extremely varied and in general includes individuals from different caste categories depending upon the composition of the settlement. Later on we will consider a case where a particular temple of local worship has developed a special link with Chamba. Some offices in it are monopolised by a group of dominant families who call themselves Brahmins^a and provide the officiants in rotation around the year. Neither of these temples is a centre of regular worship (unlike some temples at Chamba). Ceremonies are restricted either to individual requests or to a few particular days in the year. The nature of offerings (eatables, sacrificial animals, ceremonial artifacts, etc.) and the relatively rare use of these temples does not provide any significant economic rewards for the local priesthood. Comparatively better placed in this respect are a few individual chelas (mediums) who perform for individual households for a fee. In all these forms of local worship no right to inherit priestly duties is recognised and for a variety of reasons individual attempts to pass on the mantle to one's sons seldom succeed.

Other interpreters of the spiritual world in Churaha include the wandering sadhus (ascetics), Buddhist Lamas and the local Brahmins, all of whom circulate on payment for a variety of ceremonies. In spite of their relatively

rare visits, the Buddhist Lamas (called Lama guru or simply guruji) are held in high esteem by the Churahis (including local Brahmins^o). That this does not conflict with local Brahmanical ideology is apparent in a number of ways and is conspicuously epitomised at Trailokinath. On the eastern side of the Pangri Range, that is, in Chamba-Lahaul^h where predominance of the Hindu element of the population starts diminishing, is located the temple of Trailokinath. It is the most ancient temple and one of the most popular centres of pilgrimage for the population of the whole region (for Hindus and Buddhists alike). Its local patron and manager is a high caste Hindu Rana (descendent of an old petty chief). But its priests are always Buddhist Lamas. Its presiding deity - Trailokinath (Lord of three worlds) is interpreted as Shiva by the Hindus and as Avalokiteshvara (also called Lord of three worlds) by the Buddhists.

It is important to understand what the position of a local Brahmin^a rests upon and what he struggles for. Some Brahmins^a of Churaha (included in our upper caste category of Rathis) act as interpreters of the cycle of festivals and at certain life crisis ceremonies. They also act as name-givers and preachers. Almost all these functions are also performed by a number of other religious functionaries, noted above. The advantage^a a Brahmin^a enjoys in the long run is derived firstly from his ability to pass on his ritual status to his son, for his powers are believed to be inherited, and secondly from the political dominance of Hindu society of Chamba which

patronises the Brahmanical practices. The first condition is ensured if he is able to get a Brahmin^a wife, and the second depends upon the recognition of his status by the dominant classes of Hindu society at Chamba. He tries to achieve these objectives by marrying his daughters^a properly with dowries to higher status Brahmins at Chamba and elsewhere. This very practice (^{arranged} in these small groups) decreases his chance of getting Brahmin^a wives for his sons. Add to this the general dearth of brides in Churaha. A Brahmin^a in Churaha who aspires to strengthen or maintain the ritual status of his household has to pay dowries on the one hand and bride price on the other. *Not with standing* The immediate effect of these exchanges on his economic status, his economic condition itself is important for soliciting these 'pure' spouses he must arrange for his sons and daughters. In economic terms his priestly duties are not a very attractive vocation in this area firstly because of the relevant ease with which a Brahmin^a's services can be dispensed with, and secondly, the increasing remuneration from agricultural work and the possibility of expanding into new lands are directly related here to the availability of manual labour. So that, in the long run, the aspirations for the status of a Brahmin^a prove costly. It is the next generation which pays for this luxury, as for them the competition for land and wives becomes more acute as compared to others in the upper-caste category. For the reasons stated above, in Churaha, the occupation of a Brahmin^a priest seldom sticks to a particular household for long.

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In the two Brahmin households, heads of which serve the residents of Bharara, the male heirs either deserted or married Arya (second category) wives. In one of them is now entrenched a goldsmith from Chamba (now a cultivator and accepted in the Rathi category) in uxorilocal residence. In the other, the errant son has been allowed to bring his lower status wife home. The single roomed house is shared with his priestly father, who however, cooks his meals separately. The clientele at Bharara is now increasingly utilising the services of another Brahmin, from a different settlement, who has been visiting Bharara for some time as a preacher on his own initiative.

This essentially economic struggle for the descendents of a Brahmin priest ends only when they merge in the general Rathi category, only the name remains for some time. From the actual exchanges of spouses between differently named groups it is clear that more Brahmin^a girls are married to Rathi males than vice versa. In commensal relations there is absolutely no status difference at the group level.

After the abolition of princely rule, and after becoming owner-cultivators, some Rathis now interpret their status as Rajputs. The myth of Rajput origins existed before but its public claim is not so old. Even now, it is seldom expressed in the presence of a superior Hindu patron from Chamba. About gotra names we have already noted their confusion. However, these names are

synonymous with the gotra names claimed by local Brahmins^a. About the status of the Rathis as a category, there are two theories current among these Rajputs and Brahmins^a. The former claim that their ancestors were superior status Rajputs who came from the plains, and on the way met some hostile rakshasas (demons) for fear of whom they deliberately kept their superior names secret and came to be known by a variety of inferior names. The Brahmins^a on the other hand say that all of them immigrated as Brahmins^a from the plains, but for various reasons (including the harshness of the climate and poverty) forgot their superior ways and came to be called Rathis. What name Rajputs or Brahmins^a will finally stick to this category only the future will tell. But the assertion of a collective status has two roots. One is the positive motivation to distinguish one's group from the other lower categories, the Aryas and the menials. The other is the opinion of the superior Hindus of Chamba, whose patronage still matters and who still consider themselves as one indivisible category. For the Chamba priests of Hindu temples, these Churahis who may call themselves Brahmins^a or Rajputs, are all Rathis.

In a neighbouring area once Professor Newell noted what he called the isogamous process by which through inter-marriage a number of castes merged into a single category of Gaddis and asserted that Brahmins^a could not be so merged. (Newell 1955: 101-110). About a decade later he revisited the area, changed his opinion and described the situation in terms almost similar to

those discussed here for Churaha. His pre-occupation with the so called Sanskritic values and the structural model derived from the plains did not allow him to develop a satisfactory explanation. Briefly, he states that this is a unique instance of contemporary regularised inter-caste marriage; that it does not mean that the caste system itself is breaking down; that the commensal distances which disappear within the locality are scrupulously observed when visiting outside; and that as status is inherited through males only, so caste distinctions can be preserved, etc. (Newell 1963: 55-57).

However, he observed a notable exception of a group of local Brahmins^a families associated with a Hindu temple, who marry their daughters to Brahmins^a elsewhere and are able to solicit wives hypergamously from other local Brahmins^a (Ibid). In Churaha, this possibility (still remote) may emerge in the case of a few families currently associated with a local temple (at Devi Kothi). But finally it is the future economic patronage enjoyed by this temple and its association with Chamba (it has already been placed under the management of a temple committee at Chamba) which will decide the course of events for this group of Brahmins^a.

What I am trying to demonstrate is firstly, the futility of providing hypothetical insularity to a particular area and remaining content with describing the local caste hierarchies; secondly, that the fluidity of the situation in Churaha, even though unusually conspicuous, is neither

foreign to the character of Hindu social organisation, nor is it disconnected with what happens elsewhere, i.e., in the so-called Sanskritised society. This vital connection is provided by the main principles of Hindu social organisation which order actual economic, political and marital relations and not merely their symbolic counterparts.

CHAPTER 2

Social Mobility
(a preliminary framework)

Different Types of Mobility

Distribution of Power

Relevance of African Models

The political Aspect of Stratification

Ritual Aspect of Stratification

Endogamy and Stratification

Marriage and Mobility

The Plains Villages

Structure and Variation

- SOCIAL MOBILITY - (a preliminary framework)

The situation I have described earlier will raise a number of questions in the minds of those who favour a single static model for Hindu social stratification. I have already indicated that the Churaha cannot be understood as just another spatial variant of such a model. It is a part of a model which is inherently dynamic. The presence of such areas on the fringes of Hindu society is as important to its values as the presence of the lower classes is to the values of the upper classes. This vital relationship between Churaha and the rest of Hindu society can be grasped by defining its position along the three continua stated earlier, namely, spatial, hierarchical and temporal. The first two we have partly discussed. The significance of the temporal continuum will emerge from the discussion that follows.

Some of the most valuable comments about the nature of caste stratification have been made in the discussions about social mobility. Two fundamentally different problems are involved here. One is about the very possibility of social mobility in a system which ideally confers status only through birth in closed endogamous groups whose position, according to Leach, is so well defined that it excludes competition (Leach 1960: 6-7). The simple answer to this question has been provided by ample evidence of actual mobility. What is being explored further is the relation of social mobility to particular situations and levels of the hierarchy. The second

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problem concerns the nature of mobility. Does it occur only at the status group level or is individual (upward) mobility also possible? It is worth noticing that most of those who recognise only group mobility, to the exclusion of individual mobility, base their arguments on the materials derived from the mainstream of Hindu society (Srinivas 1968: 196-199). On the other hand, evidence of individual mobility characteristically comes either from what I have called the fringe areas under the princely states (Furer-Haimendorff 1960: 1966; Colin Rosser 1966) or from materials referring to the medieval period (Burton Stein 1968). Is it, after all, related to the nature of power distribution?

Different Types of Mobility: Colin Rosser demonstrates both kinds of social mobility in Nepal and emphasises the significance of political and economic factors. Unfortunately, he limits the scope of his demonstration to showing merely the possibilities of social mobility of both kinds. Beyond this he over-simplifies the problem and equates the situation in the old small feudal states with that which obtains in the plains village communities (Colin Rosser 1966). The mistaken equation of these two situations does not allow him to notice a fundamental difference between them which relates them to different kinds of mobility. The nature of social mobility is intimately related to the nature of power distribution. In this respect, the situation in the plains village communities is diametrically opposed to that in a small feudal state. In the latter, power derived from a single

source is distributed hierarchically among individuals or small familial groups. In the former, power is largely shared among the members of a locally dominant group, which is often numerically dominant as well. In a small feudal state, upward social mobility means a rise in the hierarchy of individuals. In the plains it means dominating a group, which is possible only for a like group and not for an individual. But there is another fallacy. A village community is not a complete political system as a feudal state is and he is well aware of this when he tries to establish the relevance of the cities. It is the total political domain which should be the unit of comparison for the distribution of power.

Distribution of Power: In spite of some colourful descriptions of these 'little republics' (Metcalf 1872: 2: 218-19) the plains villages, in their present political form, cannot (and historically did not) exist totally independent of some superior authority, which limits the development of hierarchies of power within the dominant groups. The amount of independence which these local communities enjoy has increased gradually in relation to two developments both of which followed the expansion of the relevant political domains to which they belonged at different stages. One of these developments is the increasing distance from the law and order apparatus of central administration. Cohen stresses this point while considering the role of local patronymic associations in the Middle East (Cohen 1970).

The second development, far more important, is the gradual removal from the local stage of the old petty ruler, who first went through various transformations from, for example, a local baron to an estate holder and finally, just a landlord gradually divested of his powers which at one stage included law and order, tax collection, intervention in local disputes, etc., and then often physically shifted to the towns developing around state capitals to the growing cities. This evolutionary perspective is important in understanding the present differences between the local communities in the plains and in the interior of the Himalayas, because these developments have not followed the same pace everywhere. The vestiges of the small feudal state, which Colin Rosser asserts, existed in India 'classically, traditionally and ubiquitously' (Colin Rosser 1966: 71) can still be traced in the region under discussion. Here we notice 1) how these petty chiefs went through a gradual transformation of their powers over the local communities and 2) how their absorption into the ruling classes often meant a shift of residence as well, from the original locality to the new seats of power.

The areas covered by the state of Chamba were once ruled by a number of local chiefs called Ranas, Rajanakas and Thakurs. The political domains (ranhus or thakuris) of these constantly feuding chiefs seldom exceeded a few square miles of these sparsely populated areas. The state of Chamba emerged from the successful exploits of one of them - the chief of Brahmaur, who subsequently

shifted his capital to Chamba. In Churaha some of these local Ranas and Thakurs, now tributary to Chamba, enjoyed varying amounts of power within their domains, far longer than others in areas nearer to the plains. On the eastern side of the Pangri Range some of them exercised their inherited powers up to the abolition of the princely rule in 1948. Even in those areas further east (Lahaul) which came under direct British rule earlier, the descendents of some of these chiefly families were regularly vested with financial, administrative and magisterial powers.

These Ranas are described at one stage as local barons who paid fixed amounts of tribute to the Raja of Chamba and attended upon him with their personal retainers whenever called for. Some of them were mentioned immediately next to the Raja in the order of precedence. Subsequent absorption of most of them into the ruling classes of Chamba resulted from firstly, their introduction into the central state administration and secondly, from their marital alliances with the noble families, the mians, and other higher status Rajputs of Chamba. Their shift to Chamba for residence can be understood in relation to three factors. First is the obvious advantage of being nearer to the source of authority. Secondly, shifting of residence did not involve the immediate loss of power within their baronies (later known as jagirs). Thirdly, their status in the hyper-gamous hierarchy depended upon not only to whom they gave their daughters in marriage but also from whom they took wives: and no Rajput of high status at Chamba would

- send his daughter or sister in marriage to these areas in the interior. Residence at Chamba is at once an indicator of high status, a matter of political convenience and a consideration in marriage negotiations.

Later on, the state used the words Rana and Thakur as titles which could be conferred on other favourites and state officials. Dispossession of those Ranas who incurred the displeasure of the Raja and allotment of estates to new Ranas went on side by side. Some of these Ranas and Thakurs were given the title of Mian (highest in the state). Some of them slipped down the scale. Now these Mians, Ranas, Thakurs, etc., are caste names at Chamba.

The character of local administration in the state evolved from this tradition of the local chief. Up to the beginning of this century, the local official in Churaha (odhru) was a replica of a local baron and his powers included the right of intervention in political, judicial, economic and social activities of the population. ~~Dis~~association of power from the rule of inheritance and the separation of different types of administrative functions were brought about gradually. The effects of the old tradition in the interior of Churaha can still be seen, when disputes of every kind are often brought before a title holder (Mian, Rana, etc.) or an erstwhile landlord or any official who just happens to be available in the situation, regardless of his specific functions.

- The status of the individual concerned in the hierarchy

of power is still more important than his special function. Such changes in the character of administration and in the powers wielded by individual local families occurred much earlier in the plains. So that only by allowing our models to vary between the small feudal state and the largest political domain, namely, India as a whole, can we grasp the full extent of variation in the nature of power distribution, its consequences for the structure of local communities and its relation with the phenomenon of social mobility.

Relevance of African Models: To begin with, we can take the help of Lloyd's second and third variants of the model of government, proposed in relation to African kingdoms. Then we will discuss the complexities involved in our situation and how the role of marriage in relation to social mobility varies from one extreme to the other.

In his second variant of the model, Lloyd states:

"The kingship is hereditary within the royal lineage ... the chiefs have both policy making and administrative roles ... Lacking rights in chieftaincy, titles and land, the descent groups in such a society are corporately weak ... Since promotion in the title association depends to a large extent on the favour of one's superiors, clientship is common here as a means to upward social mobility ... In this system there is strong competition for promotion between the individual members of the political elite each backed perhaps by a following recruited in a number of different ways - by kinship, by co-membership of a

village, by clientship, etc." (Lloyd P.C. 1965: 102).

He remarks further that such a system is relatively stable and is characterised by a high rate of individual mobility.

In Lloyd's third variant, most of the political elite come from the royal aristocracy. He feels that such a system in its purest form is most unstable. He describes the strains as follows:

"Faced by the perpetual rivalry from other members of the royal lineage, the king tries to buttress his own power by granting political office to affinal and maternal relatives, to loyal supporters from other groups within the ruling class, to slaves and lowly commoners. ... The dominated commoner class does not participate directly in the government of the kingdom; though they may influence the selection as clients ... It is in the interest of the ruling class that strong corporate groups and loyalties should not exist within the commoner class; bonds of clientship cut across class boundaries and link the king with his subjects ... the ideology of the ruling class, emphasising its right to rule may be rejected by the commoners though the political elite will endeavour through its control of rituals and the educational process to ensure its acceptance. It happens sometimes that the king recruits a few title holders from the more lowly commoners, thus giving the impression that an avenue of social mobility into the ruling class does exist." (Lloyd 1965: 105-106).

This system, due to the possible threats to the position of the king himself, and to that of the ruling class as a whole, according to Lloyd, must combine some of the features of his second variant which allows upward social mobility to the commoners. But at Chamba we find a continuous stability and development of the system in the direction of his third variant. How is this ensured? The answers lie in the relations of this system with the world outside. At this stage we depart from the African models of Lloyd which apply to the conception of a kingdom in total political isolation.

The state of Chamba, in its relations with the outside world, has gone through a process of political and social integration, almost similar to the one that the smaller feudal states (ranhus) within it, went through earlier. Once it was an independent state often at war with other states in the neighbourhood. The threats from more powerful states in the plains led first to political alliances with other neighbouring states and later on to political protection as a tributary of the rulers in the plains. These political links outside were closely followed by social links in the marital, ritual and economic spheres. Further erosion of external independence under the British rule, gradual penetration of outsiders into the administrative services of the state and the association of the ruling classes of Chamba with sources of power lying outside, increased the importance of these external links. But the loss of external independence brought internal security to the position of the Raja as well as to that

of the ruling classes. The state moved away gradually from the position which makes internal compromises of the type noticed by Lloyd, inevitable.

The Political Aspect of Stratification: If we look at this as a continuous process, starting from the small feudal state under the Ranas (known as the Thakurain period) and roughly comparable to Lloyd's second variant, we can notice how the possibilities of upward individual mobility decrease continuously over time, as the state and its ruling classes are politically and socially integrated into a larger political domain. The promotional powers for raising the status of an individual, which originally (in a small independent feudal state) rested with the ruler, later on had to reckon with the growing power of the ruling classes whose membership was sought by the aspirant. This is the basic political aspect of the processes which led to the closure of the status groups represented in the ruling classes. Now we can deal with the ritual and endogamous character of this closure.

Ritual Aspect of Stratification: The ritual aspects confuse the issue only when either we put excessive value on the role of scriptures as guides to practical behaviour, or if we subscribe to the theory of separate ethnic origins

for castes.¹ Under either theory, however, it becomes impossible^{to explain}/how titles conferred by the ruler could assume ritual character. Even that celebrated caste mark (janeo = the sacred thread) of the so-called twice born castes has been politically regulated. Hutchinson writing about the Rajas of Chamba observes:

"In past times the Rajas used to confer the right to wear the janeo, with a step in social rank, in return for gifts or special services" (Gaz. Chamba 1904: 136).

The highest form of gift recognised by Hindus of Chamba is the gift of a wife, and the numerous wives of the Rajas did not always come from higher castes. One of them of Rathi origin is now resident in Churaha enjoying

¹ The weakness of the race theory was demonstrated by Cox long ago (Cox 1948, 1970: 82-118). But its adherents still put much value on the literal translation of the word varna = colour (Ghurye 1950: 47; 1969: 46, Srinivas 1962: 63). The evidence of metaphorical use of colours to describe attributes in the Hindu literature has been cited by Cox. In this region linguistically similar words vān, vāni and vangi are even now used in the sense of type or kind as well as of colour. On the other hand, a phrase - rāng a rāng, derived from the word rāng which stands specifically for 'colour' is used to express the sense of variety in any category of things, habits, styles and actions.

a state pension as a legal, properly married wife of the late Raja. Some of her agnates were put in charge of the royal flocks, were given the title of Thakur and were accepted for inter-marriage as equals by lower status Thakurs in the area. The highest status Brahmin families at Chamba whose opinion about ritual status matters, are the descendents of Rajgurus (royal teachers), Rajpurohits (royal priests), Rajvaids (royal physicians), etc., who were themselves appointed by the Rajas. According to Hutchinson and Vogel, even Brahmans "were elevated to Rajput status by the ruling houses" (Hutchinson and Vogel 1933: 24). Some of the less fortunate descendents of the old Ranas in Churaha and Pangri who are now considered as Rathis by the higher Hindus of Chamba do not quote the authority of a Brahmin for their claims to superior status but point to old inscriptions (on stone and copper) which show their ancestral associations with the rulers of Chamba. They also refer to a more interesting fact, i.e., their exemption from forced labour, which very few families in this area enjoyed, before the changes introduced by Col. Blair Reid. So much for the ritual character of these boundaries. It is not the ritual or racial purity but the approval accorded by the ruler that mattered for status, in the past and that of the ruling classes later.

Endogamy and Stratification: The elite groups in these classes have laid stress on endogamy. That the concern for purity is secondary to the concern for status is shown by the fact that sanctions against the crossing of upper

and lower borders differ. It is the concern for the lower border which defines these groups. According to Dumont:

"The separation or closure of one group with respect to those above results fundamentally from the closure of the other groups with respect to those below" (Dumont 1970: 123).

But why does the upper group close its border in the first instance? And why is inter-marriage so important a criterion for membership of a status group? Dumont does not answer these questions. He puts more value on the so-called primary principle of hierarchy than on the evolutionary perspective. For this reason he is unable to account for the variations and seems to contradict himself at places. Let us examine, for instance, the following statements:

"Endogamy is a corollary of hierarchy rather than a primary principle ... an average and general result at one level or another of the principle of hierarchy" (Ibid: 113, 123).

"Hierarchy in the form of hypergamy penetrates the very core of the institutions of marriage and kinship. Not only does it 'temper' the endogamy of the caste segment and transfer strict endogamy to a higher level (caste) but in certain cases (Rajput) it even produces a breakdown of endogamy at the group's lower limit" (Ibid: 124).

- In Dumont's second statement, endogamy instead of

resulting from his 'primary principle' of hierarchy is shown to give way under its operation. However, this apparent contradiction can be resolved. Only the cultural connotations given to the so-called 'primary principle of hierarchy', which make it appear to be indivisible, do not allow Dumont to distinguish between entirely different types of hierarchy, i.e., the one based on individuals and the other between groups. In ideal terms these two different types of hierarchy cannot operate in a single situation. Assertion of collective relative status for the group arises from and promotes a consciousness of internal equality. It cannot be effective if due to internal inequalities some of the members of a group are relegated to a position almost equal to the members of a lower status group. Complete endogamous closure can result only if such members do not have to seek spouses from lower down the scale. (At another place I will discuss when such members can be or cannot be expelled from the group). Endogamy can appear only when the hierarchies based on individuals tend to disappear and a new type of hierarchy based on groups appears. Hypergamy operates in the context of a hierarchy of individuals. It creates powerful symbols for defining relative status and does nourish endogamous tendencies. But the latter results only when the chain of hypergamous exchanges is broken, i.e., when the intensity of hypergamy itself is lessened. Hypergamy is at once the precursor and the negation of endogamy. The latter is the precipitate of a process.

If the participants in this process are Rajputs or Brahmans, it is irrelevant. Neither of them is absolved of the need to secure spouses. Marriage is a sacrament for a Hindu (Kapadia 1966: 167-8). I will show later that this process has not reached its logical conclusion to this day. To what Dumont says that hypergamy transfers strict endogamy to higher levels of the hierarchy, I will add that along the spatial dimension, it does so to the more developed areas of the plains.

Marriage and Mobility: In his models of government Lloyd has stressed the importance of patron-client relations. In our situation a fact of great importance is that patronage also pervades the sphere of kinship. To be fair, Lloyd is not in favour of including the element of kinship for defining patron-client relations. Whatever the conceptual differences, however, the fact remains that in a strongly hypergamous situation, patronage extended to ones affines is unrivalled in importance, by that extended to ordinary clients. But there is more to it. In a simple patron-client relationship, it can stop at extending political or economic privileges to the client. A marital alliance with a superior tends to promote social status. At Chamba the wife's agnates are not only the most dependable followers but also form an important part of ones total field of kinship relations and their status is also taken into account by others for future marriages. In a hypergamous situation, one's position in the hierarchy of statuses has a bilateral reference, i.e., to whom girls are given in marriage and

from whom wives are accepted. Thus the links of affinity with social superiors provide an important initial lever for social mobility. Colin Rosser does not give full importance to the initial link with a superior established through the females, when he lists his steps for individual upward mobility (Colin Rosser 1966: 90-99).

When the links of solidarity either through simple patron-client relations at the individual level or through affinal relations extend beyond the borders of a status group (or a level) such groups enjoying unequal social status do not compete for status as groups. Leach's assertion, mentioned earlier, that caste groups do not compete with each other can apply only to such a situation where neither the endogamous closure is yet incomplete, or individual patron-client relations are not yet subservient to inter-group relations.

The emergence of the wider groups from such a feudal situation is made possible through external links in a wider political domain. Most important of these links are established through marriages with like groups elsewhere. When the area of marital choice is thus extended horizontally, its vertical spread decreases. Coupled with the decrease in internal inequalities in a developing class like structure, horizontal cleavages can appear and wider groups can close their lower borders.

The Plains Villages: In the plains, the tendencies discussed above developed much earlier. In the village

communities the cultivators were positioned better than others due to two reasons. Cultivators were not full owners of land until comparatively recent times and the right of usufruct was often held collectively by a local group. It did not allow the emergence of internal inequalities. A politically relevant fact is the distance from the centralised apparatus of law and order in a wider polity, which made the numbers and internal solidarity in a group important in the local context. The number of cultivators being more than others is related to the simple fact of agricultural economy and not to any hypothetical ethnic factors.

Corporate tendencies on descent lines are important at this level. Lack of internal differences which decreased the force of hypergamy within the status group also minimised the chances of inferior marriage, which were further decreased due to the fact that groups lower down this scale - the possible givers of wives were in a minority. Corporate tendencies provided effective punishments for the deviants who were fewer in number. So that the most important avenue of individual upward mobility, i.e., marriage, was closed.

But this situation in these villages represents only one extreme of the developments. Leach has only this situation in mind when he writes:

"The kinship peculiarity of caste systems does not lie in the internal structure of kinship, but in the total absence of kinship as a factor in extra-caste systemic

organisation" (Leach 1960: 7).

But it is precisely at this stage that competition between the groups is possible and the stability of the situation is largely a function of actual resources (economic and physical force) at the disposal of the dominant groups whose powers are greatly strengthened by the horizontal spread of their marital and other social relations. Leach also writes:

"It is a characteristic of class organised societies that rights of ownership are the prerogative of minority groups which form privileged elites. The capacity of the upper class minority to exploit the services of the lower class majority is critically dependent upon the fact that the members of the underprivileged group must compete among themselves for the favours of the elite. It is the specific nature of a caste society that this position is reversed. Economic roles are allocated by right to closed minority groups of low social status; members of the high status 'dominant caste', to whom the low status groups are bound, generally form a numerical majority and must compete among themselves for the services of individual members of the lower castes" (Ibid: 6).

Leach here is writing about a section of the exploited majority itself and totally ignores the exploiting minority over and above the village level. For instance, if we forget the existence of Chamba and treat Churaha alone as an economic and political system, it may emerge as nearer to Leach's model of caste structure, but would hardly provide us with a genuine unit of comparison with

- another society. Only by considering the whole state, its basically class organised character becomes apparent. His observation about the competition within the local majority is also mistaken. Admittedly the economic roles are allocated to the artisans by right (though the situation in Churaha belies this assumption) but who decides the remuneration for these roles? Not long ago even in the plains this right was exercised collectively by the dominant groups (Lewis 1958: 56-84). The present competition within a dominant group for these services is very much related first to the grant of rights of full ownership to cultivators and secondly, to more recent administrative and economic changes, which should hardly provide us with a model for pronouncing upon the traditional caste system. Even in the modern context, Epstein has demonstrated that competition for group status is more possible where inequalities within the caste groups are less and vice versa (Epstein 1962).

Structure and Variation: What Leach is trying to accomplish is to bring every kind of situation within the confines of a single structural model, which like that of Dumont does not help us in accounting for the actual differences. These differences between the plains and the hills in general can also be seen even within the populations of the hills. Two factors are helpful in locating these different situations. One is the persistence of the old feudal type of administration, another is the relative distance from the more populated areas and from the plains. Both of these factors are

important to locate various stages of the changeover from vertical to horizontal distribution of power in the hierarchies at different places. Near the first extreme (i.e., in the interior of the hills) status attaches to individual ranks or small familial groups. Individual mobility is more relevant than group mobility. The main avenue to it is provided by hypergamous marriages, which in their turn bring political and social advantages to the inferior partners. Near the other extreme (near the plains) status attaches to groups which are relatively closed in terms of endogamy and ritual distance. Individual upward mobility is the least possible. Group mobility depends largely upon the economic and political strength of the group as a whole. Intensity of hypergamy is lessened in general and may be visible to some extent within the status group.

Situations of the second type are typical of the plains villages. Examples of the first extreme can still be found in areas like Thaka Khola in western Nepal (Furer-Haimendorff 1966: 140-160) and in the areas east of the Pangri Range (Pangri Valley, Lahaul and Spiti) where stratification on caste lines is yet to emerge from its birth pangs.

This theme will be developed further after examining the situation in a Churahi village and after describing the wider hierarchies of power above this level.

CHAPTER 3

Bharara, a Village in Churaha

The Village as a Community

Recruitment to the Community

Kinship and Co-Residence

Development Cycle of the Household

Political Leadership

Marriage and Divorce

BHARARA A VILLAGE IN CHURAHA

The village: The present population of Churaha resides in well over a thousand small settlements. In size, these settlements vary from one to as many as forty households. The local names refer to either the individual settlements or to small groups of them within which a feeling of co-residence exists. The localities thus named can be conveniently termed villages (gra), without however implying the extent of functional inter-dependence found in the villages of the plains (Wiser 1951).

Bharara with 47 households is one of the biggest villages in the interior of Churaha. At a height of about 7000 feet, it is located in the immediate vicinity of the thick forests which cover the southwestern slopes of the Pangi Range. From the present Chamba-Tissa road it is about six miles direct ascent from west to east. Administratively it is a part of the much wider Panchayat circle of Tikri Garh (The Panchayat circle covers about 30 square miles and includes 112 settlements). Tikri Garh, the headquarters of the Panchayat is about 5 miles down west of Bharara, and Tissa (the tehsil headquarters) is about 10 miles northwest. Thirty nine households of Bharara reside in a single more or less compact settlement. Two small settlements containing five and three households respectively lie on either side of the main settlement removed from it by a couple of furlongs. An old bungalow^w of the Jagirdar (from Chamba), and a

wooden temple (c.f. Herman Goetz 1955) stand apart from the main settlement, about four hundred yards to the south. Unlike most of the smaller settlements in Churaha, the houses of the members of different castes are intermingled at Bharara.

The total area used exclusively by the residents of Bharara for various purposes is about three sq. miles. Out of about two hundred and fifteen acres of the cultivable land only twelve acres lie in that tract of land which still remains in the possession of the Jagirdar. Average distribution of the rest is 4.036 acres per household. The lower caste households - the Aryas (14) have a slight edge in the average amount of land held than the upper caste households - the Rathis (33). Compared to the distribution of land in Churaha as a whole, the residents of Bharara in general are slightly better off in this respect. Expansion of the cultivated lands in the adjoining culturable wastes still occurs, but reclamation of new lands in the forest areas is more strictly regulated by the government since 1948. The largest amount of land held by a joint family at Bharara is about ten acres. Two recently separated families hold only one acre each. About seven hundred head of sheep and goats and about two hundred head of cattle owned by the residents of Bharara show a roughly similar pattern of distribution. Only five households do not possess any sheep or goats and the largest flock of a household consists of 58 sheep and 45 goats. The main source of income for every household is agriculture. It is variously supplemented by herding, hunting, herb collecting and part time

labour. Other skills (sold either in the immediate neighbourhood or to visiting traders) include carpentry, weaving, masonry, brewing, bee-keeping, skin curing, tailoring etc. Two individuals have recently opened shops at Bharara and one of them has also taken up the export of potatoes. The size of the household varies from 2 to 10 members. The total number of residents in 1968 was 183 (excluding one wandering ascetic, who normally resides at Bharara but does not have a house of his own).

The village as a community: Lewis suggested that a village may be a self contained unit for some purposes and not for others and to ascertain these we should refer to various dimensions of the 'community', such as the ecological, physical, social, economic, political, religious, and psychological. (Lewis 1958: 316). As a physical unit of co-residence, Bharara as a whole represents a separate community. In economic terms the residents of Bharara enjoy considerable independence in the sense that they can easily dispense with the services rendered to them by outsiders (including those of a priest and the menial). But this is only the negative aspect of their independence. Their relations with the visiting traders and employers of casual labour are beneficial to the economy. Historically, the relations with the Jagirdar the local officials the timber companies and the hunting parties have been and to a great extent still are of economic significance. In political, religious, social and other spheres too Bharara at present combines a certain amount of local sentiment with vital relations outside.

On the basis of local accounts, the age of Bharara can be roughly estimated at about 130 years. The oldest house is still intact and is used for cattle by some individuals belonging to the two largest Rathi lineages of Bharara. The oldest village shrine is also located in a corner of this house. According to the legend the founder of the village, Mitun by name, was the first to settle as a cultivator at Bharara. His ancestry or place of origin is not known. He was fifty years old at the time and was living all alone, when a faqir (an ascetic) of Bardoli (a settlement ~~of~~ west of Bharara) visited him. Impressed by Mitun's hospitality, the faqir (variously referred to as Bardoli, Arya and Faqir) wanted to do some good turn to him. Mitun expressed some anxiety about the lack of wife and children. The ascetic gave him a crude test for potency, went in search of a wife for Mitun and was successful in bringing a fifteen year old wife for him. Her place of origin is unknown to the villagers. Mitun is now worshipped as an ancestor (pitar) by the whole village, regardless of the geneological connections. Only two lineages are claimed to have descended patrilineally from Mitun; but actual geneological connections up to Mitun and between them, are lost now. The descendants of the Bardoli faqir now known as Aryas, come to Bharara annually on the Mitun day. They are fed by every household for three days and are given fixed amounts of grain and other rations. From the Aryas of Bharara and from the descendants through the females (dhaneotras) they get only half as much as from others. There is no other economic relation between these Aryas of Bardoli

and the residents of Bharara.

Earliest details of the conditions at Bharara, remembered by its old residents refer to roughly the first decade of the twentieth century. Most of the events centre around their seasonal migrations to Lahaul in summer and to areas nearer to the plains (Bhatayat) in winter, others refer to their experience as hunter's assistants and as Yegarus (forced labour). Scarcity of food^d grains but plenty of animal products is another theme and a reference is often made to the consumption of Chukri (an edible grass consumed in Pangi). The landlord is always pictured in benevolent terms but the government officials of a later period come in for harsh criticism. The local sentiment was once expressed in a political form about thirty years ago. The events are as follows :

Umeda a resident of Bharara and the hero of the most popular legend (and a song) was one of the hunting assistants of the Raja, and was killed accidentally by the latter. Before that he had incurred the displeasure of one of the Churahi paramours (Bhagtu, from Thali, 5 miles west of Bharara) of the Raja. He had tried to scare her away from the Raja's camp by pouring hot water ^{over} ~~on~~ her. She did not forget this insult and after Umeda's death, Bhagtu is said to have instigated the state officials to declare the wastes used by the people of Bharara for local pasturage as a state reserve. In consequence of an appeal filed by the residents of Bharara, against this decision, one minister of state (dewan bahadur) and the official British resident came for inspection. The decision went against

Bharara and the state wanted to introduce the gujjars (Muslim Buffalo herders who visit only in summer) in the area. As a protest against this decision the residents of the village started quitting the site. The dispute resulted in a compromise. The right of usufruct in the wastes was restored but a collective tax of Rs. 150 was levied on Bharara. A more kindly inclined British Officer once remitted the tax on a subsequent visit. But the dewan bahadur re-imposed it for some time. Some individuals interpret the events differently. According to them it was not the fault of Bhagtu but resulted from the fact that the said dewan bahadur and their Jagirdar (head of an important family at Chamba) were not on good terms with each other. This interpretation put forward by a few individuals is questioned by the rest. Characteristically, those who favour this interpretation are the descendants of a local labour contractor who had a business as well as an affinal connection with Bhagtu's agnates at Thali.

In spite of the developing kinship links and caste affiliations outside, Bharara has acted collectively at a recent occasion, when it helped the election of a local Arya to the circle Panchayat. Investigation of individual disputes reveals that in spite of the fact that the patron client relations which operate on individual basis and which are still of material importance in these disputes, the opposing parties normally belong to different villages (except for a recent case which will come up for comment later on).

Recruitment to the community. Considering the pattern of recruitment to the village membership which in the past largely

depended upon the permission of the Jagirdar and one's individual effort in clearing the waste land, the stress on collective solidarity vis-a-vis neighbouring villages is not easy to understand. Two factors are worth considering here, namely the relative absence of patrilineal agnatic links with villages in the immediate neighbourhood and the additional source of recruitment of male immigrants through uxori-local marriages.

Agnatic links in the adjoining villages are extremely rare in the interior of Churaha, some lineages at Bharara still recognise some of its members resident in other villages separated from Bharara by a number of intervening villages, but social intercourse, with them is almost non-existent. This phenomenon is related to the way new settlements emerge in this area. The availability of new lands has been maximum at the highest levels and nearest to the receding forest line. But the pressure for expansion has been maximum at the lowest and the most populated areas. So that expansion in the immediate neighbourhood was less possible. To this we may add the immigration of complete outsiders to the area. The pattern of recruitment through immigration and through uxori-local marriages at Bharara will become clear from the following cases:

1. Jagta the founder of a lineage at Bharara (ancestry not known) was employed as a servant by a Rana family at Kia (about 2 miles from Bharara). In 1928 Jawahar and his brothers belonging to one of the oldest lineages) gave him a piece of land for settling down at Bharara with their sister as a ghar jawain (uxori-local husband).

2. Kamalu came from Pangi valley (1952). First he worked as an assistant in the most influential Arya household at Bharara. After some time he became an uxori-local husband in another Arya household. After a quarrel with the girl's father he shifted to another household again as an uxori-local husband. After about two years he succeeded to another similar situation. But this time he made a written contract with her father about a piece of land. This contract was conditional upon his continuous stay and upon the birth of children to his wife Dhumpni. Subsequent operation of this contract will be discussed later.

3. Ludder who died at 70 in 1966, was one of eight sons of Mansa. They all came from Chanju (8 miles towards Chamba). Phandi an old widow at Bharara had inherited some land but was issueless. She adopted one of the brothers. In return she gave Mansa and his other sons a piece of land to settle down at Bharara. Subsequently they expanded their holding and built three houses.

4. Umeda (the hero of the legend mentioned above) was a hunting assistant of the Raja. During one of the Raja's hunting expeditions he got interested in a girl at Bharara and settled down as an uxori-local husband. Umeda's wife had two brothers and three sisters. Both the brothers left Bharara and settled down somewhere in northern Churaha (no connections now). All three girls were married out but one of them came back as a widow. Meanwhile Umeda had employed an assistant Pooran by name. Pooran (now 50) says that he was abandoned by his parents at an early age and does not remember his ~~place of~~

origin. For some time he worked as a servant in Punjab before coming to Chamba and then to Churaha. After Umeda's death he stayed in the house belonging to the two widows.

5. Bir Singh a mian (superior Rajput) of Udhampur married a low caste girl ~~and came to~~ ^{at e} Talka (a village in western Churaha inhabited by a muslim caste of oil pressers). His son Ghama Singh married a muslim girl. Two sons of Ghama Singh ~~who had married Arya girls~~ came to settle at Paddar (about 2 miles north of Bharara) and married Arya wives. One of them, Magan once accompanied the ^{Jagirdar} ~~landlord~~ to Bharara and was permitted to settle there together with his family. His grandson Sagar (44) and one of Sagar's sister's sons are now two of the most influential Aryas of Bharara.

6. One girl belonging to the oldest Arya lineage at Bharara was married at Baluin (2 miles west of Bharara) to Udara (40). Udara's father Das had come to Baluin from Dhund (about 20 miles towards Chamba). She persuaded Udara to come to Bharara where with the help of her agnates he built a house on a small piece of land.

These cases refer only to some of those who got established as independent heads of local lineages. In the more recent cases of recruitment of male outsiders to Bharara the method of uxori-local residence is even more common. And as we shall see later the incidence of uxori-local marriages have also increased considerably over the last two decades. It is partly due to stricter regulations about the reclamation of land in new areas in particular and in the village wastes in general. Old residents of a village now have a

prior right to reclaim the wastes on nominal charges. Small additions to the already cultivated tracts are regularised by various means. For a complete outsider neither of these methods are available until he gets a foothold in the village.

Kinship and co-residence. Basically the Churahis subscribe to the general principles of patrilineal kinship structure, prevalent at Chamba and other western Hindu areas. The differences with other areas emerge in the kinship organisation and in the differential interpretation of these principles. The concept of exogamous gotras is not known and we mentioned their confusion about the gotra names and the functional aspects of the gotra. Ideally they subscribe to the rule of Sapinda exogamy. The rule of Sapinda exogamy prescribed in the Hindu literature and often quoted by the higher Hindus of Chamba, states that a man should not marry a girl who is related to him through a common male ancestor up to the 7th generation (exclusive of ego) in the father's line and up to the 5th generation in the mother's line (Karve 1953:55). But in Churaha the respective number of generations *(as mentioned earlier)* is stated to be 5 and 3. In practice/the higher Hindus of Chamba go beyond those numbers and try to avoid all the known actual or putative kin. The Churahis on the other hand do not always avoid the known kin related even up to the 5th and 3rd generations. What they strictly avoid, however, is that more or less localised group of agnates known as bhialti. Members of a bhialti are one's bhial (brothers). Marriage with the children of the female cognates resident in the same neighbourhood is avoided at least up to the second generation. In

exists between them. The informants state that they used to be bhials but actual connection is lost now. These are the oldest bhialtis at Bharara. Only in this case the abstract notion of a common descent has made this group of 21 households exogamous. In future the gotra names which some of them are opting for at the instance of a brahmin can stick to such groups. This possibility is further dependent upon their future capacity to secure spouses from outside. The additional fact worth mentioning here is that these 21 households form the relatively dominant section of the population at Bharara numerically, politically and in certain aspects of the village economy.

Co-residents of a village are known to form a mohal. However the word is used differently in different situations. While talking to outsiders the whole population of Bharara is a mohal. But inside Bharara the sense of a Rathi mohal and an Arya mohal exists now, even when the residential pattern does not suggest any separation between the two. Another term toal is sometimes used for the bhialti as a whole; but more commonly, it stands for a rather loose concept of an extended household. All the cognates in a joint household, their spouses and children, divorced or widowed girls of the household and their children and uxori-local husbands, *together are* living ~~all~~ members of a single toal. Children born of previous marriages and brought along with the spouses, children born out of wedlock and adopted sons and daughters are also members of the toal. Sometimes the members of a toal occupy different houses. But as

long as some degree of co-operation in ploughing the lands, tending the cattle and in some other economic and social activities is maintained they are all referred to as members of the same toal. Between nuclear families the ties of a common toal are more or less a function of leadership, economic interest and sentiment. The leadership in a toal is normally exercised by the father or his widow. Normally, generation sex and age in that order determine the authority relations within an ideal toal. But strains result from the presence of uxori-local husbands.

The word used for a house is jhumri by some and ghar by most. The difference between the three words expressed by some informants is that while toal refers to the members, jhumri stands for the building (or a single roof) and ghar includes both the members as well as the buildings/occupied by it. Unlike toal, ghar is never used for bhialti. According to a broad consensus of opinion at Bharara, a ghar should properly refer only to that group of co-residents who own their assets collectively and may be using different roofs for various purposes. The present forty seven households at Bharara are ghars in this sense. Only eleven households out of these own either double storied houses or more than one single room houses. Others occupy one room houses except for one case in which two economically independent households share a single roofed structure. In composition no two households resemble each other. The heads of nuclear families within these households would include persons married at least once now living either with their spouses and children or

(if widowed or divorced) living alone or with children, but owning some personal possessions. I could distinguish 81 such families within these 47 households.

Development cycle of the household. Certain aspects of the household will be clear from the following cases describing the development cycle of the household. These cases will also help us in understanding, 1). how and when partitions occur and 2). how new bhialtis emerge while some old bhialtis die out. First we will describe a case which is not typical in statistical terms but is taken to be one of the ideal households at Bharara. Besides, it shows a certain amount of unusual stability and ^d continuity over time.

a) Chand^d (age 61, bhialti Malagric) now heads one of the leading and the most progressive households at Bharara. When he was only 12 years old (1919) his parents died within a year of each other. Chand had one brother and five sisters all senior to him. Two of the sisters died, other three were married out and his elder brother left Bharara to live as an uxori-local husband elsewhere. The eldest sister left her husband and came back with a son and a daughter. She herself die^d in 1926. In 1927 Chand married his M.Z.H.Z.D. from another village. At this time Chand, his wife, his sister's son and daughter formed the membership of the household.

Chand's first child (a daughter) was born in 1929 and second (a son) in 1932. In 1934 his sister's daughter was married to a local man (Mohal bhialti). In 1935 his sister's son left Bharara to settle

as an uxori-local husband in another village nearby. Chand's second son was born in 1937, second daughter in 1941, third son in 1942 and third daughter in 1945. ^{This} ~~It~~ completed Chand's family which now consisted of himself, his wife, three daughters and three sons. His sister's son who had been caring for the sheep flock had left and Chand entrusted his sheep to another villager on payment, until his eldest son Ishar took up the job in 1947. His second son spent part of his time learning Kashmiri vidaya (traditional instruction in the three R's) from a Pandit who had come as a servant of a timber company and stayed at Bharara for four years.

In 1946 Chand's eldest daughter was married out. In 1954 he completed his second house. In the same year his second son Bhikham was married. A year later Chand's second daughter was married to a respectable spouse in another village (with dowry and attended with some sanskritic ceremonies). In 1956 his first son Ishar brought a wife who had eloped with him and started living in the new house. In the same year a daughter was born to the second son's wife. At about this time Chand's second son Bhikham started taking ~~an~~ interest in shop keeping i.e. occasionally bringing some merchandise from a shopkeeper at Tikri and selling it at Bharara. Chand's second granddaughter (to first son's wife) and first grandson (to second son's wife) were born in 1958. The eldest son's wife had her first son in 1960.

1961 was an eventful year for Chand. He gave about a fourth of

his land to Ishar (the eldest). His third daughter eloped with her sister's husband's brother. His third son Gopala was married with great pomp and show (with a sanskritic ceremony) to Chand's M.B.D. After a few months she left and did not return again. Gopalâ (the third son) has been the bhual (one who goes with the sheep) ever since Isher stopped caring for the sheep in 1956. He brought his second wife (local, bhialti Mohal) in 1965. His second wife's mother and Chand have a common great grandfather. Chand's third daughter who had come back after two years, eloped in 1965, this time with brother's (Bhikham's) wife's brother.

The present residents of Chand's ghar include Chand, his wife, *their wives and four* second and third sons, ~~four~~ children of the second son. (Third son's second wife had a still birth in 1966 and has no other child). In his toal Chand also includes his first son, latter's wife and four children.

The second son's (Bhikham) shop set up in the beeh (verandah of the house) was flourishing by 1964. He started shouldering most of the responsibilities of the household. In 1965 he started another enterprise. Prices of seed potatoes had increased suddenly at Chamba. Now he collects, stores and sells to mobile traders most of the potato produced at Bharara. In 1966 he built a new house which is used for storage. His younger brother Gopala still goes with the sheep. The second partition of the land (which is now increased by one third) is not being considered so far. But it is presumed that when it occurs the second son of Chand - Bhikham will move to the new

house. The verandah of the new house was recently provided with a wooden partition for future use as a shop. At present a schoolmaster (school opened at Bhara^{ra} in 1966) is housed there, Mostly he takes his meals also at Chand's house and Chand says in a jocular vein that the schoolmaster also belongs to his toal now.

Some features of this case will be discussed latter. The pattern of events in general and the mode of partition is relatively less dramatic and is somewhat nearer to that followed by poorestst sections of the higher hindus at Chamba. Complications in other cases arise out of the existence of Ux^orilocal husbands, old bachelors, adoptions, polygamy, allotments of land to the progeny of divorced daughters of the household and the absence of effective leadership.

b) In case 2, discussed earlier we referred to the contract that Kamalu had entered into with his father-in-law. The land was given to Kamalu and his wife Dhumpui on the condition that if the former leaves or if Dhumpui does not have a child then it must be re-integrated with the holdings of the parent household. Kamalu did not leave but for six years they did not have a child. In 1967, with the full consent of his wife, Kamalu brought another wife from Tissa. The latter brought a four year old son from her previous marriage. No one objected to this arrangement. According to his father-in-law his only reason for attaching those conditions

was to see his daughter happy. The conditions ensured Kamalu's stay and also provided for the possibility of the marriage breaking down at her own initiative in case of suspected impotency in Kamalu. Now when she herself is a party to the new arrangement her father has no reason to object. But they were probably helped by three other factors. The said piece of land stood in the name of Dhumpni's mother who always sided with her. Kamalu had increased the size of the holding by about one fourth. Dhumpni's father is an exceptionally skilled carpenter and a mason and the present amount of land with him (4 acres) is enough for his only son to cultivate. Now Kamalu heads a new bhialti and the son that his new wife brought with her from Tissa will start another, if he stays.

c) In our case 4, we referred to Umeda's assistant Pooran, who after Umeda's death continued living with the widows. Umeda had also adopted a girl Hoshiaroo. Hoshiaroo is Umeda's wife's sister's daughter (local, bhialti Mohal). She also continued living in the same house. Umeda's widow died in 1953. After that there were only three members in the household i.e. Pooran, Umeda's wife's widowed sister Rukmani, and Hoshiaroo. In 1956, Hoshiaroo accepted an uxorilocal husband who stayed for five years. During this period Hoshiaroo with the help of her cognates and with the consent of Rukmani tried to expel Pooran from the household, but did not succeed. Pooran's stand was that although

originally he was only an assistant of Umeda, ever since Umeda's death he had been living as an uxori-local husband of Rukmani. As a proof of his change of status he pointed to the fact that he has not been given any wages for his work in the household. In this he was supported by some other villagers as well as by the landlord of whom Pooran is a special favourite. When in 1963, Hoshiaroo's uxori-local husband left, Pooran again became indispensable to the household (in economic terms) and Hoshiaroo accepted the situation finally. There has been no issue either to the widows or to Hoshiaroo. Now Pooran, Rukmani and Hoshiaroo have two roofs. One is used for living and the other for storage, weaving and as a drawing room, often used by the Jagirdar and other visitors. One of the rooms was built by Umeda.

d) In our case 3, we referred to Ludder (Bahol) and his seven brothers (sons of Mansa). Four of them including the one Phandi (the old widow) had adopted failed to get married and died issueless. Of others, Alam died in 1954 at 90, Parja died in 1964 at 96, Ludder died in 1966 at 70 and Dalla who is still alive and is about 80. Alam became an uxori-local husband (local, Drubh) but the marriage is described as a 'game of come and go'. He did not like staying with her parents. After about thirty years (in 1924) when her parents died, she came to his house. She died a few years later after having a still birth. Then Alam adopted a daughter from outside Bharara. After Alam's death she was

married to an uxori-local husband (local, Mohal) and now has a son and daughter. Like Alam, Parja was also married uxori-locally. His wife was staying at Bharara with her mother's parents. Meanwhile her mother was married to another husband in another village. Parja's wife left Bharara to join her mother there. He also tried in vain to get another wife. After about thirty years when her wife's father, mother and only brother had also died, she consented to come to Bharara to stay with her old husband Parja. Both died issueless. Dalla (80) who is still alive, married a girl from outside in 1904. She left after two years. He remained single up to 1942 when he enticed away the wife of a local man (Drubh bhialti). Neither of Dalla's wives had any issue. Recently he adopted a girl who is only 12 and unmarried. Ludder's own case is more interesting. He married a girl from outside (6 miles from Bharara) in 1917. She had no issue and left after five years. After that Ludder did not marry but developed informal sexual relations with Jagta's (case No.1) wife. After Jagta's death in 1950 Ludder permanently shifted to Jagta's house. Ludder had no children of his own. Jagta had four girls and three boys. The girls were married out. After Ludder's death in 1966, both houses and the properties are with Ludder's wife (Jagta's widow), and her sons. Other villagers call them sometimes Jagta's toal and sometimes Ludder's toal.

In this case it is clear that after Dalla's death (who is 80)

there will be ^{one}no left to continue the Bahol bhialti. One of its houses has passed onto Jagta bhialti and another (Alam's) to Mohal Chialti. The third, that of Dalla, will go to whosoever marries his adopted daughter and according to the present trends in marriage, he will be a uxori-local husband. Earlier, we pointed out the relative absence of agnatic links of the bhialti in other villages in the immediate neighbourhood and the loss of patrilineal ties between widely separated branches due to lack of interaction. Within a settlement the continuous growth of a bhialti is checked by the pattern of marriages exemplified ~~by~~ ⁱⁿ the cases cited above.

It is primarily some aspects of the marriage such as high incidence of uxori-local marriages, elopements and a high rate of divorce, which does not allow the continuous development of relations between affinally connected groups. These links are highly unstable and vary in character and effectiveness from situation to situation. In general, the relations between the affinal households depend upon the relations between the spouses themselves. In one case a group of agnatic households at Bharara keep almost regular and active contact with a household at Bahnota (2 miles west of Bharara). Four girls from the Bahnota household are married to different males in this group of agnates at Bharara. In uxori-local marriages position of the son-in-law in the authority pattern is always inferior to his wife's agnates. In other marriages it ^{is}

occasionally reflected in the patterns of economic co-operation, marriage negotiations, etc.

Political Leadership: Within the village leadership depends upon an individual's external relations with patrons and officials, strength of local relations, economic condition and personality. The first of these factors has been far more important than the others in the past. Up to the end of the thirties, Umeda (the local hero mentioned earlier) who was hunting assistant of the Raja, was the undisputed leader of Bharara. After him Jawahar, a labour contractor for a timber company, was the most influential person. He was affinally connected with some influential families in the area and was also in the best books of the landlord. Sagar (Arya, age 55) emerged as the most influential person on the scene by 1950. He was also a labour contractor and the landlord's local representative at Bharara. In recent years he reinforced his position considerably by building his relations with some high officials both at Tissa and Chamba. In some cases he acted as a channel for corrupt offerings. His advice in dealings with government departments is much sought after. Three persons next in importance to Sagar are Khubi Nand (the vice-chairman of the circle panchayat), Bhagi Ram (member Panchayat) and Bhikham the shopkeeper. Khubi Nand is Sagar's sisters son. Bhagi Ram is Jawahar's eldest son. All three of them had the additional privilege of learning the traditional three R's from a visiting Brahmin (mentioned earlier). This Teacher's fourth pupil who also keeps a small shop at Bharara is

not so successful as Bhikham (Chand's second son). Bhagi Ram and Bhikham also have the advantage of more kinship connections within Bharara - as they belong to the two largest bhialtis, Drubh and Malagric respectively. Two of Bhagi Ram's sisters, married in a Rana household of Churara are at present resident at Chamba. Three of his brothers are sometimes employed by visiting hunters (mostly high officials at Chamba). Bhikham's additional source of influence is derived from the hospitality which he has been offering to visiting officials. Internal disputes are still of minor importance and are either resolved by local individuals or referred to visiting officials, or to the Jagirdar (or the latter's son)

The panchayat at Tikhri Garh is only a few years old. Bharara together with Bhanjal a neighbouring village, forms one of its 15 wards, each represented by a member. Some recent disputes involving residents of Bharara with others, reported to the panchayat were almost invariably resolved by the informal intervention of higher officials. The histories of these cases present a complex pattern of corruption. Some of the materials that figure in corruption are cash, clarified butter, honey, locally made woolen cloth, bear skins, country liquor and sexual favours. Detailed examination of the cases is out of place here. But I would like to stress the point that individual patron-client relations are still the decisive factor in local disputes. The nature of such relations is changing however in the sense that they are becoming less permanent. Ready money and gifts are gradually replacing the promise of long term servitude ~~on~~

Kinship terms at Bharara

<u>Generation</u>	<u>Term of Reference</u>	<u>Referent</u>
Second ascending	Dada	F.F.
	Dadi	F.M.
	Nana	M.F.
First ascending	Nani	M.M.
	Chacha	F.B.
	Mama	M.B.
	Bubi	F.Z.
	Mousi	M.Z.
	Baba	F.
	Ya	M.
EGO's:	Bhau or Bhaia	B.
	Daidi or Bhin	Z.
First descending	Puttar or Gabhra	S.
	Dheo or Kuli	D.
	Puttar	B.S.
	Puttar	Z.S.
	Lari	S.W.
	Jawain	D.H.
	Second descending	Potra
Potri		S.D.
Dhaneotra		D.S.
Dhaneotri		D.D.
Others	Lara or Manush	H.
	Jo or Lari	W.
	Sasur	H.F.; W.F.
	Sas or Sashu	H.M., W.M.
	Sala or Salu	H.B.
	Bhaia	Z.H.
	Bharjai	B.W.
	Bhaia	F.B.S., F.Z.S., M.B.S.
Daidi or Bhin	M.B.D., F.B.D., F.Z.D.	

Marriage and divorce statistics at Bharara:

The following data is derived from the marital histories of 163 persons (98 males and 65 females) either born at or resident at Bharara, including those who died recently. Besides there are three old bachelors at Bharara who are not included.

Basic figures:

(1) Average age at first marriage	{ Males = 20.76 years Females = 15.54 years
(2) Cases of Polygyny	{ existing = 13 All = 21
(3) Existing cases of secret polyandrous living (No information about old cases)	= 2
(4) Persons once married, presently unmarried but less than 50 years old	Males = 11 Females = 3
(5) No. of marriages contracted by each person:	1st marriage = 163 2nd marriage = 75 3rd marriage = 25 4th marriage = 11 5th marriage = 3 6th marriage = 2
Total No. of marriages = 279	
(6) Locality:	No. of marriages
Spouse/ belonging to Bharara area within a radius of 5 miles	= 58
" " " " 6 -10 miles	= 158
" " " " 11 miles and beyond	= 42
	= 21
Total 279	

			% of Total
7. No. of marriages contracted by the parents and attended with ceremonies	=	16	5.73%
Formally contracted but bereft of ceremonies	*	70	25.10%
Uxorilocal marriages (No ceremony)	=	40	14.33%
Elopedments	=	153	54.83%
		<hr/>	
		279	

8. No. of marriages :		
ending in divorce	=	123
Ended by premature death (before 50th year of age)	=	22
stable	=	134
		<hr/>
		279

9. Divorce to marriage ratio:

$$\frac{\text{No. of Divorces}}{\text{Total number of Marriages}} = \frac{123}{279} = 44.086\%$$

$$\frac{\text{No. of Divorces}}{\text{No. of marriages excluding those ended by death}} = \frac{123}{257} = 47.86\%$$

Periods between marriage and divorce:

Sanwal has held that in these areas children are the "most crucial causal element in marital stability". (Sanwal 1966:46-72). The following figures which show a high incidence of divorce within a year of the marriage partly refute this contention.

All marriages ending in divorce :

within a year of marriage	=	44	=	35.77%
between 1 - 2 years	=	21	=	17.07%
" 2 - 3 years	=	18	=	14.63%
" 3 - 4 years	=	11	=	8.95%
" 4 - 5 years	=	8	=	6.50%
After five years (15 years is the longest period)	=	21	=	17.07%

 123

1st marriages ending in divorce

within a year of marriage	=	24	=	31.58%
between 1 - 2 years	=	15	=	19.74%
" 2 - 3 years	=	12	=	15.78%
" 3 - 4 years	=	8	=	10.53%
" 4 - 5 years	=	3	=	3.95%
After 5 years	=	14	=	18.42%

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Trends in the incidence of divorce and uxori-local marriages

The number of marriages for each decade before 1930 is too small for a statistical comparison. The following figures refer only to 237 marriages performed between 1930 and 1968.

Time period	No. of Marriages	No. of Marriages ended by death	No. of Divorces	$\frac{\% \text{ divorce}}{\text{all marriages}}$	$\frac{\% \text{ divorce}}{\text{marriages not ended by death}}$
1930 - 39	20	1	5	25.00%	26.31%
1940 - 49	52	4	15	28.96%	31.25%
1950 - 59	81	10	36	44.444%	50.70%
1960 - 69	84	3	53	63.095%	65.43%

Uxorilocal marriages between 1930 and 1968

Time period	No. of Marriages	No. of Uxorilocal Marriages	$\frac{\% \text{ Ux. Marriages}}{\text{all Marriages}}$
1930 - 39	20	1	5.00%
1940 - 49	52	5	9.65%
1950 - 59	81	15	18.52%
1960 - 68	84	15	18.14%

Marriages attended with ceremonies (Pun-biah or Bari Janai)

Time period	No. of Marriages	Marriages attended with ceremonial	$\frac{\% \text{ of all Marriages}}$
1930 - 39	20	1	5.00%
1940 - 49	52	3	5.8%
1950 - 59	81	5	6.1%
1960 - 68	84	3	3.6%

CHAPTER 4

Economic Interdependence at Bharara

Birton system

Fluidity in Birton Relations

Present Birton Relations

Khalwai Payments

- Economic Inter-Dependence at Bharara

Informal economic associations within the village and sometimes between some members of different adjoining villages exist for 1) looking after the sheep flocks and cattle and 2) for sharing the adhwaris (half-way houses near to the grazing grounds). The membership of these associations also shows considerable variation. In the first type of association, i.e., for looking after the sheep and cattle, bhialti is less relevant. In the second type, i.e., the adhwari sharing groups, most of the members of such a group are normally derived from either the bhialti or other closely related households.

Herding: Sheep herding has declined in importance, and the practice of entrusting the animals to particular individuals on payment is growing.

At present two persons of Bharara, Talochan (age 32, Rathi, Balia bhialti) and Haridas (age 45, Rathi, Drubh bhialti) go to Lahaul (in summer) and Pathanhrot (in winter) regularly as shepherds (Bhual). Those households who send their flocks with Talochan belong mainly to Balia, Malagric, Lakhia, Jagta and Mohal bhialtis (all Rathis). Haridas' flock is derived mainly from the Drubh (Rathi) and the Arya bhialtis. Individual owners pay the shepherds either in cash or grain (Rs. $\frac{3}{8}$ / $\frac{5}{8}$ /goat and $\frac{3}{16}$ / $\frac{15}{16}$ /sheep per head, when in cash). Neither all the individual owners subscribe to this arrangement nor those who do entrust their flocks to these two shepherds every

- year. Various alternatives resorted to are 1) to send a member of the household with the main shepherd, 2) to graze one's animals within a radius of approximately 20 miles, 3) to graze them along with the cattle in nearby wastes. Two households send their flocks with shepherds resident in a neighbouring settlement. The number of flocks, their sizes and the total number of persons going to distant pastures has been declining over time. The majority of the elderly villagers have been to these areas as shepherds. About a decade back 18 persons from Bharara accompanied four separate flocks (3 flocks belonged to Bharara, 1 to Mangloa). In the summer of 1967 only 7 persons went with 2 flocks. The size of each flock in 1967 was approximately 400.

Besides the general tendency to shift to more profitable work connected with agriculture and part time labour, certain difficulties experienced at the individual level are also responsible for decreasing the practice of shepherding at Bharara. Most important of these are connected with the increased tendency for early partitions of the joint household and the high incidence of marital instability. These affect each other in a circular fashion. In the case of Chand's three sons (case a) we saw that the first marriage of only one of them who was not going out as a shepherd was stable. The second marriage of the first son was stabilised when four important conditions were ensured, namely, his own decision to stop going out as a shepherd, settling down in a separate house, his wife's fertility, and partition of the property. (I do

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not imply here that these are the main factors governing stability of marriage). This partition created a problem for Chand's household until his youngest son started going with the sheep. The youngest son's first marriage, in spite of the pomp and show which attended it and considering also the previous close relations between the two affinally connected households, did not last long. A household's ability to spare a male member for shepherding on the one hand and ensuring fairly stable conditions back home, during his absence affect this occupation. Actual sales of individual stocks to others in a number of cases are closely connected with problems of this nature.

There is a general belief at Bharara that one's stock does not grow when entrusted to others. One of the complaints against the shepherds, expressed privately is that sometimes they deliberately kill (for meat) and sell the animals entrusted to them. No charge is made for natural deaths. The rule is that if an animal dies, this side of the Jot (passes over the Pangri Range) then the skin belongs to the owner, otherwise everything belongs to the shepherd.

Some of the general difficulties of the shepherds according to Talochan are 1) decreasing size of the flock, 2) lack of permanency in the arrangements, and 3) the decline in traditional hospitality shown to the shepherds when they return after these long excursions (from 4 to 6 months). In the past they were treated like heroes and for a number of days were lavishly feasted, messaged and given a variety of gifts. Even now the relations

with a shepherd are not purely commercial and depend upon mutual trust and personal warmth.

The adhwaris literally mean the half-way houses. These are crude shelters built at a distance from the permanent settlements. In the case of Bharara most of them are located near the forest and their distances from Bharara range from $\frac{1}{2}$ mile to $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles. Normally these provide temporary abodes in summer for the cattle grazier (Gual). But now, around a number of them some households cultivate land. In some other villages nearby, some of these adhwaris have been converted to houses for permanent residence. At Bharara these are increasingly being put to other uses such as keeping agricultural implements, storing fuel and fodder. During the crop cutting operations on the lands located near some adhwaris, occasionally most of the family resides there for a few days. At present there are 17 adhwaris. The use of three of them is shared by more than five households. Seven are used by individual households. Others are used by 2 to 5 households. Technically the rights in an adhwari are inherited but little value is attached to these crude shelters. At the time of separation from the parental household, the new household either continues sharing the same adhwari or builds a new one. Allowing other close kin or friends to join the adhwari user's association is a common practice. So that in a shared adhwari quite a few households from outside the bhialti originally associated with it are seen to enjoy these rights.

Hunting excursions involving absence from home for weeks together also provide another significant activity for informal association. Heavy snowfall during winter brings plenty of game down to the lower slopes. At the close of winter when the residents of Bharara stir out from their relative confinement, most of the able-bodied males form small hunting parties which remain out only for the day or two. But more profitable game such as musk deer (Rauns) and red bear (lal bhalu or tahar) are hunted by parties of experts in summer. At present there are only six expert hunters (5 Rathi, 1 Arya) who normally go together and remain out for about a month at a time. Three of them are brothers (Drubh bhialti). They, ~~as~~ as well as some other individuals are sometimes employed as assistants by visiting hunters from Chamba. In a collective hunt the meat is shared by the whole party but the rest belongs to the individual who kills the animal.

One's continuous association with others in all these activities of shepherding, adhwari sharing, hunting, etc., has a social content of solidarity expressed in one word birton, which literally means 'use' and the term denotes a relationship of continuous usefulness.

Birton system: In an illuminating comparative discussion of the jajmani system Kolenda defines it as follows:

"Briefly, the jajmani system is a system of distribution in Indian villages whereby high caste landowning families called jajmans are provided services by various

lower castes such as carpenters, potters, blacksmiths, water carriers, sweepers and laundryman. Purely ritual services may be provided by Brahmin priests and various sectarian castes and almost all serving castes have ceremonial and ritual duties at their jajman's births, marriages, funerals and at some of the religious festivals. Important in the latter duties is the lower castes' capacity to absorb pollution ..."

"The land owning jajmans pay the serving castes in kind ... payment may account to a little of everything produced on the land, in the pastures, and in the kitchen." (Kolenda 1963: 287).

Based primarily on the models developed from plains villages, the picture of these relations of economic inter-dependence given above shows a high degree of involvement with their ritual, occupational and status co-relates. The caste groups in the plains tend to be well defined in terms of ritual status and occupational specialisation. So that another category of economic exchanges more or less ritualised, among the members of the same caste group are seen to operate independently and are considered to be very different in nature from these jajmani relations.

Among the Gaddis (south-western neighbours of the Churahis) Newell's description of what he calls a system of birton merits detailed quotation:

" ... birton, the system of traditionally sanctioned mutual obligations and duties between individuals usually

belonging to different castes. This was specially noticeable during the marriage of a son or daughter in the saj or tambol ceremonies. At the marriage of a son or daughter those people who have birton with the bride or bridegroom's father present gifts of money to the father to help defray the cost of the wedding. These gifts have no relation to either caste or kinship ... at the donor's wedding a similar gift is returned, usually with a slight increase. Similarly a person who wishes to build a house may go to a group of Sipis with whom he has a birton agreement, and ask them to carry up slates for the house. Payment may or may not be made, but if made it is below the market price of labour. The group will often receive a certain amount of the harvest if they are present while it is being threshed. This is not an economic bargain, however, but a validation of an already existing social relationship. Another important birton relationship is that between a purohit and his clients ... in the four or five weddings that I attended, the majority of birton gifts at tambol came from people with whom normally one had little contact ... Birton joins people of different castes and gotras together." (Newell 1955: 60).

Newell's description of these exchanges is a little superficial and lacks detail. But can a more serious charge of grouping together totally different kinds of relations be levelled against him. Those who focus their attention mainly on the plains villages and especially on the ideals expressed by the dominant groups in these

- villages may consider so.

The custom of giving obligatory gifts, rations and cash at marriages is widespread in the plains. In most of north-western India it is called neota (Karve 1953: 125). Its linguistic variant in the Punjab plains is neonda. In some parts the words neota and tambol are used interchangeably (Rose 1919 Vol 1: 814). This obligatory help rendered at the time of some expensive life crisis ceremonies also expresses the relative status of the households. There are no fixed rules about the amounts. How much should be given and how much should be accepted depends upon the actors. The amount is occasionally increased at a particular occasion by the giver. There are two motives behind this gesture. One is to express a feeling of solidarity with the other household, the other is to raise his own status in the eyes of the other family as well as other villagers. The other party has three options. Either it returns the excess amount, or accepts the whole and enters into superior exchanges in future, or if it accepts the whole without implying equality in obligatory returns it has to accept the relative superiority of the giver. The system of equal exchanges can be maintained between near equals. The inferiors try to repay these gestures on the part of their patrons in the form of services considered inferior, and may be totally dropped from this type of exchange. So that it is not surprising to find the system of equal exchanges increasingly confined to the limits of a local status group in the plains

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- (Lewis 1958: 177) where status is attached to large classes of occupational groups. For this reason the neota or tambol relations between the households can be easily separated from other relations of interdependence in the plains and especially so in the case of relatively higher classes. But these two sets of relations are not so easy to distinguish in the lower classes (Kolenda 1963: 287) and in areas like Churaha and Gaderan (the area inhabited by the Gaddis discussed by Newell) where ritual status claimed by small familial groups may not always reflect either the secular status or the occupational specialisation.

There is another difficulty about the term jajmani system. Even those relations normally discussed under this category differ considerably in their status co-relates. One who buys the service is not always the superior. Services of a Brahmin priest are superior to the remuneration while those of a Kamin (worker) are inferior. The simple equation of jajman-kamin (Wiser 1956: 5) does not describe either the whole range of status differences or the nature of these relations. In actual use there are numerous terms for describing the parties. These are not merely linguistic variants of jajman and kamin for a number of them are used within the same area to describe various situations. The term jajman which means literally 'he who gets a sacrifice performed' (Rose 1919 1: 259) is popularised by the Brahmin for his clients. But the term kamin is hardly acceptable to him for himself. He does not subscribe

to the so called superiority of the jajman. In some other situations both of these terms are unacceptable to the parties .

All these forms of obligatory economic exchanges between the households which over time tend to be permanent, need a more inclusive and generalised term descriptive of the whole system and a number of other terms to classify different situations which make up this whole in a particular area.

The term birton used by Newell is widespread in north Indian dialects. It has two additional merits. It stands for the relationship and not for a particular party. It covers almost every situation in which two households or two groups are involved in a relation of give and take - as equals or unequals. To have birton or to be in birton simply recognises the existence of fairly permanent and useful intercourse between the parties. A Brahmin and his jajman has birton with each other. A malak (owner) and those who render service (hali = plougher, Kamin = worker, lohar = ironsmith, etc.) are bound in individual birton relationships. Birton also binds those who render obligatory help at marriages, deaths, births, housebuilding, harvesting, etc. Obligatory economic exchanges of goods and services strengthen birton, but it is also a relationship of social solidarity. Birton relations are invoked also in struggles for political advantage and local feuds. Birton exchanges are used to strengthen patron-client as well as kinship relations. A quarrel between two kin

does not alter the fact of kinship but may break the birton between them and takes away the content of kinship relation.

Only by understanding this concept of birton in its wider sense as applied by the actors we can understand the elements of paternalism (Gould 1958: 431) continuity from generation to generation (Wiser 1956: 5) and the varying degrees of acceptance observed in some of the basically exploitative situations.

This concept of solidarity can help us in understanding the differences between the plains villages and the feudal societies of the hills. The developing class solidarity in the plains tended to distribute the economic and political power horizontally in wider groups. The kinship relations were increasingly confined to equals. For a long time the right of usufruct in land was held collectively by the locally dominant groups. Remoteness from the apparatus of law and order continued to strengthen the horizontal solidarities among the members of a local group - until at least the beginning of this century. Even patron-client relations between individual families became subservient to inter-group relations. In the old feudal situation all three systems, i.e., kinship, patron-client and occupational interdependence overlapped considerably and characterised the total spread of birton relations in the society. In the hills where elements of feudal organisation persisted up to recent times, we find greater flexibility and lesser

ritualisation of particular roles; and also lesser differentiation between different types of birton.

Fluidity in birton relations in Churaha.

Occupational inter-dependence in Churaha does not at present fall into a clear-cut pattern. The variations recorded in individual situations are significant enough to discourage any attempt at generalisation. To assess the changes we cannot proceed from one particular structure to another. But this essential fluidity of the situation and certain trends can be indicated. Some of the factors complicating this situation are:

1. Exit of the old feudal families capable of retaining a number of different types of artisans and servants. Their junior and considerably impoverished branches at some places (e.g., at Kia, Garh, Gaddom) still retain some servants and utilise the part-time services of some artisan households, but have started doing a number of jobs themselves.

2. Migrations from the old settlements to the new and immigration from outside Churaha ~~which~~ disrupted the continuity of existing relations. It had two effects. One was the need for a new settler to do a number of jobs himself which for the residents of Bharara now include farming, carpentry, masonry, skin curing, weaving, rope-shoe making, removal of the dead cattle from their households, etc. The other effect was the popularity of the mobile artisan-cum trader. Some of these people move~~d~~ around in Churaha for most of the year (except for

- the more severe period of winter - Dec. to Feb.). A large number of them visit the annual jatars, the local dance ~~feirs~~^{festivals} held at a number of places within easy reach of every settlement, and normally on different dates just after the harvest in late summer.

3. Availability of new lands and the absence of a permanent and growing clientele has been leading the artisans to change over to cultivation. Even for those who carried on with some part-time artisan jobs, agriculture is the mainstay (except for some mobile artisans).

4. The opposite trend, i.e., individual farmers and erstwhile shepherds specialising in artisan jobs, is also much in evidence and has become especially marked after the more recent controls on reclaiming new lands and forest conservation measures introduced after 1948. These specialisations include carpentry, silversmithy, tailoring, ironsmithy, joji (female head dress) making, weaving, skin curing, masonry, horse transport, shopkeeping, etc.

5. The variety of individual options exercised sometimes within the lifetime of an individual is further increased due to the problems created by marital instability, dearth of brides, and a high incidence of uxorilocal marriages. All the three factors mentioned above have registered considerable increase over the last four decades. The full impact of these will be clear later.

Present birton relations at Bharara.

Residents of Bharara recognise different kinds of birton

associated with particular activities such as house-building, hunting, harvesting, carpentry and ceremonial occasions. They also recognise degrees of birton which are influenced by factors such as co-residence, kinship, friendship, status and acts of patronage. The strength of birton between two households also depends upon its use over time at a multiplicity of occasions and in a number of activities.

The strongest birton relationship often exists between two neighbouring kinsmen who throughout the year exchange goods and services of various types. When for instance, A is out with the sheep or falls ill, B will plough A's lands or help in other important activities. An elder from A's household may be grazing the cattle of both and food for both B and A's elder may come from the same household. Minor food items, particular rations, goods of household use, agricultural implements and services of minor importance are exchanged almost daily in such a close relationship. Relatively more important contributions are made to housebuilding operations, each other's marriage feasts and other expensive ceremonies. At Bharara in some cases such close relations exist between more than two households. For some important activities such as laying the roof of a house, the whole village is said to be at birton with one another and every household is expected to send at least one member for the purpose.

Even in this type of birton the nature of services

and goods exchanged may be considerably dissimilar and some of them may be given only by one party and not the other. But so long as through traditional usage their value can be easily compared with other services and goods, the balance of exchanges can be maintained. For instance, certain goods and services only the hunters or shepherds at Bharara can give. But a number of other residents of Bharara had^{we} been hunters and shepherds themselves, and these services and goods had^{we} been figuring in the birton exchanges for a long time. The value of these services in terms of agricultural services and goods is known fairly well. This type of birton even when the exchanges are multiplex, I would call simple.

Complexity in a birton relationship develops when comparatively rare specialised services of commercial value are introduced as a part of other exchanges. In such cases there is normally a tendency on the part of the specialist to over-value his services and the opposite tendency to under-value the same on the part of his birton partner. Other social relations of kinship, friendship, co-residence, etc., are put to maximum strain in such situations. Yet these very relations in a sense are often the root cause of the strain, as they do not allow prior calculations and explicit statements ^{about} ~~of~~ the value~~s~~ of such a service~~s~~ at the beginning. At Bharara an intimate birton relationship was once broken between R and G's household. We will recount here only the main features of the case. R is one of the oldest and the best known carpenter-cum-masons of Bharara. He learnt his trade through association with the employees

of a timber company. A number of houses at Bharara and in some other settlements nearby are built by him. His son is also a carpenter and both work their agricultural land (about 5 acres) side by side with building work. G, a farmer, is the son of H an old friend of R. G's wife is the daughter of D, a brother of R. About 16 years back when R took up the construction of G's house, the two households were maintaining a close birton relationship. A number of minor carpentry services were rendered free of charge to G, who in turn helped R in agricultural operations. The construction work was started with a vague understanding that G will be charged substantially less than what is charged from others. The work was completed in about four years and the following events occurred in sequence during this period. G's sister was married to R's son. H, father of G and friend of R died. An unrelated quarrel occurred between R and his brother D (father-in-law of G). R and G exchanged some hot words about a part payment of the construction charges. At the completion of the house only half the amount claimed for final payment was given. A bitter quarrel followed and not only the birton between the two households was broken but it simultaneously led to the divorce between R's son and G's sister.

The interpretations about the reasons of this quarrel by the two parties and on the part of other villagers differ considerably. About the quality of work the two parties hold divergent views but other villagers acclaim it as one of the best and reasonably charged for. G's

- complaint is that his own agricultural services for R were not properly accounted for. Some interesting developments occurred later. Relations between G and D (R's brother) improved further and D's second daughter also came to G's house as his second wife in polygamy. After about ten years of break the birton relations between R and G's household were re-activated when R's son and G's sister again started living as husband and wife. In between, both of them had married other spouses. But the nature of present birton is not exactly the same. Now even for relatively minor carpentry work R's son charges G specific agreed amounts in cash or grain and carefully separates this kind of service from other exchanges between the two households. That is, the actual birton exchanges between the two households are again simplified to some extent.

From this we move to another type of birton in which the imbalance in the exchanges is not so easy to rectify simply because the services of one party are considered to be far superior and invaluable: and it is beyond the capacity of the other party to return the complement in full. Such services may be political, economic, ritual and social in nature. These characterise the birtons between patrons and clients, social superiors and social inferiors, ritual specialists and laymen. These are directly related with the distribution of power.

- Most of the residents at Bharara say that their main birton relationship at Chamba is with the household of

their old jagirdar. The content of the birton exchanges between the jagirdar and individual households is varied and complex. The right to stay and expect food on short visits to Chamba is taken for granted. Exchanges of economic goods and services are frequent. Normally they are in the form of loans, used or surplus goods, old clothes, shooting cartridges, etc., on the part of the jagirdar and labour services, gifts of honey, clarified butter, meat and skins of hunted animals, wool, etc., on the part of the local residents. At ceremonial occasions, the landlord may give only nominal amounts of money or food articles and may receive in turn services and gifts sometimes substantially more in market value. For political backing in the government departments the landlord's services are invaluable for them. The recent introduction of adult franchise, which in the course of time may remove the imbalance in the exchange of political advantages is yet to affect the traditional relations at Bharara significantly. But some diversification of the birtons of the nature described above is already in evidence. Some individuals have established birtons with some other political and economic superiors both at Chamba and Tissa. Certain other relations with local officials, although apparently similar, do not develop into permanent birtons due to frequent transfers of the officials which, however, was not the case in the old times.

Before going further we may emphasise here that the birton relationship is essentially based on considerations

of economic, political and social advantages mutually beneficial to the partners, and the imbalance between the exchanges is due to the differential distribution of power.

Khalwai payments: The people of Bharara are aware of a system of payment practised by the old feudal families in the area. They called it khalwai or feeding. The dependent menials of the feudal families included the farm servants and a variety of occupational specialists who could often interchange their roles (c.f. Hutchinson P^L. St. Gaz. XXII A 1904: 164) and to whom even at the beginning of the present century, Hutchinson calls little better than serfs (Ibid: 165). The obligation upon the keeper or lord of these menials was to feed them. This feeding took a variety of forms, sometimes a small piece of land was allowed to be cultivated by a menial for his own use. But the most common practice was to provide *food* to the actual worker and give rations for the use of his family.

At present the residents of Bharara (all owner cultivators) make an ideal statement about a khalwai arrangement. For them the menials are only a Lohar (blacksmith) and a Chamar (leatherworker) and they don't make a distinction between the values of their respective services. They say that for a regular birton with one of the Lohars or the Chamars, a landowner besides actual feeding at work and gifts on auspicious days and ceremonial occasions, should give the menial at least the

following khalwai:

<u>Item</u>	<u>Quantity</u>
wheat	20 to 30 kgs
maize	20 to 30 kgs
pulses	2 kgs
tobacco	$\frac{1}{4}$ kgs
salt	$\frac{1}{8}$ kg
wool	$\frac{1}{4}$ kg

While making this ideal statement they do not make any distinction between the employer households owning different sizes of land. Besides the same quantities of these items are said to be given to a farm assistant. Neither of the residents of Bharara at present has a birton with a menial defined in these terms.

The two Lohar households at Krummud (2 miles away) are nearest to Bharara. They make agricultural implements (plough-shares, hoes, sickles, etc.) and certain household necessities (scissors, fire stands, lamp stands, etc.). These things are bought either from them or from mobile traders. The wooden parts of these implements are made by local individuals at Bharara. Specific repairs are normally paid for on the spot either in cash or in grain. Sometimes a payment is deferred until the end of the harvest.

There is a Chamar household at Rajm^etar (1 $\frac{1}{2}$ miles away) with whom the residents of Bharara deal with. The Chamar makes shoes, leather drought cords and khalroos (a whole sheepskin sewn to make a bag) etc. The khalroos are also

made by a number of the residents themselves, drought cords are often bought from mobile sellers. Leather shoes nowadays are normally bought from visiting traders. Another variety of shoes (snowshoes for winter made of rope) known as poolle are made by most residents for themselves. Another job, that is the removal of dead cattle which at Chamba is considered to be fit for a Chamar only, is performed by the owner himself at Bharara. The informants at Bharara are well aware of the fact that it is considered degrading by the Chamba people. Their explanation is that they don't go to call a Chamar out of sheer inconvenience of covering three miles of hilly track especially in winter. Besides, the effort may not prove fruitful at the end, and it is inauspicious to keep a corpse in the house overnight. Considering the fact that most of these houses are one room dwellings and even in others the living room is always shared with the animals, even the less orthodox will not keep a dead body in the house overnight. But the first argument about covering the distance does not hold much substance. As most of the healthy adults cover at least five miles on a normal working day. After the winter snowfall it is really difficult; but even in summer a Chamar is never called for the purpose. With the help of neighbours and friends the corpses are deposited by the side of a brooklet about a furlong away from the main settlement.

The Chamar household is now led by an Arya uxori-local husband (since 1957). He learnt shoe making from his father-in-law and with the help of his wife and brother-

in-law works about $1\frac{1}{2}$ acres of land as well. He sells his shoes on cash payment. For repairs also from the people of Bharara he charges at the time of repair, but maintains some birton relations in his immediate neighbourhood. According to him he does not remove the dead cattle and gets his skins from corpses available outside. He intends leaving leatherwork altogether when he is able to buy more land (more about him later).

Most of the people at Bharara still say that they have birton with both the Lohar and the Chamar. They point out that if the Lohar and the Chamar or any member of their families happens to be at Bharara on an auspicious day they would give him something. At the end of a harvest also they claim that no household would refuse to make at least a token payment to either of them if they care to visit their households. There are a number of other explanations for this attitude, such as an act of prestige or of thanksgiving; but two economic advantages are also pointed out. One is to avoid the possibility of being refused or delayed in case of an urgent necessity; the other in the words of an informant is: "A Lohar or a Chamar does not put his heart into the work if he is not happy."

The named castes that figure at ceremonies are the Koli, the Hali, the Bhat, the Bajdar and the Brahmin. Koli as a caste name is widespread in these areas and the people bearing this name are associated with widely different occupations in different areas. At Bharara

- a Koli is supposed to carry the fire with which the funeral pyre is lit. In some parts of Churaha this function is supposed to be that of a Hali (literally a plougher, a farm servant). According to the state gazetteer, the Halis also used to remove dead cattle (Gaz. Chamba 1904: 164). Now the Halis are accepted as Aryas by the people of Bharara. The Aryas of Bharara also inter-marry with the Kolis of Kolha (1 mile away). But marriage with one particular Koli household at Kolha is avoided and the people of Bharara apply the term Koli only to this household. Other residents of Kolah are referred to as Aryas, but the latter inter-marry with this Koli household and do not make a caste distinction of this nature even in name. A member of this Koli household sometimes comes to Bharara for death ceremonies. He is paid only when called. His remuneration includes one to five rupees, dead person's clothes, a piece of ~~the~~ cloth and some food articles. If he does not come, the fire is carried by one of the agnates of the deceased, and the remuneration goes to the latter's sister's son.

A Bhat is supposed to blow the shell at a funeral procession. The last a Bhat performed this function at Bharara was about 25 years back. Now the same function can be performed by any other villager. The Bhats inter-marry within the Rathi category.

- The Bajdar or Bajandari (the musicians) are referred to as Aryas by the Rathis. They inter-marry with the Aryas. Three households at Kia (3 miles away) still play

- music on payment and are referred to by their specific caste name. They visit Bharara on the ancestor's day and receive food offerings at the marh (the ancestor's place). Individual households at Bharara may give them anything by way of alms. They are different from the Aryas of Bardoli associated with the legend of Mitun, discussed earlier. Most residents of Bharara themselves play ceremonial music and this group of Bajandaries is not considered to be necessary at any function.

At Mangloa (1½ miles west of Bharara) a number of the residents claim to be Brahmin. They inter-marry with Rathis. Heads of two households at Mangloa are known *at* ~~to~~ Bharara as 'learned' Brahmins. Sometimes one of these Brahmins comes to Bharara for ceremonial functions. His role is limited to reciting the purifying mantras, telling auspicious days and interpreting the cycle of Hindu festivals and naming the infants. Payment in the form of cash and grain (besides actual feeding) varies according to the occasions. For naming a child he takes one rupee. For the last few years another Brahmin from Karmari comes to Bharara regularly only once a year on Lord Shiva's day (Shivratri). He does only patri-vichar (explaining the scriptures). He is married to a Rathi woman of Bharara. For the night he may stay at any other Rathi house but his Sasurari (in-laws place). He accepts payment only in the form of grain (jina³). The amount of grain which varies from 1 to 2 kgs. is given by almost every household including his in-laws (sashurari).

- Ceremonies performed at the local temples in Churaha

do not need Brahmin priests. The forms of local worship in which the phenomenon of spirit possession and animal sacrifices figure are performed by local mediums. A Brahmin may be accidentally one of these mediums in a village with a Brahmin population (e.g., at Magloa and Devi Kothi). These ceremonies performed either on fixed annual dates or at the occasional request of individuals are attended by the whole village. The composition of the groups of functionaries does not show any caste distinctions.

At Bharara the following functionaries act at present:

S. No.	Name	Rank	Caste	Bhialti	Age
1	Ramdayal	Pujial (priest)	Rathi	Malagric	42
2	Sagar	Chela (medium)	ARVA	Stokha	55
3	Bagha	Chela (medium)	Rathi	Malagric	65
4	Gokal	Chela (medium)	Rathi	Drubh	70
5	Charnu	Bheduphera (the sacrificer)	Rathi	Drubh	27

Out of these the first and the fifth are chosen by consensus and the others are supposed to be chosen by the gods who possess them in a trance.

There are two important ceremonial functions at a funeral for which specific payments are made to the individuals, but these functions are not traditionally associated with particular castes. One is the making of the bier (bēiman) and the other is making a memorial

stone (murti). The first can be done by any expert carpenter of Bharara (without reference to caste). But the agnates of the deceased are not expected to do it. The maker of a bier is given 2 kgs of grain and Rs. 1.25. The murti maker is presently an Arya of Kia. He charges 6 kgs of grain for the work.

Other ritual specialists who visit Bharara for specific functions are the jogis (ascetics) professional chelas (witch doctors) Buddhist Lamas and pandas (astrologers). They are paid specifically for specific functions and do not figure in permanent birton relationships. But so far the frequency of their visits has proved to be an effective alternative to the ritual services of a Brahmin. Interpretation of festival dates and name giving is also done by these functionaries.

CHAPTER 5

Caste, Occupation, Marriage and the

Symbolism of Distinction

Inter-Caste Marriages

Emulation and Elaboration of Symbolic
Distinctions

- Caste, Occupation, Marriage and the Symbolism of Distinction

For a resident of Bharara the Lohar (blacksmith) and the Chamar (leatherworker) are a single category of lowest reference. These two frequently inter-change their occupations and intermarry. Below the upper caste category (Rathi, Brahman) the Aryas are of a higher status than the Lohar-Chamar. At a lower level some Lohars claim a distinction from a particularly inferior variety known as Dhangari-Lohar. In the north eastern areas and Pangi valley where in the words of Mattoo, "Everyone is his own mechanic, carpenter, blacksmith, cobbler and mason." (Mattoo 1961: 93). Only one term Lohar is used to describe a professional artisan of lower status. In the areas further east the dialectic equivalents of Lohar are Domba and Gara. Occupational description of Garas in Lahaul is " ... jewellers, musicians and blacksmiths." (^{Kangra} ~~Pa~~ Dist. Gaz. 1917: 196).

Another caste, the Barwal, is described by the people of Bharara as tailor by occupation and Arya by status. There is one Barwal household at Lesuin (5 miles away). Its head used to be a tailor. A few years back he left his 'traditional' occupation of tailoring, settled down as a cultivator and intermarries within the Arya category. Elsewhere in Churaha, people bearing the name Barwal and its slight variant Batwal intermarry with Lohars. At Devi Kothi (14 miles north of Bharara) where incidentally the best known temple of local worship is located, some writers described the situation in the following words:

"Batwals, also known to be Barwals and Lohars are the dominant community of the village ... The only distinction between these two castes is that a person in a Batwal locality is a Batwal and in a Lohar locality he may call himself Lohar." (Bhatnagar, Sud and Singh 1964: 10). How these names originate, get identified with particular occupations and express status can be grasped from the following description of Barwals by Hutchinson:

"The Barwals make mats and winnowing fans and also act as musicians. Their name may be derived from baria, the name of the grass used in their work. The Batwals are generally regarded as being of Barwal caste but were formerly employed as Chaukidars and peons and this led to their acquiring a slightly higher social status ... Batwal means tax collector. A Batwal in the parganas is an ordinary peon under the orders of the pargana officials and may be of any caste." (Gaz. Chamba 1904: 165).

But, for a resident of Bharara a Barwal is different from both the Batwal and the Lohar. His traditional occupation is tailoring and his status is higher than both. He belongs to the Arya category within which he inter-marries. Changes of occupation are frequent in Churaha and the processes which lead to the changes in names and in status can still be observed. Persons bearing different names and status can be found not only within a local group of agnates but sometimes within a household. For this reason a Churahi puts less value on the magic of caste names, occupational associations and ritual status than a villager in the plains does. Recent expansion

- of the economy, physical and occupational mobility, and the problems created by the dearth of brides have also partly slowed the processes which lead to the plains-like closure of endogamous groups with defined occupations and ritual status. Even the three caste categories (Rathi, Arya, Lohar-Chamar) which are composed of a number of named caste groups leave out some groups in between, whose status and original occupation is not clear to a resident of Bharara (e.g., Dhaki). About some others the occupational association is known but the status is not yet clear (e.g., Jogi, Rehar, Dumna, Bhat, etc.). Most people bearing these names are either new or reside at some distance from Bharara or come as visitors. Their relative status is decided when one of them settles down and contracts marriages in the neighbourhood. But unlike the plains this decision about the status is seldom abrupt and results from the cumulative effect of a number of actions on the part of the newcomer.

Among the old residents also there are always some in almost every settlement who are already undergoing such changes. So that a new person finds a variety of situations in which he can adjust himself. Neither these changes in occupations, marital arrangements and ritual status nor the entry of a complete stranger into the pre-existing groups looks as dramatic to a Churahi as to a villager in the plains. Before going further we will have a rapid glance at some events in a few families.

- 1. Ravan (66) of Mangloa (2 miles down and west of

- Bharara) is one of the Brahmin priests serving the residents of Bharara. He has three daughters but no son. His eldest daughter he wanted to marry to a Brahmin. Before that could happen she eloped with a Gosain of Paddar (2 miles north of Bharara). The Gosains of Paddar are now cultivators but originally belonged to an order of ascetics considered inferior by Brahmins. The marriage was subsequently regularised and the bride price was paid. After a few years his second daughter was married in the same Gosain household with his consent. For his third daughter, Mastu, Ravan was in search of an uxorilocal Brahmin husband. By so doing he wanted to solve three problems. One was related to the inheritance of property (2 acres of land and a house). The other two concerned his priesthood. He wanted to free himself from cultivation and to concentrate on priestly duties which according to him are the proper functions of a Brahmin. In the long run he wanted to train someone to support his priestly mantle after him.

When Mastu was about fifteen she got infatuated with Sunder, a Suniar (goldsmith) from Chamba who used to spend his late summer months in Churaha as a mobile artisan-cum-trader. During one of his absences Mastu was married to another Gosain at Paddar (a cousin of her sister's husband). She left her husband and came back the next year. After a year Ravan married her to Hardayal, a Rathi of Bharara (Balial bhialti). One of Hardayal's uncles had previously married a Brahman girl of Ravan's village. Hardayal was a shepherd at the time. Once he went out

- with the flock and did not return for about six months. During this period Sunder and Mastu were successful in persuading Ravan to accept Sunder as an uxori-local son-in-law. Since 1952 they all reside under the same roof. Mastu and Sunder have three daughters and two sons. Ravan carries on with his ritual duties, only his visits to distant settlements are now checked by old age. Sunder still does some goldsmithy and trade but mainly cultivates the land which he has almost doubled by his efforts (about 4 acres). Food for all is cooked by Mastu. But Ravan still keeps some commensal distance from Sunder, i.e., he would not eat from the same plate - a distinction not observed in relation to other members of the household.

2. Hardayal, a paternal cousin of Ravan, is another priest Brahmin of Mangloa. He had two sons. One of them died issueless and the widow also left after the death. His second son Kidara once left home and became an uxori-local husband in an Arya (Hali) household. After the death of his elder brother he was persuaded by his father to come back. He brought his Arya wife along and now resides with Hardayal under the same roof. Hardayal agreed to transfer his land ($1\frac{1}{2}$ acres) to his name. Hardayal gets his rations from Kidara, but cooks his own meals and keeps his things in a corner of the one roomed house.

- Both Hardayal and Ravan are still respected as priests. The residents of Bharara describe them as "well versed" Brahmins. Hardayal is more active of the two and still

visits Bharara.

3. Tokha and Molum are two Brahmin brothers at Mangloa. Their father Kanshi was a priest. Tokha remained unmarried up to his thirty fifth year when he became an uxori-local husband of an Arya girl (20), Labhdu at Bhanjal ($1\frac{1}{2}$ miles away). Labhdu and her younger sister had been orphaned about two years earlier. The land ($1\frac{3}{5}$ acres) and the house was inherited by them. Labhdu turned out Tokha after three years and accepted Kunda, a dogra Rajput from Chamba (his elder brother is settled at Paddar, a neighbouring village). Meanwhile Tokha became an uxori-local husband at Garh Tikri with the widow of a Dhangari Lohar (the lowest in status).

Molum, Tokha's brother also brought a Lohar wife of Dhangari status. Most of the year she always spent at her parent's (peoka) and tried to persuade Molum to go with her as an uxori-local husband; a proposition which Molum did not accept. After about six years the marriage tie was broken by her. A year old son went with her but her daughter about four years older than him (now 8) stays with Molum.

Both the brothers were first described as having turned Lohar by virtue of their marriages. But the actual position (on which some informants do not agree) is like this. Neither the local Brahmins nor Rathis of Bharara are prepared to accept food from either Tokha's or Molum's household. Aryas accept food from Molum's household but

not from Tokha's. Tokha and Molum do not claim any commensal distance from each other.

4. An old case described by the residents of Bharara concerns Pundit Kanshi Ram who died in 1958. He came from Kashmir. He was an employee of a timber company, was dismissed due to negligence of work, and then stayed at Bharara from 1946 to 1950. At Bharara he worked as a private teacher of Kashmiri Vidaya (traditional 3 R's). Then he eloped with a Barwal girl and settled at Lige Kothi (north-western Churaha). He carried on his teaching work and some ritual duties at Lige Kothi up to his last days. He is said to have always avoided taking meals cooked by his wife.

4a. We may recall here the Brahmin of Karmari who visits Bharara annually on Lord Shiva's day. He has married a Rathi girl from Bharara; does not accept food from any resident; collects only grains from most households (including his Sashurari, i.e., in-laws) and never stays with his wife's parents. But in his own household his wife cooks the meals for all.

5. Tega, an Arya from Rajmetar is now an uxori-local husband in a Chamar household at Silera (discussed in relation to Khalwai arrangements). He was one of six brothers. His father died in 1955 and the total property left was about two acres of land. He learnt show^e-making from his father-in-law, Swaran. The household has already severed most of its khalwai arrangements. Tega's present ambition is to buy more land at Silera and when

- he has about three acres, to leave leatherwork altogether. His brothers do not observe a commensal distance with him personally but do not like to visit his household.

6. At Bharara, Sagar an Arya, was originally a Rathi (Lakhia bhialti). Lakhia, his father, was originally a Gharati (one who mans the water mill) near Tikri. Lakhia married a Rathi girl from Bahnota, got some land at Bharara where he finally settled down as a cultivator. Sagar was one of six brothers. They inherited about 3 acres of land from Lakhia. The oldest brother Lunj, was 38 when he married. Sagar next in age, was about 33 when he started living with a local Arya girl. Some land was in the name of his wife, but later on when he became an expert carpenter, he bought more land and now has 9 acres which is twice as much as the total land held by his three surviving brothers. On the basis of land holding and income from carpentry, his economic status at Bharara is considerably above average. But for everyone (including his brothers) at Bharara he is as much an Arya as any other. He has also fully accepted the position and subsequent marital links in his family have been with Aryas.

The situations which lead to inter-caste marriages vary considerably as we have seen in the cases described above. Most of these situations involve individuals who find themselves relatively poorer than their equals at the time of marriage. The priest Brahmans in general are left behind others in expanding their resources, the general direction in the expanding economy of Churaha

-

- has favoured the cultivator. The model of a priest Brahman which those in Churaha try to copy is derived from Chamba where ploughing is considered to be a degrading occupation. The richer Brahmans of Chamba employ servants for the purpose. The desire to leave ploughing does not leave the mind of an already cultivating Brahman of Churaha who aspires for priestly status. At the same time remuneration from priestly duties is extremely limited in Churaha. The resulting lack of expansion in the household resources affects their descendents even more acutely due to subsequent divisions of the property. In a number of cases the priestly aspirations end with the individual Brahman priest. In others these are rarely sustained beyond the third generation. In the case of Ravan (case 1) and Hardayal (case 2) association with priestly functions can be traced up to their common grandfather. But after Hardayal and Ravan this family tradition dies out as it did earlier in the case of Kanshi (case 3). The immigrant Kashmiri Brahman Kanshi Ram (case 4) did not take to cultivation but tried to supplement his income by teaching. At Bharara he had only four pupils, whose parents barely supported his stay. The cases of Tega the Arya (case 5) and Sagar (Rathi) represent a situation where due to a number of sons, the original property of a subsistence cultivator faces the prospect of immediate fragmentation.

The importance of economic considerations, and the desire to have an independent affinal household in the mind of a bride can also be grasped from the case of

Mastu, Ravan's daughter (case 1). In economic terms, Sunder the goldsmith-cum-trader was richer (and is even more now) than both the Gosain and the Rathi, her two successive husbands left earlier. To Mastu at least Sunder was also able to display his riches by giving superior gifts for three years. For leaving the earlier husbands she gives the main reasons as poverty and lack of independence in the affinal households. Both were joint households, the first had 9 members at the time. The second had only 5 members but the husband himself being a shepherd used to remain away for long periods. Before analysing the varying implications for the status of individuals figuring in these cases, we will describe some other relevant facts ^{which} ~~with~~ influence the ideas at Bharara.

The Rathis at Bharara and the Brahmans of Mangloa freely inter-marry. In these inter-marriages the Brahman girls married to Rathi husbands are approximately three times as many as Rathi girls married to Brahman husbands. But the Rathis of Bharara are also aware of the fact that some Brahman households in other settlements near the Chamba-road, take wives from local Rathis but try to marry off their own girls in settlements nearer to Chamba. The Karmari Brahman who presently visits Bharara on Shiva's day has married a Rathi girl from Bharara (case 4a) but does not subscribe to the general belief at Bharara that a marriage between a Brahman girl and a Rathi boy is perfectly normal. Given these facts, can we describe the overall situation in terms of the generalised concepts

of hypogamy, or hypergamy? On the other hand, the purely economic co-relates of the difference in individual situations are perfectly clear. Earlier we observed that in terms of average land holdings the residents of Bharara as a whole are economically better off than others in the neighbouring settlements (including Mangloa). From Satyas a village on the roadside in northern Churaha, it is reported that a group of Brahman households whose land holdings are exceptionally higher than others consistently try to marry their girls at Chamba and receive local brides for their males hypergamously (Nitzberg 1970).

An important influence on the local ideology is exercised by the marital practices in another category of people who are considered superior by both the Rathis of Bharara and the Brahmans of Mangloa. In this category we include 1) the descendents of old feudal families still resident in Churaha (some of them still have comparatively large land holdings, are still addressed by their titles such as ranaji, thakur sahib, mianji), etc. and do enjoy precedence in terms of salutation, 2) the lower grades of the non-cultivator Brahmans and Rajputs of Chamba, 3) the officials posted in Churaha, most of whom belong to Chamba; and 4) a number of traders and shopkeepers now residing in Churaha temporarily or permanently (e.g., at Tikri, Tissa, Baira and Trela). All these people try to marry their daughters outside Churaha (at Chamba and beyond) but accept local brides. They do not discriminate if these brides are Rathi or Brahman. In one household

a Rathi girl of Bharara shares her polygamous husband with a Brahman co-wife. The presence of these groups further reinforces the attitude that the local Rathis and Brahmins are one status category for inter-marriage.

Sometimes even the main upper caste category (Rathi-Brahman) of Churaha is not able to preserve a distinct lower limit when an exceptionally powerful individual is involved. It is not uncommon for temporarily resident officials to keep an Arya woman at one time and an upper caste one at another. In one case the head of a Rathi household consistently tried and was successful in persuading a revenue official to leave his Arya wife and keep his daughter instead. There is no ritual involved in these marriages and the outside officials consider these women as concubines but according to the Churahi code they are proper wives. In the eyes of the Churahi father that particular official obviously had not fallen in status as a result of his earlier marriage with an Arya girl. But as we saw, Sagar a local Rathi of Bharara lost his status by marrying a local Arya wife.

A number of marriages occur with complete strangers to the area. In the case of wives brought from outside Churaha even at present little curiosity is shown about their original caste status. In the case of a number of stranger husbands who married local wives, the original caste status is not known. Minor status differences are however, recognised about the areas of origin associated with them. Thus a Brahmauri (from Brahmaur) is slightly

superior to a Lahauli (from Lahaul) or a Pangwal (from Pangi); and a Chamial (from Chamba) or a Jamual (from Jamu) or a Kashmiri (from Kashmir) are all superior to the first set. While discussing the recruitment to the village we observed in the cases of Jagta, Umeda, Pooran, etc. that nothing was known about their original caste status. Among the comparatively recent cases are three uxori-local husbands with Rathi girls at Bharara and the only fact of origin known about them is that one is a Lahauli (from Lahaul) the second is a Kumaoni (from Kumaon U.P.) and the third is a Gaddi (from Gaderan). Two other uxori-local husbands with local Arya girls are both known as Pangwal (from Pangi). In those cases when the original caste is known, as we saw in the case of Sunder, the goldsmith, the richer ones often get accepted in the upper category. Now even when Sunder's father-in-law, the priest Brahman, still discriminates with him personally, the interdining relations of Sunder and his family as a whole are within the upper category.

For analysing the character of variations in the situations described above we have to bear in mind that the local ideology is still to a great extent in flux, the development of consistency in the local ideology is constantly thwarted by the strains created by the dominant and strongly hypergamous society of ^{CHAMBA} ~~Chamba~~ and by the physical as well as occupational mobility.

We are mainly concerned here with two orders of variation. When a particular marriage changes status

(or merely caste identity) which particular individual or individuals are affected by it in particular situations. The second order of variation refers to the content of this change, which also varies from situation to situation. In view of considerable variation on these lines we can only cautiously generalise about Churaha.

A marriage between two named castes included in a category (e.g., Brahman ^{and} ~~to~~ Rathi) generally does not change the caste identity of the father. The wife and the children are known by the father's caste. But there are very important exceptions to this rule. In an uxori-local marriage it is the father who loses his caste identity. There is a further exception to this exception itself. Among the near-equals and in cases where the status of the wife's family may be slightly lower, the uxori-local husband is known by the caste name of his wife. But in the case of exceptionally higher and titled families such as a Rana, and in case of priestly Brahmans, the uxori-local husband does not become a Rana or a priest. His wife and children, however, retain their superior caste name. Even this situation is not so rigidly defined and exceptions to it occur when the property is inherited by an uxori-local husband in a Rana household and when an individual born of a Brahman mother and a Rathi father is deliberately trained to take up ritual duties. Other situations which complicate the interpretation of these rules arise when after a divorce or a death particular spouses (and their children) either go back to the original households or to the household of the new spouse.

Considering the frequency of uxori-local marriages, a high divorce rate and numerous instances of inheritance by others than one's sons, it is not difficult to understand how original caste identities within a category tend to merge. Reporting about inter-caste marriage in an adjoining area, Newell observed that a number of caste groups have merged through a process of isogamy into a single category of Gaddis. But he makes an exception in the case of Brahmans who according to him cannot be merged in this way. On finding a more pregnant situation in a village (Kugti) a decade later, he takes the help of this rule of caste being determined by the father and still maintains that original identity of the Brahmans can be retained in this way. (Newell 1955: 101-110; 1963: 55-57). Newell's explanation of what he says: "the impossibility of isogamously incorporating Brahmans in the Gaddi community", rests mainly on the structural necessity of a priest qualified by birth to undertake religious family rites. (Newell 1955: 101-110).

Yet he notes that all Brahmans are not priests (p. 106) and also observes that the preservation of caste identity on the part of Brahmans is conditional upon their economic independence which he assumes for all Brahmans in the state (p. 109). Newell is also aware of the fact that there are other religious specialists in the area such as Sadhus, mediums, etc. But with a complicated manoeuvre he first disassociates them from the rites-de-passage and then finding them closely involved in temple worship with Brahman pujaris, associates them rigidly with units

- of population at different levels (p 107).

Newell is obviously trying to extricate from the situation the so-called ideal Hindu social structure. When at Kugti he finds Brahmans freely inter-marrying with non-Brahmans he goes on to minimise the importance of this situation pronouncing it as "possibly unique instance of contemporary regularised inter-caste marriage in India" (Newell 1963: 55-57). Noticing some instances reported from adjoining areas (Kulu and Trilokinath) where the services of a Brahman priest are not necessary for the rites-de-passage, Newell dismisses these as belonging to a totally different social structure (1955: 107). In general, Newell looks at his situation as merely a variant of the ideal caste system which has made some allowances to factors of general economy, environment and communications.

The opposite way of looking at these areas is suggested in the writings of those amateur anthropologists who were not preoccupied with showing ideal consistency in the Hindu social structure. According to Lyall: "On the border line in the Himalayas, between Tibet and India proper, anyone can observe caste growing before his eyes." (Lyall 1967: 1883-4: 74). A commonly held assumption both in the case of Newell and earlier writers, however, is that the differences between these areas and the plains are mainly cultural and given increased contacts with other Hindu areas, these differences will disappear. I have discussed earlier that new forms of communication

(roads, postal services, etc.) do not answer for the whole range of inter-area contacts and the phenomenon of seasonal migrations in particular did not allow these people to remain completely isolated. Early political integration into Hindu states, traditional trade routes which pass through these areas and a long history of immigrations from the Hindu areas are other significant factors which should be taken into account. If it is only a matter of adopting some ideas, why this process has taken so long? Newell notes that the situation in Kugti has operated in this way for at least a hundred years. Ibbetson and Lyall claim that the process of adopting Hindu ideas even in areas adjoining Ladakh and Tibet (Lahaul) have been going on ever since they came under Hindu Rajas, i.e., more than a thousand years ago (Ibbetson 1919 vol 1: 90). The area under discussion, i.e., Churaha have been under Hindu political domination ever since the recorded times.

What all these writers have noticed but have not given due importance to are some of the real problems faced by the actors. For the latter it is a struggle in which ideological symbols, economic necessities and the need to secure spouses are interlinked. Rose puts it more bluntly:

"The purchase of a bride is an economic need as well as a social necessity, and her price tends more and more to be regulated by the laws of supply and demand."

"No doubt we find very many instances of Brahmans whose status is mediocre or even debased. But the degradation

is always due to economic necessity ..." (Rose 1919 v).

This struggle has different levels which range from the individual to the inhabitants of a particular area. The idea of Brahmans being a uniformly distinct species is a myth. An ordinary cultivator of Mangloa is a Brahman in his own Brahman household, but is a Rathi when married uxorilocally in a Rathi household. When after a divorce he is back again he is a Brahman. Now even the local priests (Hardayal and Ravan) subscribe to the theory that Rathis and Brahmans were originally the same and the divergence occurred when the former left their ritual functions, i.e., what they themselves are trying to preserve. Higher Brahmans of Chamba do not recognise even this notion of distinction between the two. For them they are all Rathis. About the concept of 'gotra' we have already discussed their dilemma in the first chapter. Meaningful divergence between the local Brahmans and others can occur if the former are able to close the borders for marriage by marrying outside the area which a few better off among them still try. In the situation discussed by Newell (Kugti) one of the Brahman lineages associated with a local temple have also partially succeeded. They marry either outside the area or with local Brahmans who in turn freely inter-marry with the Gaddis. (Newell 1953: 55-57). To marry a girl outside with superior Brahmans involves dowry and for a wife the Churahi Brahman still has to pay bride price. Those familial groups in Churaha who succeed in this effort finally and not all those who are presently called

Brahman may separate as a Brahman caste if such a separation occurs in the future. At present it is the process of merger in the Rathi category which is more significant.

What the Brahmans in Churaha could not achieve alone they have achieved together with the most numerous and dominant group, the Rathis. This category as a whole has been able to close its lower border to a great extent. Having now achieved some economic and political independence, they are able to prescribe lower status at least to its near equals in the neighbourhood who contract inferior marriages. Even this phenomenon is related to the relative independence now enjoyed by the locally dominant groups. Previously such an expulsion depended on the pleasure of the feudal lords and later of the Rajas who could also restore the original status. For the second most numerous category the Arya (itself composed of a number of named caste groups) the tendency to close the lower border has brought only partial success. Even a Chamar household like that of Tega (case 5) hopes to recover his earlier Arya status after establishing himself as a cultivator - and the hope is well founded for we have seen a Chamar can marry a Lohar, the latter can marry a Barwal and the Barwals inter-marry with the Aryas. A Lohar wife with a Brahman like Molum (case 2) does not make him a Lohar but an Arya. In the eastern areas where most of the cultivators claim upper caste status this intermediate category itself gradually disappears.

The most important content of caste status we have distinguished so far is the right to inter-marry. Considering the importance of economic and political factors in marriage, it is not surprising to find caste status tending to be congruent with secular status. In the old feudal setup when secular powers were inherited by small familial groups this equation was easier to obtain. Even in the present situation of Churaha when the local groups have become relatively independent, especially after 1948 and power is more horizontally distributed, this congruence is helped by the frequency with which more powerful individuals still join a higher category and the weaker ones leave it.

Emulation and elaboration of symbolic distinctions

About the symbolism of purity and pollution, I agree with Douglas that its primary concern is "the ordering of a social hierarchy" (Douglas 1970: 149). It is logical, however, to treat it as a part of the overall ideology of superiority and inferiority. In empirical situations it is not sometimes easy to distinguish if an act is polluting or simply inferior. For interpreting this ideology, the sheer scale and historical development of Hindu society does not allow a simplistic explanation. Two main sources of diversity can, however, be identified. One is that the nature of the hierarchy of power differs spatially as well as temporally. The other is that in actual application it is not merely the access to pre-existing or imported ideas that matters, but far more

- important is to see what your relevant inferiors and superiors are doing.

We will illustrate the second one first. At Bharara we have noticed that members of the upper caste category themselves are associated with functions of skin-curing, leather bag making, dead cattle removing, washing, sweeping, weaving, providing music at ceremonies, etc. It is, however, known to many informants that at least some of these functions are considered polluting by the higher Hindus of Chamba. The local Brahman priests also know that the polluting aspects of some of these functions are referred to in the sacred literature. Some priestly Brahmans also try to disassociate with such functions with varying success. Some poorer descendents of the feudal families in Churaha themselves have to perform such functions. Association with these functions is considered inferior only by a few individuals with pretensions to priesthood or the comparatively better off Ranas; but even they recognise that these neither pollute nor degrade the caste status of an individual. On the other hand, blacksmithy and shoemaking are associated with the most deprived familial groups in the area. The latter may be associated ideologically with one of the most inferior occupations. But there is no ideological explanation at Bharara for why blacksmithy is as much polluting as shoemaking. Association with either of the two functions can deprive a person of his original caste status. The distance observed in the case of the Lohar (blacksmith) and the Chamar (shoemaker) is relatively greater but no distinction is made between

them. Writing about Rampura, a village in South India, Srinivas observes:

"Ideas of pollution do not attach themselves to working with iron, making pottery, ... There is no inherent reason why these occupations should be regarded as low. But the fact remains that they are and the castes practising them are unequal ... other castes do not accept cooked food and drinking water from smiths. Even the untouchables do not take food and water from smiths."

"The tapping and sale of toddy are low occupations because only low castes drink toddy; Western alcoholic drinks, which are consumed only by the wealthy, are not considered low." (Srinivas 1955: 21-23).

I am inclined to think that all the practices concerning occupations, marriage, dietary rules, etc., to which the notions of superiority or inferiority are attached can be more profitably studied by establishing their associations (past or present) with actual groups in the hierarchies of power and influence. This approach can also help those who are inclined to look at the origins of particular practices. Both the historical materials and the contemporary situations on the borders of Hindu society can help in this respect. The repulsion for beef eating for instance, may not be explained in this way if we look only at the contemporary plains situation where even the lowliest may not eat beef. But some answers can be found in the continuous political subjugation and dominance of the earlier populations by the Hindu society. Historical references point out that beef eating came to be considered

- an inferior practice only in the post vedic period (Srinivas 1962: 42). A Hindu theologian or an informant from the plains may give a religious or a philosophical reason for this practice but a Hindu from Churaha, Pangi or Lahaul also has a ready referent nearer at hand. The existence of this practice in some of the adjoining predominantly Buddhist areas is well known to him. In Ladakh the Tibetan Buddhist society at least in the central and eastern areas, has remained more or less free from Hindu domination. Their main cattle are the yak and the cow and a number of cross breeds between them. (Dso, Gar, De, Bre, etc., males and Dsomo, Garmo, Demo, Bremo, etc., females). Besides being used as draught animals these are the main source of milk products and meat. Even after natural or accidental deaths, the meat is never thrown away. The surplus is cut into pieces, dried and stored for use during the severe winter months. There is no notion of inferiority attached to beef eating, but eating horses and fish is considered extremely bad, and is associated with the Mons. They are a small group of people (less than 0.5%) collectively known as Mon (Beda = musician; Gara = artisan) who have no connection with leatherwork. Commonly held tradition about them is that they came from the Indian plains. Some legends refer to them as being bought or exchanged for grain, etc. Their touch is not polluting but they are not allowed inside a respectable household. The common peasantry does not allow them to enter at least the kitchen room (which is also the main living room). They cannot inter-

- dine as equals. Ideologically no section of society is

inferior and theoretically they can even be recruited as Lamas, but in practice it does not happen. The Lamas can go to their houses for ritual purposes but do not accept cooked food from them. In some areas of western Ladakh where the Balti Muslims are predominant and have been exercising political power for a long time, discriminations of this nature (entry to the kitchen and inter-dining, etc.) are extended to the Buddhist peasantry itself and is not merely confined to the musician and the artisan.

The Buddhists of Lahaul who came under the political control of the Hindu state of Kulu now consider the practice of eating beef as bad as horseflesh and fish. But the practice is by no means extinct, in the lower classes (both Hindu and Buddhist). Most of the upper classes now claim the Hindu caste status of Rajputs. But some of them still inter-marry with some Buddhist families in Ladakh. A close link of these symbols with power is also suggested in the following change recorded by Rev. Heyde. In the Hindu states, killing of cows and yaks was not allowed as a rule, although the practice was carried out secretly at some places especially in winter. For a prominent collective ritual in Lahaul instead of a yak, a buffalo used to be sacrificed under the orders of the Kulu Rajas. When Lahaul became British territory, yak replaced the buffalo for this ritual. (Gaz. Kangra III: 1917: 200).

The occupation of a leatherworker also seems closely

linked with these practices in different areas. Working with leather in any form is not despised in Ladakh. In Lahaul the higher classes consider it inferior but leatherwork is not confined to a particular caste. In fact a professional Chamar (leatherworker) is found only in areas west of the Pangri range.

I have tried to illustrate here that these symbols are neither immutable nor can be brought in the framework of a single system. They are closely related to the actual hierarchies in a given situation. The potency of these symbols is derived from their association with power in the hierarchy to which even a pre-existing or imported ideology of superiority-inferiority tends to gravitate.

There is an inherent dynamism in these symbols. While the inferior tries to emulate the superior, the latter is always in need of preserving the distinction. This distinction can be preserved either by limiting the inferior's capacity to emulate or by continuously elaborating the symbolism involved. Both of these methods have been employed in India. The capacity of the inferior to emulate is to a great extent automatically checked by unequal distribution of resources and this is more apparent in the case of those symbols which need financial backing. Association with certain forms of marriage, occupations and food items known to be considered inferior by others is not accepted merely for ideological convictions. In the case of symbols which prove relatively

- easier to emulate, quite often political power is used to check the process. Dr. Hutchinson details some of the restrictions officially imposed on the menial castes in Chamba state:

"The men might not wear long hair, or live in houses of more than one storey; the women were forbidden to put on gold ornaments and a bride could not be carried in a palki. The use of the palki, dafal and nakara at weddings is still forbidden, but permission may be secured in perpetuity by one payment of Rs. 25 to the state." (Gaz. Chamba 1904: 165).

According to the relative price levels, Rs. 25 was equivalent to an acre of land at the time. Some of these musical instruments are now considered as caste marks at Bharara. The use of drum instruments (dafal and nakara) is proper for the Rathis and the use of bells (ghanta) and shell instruments (sankh) is proper for the Aryas. In practice this distinction is not always kept these days. At present there is no regulatory device like the one used by the Rajas to promote individual aspirants, and the power of the locally dominant groups to control such deviance has yet not developed to the extent it did in the plains villages.

- The second device - far more important to preserve the distinctions between superiors and inferiors has been the constant elaboration of distinctive marks. One of the drawbacks in the use of the term sanskritisation to describe these processes is that it fails to take sufficient

notice of this phenomenon. This term is not only culture bound as Lynch puts it (Lynch 1968: 237); but it precludes the possibilities of change within Hindu culture. It suggests only a particular fixed set of ideas to which the actors may turn again and again and hence look only backwards, while the overall movement in the ideology has been forward. The theory of sanskritisation recognises only the emulation by the inferior but not the elaboration on the part of the superior. Gould came very near to explaining this when he wrote:

"By the time they (the low castes) reach their destination (of sanskritisation) however, they will discover that the Brahman has himself vacated the spot and moved on (to) the higher hill of Westernisation whence he still gazes contemptuously down upon them from an elevated perch ... No doubt it will be at this point that the lower castes also commence abandoning their craze for sanskritisation and then the book will have to close on this concept." (Gould 1961: 949).

Gould recognises this tendency in the upper classes only in relation to Westernisation and fails to detect this 'moving on to the higher hill' within the traditional context because he also seems to subscribe to the notion that the traditional Hindu ideology (the so called sanskritic tradition) is fixed. His magic point of departure to which Lynch also seems to subscribe (Lynch 1968: 210) looks conspicuous only because of relatively more conspicuous differences in the Indian and western

- traditions. The lower castes could not satisfy their urge for the so called sanskritisation even after thousands of years of emulation, and the gulf between their symbols and those of the higher classes instead of narrowing has been widening. The need is to recognise that even in the traditional context the higher classes have been constantly creating or adopting new symbols of distinction. The effect of this elaboration which was far from uniform at different places is apparent in the degrees of untouchability and the range of food items excluded from superior diet, in different areas and situations.

Only the recognition of this process of constant elaboration of symbols of distinction can help us in seeing continuities between the relatively simple and the extreme forms of abstinence and untouchability. Unfortunately the very use of such words as untouchable, vegetarian, etc., tends to obscure the range of variation in these practices. No student of Indian society is wholly unaware of these variations. But recognising continuities between them is not so usual. Two expressions of equality and nearness are recognised in India. One is to dine from the same plate and the other is to greet with an embrace. The hierarchies of inequality based on generation, age and sex start within the household, and the greeting takes many forms ranging from actual embrace to merely touching parts of the body which are prescribed according to seniority or juniority. For instance, a father will touch the head or shoulder of

his son and the latter will touch the knees or feet of the former. These gestures also form the language of blessing and approval. In the higher classes of Chamba, a husband can express his extreme displeasure or contempt to his wife by withdrawing his feet when she attempts to touch them. In external relations this language gets extremely complex and other symbols are often added. But the basic notion of touching the person and things belonging to or used by the person is employed to express actual differences in status and nearness. Between the highest and the lowliest it often does not stop at merely disallowing the touch or entry to the house. Even the shadow (or a prescribed distance) is sometimes avoided. The highest status Mian Rajputs and some Brahmans of Chamba do not allow a large category of people even to enter the outer gate of the house.

Similarly the codes of inter-dining range from mere avoidance of eating from the same plate to avoid even the same sources of drinking water (a stream or a well). The practice of leaving food items associated with inferiors starts with avoiding beef and alcohol but does not end with being a pure vegetarian and a teetotaler. Quite often even onions, garlic, etc., somehow associated with non-vegetarian diet and drinking are avoided. The main force behind this constant elaboration of the symbols is the need to remain distinct from the emulating inferiors. In the upper classes where the competition for relative status is most intense this tendency is particularly marked and they are the most important innovators in this

- respect. Although I do not agree with the notion of Brahman being the model everywhere (Weber by Gerth ~~to~~ *and* Mills 1957: 397) yet it is possible that the need to elaborate these symbols of distinction which are considered a part of his qualifications and on which the priest Brahman's livelihood seems to depend, would make him the chief innovator of these symbols of distinction for himself and for his patrons.

Only by having such a broad vision of this process of emulation and elaboration and its implications for spatial and temporal variations we can understand why the Vedic Brahmans ate beef and drank soma (an alcoholic drink) and why ordinary Brahmans of Churaha are even now non-vegetarian and drink alcohol. Among the priest Brahmans also we have earlier hinted at competition being waged through the use of symbols of distinction. Hardayal and Ravan, the old priests of Bharara, resident in one of the settlements nearest to Bharara are respected for their learning. They have a number of affinal links with Rathis in the neighbourhood. Recent marriages of their children with lower caste individuals we have discussed already. They visit Bharara for all sorts of ritual ceremonies when called. They inter-dine with the Rathis and otherwise see little distinction between the Rathis and themselves. The Karmari Brahman who at present is trying to outsmart them, has also married a Rathi woman of Bharara. But no girl of his family is known to be married to Rathis. He visits only once a year on Shiva's day, interprets the scriptures, and the festival cycle,

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gives ritual advice for important ceremonies, makes amulets. He does not inter-dine even with the Rathis, and accepts only jinas (grains) from every household (including his in-laws). To preserve his public image he does not even stay with his in-laws (although in his own house his Rathi wife cooks the meals). While Hardayal and Ravan abstain only from drinking, he is a vegetarian as well.

The superior Brahman priests of Chamba, besides being reputed vegetarians and teetotallers have a number of other distinctions. Some of them are well known even to the residents of Bharara. They despise ploughing which all the priest Brahmans of Churaha normally do. They do not allow even the Rathis to touch them and give their blessings from a distance.

Between the plains and the hills a major source of diversity in the interpretation of symbols is due to the differential nature of the hierarchies of power. In Churaha we noticed how even the priest Brahman like Hardayal can preserve his status even while living with his lower caste daughter-in-law. In the plains such a situation threatens the status of the whole group. Churaha at present stands in between the old situation in which the hierarchies of power were based on individuals and small familial groups, and the plains like development in which power was increasingly associated with much larger strata. In Churaha where larger group identifi-

cations are not very old the phenomenon of out-casting

is relatively new. Even now the individuals main source of strength lies in his relations with particular patrons and officials, and it was much more so in the past. The habit of tolerating the excesses of even a menial servant of a patron, and the habit of the Chamba patrons to see relatively less internal distinctions among the Churahis, also tend to minimise local symbolic distinctions. But the movement towards a plains like situation is apparent. The power of the local Rathi groups and the Arya groups in that order, to take independent action is growing. However, even now a deviant's voluntary action in leaving the house is more common than his forced expulsion from the house. In certain individual situations as we saw in the cases of Mangloa Brahman priests, persons of different status continue living in the same house. Inter-dining relations are normally cut off, but not always, as we have seen in the cases of Ravan and his daughters family, Molum and his brother, Tega and his brothers.

Considering the presence of numerous situations of this nature throughout Churaha and the relative lack of independent sources of power up to the immediate past, it is not surprising to find the Churahi ideology of local superiority and inferiority rather vague and less developed.

At Bharara the Rathis and Aryas drink together, smoke together, dance together but do not dine together. To accept cooked food from an Arya is bad but the rule is

often abandoned among the hunters and shepherds. They participate in each other's ceremonies and celebrate the local festivals collectively. There is a curious custom about the funerals. When they come back from the cremation ground, food in the form of parched grain is offered to each returning individual, by the others. But between the Rathi and the Arya individuals this offering is limited to simple uncooked grain. The peculiarity is that parched grain is neither given nor taken by a Rathi to and from an Arya. Newell noticed at Kugti that certain rules about inter-dining scrupulously observed while visiting other villages are abandoned within the village (Newell 1963: 55-57). Some residents of Bharara comment upon this duplicity about the household of Hardayal (Brahman priest of Mangloa living with his Arya daughter-in-law) and to a certain extent themselves display this element in the presence of outsiders and otherwise. I would rather hold that this difference in ritual behaviour^{fr} in private and in public is fairly general in India.

About the Chamars and the Lohars, the code is a little more harsh. They should not go near the hearth of a superior, but they can participate in the local dances and drinking parties. There is little discussion about particularly polluting situations requiring specific ritual purification. It is ridiculous to ask a Churahi Brahman if after being touched by a Lohar or a Chamar, he takes a bath (which he seldom takes even otherwise).

The relative ranking of named caste groups we will take up in relation to the superior Hindus of Chamba without which the social hierarchy of a Churahi is incomplete.

CHAPTER 6

Hierarchies of Power and Prestige

The Land Tenure

Forced Labour

Movement to Rural Areas

Status Legitimation

Inheritance

Joint Family

HIERARCHIES OF POWER AND PRESTIGE

In recent years it is primarily Dumont who has brought under proper focus the all important and pervasive theme of hierarchy in India (Dumont 1966, 1970). However, as I pointed out earlier, the principle of hierarchy as an abstract cultural notion has a limited value. First we need to identify actual power hierarchies of varying nature and relevance in particular situations. Secondly, to relate the local hierarchies with the power structure of the wider society affecting the local situation. *and* Thirdly, to have at least a glimpse of the temporal development of power relations as far as possible. Only by working along these lines we can explain some of the basic value differences that occur almost perpetually between dominant and dependent areas and between different classes of the population. Value judgments of the middle classes of the Hindu mainstream as well as those contained in the sacred literature, if not placed under this broader and more realistic perspective, only keep us away from this task.

A resident of Bharara would not agree with Weber's view that social rank is always determined with reference to the Brahman (Weber, Gerth and Mills 1957: 397). For him the Ranas, the Thakurs and Khart^{re}is within Churaha are higher than the Brahmans. Between the Rathis of Bharara, Brahmans of Mangloa and Gosains (an order of ascetic priests) of Paddar, there is no difference in social status. All the named groups stated above belong

to the upper caste category of Churaha and they are all considered lower than the higher Rajputs and Brahmins of Chamba. So that the difference between a Chamba Brahman and a Mangloa Brahmin is not a minor difference within a caste, as there are other groups which intervene between the two in terms of social ranking. Can we bring such a system of ranking under the four-fold varna scheme? Can the status differences within a named category be sometimes greater than between two such categories?

Earlier I asserted the importance of considering the wider hierarchies of power which affect a local situation. Here we will see in better detail how these hierarchies operate. For our purpose the distribution of power within the state of Chamba will suffice. Some of the historical materials and ethnographic observations from the neighbouring Hindu states in this region also reflect a similar pattern of power distribution and social ranking.

In spite of some significant changes that have occurred after the dissolution of the state rule in 1948, the old power structure and its effects on status ranking can still be studied at Chamba. What preceded before is also fairly well recorded and affords us a comfortable look at some of the processes of political evolution. I referred to three lines of development, namely, 1) the expansion of political domain from a small principality inhabited by a few thousand souls to a state covering

3,216 sq. miles and a population of 210,579 (census 1961) and then its gradual absorption into the larger polity of India. 2) Increasing loss of autocratic powers for the Raja in the larger context and for the local chiefs within the state, and 3) the evolution of administration from autocracy to bureaucracy, again at different levels. All three developments have contributed to the changing nature of the hierarchies of power, i.e., from those based on individual status to those based on wider groups.

In its evolution along these lines Chamba has come a long way. Yet up to early eighteenth century, even the highest office of wazir could be offered by the Raja to one of his lowliest wife givers - a barber (Gaz. Chamba 1904: 95); and as late as in 1820-25 one of the local chiefs in its eastern areas could even indulge in a private adventure of conquest against Ladakh without the blessing of the Raja (Ibid. 105:106).

A few of the descendants of the feudal chiefs (e.g., in Chamba Lahaul) retained considerable administrative, judicial, financial and social powers up to recent years. For most others, the loss of local independence, increasing association with the emerging bureaucratic apparatus of the state, intermarriages with the aristocracy and finally the shifting of residence to Chamba meant absorption in the higher classes of Chamba. Their junior branches were similarly absorbed at lower levels. Some of them at present are ordinary cultivators and no one knows how

many changed or lost the titles Rana, Thakur, etc. Side by side was going on the process of creating new similarly titled households out of the Raja's favourites and the degradation of others. The right to grant these titles and estates was technically held by the Rajas up to their last days and some of its latest beneficiaries are still alive in Churaha; but their social acceptance depended upon their ability to contract marriages at desired levels, which decreased over time. The title of those who claim descent from the royal households of Chamba and other states in the neighbourhood is Mian. This title used at the Mogul courts is said to have been given them by one of the Mogul Emperors (Gaz. Chamba 1904: 65). At present Mian, Rana, Thakur, etc. are caste names in Chamba. The Mians and Jagirdar Ranas claim a status superior to the ordinary Rajputs of Chamba. The latter claim to be superior to those poorer descendents of Ranas and Thakurs who do not possess any Jagirs. These lower status Ranas and Thakurs are higher to Rathi cultivators. According to Goetz:

" ... dividing line between these groups is difficult to draw. The Ranas are evidently identical with the old Rajankas, the court aristocracy of pre-Rajput times ... The name (Thakur) means lord and may have been originally applied to any petty chieftain or his descendents, whether he had been a successful interloper from the lower classes or an immigrant from outside ... The Rathis finally do not belong to the aristocracy, but are yeomen agriculturists. As their name, i.e., Rashtriya, i.e., the people of the kingdom implies, they too belong to the ruling class,

though only in its inferior ranks." (Goetz 1955: 45-46).

But for the higher grades of Hindus of Chamba ~~who like to advocate~~ these Rathis are Shudras. The dilemma of the Rathi category in Churaha about being considered Rajput or Brahman, we have already referred to. Lower grades of Chamba Rajputs and Brahmans take wives from them. Writing about the southern neighbours of Chamba, Lyall observes:

"The Rajput clans of the second grade might more properly be called first grade Thakurs. They marry their daughters to the Mians and take daughters in marriage from the Rathis ... In the statements most of the Thakurs have been entered as second class Rajputs, and a few as first class Sudras. Most of the Thakurs in this last class might more properly have been classed as Rathis ... The best line of distinction, however, is the marriage connection; the Mian will marry a Thakur's daughter but not a Rathi's. The Rathi's daughter married a Thakur, and her daughter can then marry a Mian. No one calls himself a Rathi, or likes to be addressed as one ...; the distinction between Thakur and Rathi is, however, very loose. A rich man of a Rathi family, like Shib Dayal (Chandhari of Chotra, marries his daughter to an impoverished Raja, and his whole clan gets a kind of step and becomes Thakur Rajput ... The Sudras of the first grade comprise Thakurs, Rathis and Kanets only." (Lyall. Gaz. Kangra 1883-4: 75-76).

In spite of Lyall's obvious attempts at stating the

situation in the varna idiom, where do we find here that celebrated distinction between the Shudra and the twice-born Rajput? Until the character of power distribution changes (from vertical to horizontal) and divides the society into a relatively fewer strata, status groups do not become completely endogamous and the differences of status within an inter-marrying category are of no less importance than the differences between them. Even within the highest named group of Rajputs, e.g., the Mians of Chamba there are recognised grades. Only their lower grades take wives from the untitled Rajput families. Very similar relations exist between the lower status Rajputs and Rathis.

The Brahmans of Chamba are similarly graded. The descendents of the raj-gurus (^{royal teachers &} spiritual preceptors to the court), raj-purohits (royal priests), raj jyotshis (royal astrologers), raj vaidis (royal physicians) and the priests of Lakshmi Narayan temple (the premier Hindu temple of the state) come under the highest grade. The lowest grade of Chamba Brahmans (whose Brahman status at least is recognised by higher classes) are that poorest section (Acharaj) who cater to the ritual requirements of the lower caste groups. But ordinary cultivator Brahmans in the villages are not considered to be Brahmans by the higher Hindus of Chamba. They merge with the Rathi category and are either called Rathis or by the names of the areas of residence such as Churahi, Pangwal, Gaddi, etc. But the lowest grade of higher Brahmans take

wives from the Rathis.

Thus the hypergamous ladder of the Brahmans also goes right ~~on~~ into this general category of Rathi cultivators (30-40% of the state population). It is at this point that the two Hindu categories of Rajput and Brahman merge with each other and this is precisely the situation we study in Churaha. Separation between the two is possible only at higher levels and that has also been achieved gradually over time. Hutchinson and Vogel observe that even Brahmans were sometimes elevated to Rajput status by the rulers (Hutchinson and Vogel 1933: 24). If we go further back in history this separation was not clear even within the ruling clans. Rose records that a number of ruling households in the Rajput states of this region were Brahmans by original caste. In one case he finds one of the three brothers of a royal household acting as purohit (priest) for the other two (Rose 1919: I: 41). Maru the founder of the royal genealogy of Chamba was neither a Brahman nor a Rajput but a Sadhu (Gaz. Chamba 1904: 69).

Faced with this kind of gradation of purity and status among the Rajputs and Brahmans I have been using the term caste-category instead of caste, as the latter as generally understood has strong connotations of internal equality of status.

The administrative set up of Chamba has evolved from the concept of local chiefs paying tributes in the form of money, goods and services to the Raja and enjoying independence within their territories. It has gone through many stages. At one time some of them are seen administering

their respective territories from Chamba itself, where as members of the central court they were in permanent attendance on the Raja. It is at this stage that the central bureaucracy was born and started spreading its tentacles to the regions. From feudal barons to members of a bureaucracy has been a long step. Even the new appointees enjoyed similar powers, privileges and titles at the time. The remuneration of an official was not a regular salary but economic and political privileges of various types. For the highest appointments the practice was to confer a jagir (estate). Both the office and the jagir tended to be hereditary. Within the estate a jagirdar's rights to collect rents, enforce law and order, settle local disputes and recruit individuals for a variety of services, in the interests of himself as well as those of the state, varied from one jagirdar to the other. The practice of direct collection of taxes and appointing lower administrative officials within the estates and baronies has grown gradually. In the case of lower officials, ordinary priests, certain other functionaries and henchmen, their remuneration was often limited to grants of rent free land (muafi). At levels lower than this there were some negative privileges, e.g., exemption from a variety of types of forced labour. Up to the time of Col. Reid's reforms, most of the administrative apparatus was not manned by salaried officials. The privileges centering upon these estates and land grants of various sizes and exemptions of various types have differed so considerably that they defied the attempts at classification by British settlement commissioners

appointed in these states. There are significant differences of opinion among them (Gaz. Chamba 1904: Gaz. Kangra 1883-4). The point I would make here is that distribution of economic resources and other privileges have been closely related to the distribution of authority and as the latter tended to be hereditary, power was associated with small familial groups. In the course of time, the protection afforded by the paramount rulers above and beyond the state strengthened the powers of the bureaucracy headed by the Raja. It tended to curtail the local privileges of the individual jagirdar-cum officials. At the same time the higher status groups of Chamba were strengthening their position through marital alliances and economic and political participation in a wider domain. These two processes dissociated power from familial groups and increased ^{ingly} association ^{ed it} with wider kinship groups. Along this development Chamba has not gone as far as the plains. Basic difference in the land tenure, for instance, persisted until 1960.

Land tenure: Writing about the traditional land-tenure, one official states the difference between the plains and these hill states in the following words:

"Instead of an agricultural body equal among themselves, and looking only to government as their superior, the community is divided into various grades and one class enjoys privileges which do not extend to the rest." (Gaz. Kangra 1883-84: 100).

Until recent times the Raja was technically the sole

proprietor (malak) of all the resources in the state. The most prosperous class were the jagirdars. ~~Malguzar~~ ^{other} officials and tenants of various status and privilege came next. The jagirs which survived till recent years were sixteen in number. Seven of them were held by Mians, six by Ranas, one by a Rajguru, one by a Rajjyotshi and one by the descendents of an immigrant from a neighbouring state who helped the Raja at a critical time. Out of another fifteen listed as the first class crown tenants (malguzar) and free holders, nine are Mians, one Raj vaid, one Raj purohit and four others using various titles such as Lala, Mehta, Thakur, etc., all of whom held hereditary offices in the state. A number of Hindu temples, especially the Lakhshmi Narayan temple at Chamba hold large amounts of rent free land. Most of the lower status crown tenants and free holders also belong to middle rungs of Rajputs and Brahmans. The muafidars (free holders) as the name implies, should be exempt from rent payments. But a distinction was made between those who reside in the capital and do not plough the muafi lands and residents of villages who do. Only the latter were liable to an annual cess known as sal beach (Gaz. Chamba 1904: 282).

Forced labour: Here we reach a point where the privileges end and some of the worst obligations begin. All cultivators and other groups deprived of the privileges discussed above were liable to render forced labour (begar) of various types. When Col. Reid started replacing this system of forced labour with paid servants, the situation was as follows:

"So inveterate had the practice become that even artisans and other classes unconnected with the soil were obliged to devote a portion of their time to the public service ... Certain classes such as the privileged Brahman and Rajputs uncontaminated by the plough, were always exempt."

"A man's caste makes no difference: the begar is regarded as a burden on the land to be borne in turn by each landholder not specially exempted." (Gaz. Chamba 1904, 271-2).

The higher Brahmans and Rajputs of Chamba hold some philosophical theories to explain their extreme prejudice against ploughing, such as it involves forcing the sacred oxen to plough; it is sacrilegious to drive a furrow into the bosom of mother earth, etc. But the facts detailed above point to a real difference between masters and servants in a broad sense. However, the popularisation of such theories ^{did} ~~does~~ help sometimes the less fortunate Brahmans and Rajputs who were struggling hard to escape this burden of begar. Those who had~~s~~ to take to agriculture for economic reasons can make a distinction between actual ploughing and all other types of agricultural work. They can retain caste communion at least with some lower grades of Rajputs and Brahmans so long as they are in a position to employ servants for ploughing. Not long ago, the moment a higher Rajput or a Brahman of Chamba himself drove the plough he was neither a Rajput nor a Brahman but a halbagh (plough driver) to be called henceforth just a Rathi, Churahi, Gaddi, etc.

The intensity of this prejudice and the scale of misery at the lowest levels of these higher status Hindus was once given a graphic description by Barnes:

"Their emaciated looks and coarse clothes attest the vicissitudes they have undergone to maintain their fancied purity. In the waste lands which abound in the hills, a livelihood is offered to those who would cultivate the soil for their daily bread; but this alternative involves a forfeiture of their dearest rights, and they would rather follow any precarious pursuit than submit to the disgrace. However, the prospect of starvation has already driven many to take to the plough, and the number of seceders daily increases. So long as any resource remains that fatal step will be postponed, but it is easy to foresee that the struggle cannot be long protracted." (Barnes. Gaz. Kangra 1883-4: 86-87).

What facilitated the changeover to cultivation for such families was not some accidental discovery of a loophole in these theories about ploughing but the abolition of the begar system. The abolition of forced labour in favour of the practice of paid recruits initiated by Col. Reid has been extremely slow in Chamba. Even after forty years of Col. Reid's recommendations there were only twenty regularly paid begarus and they were confined to Chamba the capital of the state. In the parganas forced labour for government projects, for tours of officials and for a variety of royal occasions continued till recent years in some form or other. Within individual jagirs the jagirdars were allowed to recruit begarus for

similar purposes. Even now individual officials often take advantage of this so called ancient custom of the hills. Reid's main effort was directed towards improving the finances of the state. He instituted a number of new taxes as alternatives to the obligations of begar of different types (begarus were further graded and differentiated according to the type of jobs and periods of service). This provided an escape for those who were in a position to pay these taxes. So that instead of waiting for the point of starvation noted by Barnes, junior branches of families slightly above this level also shifted to cultivation. Higher grades of Rajputs and Brahmans of Chamba still hold strong views against the occupation of a plough driver (halbah); but at the lower levels and in areas like Churaha even to those who claim a high Rajput status (Ranas, Thakurs, etc.) and even that of Brahman priests the act of ploughing is less polluting now^{ad/}adays.

Movement to rural areas: The Change over to cultivation normally involved taking up residence in the villages. Now, when the begar system has almost totally disappeared (some vestiges of it still remain in Chamba Lahaul and Pangi) together with some other inhibitions to be discussed later, numerous defections from the town to the villages occur every year. The scale of this movement in the first four decades after Col. Reid's reforms can be gauged from the following facts. With the introduction of specialisation in the administration and the creation of several new departments and institutions at the capital, the bureau

cratic apparatus of the state became relatively more top heavy than before. It meant more job opportunities at the capital. Together with this, the arrival of administrators, commercial interests and skilled personnel from outside the state should have increased the population of the capital Chamba, which was increasingly assuming a town like character. Some increase in the population did occur during the last few decades. But during the first forty years after the above mentioned reforms, while the number of occupied housing units at Chamba increased considerably, the population itself slightly declined as detailed below. (Gaz. Chamba 1933: Table 7):

Year	Total population of Chamba Hindus	% increase over 1881	No. of occupied houses	% increase over 1881
1881	4,390	-	855	-
1891	4,635	-	1,114	-
1901	4,615	-	1,092	-
1911	4,242	-	1,329	-
1921	4,273	-2.7%	1,327	55% (approx.)

During the same period, the total population of the state as a whole increased by 22.5% (from 115,773 to 141,867) and the cultivated area was also increased by 29.4 square miles (Ibid, Table 6).

From the description so far, an outline of the distribution of power and privilege in the traditional set up can be grasped. Even if we ignore for a while the internal hierarchies within what I have termed the higher Hindus, the basic fact is clear that this small group consisting

of about a third of the population of the capital and a few feudal families residing outside, controlled the economic and labour resources of the entire state. What the British officers finally achieved for the peasantry was not the ownership of lands but relative permanency in the tenure and freedom from forced labour. Ownership rights in land were gained after the dissolution of the state and mainly between 1955 and 1960. Most of the old landlord families still retain considerable amounts of land and still there are tenants and landless labourers attached to these lands. The integration of the state together with similar other hill states into a single unit, i.e., Himachal Pradesh has not so far altered the fact that these higher Hindus still dominate the higher levels of the administration and that precisely this class (together with a new minority of Khatri traders) still control most of the property and business at Chamba.

Leach is surely looking at something different when he pictures Hindu caste society as an inverted pyramid, in which majority is exploiting the minority (Leach 1969: 5-6). Any-one looking at Churaha alone and ignoring the existence of Chamba as well as the history of power relations would also agree with Leach. For discussing power relations we have to consider society as a political fact. About these areas we can get a fair picture of these relations within the context of the small hill state, whose independence in certain political, economic and social spheres was diminished by an extremely gradual process which was completed only in 1948. The plains

villages, on which presumably Leach's formulation is based, cannot be understood without referring to much wider spatial and historical contexts.

Areas and classes: The state of Chamba before 1948 had gone through a long and slow process of political, economic and social integration with areas on its west nearer to the plains. On the political level we may recount the various stages as: 1) a member of alliances of mutual benefit with the neighbouring hill states, 2) a tributary to the Moghul Empire, 3) a protectorate of the Sikh rulers of Punjab, and finally, 4) a princely state under the British when external independence was lost completely and internal independence was diminished gradually by the central bureaucracy of the country. Side by side with this process (as noted earlier) has been growing the external social economic and political links of the more influential sections of the state population. The Raja's technical position as head of the state was secured against internal threats, but the power to influence internal changes in the status order of individuals or groups had to be increasingly shared with the growing upper classes. The resistance to such changes has been maximum at the upper levels of the hierarchy on the one hand and in areas nearer to the plains on the other. These two dimensions are important to understand the position of Churaha, which lies at a remove both from the upper classes of the state and from the plains.

- Status legitimisation: To some extent these trends which influenced the internal status order are apparent in the evolution of the institution of rular-bhiriri jalsa. Under the Rajas rular-bhiriri jalsa was an annual event (also held at the accession of a Raja or when the state was in urgent need of money) with a double function, that of collecting funds over and above the regular taxes and rents and that of legitimising individual status. The main event at this annual gathering was the public audience of the Raja, at which presentations of nazar (gifts both in cash and kind) were ^{made} ~~presented~~ to the state (in the person of the Raja). The order of precedence at such presentations was related both to the status of the individual and to the amount presented. The earliest roots of this institution are traceable to the system of tribute extracted from the dependent feudal barons.

By the close of the nineteenth century all those exempt from forced labour figured at such presentations. Gradual conversion of the gifts from kind to cash (up to recent times the Rana of Pangri presented hill ponies) made the relation between the status and the amount presented more precise. In the old accounts considerable flexibility in the order of precedence is revealed especially at times when the state was in need of money. Even up to the beginning of present century some individual favourites of the Raja (affinal kin and a few influential outsiders) were granted titles and positions at the higher rungs of this socio-political ladder.

When the incidence of upward mobility decreased, the order of precedence became less flexible and the amounts presented were fixed according to existing status. From an obligation to pay the nazar, it became a mark of status. At present disputes about relative status, in the absence of a regulating authority, become conspicuous at marriage feasts (dham) where the seating arrangements are supposed to reflect this order of precedence.

This system excluded the begarus, i.e., the cultivators and menials. In the latter half of the nineteenth century a new group appears for the first time at the lowest level of this privileged hierarchy. They are known as akkars. They are described as respectable agriculturist families. They were also exempt from the humiliating forms of begar but could be employed as messengers, letter carriers, etc. When the British officers tried to regularise the accounts and improve the finances of the state, the amount of nazar presented by an akkar (lowest in the order) was fixed at Rs. 1. At their instance too the status of akkar, the right of presenting a nazar of Rs. 1 and the relative freedom from begar was extended to all the respectable agricultural families in the villages. Disappearance of the begar system shortly afterwards and lack of conspicuous occupational distinction from ordinary cultivators checked the development of the akkars into another named status group. The number of these rural notables in 1901 was 1,164 and in 1931 it was 1,302. Separate figures for the four sub-divisions of the state are available only for 1901. Distribution

of these akkars as given below, roughly reflects the general differences between eastern and western areas in terms of social standing.

Sub-division (Wazarat)	Geographical position	Rural population in 1901	No. of <u>akkars</u>	1 <u>akkar</u> per population of:
1. Bhattiyat	West and South	35,115	612	57
2. Sadar	Central	35,629	297	120
3. Bharmaur (Gaderan)	South East	4,343	26	167
4. Churaha-Pangi	North East	46,747	229	204

(c.f. Gaz. Chamba 1904; A; 178; B: Tables VIII, XVI, XLIV)

Salutations: There is a system of salutation at Chamba which was politically regulated under the Rajas. The highest class of Rajputs, the Mians, alone had the honour of being greeted with 'jaidiya' (from Jai = victory and deva = king). Within the Mians the inferior in status would greet the superior first. Among equals it is freely exchanged. To inferior Rajputs and others a Mian would not return the 'Jaidiya' but would say Ram Ram or other inferior forms of salutation. Similarly the higher Brahmans would receive jai, namskar or paire pauna (I touch thy feet) to which panditji, guruji, etc., are added. To high status individuals they reply ashirvad (blessing) but to inferiors they say jinda raih or charanjiv kaliayan (live long or live for ever). According to Dr. Hutchinson while the privilege to receive a higher form of salutation could be conferred, ~~but~~ its unauthorised assumption was punished with a fine and imprisonment. (Gaz. Chamba 1904: 134).

While the right to be greeted as superior could not be assumed, it could be withdrawn officially by the Raja and unofficially by the socially powerful. A wife giver or a cultivator even if originally entitled to it could not expect a superior greeting from his wife receiver, and from non-cultivators, *equals*.

At present considerable modifications in the actual exchange of salutations have occurred both at Chamba and in Churaha. Quite a few new forms of salutation are also popular. But the importance given to the traditional way of greeting becomes apparent in certain situations, particularly in patron-client relations. In such situations or when the superior is of a conspicuously higher status, the present tendency is to offer a form of salutation even higher than the receiver is known to be entitled to. On the other hand in situations of lesser status difference there is an even stronger tendency to assert equality.

Inheritance: For those who agree with Hocart in interpreting the customs of caste society as 'degradation of the royal style' (Hocart 1950: 155), there is enough evidence at Chamba. Besides other spheres of life with which Hocart concerned himself, it is also apparent in the system of inheritance. In this aspect it has served a definite economic purpose of preserving the family fortunes at the upper levels of the hierarchy. As described earlier, the evolution of property rights in the state is intimately connected with the evolution of

political privileges. For the jagirdars and high officials of the state (and the two went together until the growth of the salaried bureaucracy) the major economic assets such as the right to collect taxes (part of which was paid over to the Raja) and extract forced labour, were basically political rights which could not be easily subdivided among a number of sons. Sub-division of other assets could also weaken the capacity to meet considerable social and economic obligations related to the original status of the family. Consequently, at upper levels there has been a strong stress on the rule of primogeniture. The practice in the royal family was that the eldest son succeeded to the throne and his juniors were granted jagirs. The higher families followed this practice within their jagirs and gave only small allotments of land to the younger sons. But there was another complication arising out of polygyny and hypergamy. Different wives had different status in the households. The lowest of these were mere concubines whose son's inheritance depended entirely on the good will of the rest of the household. From this multiplicity of wives of different status (which reflected on the status of their sons) has arisen a particular rule of inheritance known as Chundevand (distribution upon mothers). Chundevand is the primary division of shares which are then separately divided among the surviving sons (munde vand), of particular mothers. The right of the girls to ancestral property is not traditionally recognised, the Hindu succession act of 1956 which confers this right is seldom invoked and is bitterly criticised by the higher Hindus of Chamba.

The element of inequality in different shares (resulting both from ^{primogeniture}~~munde vand~~ and chunde vand) has been reduced considerably after the gradual separation of political privileges from property. But it is still conspicuous in some of the highest families of Chamba. Recent extension of the all India legislation to the state also discourages these practices; but more important is the fact that only a few disputes concerning inheritance are taken to the courts. The decisions about how and when to separate a share of the family property in favour of an heir are taken by the father and other elders in a joint family. The tendency to postpone the division of property is also the greatest at higher levels. The demands of separation normally come from the junior heirs. Successful individual aspirants for independent households are often given considerably smaller provisional allotments and the final division is postponed for as long as possible. To set up an independent separate household, to ask for partition of the property and to invite legal support for getting a share as big as that of the senior-most heir are inexcusable acts and are said to reflect the lack of virtue which is often traced to the influence of the inferior status mother of the claimant.

The intensity of these practices decreases over time. It also decreases conspicuously as we go down the hierarchy. The property and the privileges associated with it decrease and end above the level of the tenant cultivator. The practice of hypergamy also decreases.

In a situation like Churaha the most valuable asset until recently was, and still is, personal labour. Chunde vand is virtually unknown (except in a few Rana households). The custom of primogeniture is remembered in a modified form. Ideally the land should be divided equally amongst the surviving sons; the eldest should choose from the earmarked divisions first; the second son should get an additional implement or an animal and the parental house should go to the youngest. But as we have noted in Churaha regular divisions according to even this modified ideal do not occur. Early separation from the parents, after marriage, is considered normal. It is usually the eldest son who builds a new house and moves out first. Others follow more or less according to seniority (which is sometimes disturbed due to difficulties of contracting a marriage, its instability, etc.). The youngest normally remains with the parents and in most cases inherits the old house (refer to the development cycle of Chand's). For deciding a particular share the father counts not only the sons, but also 1) the girls with uxorilocal husbands, 2) the children of divorced girls staying with him, 3) the children from previous marriages who accompanied his wife (pichhlag), 4) children born out of wedlock to the girls of the household (haller), 5) the widows and their children even if born long after the death of the husband known as chauke^{an}du (born within the four walls), provided they stay at the place of the deceased. Among the higher Hindus of Chamba ~~none~~ of the cases described above are considered exceptional and the right of inheritance for such individuals is not recognised.

Over and above this multiplicity of claimants, in Churaha the property with a subsistence cultivator is not always enough to be doled out. But in the present economy of Churaha, the property created by individual effort in terms of houses, lands and animals, etc. is still more important than the share from the parental property. The basic asset still is the individual labour. Quite often the rightful heirs desert the parents without claiming any share. The elder sons figure more in such cases. In cases of barrenness and when all heirs desert, the Churahis frequently resort to adoption (both boys and girls) of sometimes totally unrelated individuals. In the near future, when the pressure on cultivable lands grows and when the Government of India laws (the Indian Succession Act 1925; and the Hindu Succession Act 1956) with their precise definitions of heirs and co-parcenary rights, are actively invoked by individuals, it will be interesting to watch the situation. Up to now any disputes arising out of these ambiguities are decided by the patrons and local officials in an arbitrary manner. Only one case from Bharara (against a party from Mangloa) reached a court. Earlier, the disputed piece of land passed hands three times at the ins^astance of a patron and two officials. After hearing all the evidence the decision of the court was to divide the land half and half between the claimants.

In the overall context of the traditional hierarchical society in the state of Chamba, the point worth the notice of an economic anthropologist is that the chances of

- fragmentation of the ancestral property, ~~is the~~ least possible at the highest level, increase as we go down the hierarchy. This situation is more or less similar to the neighbouring Hindu states as well. Lyall noted the prevalence of different customs of inheritance in Kangra proper and outside, and also in different sections of the Gaddi population. About primogeniture he observed that in one case the junior branches even had to pay heavy rents to the successor, on their small allotments. (Gaz. Kangra 1883-4: I: 63-64). This extreme stress on primogeniture at the top and lack of precise rules of inheritance at the bottom is typical of the old feudal setup - a difference between the masters and their serfs. Recruitment to the serf's household by whatever method increases the labour force of the lord, and whosoever deserts loses his rights in the land and house provided to the serf - his remuneration.

Such practices prevail in areas east of Pangri Range (i.e., the Lahaul plateau and Spiti Valley). In these areas the local barons (known as Jos in the past and Thakurs at present) never completely lost their powers within their principalities. Even after the dissolution of the state of Kulu (whose tributaries they were till the middle of the nineteenth century) the British policy of indirect rule ensured considerable local autonomy for them. Relative geographic and economic isolation of these areas also checked those processes which brought the people of Chambya and western areas increasingly closer to the plains society. Due to the strict rule of primogeniture

among the Thakur families, the junior branches who finally separate from the parental household merge into the category of ordinary cultivators, and either render some service or pay rents to the Thakur on their small allotments. (Gaz. Kangra III 1917: 194). Lack of precise definition of inheritance rules is evident from the following observation about the holdings of uxori-local couples:

"Supposing such a husband and wife die without issue, it appears to be doubtful who would have best claims to succeed them, whether the next of kin to the wife or to the husband. But it is agreed that the survivor of the two might lawfully give the estate to any member of either of the two families." (Ibid: 194).

To some extent these differences in the inheritance practices are evident in the stated ideals as well. Some of the higher status informants of Chamba express the view that ideally the inherited property should never be partitioned and the eldest brother should be looked upon as a second father after the latter's death. Some others say that an elder brother should get at least an extra-full share. At a lower level of the Chamba population and among a section of the ~~G~~radis the expressed ideal is to keep one twentieth of the property as elder brother's extra (Jaithaund). The ideal view of a Churah also takes account of the elder brother's right (his Jaithwagh) of first choice. But the Churahs also recognised special rights of other brothers especially the youngest who should get the old house (as his mulwahar).

Joint family: While the stress on primogeniture is on the wane at Chambya, the tendency to keep the estate undivided as long as it can be helped is much more marked as compared to Churaha. Incidence of joint family is maximum at higher levels. At Chamba I recorded nineteen upper class households in which more than thirty members live together with all the resources held in common. If we included such cases as when living is separate (sometimes in different portions of the same house) but the property is held in common, or when some part of the inherited property is held in common, the numbers are much larger. On the other hand at Bharara, Chand's household with ten members is the largest. While discussing the development of this household we noted that the process of a further division had already started, and that the temporary delay (otherwise unusual at Bharara) was mainly due to the trading activities of Chand's second son (eldest had already separated) who was using the new house for stocking his purchases of potatoes. Another factor was that the younger brother was the only other member who could take care of the common flock.

But a more significant index for joint living is the fact of adult males (either once married or more than 25 years old) living together. At Chamba it is not unusual to find adult males belonging to three generations sharing a common household. At Bharara out of 46 households three are shared by ^{the} fathers and more than one adult son. Another eight are shared by adult brothers only. Except for one case of three brothers (whose wives are real sisters)

- in all these cases the number of brothers is limited to two. In one case one of the two brothers is a regular shepherd and remains out for long periods. In the remaining nine cases the most important factors seem to be related to the problems of marriage. Two cases are generally believed to be polyandrous (not acknowledged by the households concerned). In other seven, either one of the brothers remained unmarried or the wife left or died or the marriage itself is less than a year old (except for Chand's youngest son whose marriage is two years old).

In the discussions about the institution of joint-family in India the most popular explanations associate it either with traditional ideas or with the cultivator's economy. In a brilliant comparative discussion of a number of surveys Kapadia has shown that joint-family is not a concomitant of agricultural community, and that neither the commercialisation of economy nor the exposure to new ideas about individualism seem to affect its incidence even in the urban setting. (Kapadia 1966: 279-335). However, the economic argument which still finds a respectable place in anthropological writings needs a closer scrutiny. O'Malley describes what he calls the process of disintegration of the joint-family in the following words:

"The joint-family is an institution which had its origin in an earlier order of society, when the country was thinly peopled, the population was mainly agrarian, and cultivation was capable of expansion to meet the needs of growing families. Each family depended on its own labour and the larger it was, the greater was the number of hands

available for work. It was an institution which was peculiarly dependent on a community of interests ... The economic complex has been transformed during the last hundred years. A largely increased population has caused pressure on the soil, holdings are incapable of expansion. There is no longer the same uniformity of interests owing to the small size of holdings and the pressure of circumstances necessitating the adoption of different callings; one son, for example, may be an agriculturist, another a mechanic, a third a clerk." (O'Malley 1941: 384).

Bailey endorses this observation of O'Malley about the over-all process, but allows his own argument to run in circles. He writes:

"Partition of the joint family, since land was limited, reduced the size of estates. This in its turn meant that some of the land-holding peasants had to participate in the new commercial economy ..." (Bailey 1957: 10).

"The joint-family cannot survive divergent interests and disparate incomes among its members ... Opportunities to make money in fields other than agriculture caused joint families to be partitioned." (Ibid: 92).

Bailey, in fact, is examining the problem at the individual level in a small setting and there are all sorts of factors which influence individual partitions and joint living at this level. Moreover, in his own data the joint family is the 'exception' (Ibid: 92).

At a higher level he attempts to compare the present with

a conjectured past and finds himself in agreement with O'Malley. Even such a conjecture could help Bailey in reaching different conclusions had he given due weight to some of the evidence available to him and which he treats as exceptional. He noted for instance:

"In every case joint holders are moderately or very rich ..."

"Of the five richest men in the village, four were sole heir or have become sole heir by the death of brothers. The fifth benefited from a special arrangement. The fifth person is the mutha headman. He has four half brothers. When the father died the eldest son took over an estate five times as large as that of each of his brothers, who received only enough to keep them. I do not know how in law this was done. The present headman's eldest son insists that his younger brother - also as it happens, a half brother - will get only as much as he needs to live. I thought perhaps that the land was attached to the headmanship, but it is not." (Bailey 1957: 89-90).

Turning to O'Malley, his basic assumption that joint-family is dying out is not supported by later studies. Kapadia has further shown that in some cases its actual incidence is even greater in those areas where the economy is more diversified. (Kapadia 1966; 330-1). If we follow O'Malley's description of the economy which favoured the joint-family we may expect this institution flourishing in Churaha, and other similar areas in the Himalayas where land for expansion is still available, each family depends

on its own labour, and the population is scarce and mainly agrarian. Empirically it is rather the opposite that is true. At Chamba in particular and in the western areas in general, where opportunities for diversification of the family economy are more, new land is relatively scarce, density of population is more, that the incidence of joint-family increases.

For understanding these differences we must examine further what is meant by the 'community of interests', and how it affects the joint-family. Does the diversification of occupations within a joint-family necessarily go against the community of interests? Does the partition of a joint-family of subsistence cultivators significantly check their capacity to produce or expand into new lands? In the cases from Chamba and Churaha, the answers to these questions are more often in the negative, ~~than positive.~~ In one household at Chamba, the father (now retired) was a high official of the state and still has considerable influence in the bureaucracy. His eldest son is a police official. Second son is a senior clerk in a local office, one son and a grandson are receiving higher education. The estate (now technically sub-divided to by-pass the new laws concerning the ceiling on land holdings) is mostly rented out and a part of it is managed with the help of servants. From the accumulated surplus they built two shops (besides an impressive addition to the old house) in the local bazar which are rented out. Considering the nepotism that still pervades the administration, there are numerous occasions when they need each other. The

cost of higher education would have been virtually impossible to meet had the property been divided into three or four parts. Even if we ignore the important obligations and distant benefits derived from certain occasions (Marriages in particular) which are used to enhance the prestige and to build new desirable links for the family and take into account only the apparent economic and political advantages stated above, their strongly expressed desire to remain together is understandable.

Among the subsistence cultivators of Bharara we have seen that even those who leave the household without claiming any share in the ancestral property, are not worse off than their fathers. Acquiring new lands and building a new house (which in most cases is a single roofed structure) are still largely related to individual effort. The new land is often located away from the original settlement, which rather encourages separate residence for a cultivator. In some cases when one of the co-parceners is a shepherd the arrangement benefits the joint household, but the general trend in the mode of existence from pastoral to agricultural has considerably reduced the incidence of shepherds. At this level of subsistence cultivation, even if a surplus in land is accidentally created (due to deaths, lack of heirs, etc.) there are not many tenants or servants lower down the scale to work it.

The only conclusion we can reach from these differences

between the higher classes and the ordinary cultivators of Churaha is that economic and political rationale for a joint-family increases at upper levels of the hierarchy. The impression that the institution has something to do with the cultivator is created by the plains village studies. In most of these cases relatively higher incidence of joint-family occurs among the locally dominant groups ~~who have been~~^{of} owner cultivators ~~for long~~^{who} and quite often employ landless labour created by lack of new lands for expansion for the growing population in the plains. The classes above them are normally ignored in such comparisons. Even in non-agricultural sections of the population this differential relevance of the joint-family can be observed, for instance between the Khatri shopkeepers of Churaha (e.g., at Tikri Tissa and Trela) and some of the well established merchants of Chamba.

The stress on joint family in the upper classes and its lack at the subsistence level has some important economic and social consequences. Joint family contributes not only to the preservation of the ancestral property but increases the possibilities of its expansion - by creating surplus. One of its long term social consequences in more developed areas is the growth of relatively larger local descent groups as compared to areas like Churaha. The stress on territorial exogamy in western areas nearer to the plains and its absence in eastern areas is influenced by, among other factors, the actual differences in the size of local descent groups.

CHAPTER 7

Hierarchy, Hypogamy and Endogamy

HIERARCHY; HYPERGAMY AND ENDOGAMY

In the first chapter I tried to relate hypergamy and its opposite hypogamy to the basic tendency to seek marital alliances with one's superiors. I emphasised the fact that hypergamy at Chamba and hypogamy in Ladakh are the different results, in different situations, of this basic tendency. Our starting point should be to find out if it is the boys or the girls who have a better chance of being accepted as spouses at successive higher levels of the hierarchy. At Chamba a marital alliance with a superior household either through one's males or females is welcome - but is possible to achieve normally through one's females. I related it mainly to the practice of polygamy among the higher classes of Chamba.

I admit that over a period of time a practice acquires the force of custom. Once established it also tends to create its own potential. I referred to certain practices such ^{as} ~~as~~ female infanticide, impossibility of a second marriage for women and the tendency to marry the girls outside the state, at the higher levels of the hierarchy at Chamba. The practice of committing suttee after the husband's death was once common but was officially banned during the British period. In 1844, six wives of a dead Raja became suttee at Chamba (Gaz. Chamba 1904:107). Isolated cases of widow suicide have been occurring long after this event. At present, such a death is hushed up and explained away in terms of natural causes to 'keep the law from ones doors'. All these practices can be related to

this so called custom of hypergamy which creates an intense competition for higher status husbands. In their turn, these practices which reduce the number of high born girls further the chances of their inferiors finding themselves as wives in higher status households - thus reinforcing the practice and hence the custom of hypergamy.

But to dismiss hypergamy as a custom of uniform relevance does not help us in understanding its implications at different levels of a hierarchy. This custom is very much governed by the laws of supply and demand. The unidirectional movement of brides it suggests creates complications at the extremes of a hierarchy and tends either to modify its own character or some other principles of social organisation (endogamy and exogamy). In general, it creates different values about marriage, divorce, status of women, kinship norms, etc. at different levels of a hierarchy.

Dumont seems to be stating only a part of the facts when he characterises a hypergamous situation as, "infanticide at the top, breakdown of endogamy at the bottom, polygamy among the powerful" (Dumont 197:118) Breakdown of the upper endogamous limit of a group placed below a hypergamous group is an obvious corollary of the above statement. At the very top of a hypergamous ladder, composed of a number of partially closed groups, the principle of endogamy suffers an even greater strain. Only by recognising the intensity of this strain we can explain some of the marriages of the nobility of Chamba not only outside the caste but also outside the religious limits i.e.

with Jat Sikh princes of the plains. There is another particularly interesting case of the Thakurs of Lahaul (earlier known as Jos or Nonos - Tibetan terms) who intermarry with the Rajputs on ^{the} one hand and with the Buddhist aristocracy of Ladakh on the other. The situation at the top of a hypergamous hierarchy can be resolved only in three ways, that is either by resorting to infanticide or hypogamy or by crossing the earlier endogamous limits. Unless we assume that all the girls at this level are eliminated by infanticide or that the very leaders of the local norms disregard this custom by marrying their daughters to their inferiors in the local hierarchy (reversing the the hypergamous chain itself), we cannot escape the conclusion that endogamous limits have to be broadened at the top of a given hypergamous ladder. At the bottom of this ladder, endogamous limits cannot be maintained due to a different kind of strain, resulting from the scarcity of available brides.

This tendency of broadening the endogamous limits at the two ends of a hierarchy is true of those individual groups as well who tend to close their borders in the local context. The most important long term effect of this phenomenon is what Majumdar called 'Horizontal spread' of the caste. But Majumdar also seems to visualise this tendency only at the lower levels of an endogamous group, even though in the overall context he admits that, "This horizontal spread is not merely the characteristic mobility pattern of the lower castes, it is true of the higher castes, of the Brahmans as well" (Majumdar 1958:334-35). By recognising this tendency at both ends we can explain not only the horizontal spread but also the horizontal

cleavages

~~barriers~~ that often appear in an originally inter-marrying population

Dumont also failed to spell out that practices dramatically different from polygyny and infanticide can also result at the lower extreme of a strongly hypergamous situation. As opposed to the higher classes of Chamba, the Churahis value the birth of a girl. Adoption of girls at Bharara is far more common than that of boys. Out of four cases of adoption I recorded, three were girls (refer to Umeda, Alam and Dalla) and these are relatively recent as compared to the adoption of one of Mansa's sons by Phandi (the old widow) which occurred more than eighty years ago. Instead of being a liability, marked from birth as her would-be in-laws' property (paraya-dhan) who though a respected guest at her parents, can easily bring shame to them simply by remaining unmarried beyond a certain age, a girl in Churaha is an asset as a working hand, as a bringer of bride price and as the one for whose hand others are competing for. Enforced celibacy of males and cases of ^{secret} polyandry also we find in Churaha, not at Chamba. In fact, we can get sharp differences at the upper and lower levels of a hypergamous society in the whole range of values concerning marriage, divorce, status of women, status of affinal kin, rules of exchanging gifts and services between them, etc.

For understanding the relevance of hypergamy for the actors, to know the nature of status differences in the society are important. Before that I would like to point out that at Chamba both kinds of affines through one's males and females are referred to when describing

the position of a household or a group in the status hierarchies. While the affines through ones females are superior by definition and must not be otherwise in fact, the affines through the males also should not be much inferior to their equivalents of one's equals. Without recognising the importance of this bilateral reference to status we cannot understand the institution of concubinage at Chamba. From beyond a certain lower limit a women can become only a rakhror (a keep) who cannot be given the status of a properly married wife (lari), and is practically bought with bride price or in the old days could also be received as a part of the dowry of a proper wife. The agnates of a rakhror cannot be treated as affinal kin, and her children's right of inheritance is not recognised in the traditional code. Among the higher classes, a marriage in which bride price is paid, is more or less a commercial transaction. It does not create a social relationship between the groups. In the case of properly married wives (lari) also, the one who brings unexpectedly smaller dowry often compromises the position of her agnates vis-a-vis the agnates of other wives in a household.

About the content of status referred to in a hypergamous marriage to start with, we can refer to the view point of a middle class Rajput of Chamba, below the highest named status group of Mians. He prefers to marry his daughter either to a Mian who is not appreciably poorer than himself, or to a richer (the size of land holdings, immovable property and government jobs are the main indicators) Rajput of superior descent (the sense of relative

superiority of descent exists within named groups at higher levels), with respectable connections (rishte - refers to the total field of kinship relations). Rajputs poorer than himself or of inferior descent cannot normally expect his daughter in marriage, but provide wives for his males. Two other categories of people cannot be his affines. One of them are traditionally well marked out as his inferiors (the distinction between masters and servants). These include the cultivators (who may be of superior descent - some of them are Mians by descent) and all the groups associated with menial occupations. The second category include the Brahmans, a small group of Khatri traders and some Muslim and Sikh households of Chamba. The element of superiority and inferiority between these groups and the Rajputs is of lesser importance than the fact that their endogamous borders are closed against each other at this level of the hierarchy. They are 'different'. The importance of secular status, descent and the nature of this endogamous closure at different levels of the hierarchy will be clear from the description of actual hypergamous practices.

Among the named status groups of Rajputs at Chamba, the Mians show the greatest amount of internal grading. Most of the Mians claim descent from the royal households of Chamba and of other hill states in the neighbourhood. As we discussed earlier, Mian was a title and could be bestowed on others, (some of the Ranas - the local chiefs - have been absorbed in this category) and their economic status was broadly related to their political status

which varied considerably. In the case of some junior branches the loss of political and economic privileges also led to a fall in the order of precedence at the bhriri jalsa and finally on turning to cultivation the loss of the title of Mian as well. At Chamba, even now a cultivator is not a Mian by definition.

Ideally the Mians are divided into four grades. But these internal borders are not precise. Individual statements differ considerably when the relative position of individual als (named descent group) is discussed. The element of subjectivity in these statements derives from the hypergamous practices of the author. Jagirdari rights and administrative posts held as well as the position enjoyed in the order of precedence at the bhriri jalsa are also cited to justify relative ranking, but the basic reference at present is who gives brides to whom. Consequently some of the collateral branches of the royal household of Chamba (which occupies the top of the hierarchy) find themselves in lower grades than some others, and some descendents of the Ranas (old local chiefs) are mentioned in the upper grades of Mians. Untitled Rajputs of Chamba are also described as higher and lower, but these limits are much less marked below the first grade. Majority of the junior and poorer descendents of the Ranas and Thakurs resident in the parganas (who alone seem to prefer these caste names now) are considered lower than the Rajputs, except for the Jagirdar Ranas of Trilokinath who marry their daughters to ^{either} the Mians ^{or} ^{either} ^{or} first grade Rajputs of Chamba ^{ba}

but receive wives from ordinary Thakurs and Ranas of Churaha-Pangi or from the Thakurs of Lahaul. The order of some of the steps along this hypergamous ladder below the royal family, can be roughly described as follows :

<u>STATUS</u>	<u>al</u> <u>Names</u>
Mians of 1st grade	Chambial, Bijlwan, Bhupatia, Chubaria, et. al. (all branches of the ruling lineage of Chamba), Jasrotia, Jindrotia, Kotoch, Kishatwaria, Kotlia, et. al. (claim descent from royal households of other states) and Ranyal (descendents of a Rana)
Mians of 2nd grade	Ranpatia, Chenaria, Falgutia, Khudial, et al. (collaterals of the ruling lineage), Behandral (a distant branch of Chamba family who once ruled a minor state) and Pathania, Jamwal, Suketia, Mankotia, Lehrial, et. al. (collaterals of other royal households).
Mians of 3rd grade	Tharial, Jarial, Bhadwal, Sambial, Rugial, Bandala, Dhamrial, et. al. (whose royal connections are upheld) Manhas, Malhoter, Sikuntia, Mothlial, et. al. (whose royal descent is disputed).

STATUSAL NAMES

Mians of 4th grade and
Rajputs of 1st grade

Salehria, Nanglia, Rukwal, et al. (whose Mian status is not recognised by other Mians, as they freely intermarry with other Rajputs), Charik, Dadru, Sumari, Chauhan, et al. (they do not claim descent from any of the royal families of these hills but ~~claim descent~~ from the aristocracy of the plains). The Rana family of Trilokinath may also be included in this class.

Except for some newly rich households, who are so far excluded, the grades described above, include most of the upper class Rajputs of Chamba. The al names in the case of Mians refer to either the state capitals, or some prominent royal ancestor, or the names of jagirs held or in some cases just the name of the ward of residence. Some Rajput al names show affinity with some popular Rajput surnames of the plains. Below this level come the middle class Rajputs of Chamba who consider themselves to be superior to those Rajputs, Thakurs and Ranas who receive wives from ordinary cultivators Gaddis, Rathis, etc. The roots of most of the al names below the level of the upper classes are lost. But in a number of cases they show a linguistic twist at the end. While most of the upper class al names generally end in 'ia' or 'al', below this level the characteristic ending is '-u' eg. Suhalu, Dadru, Charu. This is

also the way an inferior's (or junior's) name is uttered at Chamba e.g. Singu, Debu. Some of the al names of the inferior most category of Rajputs seem to have been applied to them by others, as their derogatory meaning is more or less known and their acceptance varies in different situations, (e.g. Phakanu = bran eater, ordian = ill wishers, Rikhantu = bear meat eater).

The higher Brahmans of Chamba are also similiary graded. In the highest grade figure some of the descendents of royal functionaries and priests of major temples. Some of their al names are directly derived from these offices, e.g. Purohit (from raj-purohit = royal priest) Vaid (from raj-void = royal physician) and Haryan (from Hari Rai temple). Some others refer to the capitals of other states (e.g. Kolue = from Kulu). The al names of a lower grade of Brahmans (Bhat, Pade, Pande, etc.) refer to inferior priestly functions which a Brahman of higher grade may not do, for instance, attendance at funeral ceremonies. The lowest grade of these higher Brahmans of Chamba include Acharaj, Bujhru, Gwalhu, Gujrati, Pahri etc.). Some of the higher grade Brahmans of Chamba do not consider them as pure Brahmans. In this group are included those who either act as temple servants (e.g. Pahri) or cater to the needs of some lower castes of Chamba.

Below this level Brahmans serving some of the lower Shudra groups and those who are partly or wholly engaged in agricultural work are not considered Brahmans at all by the Upper classes. The

al names at this level repeat the pattern we observed among the lowest status Rajputs (e.g. Dundu = one handed, Ranetu = Rana's tenant, Kuthlu = seller of Kuth, Nansain = who lived at his mother's mother's, jogi = descendant of an ascetic). This feature in the al names of poorer classes is fairly common among other smaller categories as well. Among the Khatri^s (traders) for instance the al names of the richer groups at Chamba are skin to some well known Khatri surnames (e.g. Gupta, Sethi) but at the lowest level some of the al names are, Druhru (greedy), Mogu (dealer in coral), Jamuhan (clumsy). Ranas and Thakurs resident in the parganas generally refer to the place names as names of their als. Some of the descendants of Ranas and Thakurs at Chamba claim Rajput or Mian status. Some of the al names of these richer sections are derived from their titles e.g. Ranyal, Thakarial. The al names provide a rough guide about status at the initial stages when a prospective match is discussed. At lower levels these names change quite often. Junior branches of higher families who take up residence in the countryside often take a new al name.

The lowest status groups (discussed above) of Rajputs, Brahmans, Khatri, Ranas, Thakurs, etc., represent the economic level between ordinary cultivators and the higher Hindus. A number of them reside outside Chamba, but almost every such family maintains regular contacts with their relatives (either some agnates or affines) at Chamba.

In Churaha some of these groups are represented at Tissa, Bhanjraru, Tikri, Kia, Trella, etc. From their geneological histories it seems that some of them are downgraded branches of higher families of Chamba; some others are descendents of local chiefs and at least two cases show their origin from the local cultivators of Churaha. Except for some Khatri shop keepers and traders, most others depend upon agricultural land which is worked partly with the help of servants. The hypergamous practices of these groups are crucial to understand some of the problems.

In general they try to marry their girls to their superiors within the respective categories (Khatris, Rajputs, Brahmans, etc.). Wives received in these households from ordinary cultivators bearing different caste names (Rathis, Brahmans, Gosains, etc.) are taken almost indiscriminately. In some of these households can be observed the splended co-existence of the opposite practices of giving dowries at the marriages of their girls and of paying bride price at the marriages of their boys. Some of them make pronounced gestures to show lack of contact with the wife's agnates. For instance a Rana of Kia who has married a girl from Bharara, avoids even passing through Bharara when on his way to Chamba. Earlier we referred to the Kashmiri Pandit of Lige-Kothi who refused to take his meals from his wife, and to the Karmari Brahman who visits Bharara and may stay at any other household except his wife's parents. In the case of their girls, great effort is made to

make them acceptable to their superior would-be husbands at Chamba. A number of Khattris send their girls to live at Chamba with other relatives. The Ranas on the other hand, keep them confined indoors. Among the higher groups it is considered impolite to bluntly ask for or offer a particular amount of dowry. But in these families this bargain is struck before hand and boasted about openly, even when quite often it results in heavy debts for the family.

There are those who have not been able to hold on to this rather precarious perch (e.g. some Brahman households at Devi Kothi and Thakurs of Thalli). Some situations finally lead them to establish social relations with their local inferiors. When they are unable to solicit superior husbands for a girl or when a very old husband is proposed for her, she runs away with an inferior. The problems of securing and keeping the Churahi girls as wives have also increased. With the gradual disappearance of social, political and economic inhibitions imposed on the cultivators, conspicuous differences of status between some of the less fortunate members of these groups and the ordinary but now independent cultivators are not possible to maintain. The use of political means to maintain these differences was more common in the past when such groups could receive even formal backing of the state. There is an interesting entry in the official records about one of the sub-divisions of the state (Brahmaur). It stipulates that all those who pay ^c back dasarat (an annual cash cess) enjoy a specific privilege, in that others are prohibited from enticing

away their girls and widows (Gaz. Chamba 1904:274). Even at present the fear of individual or collective reprisals with the informal help of local officials is an important deterrent. Other processes which have led the poorer branches of higher families to turn to cultivation and the positive incentives for so doing (since the Reid Reforms), we discussed before. Among those families of higher Hindus who have to keep some sort of kinship relations with their erstwhile inferiors there is a tendency to claim better status for their affines -- and to pass them as Brahmans and Rajputs. This has created a dilemma for many a Rathi of Churaha -- should he be called a Rajput or a Brahman -- as some times even two girls from the same household find themselves with husbands belonging to different caste categories.

So far we have discussed the upper castes above the level of the ordinary cultivators of Churaha. We referred also to small groups of Muslims and Sikhs at Chamba. A tribe of Gujjar buffalo herders who visit the state only in summer and have a more permanent base in the plains, are largely excluded from the system. In the case of lower castes (customarily described as Shudra) also, the maximum proliferation of endogamous groups is found at Chamba. Of those permanently resident at Chamba (many others visit the capital either at annual fairs, or for trade, or for official business, or pass through it as seasonal migrants) eighteen groups have distinct names. Some have hypergamous relations between them and the borders of some others are presently closed against each other. Some of

these lower caste groups of Chamba (e.g. Parkhan = carpenter) manage to get even Rathi wives of Churaha. Except for some of the lowliest groups (e.g. the Chamar) or some impoverished families who migrate to Churaha, these Shudras of Chamba consider the Aryas of Churaha lower in status from whom wives are often brought but to whom daughters should not be given in marriage. In ~~some~~^{sum}, the hypergamous direction between most of these lower castes of Chamba and Churaha is roughly similar to the one between the upper castes, except for the fact that at lower levels the intensity of hypergamy itself decreases.

If we trace all the marital links in spatial terms in a broad sense they go right into the plains on the west and upto the borders of Tibet on the East. But as we observe earlier new forms of communication do not go beyond Churaha, and the seasonal movements across the Pangri Range have declined considerably. This situation has placed the Churahis near the lower ends of the hypergamous hierarchies in spatial terms, (though some Lahauli and Pangwal brides are still brought by Churahis). One obvious result of this position is that the Churahis cannot transfer the resulting dearth of brides further east.

Most of them are subsistence cultivators in a strict sense. Upto recent years new land has been available (and to a lesser extent still is) for cultivation not for accumulation and for sub-renting (ownership rights in most cases were won by 1960). So

that relative prosperity in most of the population is related to personal labour. Other privileges which create difference in secular status lie above this level. If a rare opportunity of establishing hypergamous affinal relations with a higher status household presents itself the Churahis also compete for that, "... prestige and consideration which results from inter-marriage...." (Dumont: 197:117). But among themselves the competition is not for these non-existent privileges but for conjugal rights and for personal labour. Not only the hypergamous practices lose their intensity but there is a conspicuous lack of interest in marriage on the part of rest of the family and the struggle is waged at the individual level. The dearth of brides rather reverses the trend. It is neither the husbands nor their status which is competed for, but the brides and their children. If Sagar of Bharara can trace his ancestry upto a Mian or if Kanshi of Mangloa can claim his descent from a raj-guru, it is immaterial in the situation:

In Churaha this process of levelling down and the consequent irrelevance of status derived from descent has gone beyond the confines of some originally named groups. Besides, those borders of distinction between the main upper caste categories (Brahmans, Rajputs), so important at Chamba have also given way in Churaha. In some cases even the religious borders have been crossed. The Buddhists of Bhaneodi (northern Churaha where the only Buddhist temple this side of Pangi range is located) freely intermarry with

the Rathis. In a few cases, some lower caste Muslims (at Bharara and Tissa) and Sikhs (at Mangloa) also figure in marriages with local Aryas and Brahmans. The relative fragility of these borders of so called purity have been noted in some other situations (Furer-Haimendorf 1966: 31-35; Berremen 1963:154). But in Churaha the original identities in some cases are only a part of the memory (e.g. Hali, Megh, Sippi, Gosain, Jogi, Bhat) and in some others have little meaning for endogamous purposes (e.g. between Brahmans of Mangloa and Rathis of Bharara, between Lohars and Batwala of Devi Kothi). These distinctions (at least in the Local context can be maintained only if a group is favourably positioned in the sense that an assured supply of desirable spouses is available from outside. Conversely such sentiments can appear in a section of a hitherto undifferentiated population with the growth of internal secular differences (c.f. Furer-Haimendorf 1966: 140-160).

At present the only important local barrier for intermarriage among the Churahis is between the major upper caste category (collectively termed Rathis) and the small lower caste category Aryas). Besides, some local groups of Aryas try to maintain a distinction from few families of Lohars and Chamars who intermarry. The lower border of the upper castes of Churaha however is not exactly similar to the one between the upper and lower castes of Chamba. For some higher status Hindus of Chamba the lower castes include the Rathis as well. But in Churaha some of the higher Shudra groups of Chamba are also accepted for intermarriage in the upper

caste category (e.g. Tarkhan, Suniar, Kumhar). In the extreme north of Churaha and in eastern areas the Aryas as a lower caste group of cultivators disappears and only a few families of the lowest status Lohars lie outside the lower border of the cultivators.

The nature of this border between the Rathis and Aryas differs from that of the borders between, for instance, the Mians and the Rajputs, and between the higher castes of Chamba and the Rathis of Churaha. A Mian does not lose his Mian status by marrying a Rajput wife. It affects his position among the Mians. He loses Mian status only by marrying his daughters to Rajputs. Even a higher status Hindu of Chamba can keep a Rathi wife if only as a Rakhror. But to a Rathi or a Brahman of Churaha this device is not available when he marries an Arya wife. At present a Rathi by marrying an Arya wife himself becomes an Arya. It is this border which can be rightly termed as the true endogamous limit, as compared to the successive hypergamous limits of varying nature above this level. In this sense this lower limit of the Rathis also forms the real endogamous limit for all the higher Hindus of Chamba. Looking at Chamba along one can come to a wrong conclusion that these Brahmans, Rajputs and Khatris are completely endogamous groups. I stress here the need to follow the spatial spread of the marital links of these so called endogamous castes which look like distinct species in the plains.

Presently I will try to answer some basic questions about the importance of descent and affinal relations; and about the different nature of the borders of hypergamy, of parallel distinctions and of irreversible pollution, associated with the lower border. The need

is to refer to not only the existing power relations but also to their evolution. Earlier I referred to Lloyd's African models of government (Lloyd 1965: 102-106). About his third variant Lloyd notes that when the ruling groups completely monopolise power there are dangers to its stability and some avenues for upward mobility have to be kept open and the model tends to remain closer to his second variant in which incidence of upward mobility is well marked. I pointed out that when such a polity does not remain isolated and external protection both to the local chief and to the elite is ensured in a larger political domain, compromises of this nature are not necessary and the elite can continue to monopolise power in the local context. Subsequent alignments of the local elite with the aristocracy of the larger polity strengthen their position at wider group levels. So that chances of upward mobility for others decrease. I referred to this course of evolution first in the case of the small feudal states (ranhus and Thakuris) and then for the state of Chamba itself.

Besides the relatively static economy, we should bear in mind the long history of political evolution of this type in which allegiance of the commoners is obtained indirectly through the existing power holding individuals and groups at different levels and in which upheavels brought about by the zeal for direct proselytization (as in the European history of comparable periods) have been largely absent.

Had the elite groups been able to keep all their kinship relations within their borders or had the privileges been of a nature

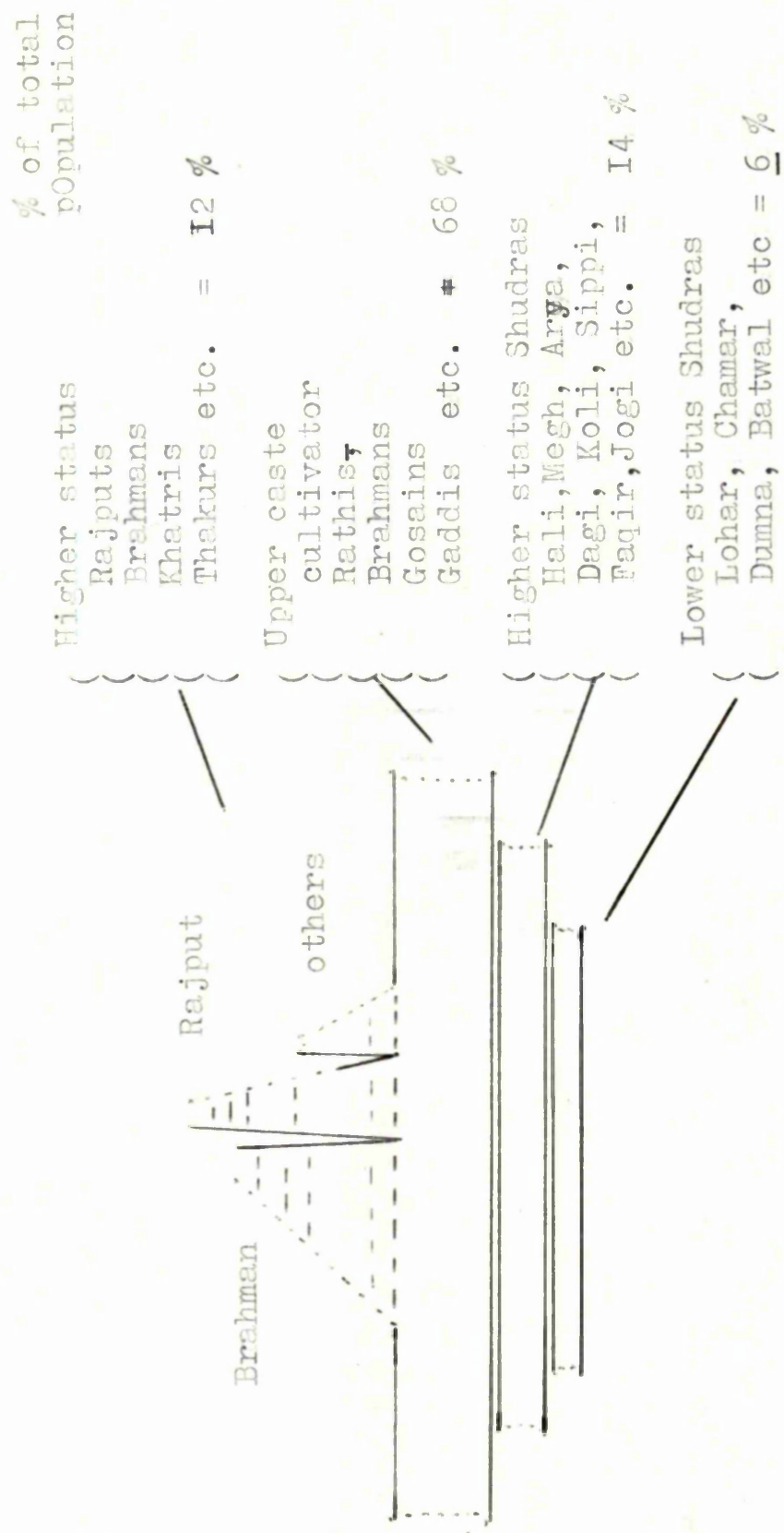
which could be successively distributed equally among their descendents the only chance for their inferiors to share the power held by them would have been through simple patron client relations. But two factors intervene here. One is hypergamy and the other is the relative limitation of and indivisibility of privileges at successive higher levels of a hierarchy, which continuously deprives some of the junior members of the elite. As the chances of direct promotion to privileged positions (firstly by the local chiefs, then by the Raja) decrease, these two, that is, the affinal relations and descent connections between the - upper and lower levels gain in importance. The bilateral kinship relations have played and continue to play a major role in the formation of groups associated with particular privileges. Monopolisation of particular offices and privileges first at the familial group level, then at the level of successively larger kinship units and finally at the level of an inter-marrying stratum are various stages of this process. If some thing like this final stage was seen to have been reached in the local context in a given area and local theorists described the situation as it appeared to them, we have no reason to see it projected throughout the spatial and temporal dimensions of the society. Even a previously endogamous group has to alter its ideology when it moves into a new situation where evolution of power relations has still not reached this stage (as we have seen in Churaha). When we approach

these problems with a notice ^{on} of ^{pre-existing} endogamous groups (like different races or ethnic groups) we either turn the whole course of evolution on its head, or simply ignore the processes involved in it - remaining satisfied with scratching its surface with tools of cultural anthropology. (For a detailed examination of such theories see Cox 197:82-118).

Emergence of parallel social divisions among the elite at earlier stages when positions of power were monopolised and made inheritable is not difficult to follow but their endogamous character vis a vis each other could not have emerged without spatial spread of their marital links. The tendency for such a spatial spread as well as the capacity to do so is also maximum at the top of the hierarchy. The attempt to close the lower borders individually or severally against the inferiors - - not unique in itself - - raises some additional questions. Why inspite of the attempts to close it at higher levels, a complete endogamous closure is achieved only at the level of the dominant groups of cultivators? And why crossing this border even for the males has been increasingly associated (especially in modern times) with ideas of irreversible pollution? Less than a hundred years ago the son of an upper caste male and a Shudra female could be freely accepted in the upper caste catagory of Churaha - the Rathis (Gaz. Kangra 1883-4) Why the character of this border is increasingly becoming more rigid inspite of the strains which

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AN APPROXIMATE REPRESENTATION OF THE POWER DISTRIBUTION, STATUS HIERARCHY, HYPERGAMOUS AND ENDOGAMOUS BORDERS IN THE POPULATION OF CHAMBA STATE.



Endogamous border ==
 Hypergamous border ----
 Open spatial border.....

lead to the disappearance of the internal endogamous borders within the upper caste category.

These problems are closely associated with numbers and the way sanctions operate. In the overall hierarchical distribution of power, the numbers at lower levels are greater than the numbers at higher level. Hypergamy operates in the context of this pyramid of power whose base lies at the levels of subsistence. (see figure). Within a hypergamous situation of this type, at a given level, the number of those having inferior marital links normally exceeds the number of those having superior marital links. Can the lower border be closed without punishing a majority of its members. The second best solution is large scale concubinage. Both of these methods require the help of superior political power. At Chamba we have seen that both methods have been tried at different levels, especially above the village level to maintain the distinction between the masters and the servants, (the earstwhile begarus). But when the effect of political regulation from above is reduced such borders are not easy to maintain. Self regulation imposes its own rules. Personal influence in the new administration, control of economic resources and numbers all count. The numbers assume the greatest importance among groups occupying the subsistence level and located farthest from authority. It is the majority here which can close its border against minorities. So that the character of distribution of power is reversed at the base

of the pyramid. When inferior marital links can occur only with a minority these are relatively rare, ^{and are} hence abnormal, ^{and} can be and must be controlled by corporate action. But overt action is not always necessary in a situation where power being more vaguely distributed in a large group of equals increases the relevance of the super-natural. Churahis with their recent independence are at present going through this transformation which in the case of plains villages occurred long ago. While Leach ignores the distribution of power above the level of the village, Douglas fails to grasp the character of caste at this level and writes "the purer and higher its caste status, the more of a minority it must be" (Douglas 1970:148).

How recent some of these processes are, can be grasped from the following observations about these areas.

"Till lately, the limits of caste do not seem to have been so immutably fixed in the hills as in the plains. The Raja was the fountain of honour and could do much as he liked. I have heard old men quote instances within their memory in which a Raja promoted a Girth to be a Rathi and a Thakur to be a Rajput for service done or money given; and at the present day the power of admitting back into caste fellowship persons put under a ban - - - is a source of income to the Jagirdar Rajas" (Gaz. Kangra 1883-84:74).

Earlier we referred to Dr. Hutchinson's observation about the Rajas of Chamba who used to '... confer the right to wear Janeo,

with a step in social rank in return for gifts or special services' (Gaz. Chamba 1910:136). Examples of conspicuous status changes at higher levels upto relatively recent times exist at Chamba and the phenomenon of 'assumed status' ~~also~~ ^{also} figures in the local discussions. In Churaha we have also got examples where attempts to enter higher hindu status catagories ~~could not be made~~ ^{only had partial} success. (e.g. the Thakurs of Thalli who were given the title near about 1930 when their sister was made a queen but their own economic status and hypergamous position was not such improved after the death of the Raja. The residents of Bharara dispute their Thakur status). But such conspicuous changes at higher levels are less relavant to understand the nature of borders we have described for the Churahis.

How the dominant community of the villages - the Rathis have emerged. Can it be treated as an ethnic group distinct from the lower castes. At the begining of the present century Hutchinson observed that it is receiving large accessions from above as well as from the lower castes (Gaz. 1910:134-135).

This contention is strongly supported by the population trends refering to the period between 1881 to 1931. During this period the number of caste Brahmans, Rajputs and Khatris remained almost constant, while the Rathis recorded more than 100% increase (from 32190 in 1881 to 66029 in 1931). Some of the lower castes (e.g. Mirasi and Jogi) are shown to have disappeared altogether while the numbers of some others show dramatic decline without

contributing to the increase of other lower castes. The Dagi and Koli for instance were reduced from 19536 in 1881 to 1798 in 1931, the Tarkhans from 1570 to 608, the Fagir from 588 to 136. (Gaz. Chamba part B: 1904 and 1933 table 15).

CHAPTER 8

Hypogamy and Polyandry in Ladakh

Basic Information

Distribution of Power

Local Descent Groups

Polyandry

Kinship Terms

Hypogamy and Polyandry in Ladakh

In the Hindu society we have seen that bride price, hypogamy, involuntary male celibacy, divorce initiated by the female, etc., are inferior practices associated with lower classes and backward dependent areas. Polyandry is abhorred and must be kept secret. But this is not so in Ladakh. In spite of some very significant recent changes in the wake of defence and development activities in the area, which are reducing the incidence of polyandrous living, it is still a respectable practice, not confined to lower classes. Sometimes its opposite, i.e., polygyny is ridiculed. During my visit, the hottest rumour at Moolbeg (a village in west⁹central Ladakh) was about the household of the descendents of a local chief (Kālon). The Kalon has two daughters (aged 26 and 24) and a uxori-local son-in-law (= magpa, aged 24) introduced recently. The household claims that the conjugal rights of the magpa are limited to the elder girl. According to the villagers both the girls are secretly married to him as the Kalon cannot solicit more magpas for his girls - a measure of his declining fortunes.

This vital difference is ignored by some writers who try to generalise about the marriage practices in the Himalayas. For instance, Majumdar holds that polyandry is a part of the general 'marital climate' of the Himalayas which has, "unmistakable signs of deviant sexual preferences" (Majumdar 1963: V). Iravati Karve suggests that the 'Khashas' (a blanket term used to

describe the Hindus of north western Himalayas) may be retaining either an ancient Indo-Aryan custom or "they might have taken it up from the polyandrous Tibetans just across the border" (Karve 1953: 132). Peter relates polyandry to " ... the fact that certain peoples find themselves in a difficult and insecure natural environment" (Peter 1963: 568). Later on we will examine Peter's contentions in detail. Then we will also discuss the explanation of polyandry offered by Leach, the most critical so far. Within the limitations imposed by lack of space, and the dearth of information about Tibet proper, I will try to make the situation clear so far as Ladakh is concerned. I will confine myself to some aspects of the power relations and the institution of polyandry in the traditional social organisation in Ladakh.

Basic Information: Ladakh, an administrative district of Jammu and Kashmir state of India, covers at present an area of about 30,000 square miles. It is divided into three tehsils, namely, Kargil (west), Zaskar (south) and Leh (east). Out of a total population of 88,651 in 1961, the Muslims mainly concentrated in Kargil account for 48%. With the exception of about 200 souls of Christians and immigrant Hindus, the rest of the population are Buddhists of Tibetan affinity. Except about 5,000 inhabitants of Zaskar, most of the Buddhist population lives in Leh tehsil, which is referred to as proper Ladakh by local inhabitants. Most of the Buddhist aristocracy and middle class peasantry lives in the

- central parts of this proper Ladakh in which the majority of the prominent monasteries are also located.

This area is largely an uncultivable arid plateau, an extension of the main plateau of Tibet between the inner Himalayas and the Karakoram range. The population is confined to the banks of Indus and its tributaries, and lives at an approximate height of between 12,000' to 14,000'. Due to lack of rain or snow, expansion of cultivable lands is virtually impossible. The figure of 20,427 acres cultivated in Leh tehsil in 1963 (I.C.A.R. 1963: II: 58) might have been reached centuries ago. The other major occupation is sheep and cattle grazing. In 1961 the total number of animals was 261,464.

Except for three predominantly Muslim villages near Leh, the rest, i.e., 106 villages are mainly Buddhist. A few other small villages now form an administrative part of the developing town of Leh where the headquarters of the tehsil as well as of the district are located. The importance of Leh for the traditional economy is limited. Even now the town has only 21 shops and employs less than 200 persons in commercial activities; the majority of these persons are immigrant Hindus and Muslims. Most others are government servants.

- As compared to the villages in the plains and other parts in this region, a Ladakhi village is not a compact unit of residence. There are some significant differences in the settlement patterns (Brar 1968: 97-102). In

general, individual houses or small groups of them (2-5) stand in the midst of cultivable fields, hundreds of yards apart. Some of the large villages (e.g., Thikse - population 1,083) are more than eight miles long, less than half a mile deep and are hedged in between the river and a vast barrenness of bare hills, crags, sandstone and gravel. But the political, economic, social and ecological identity of the village has been maintained since early times when each of them was a separate barony of a local chief.

Distribution of Power: The classical Buddhist preaching, coupled with the comparative lack of plains like pollution observances, tend to create an impression that it is an ~~egalitarian~~ ^{unstratified} society. But it is not. I will not go into the details of the old system of serfdom, whose traces are still found in Ladakh (for the nature of serfdom in Tibetan society see Goldstein 1971: 521-534). At present the main division is between the aristocratic families, mainly the descendents of local chiefs (rgyapo, Kalon, Lunpo, Nono, Jo, etc., are some of the titles used) and the commoners, the yulpa (yule = village). Besides there is a small group (.5%), mentioned before, who are collectively known as the Mon and include the Beda (musician) and the Gara (artisan). The Mon are the lowest in status.

There are many reasons which have not allowed the development of a hierarchy based on wider groups and tend to obscure the lines even between the categories

named above. Geographical isolation from the more populated areas is one of them but it is not the main reason. More important clues lie in the historical developments and the dominant political role played by the monastic organisations.

Ladakh suffered some successful invasions both from Tibet and from the Balti Muslims on the west, at earlier stages of its history. But the local rulers, especially in the eastern areas lost their political hold only by the middle of the nineteenth century, when it was brought under the control of Jammu and Kashmir. The British protection followed shortly afterwards. By this time the monastic organisations directed from Tibet had assumed considerable political and economic power, which have been increasing with the decline of the local aristocrats. This alternative source of power vested in the monasteries have not proved ~~to be~~ a hinderance to the Buddhist chiefs of Lahaul and Spiti in identifying themselves and developing marital relations with their Hindu overlords of Chamba and Kulu. But for the Ladakhi chiefs such an identification with the Muslim upper classes required formal conversion to Islam which meant an immediate and total break with the monastic organisations - a proposition which only a few of them accepted.

The Lamaist monastic organisation is radically different from the Brahmanical organisation. Power cannot be inherited. ~~Besides,~~ ^A monastery (gompa) recruits individuals and through them links itself indirectly to particular

families and groups. Technically the avenues of upward mobility within it exist and are sometimes utilised. But in practice the upper classes have been successful in dominating the monasteries by a variety of means. In general they try to control the internal hierarchy of a gompa by sending their own members as Lamas. In the selection of Abbots (Kushoks, the Ladakhi equivalents of Dalai Lama) for different gompas, the upper classes have been remarkably successful. At present there is not a single Kushok in Ladakh whose family had not been previously connected through kinship with the aristocratic families either of Ladakh or of Tibet. In some cases the internal wrangling within the upper classes have led to disputes about these selections. Some of these disputes have been lingering on for quite some time. As a result some of the gompas have remained without acknowledged Abbots (e.g., Hemis and Mato). In some others, more than one claimant exist side by side (e.g., Fiang, Rizong and Liker). In such cases power is wielded by the cliques of Lamas within a monastery. These struggles for power within the monasteries are important to understand why the upper class households almost invariably send at least one of the sons as a Lama to the gompas. For the lower classes it is a rare privilege. Even those who are admitted, seldom rise in the internal hierarchy of a gompa and remain as mere aides to the higher status Lamas for reasons which need not detain us here. Total number of celebrate Lamas in Ladakh was estimated to be more than 6,000 in 1965. Some others were detained in Tibet after the India-China

war and quite a few of Ladakhi origin find themselves at various establishments of the Dalai Lama outside Ladakh. This provides us with an approximate ratio of 1:7 between these celebrate males and the total Buddhist population. Their female equivalents, the Chomos (Nun) are less than three hundred in the whole of Ladakh.

The power exercised by the gompas in every sphere of life, i.e., political, administrative, economic and social, cannot be exaggerated. The monasteries directly own more than fifty percent of the land, ~~most of the~~ *and* livestock and have been so far the biggest traders and money lenders. Most influential politicians and key job holders are the Lamas. The recent land reforms introduced by the J&K government could not be implemented in the case of monasteries due to local resistance. But the holdings of a number of aristocratic families have been considerably reduced.

Within the ordinary cultivators also the distribution of land is considerably uneven, as given below, about two villages, i.e., Spituk (about 5 miles south west of Leh) and Nayoma (about 60 miles east of Leh).

size of land holding	No. of cultivator households at:			
	Spituk	Nyoma	Total	%
no land	8	1	9	10.7%
less than 1 acre	11	19	30	35.7%
1.0-2.4 acres	18	10	28	33.3%
2.5-4.9 acres	8	5	13	15.5%
5.0-7.4 acres	1	1	2	2.4%
7.5-9.9 acres	1	-	1	1.2%
10 acres & above	1	-	1	1.2%
	48	36	84	100%

Up to recent times, the system of rent assessment was based on the household and not the holding. On that basis the households were divided into three classes. Cunningham has given an estimate of these classes before and during the J&K administration, as detailed below: *(Cunningham 1854; h. 269-70)*

class

	before the J&K administration	afterwards
1 <u>Khang Chen</u> (big house)	2.2%	5.5%
2 <u>Khang Phyed</u> (half house)	8.9%	27.9%
3 <u>Phyedi Phyed</u> (quarter house)	88.9%	66.6%

The livestock also shows great unevenness in distribution. Most of the large flocks are still owned by a few aristocratic families and the gompas, who employ the shepherds

for the purpose. The system of forced labour has been partially abolished. In certain areas where ordinary transport cannot reach, forced labour (unpaid) is still a regular obligation to be borne by local cultivators turn-by-turn. Within the domains of individual gompas and landlords it has now taken the form of 'voluntary' unpaid labour.

Social Status: Earlier I mentioned three categories, i.e., the aristocratic families, the Yulpa and the Mon. Within these categories there are two important indicators of relative status. One is the name of the house which has assumed considerable significance in Ladakh. In size the house in Ladakh ranges from a palace like four storey building with more than fifty rooms to the meanest one room shelters. (I am excluding here the tent dwelling nomads employed by the owners of big flocks). A house in Ladakh has a specific name unrelated to the names of its occupants. Some of these names are Dinmopa (from bear), Singe-pa (from lion), Drogpa (higher ground), Kalon-pa (Kalon is a title), etc. In the upper classes and most of the better off peasantry, the households and hence the houses have a reputation of remaining undivided for a number of generations. The nature of the economy has not allowed radical changes in the fortunes of the household. So that the names of these houses, particularly in the upper classes, ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~which~~ are well known in the neighbourhood convey an idea of the conventions of the household as well as its relative status vis-a-vis others.

Another important index is the membership of a particular sashoo. Literally, sashoo means ten. On the tenth of every month all the member households of a sashoo collect at one place for a night of feasting, drinking, dancing and recitation of some holy texts. The expenses are borne by the host. Occasionally the standard of feasting is raised by the host and this new standard should be followed at subsequent occasions. Those who cannot keep up with the new standard, either have to bear some veiled comments of ridicule or they join another sashoo commensurate with their standard.

In the marriage negotiations, the membership of particular sashoo groups and the names of the houses figure prominently. It is at this level that the hypogamous practices throughout the society become clear. Between the aristocratic families and the yulpa its importance is easy to assess. A poorer aristocrat who can accept inferior status husbands for his daughter or sister is simply shocked at the idea of introducing an ordinary yulpa wife in his household. The most common explanation given is that ^awife of an inferior status does not know how to run a superior household, and has no respect for its superior conventions.

Local Descent Groups: Peter could not reach a definite decision about what the concept of phaspun (local descent group) stands for in Ladakh (Peter 1963: 381). The Tibetans use two words ru-gyu^u for father's lineage and sha-gyu for mother's lineage. In Lahaul the word ru-pa

or ru-wa is used and further differentiation between mother's and father's descent group is made only with particular references. Most common term used, in a similar sense in Ladakh is phas-pun. This term is popularised by the Muslims of Ladakh.

Among the Muslims of western Ladakh descent is strictly patrilineal; and the phas-puns are descendents of a common male ancestor and they may not be confined to a particular locality. But for the Buddhists of proper Ladakh, its meaning differs. In uxori-local marriages the children take the name of the mother's household. The husbands (magpa), a uxori-local wife may accept at a time or successively, are seldom related to each other. Even in a viri-local situation the husbands may not always be brothers. Sometimes a person even from outside the husband's descent group is invited as a co-husband (phor-jag). In such situations, the children's actual residence and inheritance is given more importance than the biological descent in deciding what group they belong to. So that the exact meaning of phas-pun for the Ladakhis is what they themselves express as 'father's people' or 'mother's people'. The members of a phas-pun, both males and females, when they live among other phas-puns as wives or uxori-local husbands do not lose their membership until their death and only their phas-pun fellows are allowed to cremate them. But this link is not extended to their children.

About the functions of a phas-pun one comes across very

confusing statements such as, they are members of the same family - branched out from the same house and must co-operate with each other at every crisis: they worship the same lha (family deity) who looks after their common interests, etc. No informant fails to point out the collective responsibility of the phaspun for cremating their dead. At places like Moolbeg in western areas marriage within a phaspun cannot occur. In central Ladakh (at Spituk and Thikse) except for one instance, the aristocratic families have been avoiding marriage within the phaspuns. But in the lower classes a phaspun is not strictly exogamous.

The limits of exogamy are normally stated in terms of a number of generations of male ancestors of the mother and the father. In central and western Ladakh the stated number of generations (exclusive of ego) is six on either side.

In eastern areas (at Nayoma) the stated number is four. But this difference is less important than the rule of equal number of generations stated on either side. It differs from the rule among the hypergamous Hindus, where the number of generations traced through the father is always more. Significance of this difference as well as up to what extent these stated rules are actually adhered to will be clear a little later.

Polyandry: Peter describes some situations which are not statistically significant but provide a key to understand the nature of polyandry. He writes:

"There are those in which the father or fathers insist that their sons take their step-mother to wife; and there are those in which the father imposes himself upon the daughter-in-law and forces her to become his wife too In the first case the son was eager to take his step-mother to wife and did not need much coaxing by his father; In the latter case the sons accepted the situation out of passivity and obedience to their fathers, they willingly gave up choosing a bride for themselves from among younger women than their step-mother" (Peter 1963 p478).

The informants do not look at such situations in this way. Its full significance will be clear when we discuss the kinship terms. What Peter ignores here are two important roles - that of the wife and that of her agnates. This attitude may be partly subjective, but is largely due to the fact that in a patrilineal society we try to over-emphasise the role of the father. This is further distorted when we try to determine the role of marriage within the confines of the domestic group. But for Peter this is a bit inexcusable. Two other themes on which ~~he~~ Peter dwells at a number of places are 1) that fathers are usually 'afraid of their children' (Ibid: 377); and 2) that a wife enjoys extraordinary freedom as she can easily divorce or get a new contract signed with the help of her agnates, "giving the wife greater guarantees and

facilities for happiness it is rare for a wife to be divorced by her husbands - perhaps a concomittant of the status granted to the Tibetan women, comparatively higher than elsewhere in the Orient" (Ibid: 428).

In spite of Peter's long and painstaking excursions into his world of polyandry it is sad to note that this failure to co-ordinate various aspects of social organisation leads him to a dead end; and the only explanation he finally offers in what he calls his Anthropological theory of polyandry is as follows:

"Polyandry is a latent male homosexual and near incestuous form of the marital institution, co-related with excessive economic and social pressure on the nuclear family of the peoples living in a difficult natural and social environment a recessive cultural trait it disappears again with great facility when more usual conditions operate, conditions that bring about a righting of the abnormal lack of balance between individual tendencies of love and agression between men" (Ibid: 569-70).

Before going further let us examine Leach's explanation of polyandry - most critical so far. According to Leach, polyandry is one of a variety of solutions adopted to resolve the following dilemma:

"On the one hand there is the ideal that the patrimonial inheritancé ought to be maintained intact. Full brothers and the sons of full brothers ought to remain together in the ancestral home and work the ancestral land. On the other hand, since the wives of these men,

when they join the household, bring with them property which will be inherited by their own children which is in conflict with the ideal of maintaining the economic solidarity of male siblings" (Leach 1966: 109).

Leach arrives at this conclusion through deductive reasoning. With his observation that in polyandrous societies the women are also enabled to inherit, one may agree. But then he relates this ~~situation~~ to the institution of dowry; and holds that dowry creates separate blocks of property and hence leads to the dilemma stated above. (Ibid 1966: 108-9). One of his recent observations is that hypergamy is also associated with dowry (Leach 1970: 109). Are we to understand that dowry, hypergamy, polyandry and what he calls patriliney of 'uncertain type' can belong to each other? I am not in a position to look at the problem from as wide a perspective as Leach can, but from the marriage practices in the region under discussion his formulations do not get the least support.

In Ladakh we have polyandry associated with ^{hypogamy,} bride price and the type of patriliney Leach has in mind, ~~but not hypergamy~~. At Chamba we have polygyny, dowry, hypergamy and an extreme stress on patriliney. The ideal for the male siblings remaining together in the ancestral home and keeping the patrimonial estate undivided is emphasised at both places. Now let us see the real difference in the two situations. At Chamba, that part of the dowry which is formally given to the husband and his relations is always minor as compared to the main portion which

belongs to the wife (suaj) and cannot be shared by other co-wives or wives of the husband's, brothers or their children. Besides, some valuable gifts are often given to her by the bridegroom's party. These also form her personal block of property. She is expressly forbidden to give away any part of her property to her agnates. But it is often snatched from her and included in the dowry of her husband's sister, in spite of a bitter resistance on her part. In fact, most of the domestic quarrels at Chamba originate from this situation. About her rights in the husband's household and those of her children, not only addition^{al} co-wives can be brought without her consent, but she can be ordered back to her parents house, with or without her children and almost always without any part of her so called personal block of property.

A Ladakhi wife also brings rintho which can be mistaken for a dowry. It is in fact a contribution by the bridegroom's father, made prior to the marriage, over and above the agreed bride price, which she brings along and which cannot be snatched from her. Another important item she brings with her is a head-dress (perāg or perāk) - a gift from her mother. It is a costly item and bears a number of precious stones, which women in this area regularly accumulate in this form. But it is not inherited by her sons and does not conflict with the ideal of solidarity among the male siblings.

The rights enjoyed by the first wife properly married

in a polyandrous household can be imagined from the marriage agreements. At the end of a period (often a number of years) during which the bridegroom's father or his representative goes a number of times to the bride's household, with substantial gifts, and ceremonially begs for the match, a contract is formally negotiated and signed before witnesses. Some of the clauses that appear in these contracts are as follows: What property (normally a field) the bridegroom's party agrees to allot her, for her exclusive use if at any time she is ousted from her position in the main house (Khang-Chen) and when she finally retires after a wife for the next generation comes. How many husband's services are available to her. In case of barrenness she reserves the right of bringing a co-wife from her phaspun. If a child is adopted and if he or she is not one of her own phaspuns, she has the right to bring a spouse (male or female) for the adopted son or daughter. In case impotency is suspected in the husband, or if her husband(s) abandon her or die, she can accept another husband preferably a phaspun of the former but sometimes even unrelated to them (porjag), without leaving her affinal household and without losing her privileged position, as first wife. If she herself leaves (and she may if no heir is left at her agnatic household) there is no compensation; but ⁱⁿ the rare case ^{of} ~~in~~ her being asked to leave, compensation must be paid. Even among the poorer classes the minimum compensation is the equivalent of a cow. Any child born to her, even if she is living ^{without a husband (but in his household)} ~~as a widow~~ does not suffer any disabilities with respect to inheritance.

When this first wife, the lady of the house is installed, the parents ideally retire and often literally quit the main house (Khang-Chen) and reside in a small out-house (Khan-gu). They are allotted separate pieces of land, i.e., pha-skal (father's) and ma-skal (mother's). There is a proverb in Ladakh which according to Peter means "that the relations of the husband(s) should be turned out, while the wife's relations can always be sure of a welcome in the home" (Peter 1963: 353). Henceforth it is the wife's brother, the ajang of her children (M.B.), without whom an important social decision (about marriages in particular) cannot be taken. Part of the bride price paid at a marriage must go to the mother's brother.

Any other wife brought subsequently into the household, even if by the eldest husband, must be acceptable to the first wife. Her marriage is the proper marriage, the bagstun-chenmo, or the great marriage. A subsequent wife's marriage can be either skunma (or skuste) - literally a theft, or at the most a bagstun-chungan - an apology for a marriage, in which a small feast is given at the bridegroom's place. Now I ask Leach if it is her latent rights of inheritance at her parent's household or the rights in her affinal household secured and enforced with the help of her superior agnates which can ^{better} sustain a polyandrous situation?

Kinship Terms: Before going further we will have a brief look at the terms of address in Ladakh:

Reference	Terms of address (-le is added for respect, e.g., <u>Ama-le</u> , <u>Ane-le</u> , etc.)
F.F.F., M.F.F., W.F.F.F.,	<u>Mespo</u>
F.F., M.F., W.F.F.,	<u>Meme</u> or <u>Apo</u>
F.M., M.M., W.M.M.,	<u>Api</u>
F., W.F., H.F.	<u>Apa</u> or <u>Aba</u> - <u>Apa-tsho</u> - eldest <u>Apa-tshungu</u>) juniors or <u>Ago</u> or <u>Aju</u>)
M. W.M. M.Z. other wives of fathers	<u>Ama</u> - <u>Ama-chenmo</u> - eldest <u>Ama-tshung</u> - juniors
M.B.	<u>Ajang</u>
F.Z.	<u>Ane</u>
B., W.B.,	<u>Gaga</u> or <u>Atsho</u>) elder or <u>Ago</u> or <u>Aju</u>) <u>Nono</u> or <u>Butsha</u> - younger
Z., W.Z.,	<u>Atshe</u> - elder <u>Nomo</u> or <u>Pomo</u> - younger
H.	<u>Gaga</u>) or <u>Atsho</u> or <u>Ago</u> or <u>Aju</u>) eldest or <u>Magpa</u> or <u>Mee</u> (a man)) <u>Nono</u> - others
W.	<u>Ane</u> - eldest or <u>Atshe</u> or <u>Nomo</u> - others
S., B.S., Z.S.,	<u>Butsha</u> (= a male child)
D., B.D., Z.D.,	<u>Pomo</u> or <u>Nomo</u> or <u>Bomo</u> (= a female child)
D.H.	<u>Magpa</u> or <u>Butsha</u> (<u>Bag-po</u> = bridegroom)
S.W.	<u>Nomo</u> or <u>Pomo</u> or <u>Bomo</u> (<u>Bag-ma</u> = bride)
S.S., D.S., etc.	<u>tsau</u> or <u>tso</u>
S.D., D.D., etc.	<u>tsamo</u>

The most striking difference of this system from that of the hypergamous Hindus of North India (see Karve 1953: 98-107) is the general lack of distinction made while addressing one's agnates and affines. In two cases where the distinction is scrupulously observed is the mother's brother and the mother's sister. A junior father can be addressed by the terms used for eldest brother and eldest husband but the mother's brother must be distinguished. Similarly the term for father's sister and the eldest wife, i.e., ane is the same and it cannot be used for the mother's sister. The second aspect is that the lines between the generations tend to merge while the difference between seniors and juniors in the same generation is emphasised. It is related with the polyandrous situation where the positions of the eldest wife and the eldest brother are important. But the use of the term ane both for wife and father's sister requires some additional explanation. Empirically there is no suggestion that conjugal relations with father's sister can ever be contemplated. I will only add the information that children of a uxori-local sister are quite often not distinguished from one's own even while arranging a polyandrous marriage.

But the aspect that interests us here is how in spite of predominantly patrilineal inheritance and patrilocal residence most of the affinal relations find themselves equal in status to the agnates and some of them are even treated as superiors. Peter could at least establish the bare fact of hypogamy from the information available

to him. He is perhaps not aware of the fact that every lower class household does not have a male celibate representative in the monasteries. But he knows some other related facts, i.e., a large number of lower class Buddhist girls in Ladakh find themselves with Muslim husbands (Peter 1963: 337); and there is a significant frequency of prostitutes in Tibet (Ibid: 417). In Ladakh the Muslims have even got round the necessity of converting the girl beforehand. A temporary marriage (nikahe mutah) can be contracted with a non-Muslim girl. I do not suggest here that hypogamy alone can bring about polyandry. But in combination with other factors, particularly those ecological and administrative aspects which tend to limit the possibilities of partition and expansion, hypogamy can sustain this practice.

For understanding the differences between the upper classes of Ladakh and the poorer Buddhists of Lahaul and Pangri, all three factors noted above are important. In these areas the method of rent assessment was changed roughly at the same time as in Chamba ^{though} ~~but~~ its implementation was left to the local chiefs for a long time. These areas are relatively far more fertile compared to Ladakh and expansion of holdings especially in Pangri and Chamba Lahaul is possible. Some of the upper class Buddhist groups have already been linked with the Hindu organisation through hypergamous marriages. As compared to central Ladakh, the Lamas of Lahaul, otherwise also fewer in number, are not always celibate.

In Chamba Lahual and Pangri valley, at present the polyandrous marriage among the Buddhists also is ~~a rare~~ ~~exception~~, though it still occurs. The stated rule is that more than two brothers cannot be formally married to a wife. A 'great marriage' is rare. Marriage by elopement is more common. It is normally the elder brothers and the senior wives who move out after building a new house, leaving the old house to the parents and the youngest son. The ideal that solidarity between male siblings must be maintained, neither helps a Ladakhi father from being thrown out of the main house, nor helps the Lahauli brothers in remaining together. About the finer distinctions between polyandry and polykoiti which Leach would like them to make, the Lahaulis have little use. (Leach 1966: 113). In Lahaul where the Hindu and Buddhist organisations overlap, monogamy, polygyny, polyandry co-exist and I dare not venture to ~~say~~ ^{suggest} which is considered ideal; ~~if I do not~~ ^{is limited} unless ^{of course,} ~~limit~~ my search for ideals to the households of the Thakurs. (presently a Hindu Rajput, but ~~a~~ erstwhile Buddhist Jo²)

About the religious practices in Lahaul, the situations exemplified in the following description by Rev. Heyde are still open to observation:

"In cases of severe illness, &c, they call in lamas and Brahmans, who perform their respective rites at one and the same time" (Gaz. Kangra III 1917: 199).

Ibbetson makes another interesting observation about Lahaul which he calls 'debatable land between the two religions':

"The Lamas of Lahaul will not eat with a European,
while the Lamas of Tibet have no objection to doing so"
(Ibbetson & Rose 1919: 89).

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND SOME RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Wider issues about structure I will leave to more ~~to more~~ competent hands. What I have felt throughout this analysis is that in the types of situations discussed we are dealing only with parts of a much bigger and complex organism and we should not always be constrained to balance the structure at every level. For such a balance, only the widest limits of the exchanges can provide a proper framework. These exchanges both of persons and goods at marriages in this region have not been limited either to particular areas or until recently even to the political borders of the country. What we have to reckon with is rather the almost permanent imbalances created by these exchanges. About special mechanisms devised to achieve balance in the exchanges, the like of which Leach finds among the Kachin (Leach 1966:81-90), also one must be cautious about the actual worth of such devices. For instance the higher Hindus of Chamba also give the most elaborate and costly feasts. But in terms of re-distribution the expenses incurred at these feasts do not amount to even a fraction of the dowry received. Besides the feasts given by the bride's parents are actually more expensive than those given by the parents of the bride-groom.

At the same time I feel the necessity to avoid going to the other extreme suggested in the following remark:

" The more one studies castes in the works of Nesfield, Ibbetson, Risely and other writers the more one sees, I think, that caste like law may be defined as a function of economics." (Rose 1919: iii).

Until Marriage is so intimately innvolved in the economic and polaitical exchanges we cannot ignore the power of the symbols related to marriage and their impact on the social organisation.

For future studies in this region some very recent developments, whose full impact will be felt after some time, must be kept in mind. The most important of these is the complete closure of the border between these areas and Tibet after the recent war. Second is the increased pace at which communications and transport facilities between these areas and the plains are being created. Third is the fact of unprecedented extent of development activities, especially in Ladakh, which resulted from a rather sudden realisation of the strategic importance of these areas. About Churaha three specific developments are worth mentioning. A large scale programme for promoting orchards in the area has been launched. The higher classes of Chamba are the foremost in taking advantage of this programme subsidised by the government, and have started buying land at higher levels suited to orchard growing. For some^{of} these richer groups it may finally prove to be an inducement to move residence to Tissa, the tehsil headquarters of Churaha. Together with the increasing wigour with which forest preservatioⁿ measures are being implemented, this development is going to create pressure on the lands. A new road is being constructed across the Pangi Range. But considering the difficulties involved it may take another few years for completion. According to the new service rules the practice of polygyny among government servants is banned. All these developments may finally ~~lead~~^{enable} some groups of Churahis to Sanskritise their rituals and the marriage and sex code to the satisfaction of Srinivas (Srinivas 1962:46), and may create

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