

# An Unpublished Account of Kinnauri Folklore

by Sur Das, introduced by Arik Moran

Stretching along the banks of the Sutlej River from the border with West Tibet to the Shimla Hills (Himachal Pradesh, India), the remote region of Kinnaur (also spelled 'Kanawr', 'Kunwar', etc.) is among the most fascinating, if least understood, parts of the Himalaya. A major obstacle to comprehending the region is the notorious difficulty of its language, which is a Tibeto-Burman dialect that greatly differs from the Indo-European Pahari spoken in adjacent parts of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The complex cultural world of Kinnaur, which draws from the West Tibetan, Hindu and indigenous Pahari cultural zones that surround it, has consequently been exceedingly difficult to access, with the few insights into it limited to comments found in travellers' accounts and anthropological interpretations by researchers specializing in and around the region. This paper redresses this shortcoming by presenting a hitherto unknown account of regional folklore that was written by a local Kinnauri in 1938.

The text, originally titled 'Himalayan Folk-lore Stories', was recently discovered among the effects of Sir Harold Matthew Glover (1885-1961), a high-ranking official in the colonial Forest Department.<sup>1</sup> Glover commissioned the account from a subordinate ranger while on tour in 'upper and lower Bashahr', the erstwhile kingdom of which Kinnaur formed the easternmost portion. The author, the notable (*negi*) Sur Das of Sangla, wrote the text in cursive English in a notebook of 67 pages, measuring 18x22 cm.<sup>2</sup> Sur Das was highly esteemed by his superior, who cites a passage from

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I wish to thank William Eustace for providing me with a scanned version of the text presented in this paper and his permission to reproduce it here for a wider audience, as well as additional documents and information on his grandfather, Sir Harold Glover.

- 1 Sir Harold Glover was born in Worcester, England, and educated at Worcester Royal Grammar School and Magdalen College, Oxford. He entered the Indian Forestry Service in 1908 and served as Political Assistant to Superintendent Hill States, Simla in 1914. In 1925 he officiated as Conservator, becoming Chief Conservator of Forests, Punjab, from 1939 to 1943, when he retired. During 1944 he was employed on special duties by the Punjab and Baluchistan Governments and in 1945-6 he was Forest Adviser to Allied Control Commission, first in Germany and then in Austria. He wrote a number of technical articles and, in 1945, published *Soil Erosion in the Punjab*.
- 2 Sur Das wrote his account over three days (3-6 June 1938), apparently in consultation with

the notebook (the concluding lines of ‘Phulma and the Ghost’, see below) in a personal letter, asking his undisclosed addressee whether he did not ‘think that well told? Particularly in a foreign tongue by a Bashahri!’ That the officer’s appreciation of Sur Das was shared by the government of Bashahr and his countrymen can be deduced from his elevated social status, his father (who also finds mention in the booklet) having been the kingdom’s appointed police officer (*darogah*) in Sangla, the Baspa Valley’s main village, which is adjacent to Kamru, the original abode of Bashahr’s ruling dynasty. The text thus offers a view of local customs and beliefs as perceived by the early twentieth century Kinnauri elite, which had successfully guarded its social status through privileged access to both the British and Bashahri administrations.<sup>3</sup> This does not detract from the account’s validity as an articulation of popular perceptions, because (before the arrival of migrant workers for the vast hydraulic projects along the Sutlej in recent decades) the regional population was and remains truly miniscule.<sup>4</sup>

The insights to be gained from Das’s stories are far from trivial. The first chapter, for example, offers an overview of the socio-political functions of Kinnauri popular religion—locally known as *devta ka raj* or ‘government by deity’—that is startlingly congruent with the recent findings of anthropologists working in the region. The *devoirs* of the various postholders (*mathes, kardars, chelas*) attached to village gods (*devtas*, here ‘deotas’) thus clearly point to a continuity between early twentieth-century and present-day socio-religious practices (Sutherland 2006) that is similarly reflected in the particular mode of possession exhibited by the deities’ spokespersons (Berti 2001). Early evidence of the perplexed effects of the introduction of novel technologies to Kinnauri society may be discerned in the author’s defence of the *devtas*’ traditional function as healers in light of the arrival of contemporary, western trained-doctors. The same chapter also offers important information regarding the history of Bashahr and evidence of its origins in the Baspa Valley. The visits of the presiding goddess of Bashahr, Bhimakali of Sarahan, to the ancient

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village elders. The notebook reached Glover in Lahore four days later.

3 On the relations and consequences of the British Forest Department’s activities in Bashahr, see Moran (2007).

4 Even in 1971, a whole generation after Sur Das wrote this, the population of Sangla Tehsil, which encompasses the entire Baspa Valley, constituted a mere 10,789 inhabitants (Raha & Mahato 1985: 21).

goddesses at Astangche (a site between the ancient capital of Kamru and Sangla) thus offer evidence of the royal family's persistent ties with the valley and its deities through ritual. The author's comment that Kalan Devta of Kamru is 'the soul [of] ... the grandfather of the present raja of Bashahr' (fn 32) further underscores the links between the kingdom's rulers and the Baspa Valley, while affirming the intuition that West Himalayan village gods are frequently deified representations of deceased human leaders. The interplay of theistic and human sovereignty is also evinced in the ruler of Bashahr's extending land grants (*muafi*) to Jubbal Narayan, the paramount deity in Jubbal, a tract that had developed into an independent chiefship by the time of Das's writing. In doing so, the raja would have increased his prestige among the followers of a deity that lay beyond the political boundaries devised by the British with their arrival in the West Himalaya (c. 1815). Such seemingly minor vignettes add an historical depth that underlines Peter Sutherland's call for a closer scrutiny of the analytical categories used when addressing questions of religion, power and sovereignty in the region (Sutherland 2006).

The stories appearing in the second and subsequent chapters are almost exclusively derived from the subjective experiences of local inhabitants. These provide a close encounter with Kinnauri narratives that is rarely attained in contemporary sources. The altercations of peasants and hunters with mythic creatures, for example, attest to the unique blend of West Tibetan and Hindu beliefs that pervade Kinnauri society. This is patently evident in the case of the Kalis, the female 'fairy-like mountain spirits' who inhabit high altitude regions and who are believed to be vastly more powerful than the *devtas* that manage village life. The same spirits also control the elements and are habitually offered sacrifices to secure good weather conditions, but they may also launch devastating hailstorms and/or steal the highlanders' crops when angered. The formidable risks involved in incurring the Kalis' rage are exemplified in the story of Malu the hunter (*shikari*), whose venture into their territory and subsequent killing of mountain game (which is considered Kali's property) resulted in lifelong madness (see story 3 in chapter II, below).

Beyond Kalis and *devtas*, Kinnauri folklore boasts of numerous ghosts possessing lesser powers. These included not only maleficent beings such as the *ghoras* and *shin-dans*, but also the spirits of deceased members of the community. In possessing a member of the deceased's family, these

latter could enforce social norms and rules, such as ensuring the proper dispersal of the ashes of the deceased in a selected location, or safeguarding polyandrous marital contracts when these came under threat (stories 2 and 1, respectively, in chapter V, below). Again, the agreement of these early twentieth stories with the findings of anthropologists in neighbouring regions (e.g., Sax 2009: 21-22) points to the remarkable continuity in Kinnauri (and, more generally, West Himalayan) society and help validate recent explorations in the field.

Before delving into Das's stories, a few technical notes on the body of the text and its mode of presentation are in order. Apart from rare instances of obvious misspellings (e.g., 'fructure' for 'fracture') and cumbersome syntax, which have been corrected, the transcription below follows the text's original format, which consists of a 'preface' and five 'chapters': 1) village deotas and devis, demi-gods and goddesses (pp. 1-15 in the original); 2) Kalis and Matingos, the fairies (16-32); 3) Other Spirits and Ghosts (33-46); 4) Báyuls, the hidden habitations (47-53); 5) Life and Death (54-66). Das also wrote numerous notes in which he translated Kinnauri and Pahari terms into English, and sometimes added additional glosses. These have been retained and, where appropriate, supplemented with the definitions provided by Tikka Ram Joshi's contemporary dictionaries of Pahari and Kinnauri (Joshi 1989).<sup>5</sup>

## Himalayan Folk-lore Stories

### N. Sur Das

#### Preface

This short note briefly deals with Folk-lore Stories prevailing mostly in Kunawar, and has to amuse its readers with what good spirits (deotas) and rakshasas (evil spirits) do in human life over here. The belief in doings of good and evil spirits and their very existence are being challenged now due to the growth, though slow, of the new culture of this twentieth century. In the remote past centuries, bad administration by the rulers ruled in

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5 To many of Sur Das's notes I have added definitions from the Pahari and Kinnauri dictionaries (Joshi 1989), marking them as 'PD' and 'KD'. Given the notorious difficulty of the Kinnauri language and its limited spread (in 1971 there were less than 50,000 Kinnauri speakers in all (Raha & Mahato 1985: 21)), it is hoped that these additional definitions will prove useful.

difficult mountainous countries like Bashahr. No regular communications were there. Four to five miles journey from one village to another formed a whole day's hard march. The man's social position was in [the] dark and spirits danced in his mind. But the man of today has already begun feeling himself self-confident and is able to make use of rationality. Both deotas and rakshasas, therefore, are growing weaker with the dawn of light on man. But the thing is, today, good and evil spirits may be there, yet their existence has not as much to do with human life as it was thought in the remote past. It is difficult to deny the very existence of spirits – super human beings.

### Chapter I: Village Deotas and Devis<sup>6</sup>

Almost each village has got its deota or devi in Bashahr, like those in Kulu and [in] part of Mandi. Deotas and devis are of different origin. Some are Narain's [Narayan, Vishnu], said to [have] come from Badrinath [in Garwhal] and others are Nāgās [serpents], said to have sprung up in high-lying mountain lakes. Again, other deotas are thought to have come into being from this or that place. It is believed that some deotas came out of 'Gu-Rag',<sup>7</sup> a growing stone. For instance, the deotas of Pangī, Rarang, Khawangi and Rogi are thought to be brothers springing up from a growing stone (gu-rag) at Pangī.<sup>8</sup> That growing stone is enclosed within a small temple so that nobody touches it. If anybody touches a growing stone it is desecrated. The person touching a growing stone is made to offer a sheep or a goat, generally a young one, to the offended growing stone by the

6 Deotas=demi gods=good spirits, devis=demi goddesses=good spirits [PD p.31: *deo* 'a deity, a village god'; *debi* 'a goddess'].

7 Gu=to grow or growing; rag=a stone [KD p.70: first person pronoun, 'I'; KD p.120: *rág/rágg* 'a stone'].

8 [AM:] These four villages are situated on the right bank of the Sutlej River, facing the Kinner Kailash Range. Rogi (Roghi) lies about an hour's walk west of Chini (also called Kalpa), which is located immediately above the modern district headquarters of Rekonng Peo at an altitude of approximately 3,000 meters. Khawangi, Pangī and Rarang are three villages along the Indo-Tibet Road (and thus closer to the Sutlej River) situated to the east of Peo and opposite Powari, the administrative headquarter of the erstwhile wazirat of Tukpa. The claim that these villages' sibling devtas originated in the 'growing stone' of Pangī was nevertheless contested during a recent visit to Roghi (July 2008), where a knowledgeable youth asserted that these deities had originally come from Rohru, hinting at a past migration from the latter region to Kinnaur and incidentally explaining the enduring ties between the devtas of both regions (see, for example, Moran 2007: 164-6).

village community. Even if nobody sees a man touching a growing stone, he fears [the] growing stone and confesses his contact with the growing stone God. A man touching it and then keeping quiet is sure to come to grief. Why should he not boldly confess his touching [the] growing stone and be away from ‘doshang’?<sup>9</sup>

The deota or the devi of a village has got a ‘rathang’ [*rath*, a palanquin], a body made of wooden framework, and the same is decorated with fine cotton or silk clothes over the body and the neck is adorned with metal faces [*mohra*], generally of silver or gold. The head for [the devta’s] hair is provided with dark-red coloured ‘yak’ tail hair. The wooden framework body receives two long well planed poles, one on each side, so that the two poles project on both sides (back and front) of the carriage [of] the body so as to facilitate [an] up and down motion of the body of a deota. Two men, one for [the] back and the other for [the] front [of the *rath*], are required to carry up the deota or the devi, as the case may be, and they have both the poles on their shoulders and the devta or the devi dances up and down [through their movements]. There is no difference in the [form of the] body of a deota and that of a devi. The devis have got nose rings (‘balus’) in their front face nose. The front face is called ‘shir mukhang’.<sup>10</sup>

It’s not that there is only one deota or devi in a village. Some villages have got two deotas bearing [one] body.<sup>11</sup> There are many other deotas and devis in a village [that are] having some form of body, or [having] faces only, or having none [at all]. These subordinate deotas or devis are under the village deota. Some of them are advisors and others are just like peons for carrying out the orders of the village deota. These village deotas or devis are not to be touched by dogs, and some are not to be touched by Kolis, Lohars and Badis. For example, Sangla Nag is not touched by these low caste communities. All deotas and devis are not touched by a whole family when a child is born or when a death of a member occurs, for 8 to 13 days. If touched by untouchables, the deotas and devis become polluted.

9 Doshang=anger of good spirits towards [an] offending man or woman [KD p.57: *doshang* ‘defect, blemish, fault’].

10 shir mukhang= Front face made of a complex of metals [PD p.115: *shir* ‘head’; KD p.83: *mukhang=khákang* ‘the mouth’ (possibly from a joining of the Hindustani *muh* with the Tibetan *khá/khás*); also, PD p.7: *bálú* ‘a nose-ring’].

11 [AM:] The custom of more than one deity sharing a *rath* is also found in Kulu, where the *devta* Manu of Old Manali and Hidimba, the area’s presiding demoness, share a palanquin.

The effect of pollution is removed by offering a 'bali'<sup>12</sup> of a sheep or a goat.

The village deota or devi has a regular establishment consisting of musicians, kardars, the mali or chela and two or more of *māthās*.<sup>13</sup> Musicians play upon musical instruments with the deota or the devi. Kardars are responsible for the deota's income and expenditure, treasury and the corn stores. The mali or the chela has to issue the orders of the deota or the devi by throwing his cap off his head by a special musical accompaniment, [while] standing by the side of the deota's or the devi's 'rath'. It is said that the spirit of the deota or the devi enters the body of the mali and makes him speak what he or she wants to order for. The *māthās* are meant to refer the requests of the community or a man to the deota or the devi. Almost every case touching the interests of the village community is referred to the village deota or devi and his or her decision received.

If anybody in a village falls ill, the matter is caused to be referred to the village deota or devi by the family members and the deota or the devi hint out the cause of the trouble and at the same time the remedy for the cure is told. The cause of illness is generally attributed to spirits and the remedy therefore is told in offering a 'bali'. The ill body, after making 'bali' by his family, recovers. No doctor or 'vaidi' [Indian doctor] was consulted in the long past. In these days, [the] use of a doctor or a vaid is coming into vogue, but in many cases [an] ill man will first consult his village god or goddess and with his or her permission he will avail himself of the services of a doctor or a vaid. If the deota or the devi is not consulted, the treatment by a doctor or a vaid is doomed to result in failure.

More than often, hopeless cases of illness are brought before the deota or the devi of a village and it is not uncommon with the deota or the devi to say beforehand that the case is hopeless and the patient is not going to live long. Apparent wounds and fracture cases are not received by the deotas or devis for curing. They used to go to voids even in the distant past. At many a time cases attended by the deotas or devis resulted in death of patients. But do our modern doctors and voids succeed in all cases that go to them? Certainly not.

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12 Bali=offering of an animal generally a sheep or a goat.

13 [AM:] The Kinnauri dictionary defines *māthas* as 'a sept of Kanets' (KD p. 102), the dominant caste in Himachal Pradesh. In the 'Pahari dialects', the same term appears as *mauta* or *kamdār*, which is given as 'an official ... [who] corresponds to a naib-tahsildar and decides petty cases' (PD p. 67).

The village deotas and devis have the power to check epidemic diseases, they can make the clouds to shed rains, [they] can dry up the clouds and [they] can help a man or the whole community in fighting with his or their foe. Some years past, there was rinderpest (cow disease) in the state. The [presiding] deota, Nag, of Sangla Village, was requested by the village[rs] not to let in the disease. The deota went to Sangla Kanda [a ridge west of the village] and all the cows and oxen were gathered together at Rangalti [probably at the foot of the ridge]. In the whole herd of village cattle, two cows were already infected. The two cows foamed and frothed through their mouths and were restless but were unable to walk on. The deota went round and round the herd, the two cows inclusive, and drove the disease off to the other side of 'Rupau' [the eastern ridge that flanks the Baspa Valley and connects it with Rohru via the 'Rupin Pass']. The two cows immediately recovered and there was no cattle pest.

This year (1937), summer cholera was proceeding upwards from Tranda side [i.e., the tract along the left side of the Sutlej River situated between Rampur and Wangtu Bridge, the western boundary of Kinnaur]. Chandike Devi of the village and the deota of Chini said that they will not let in the disease beyond Rogi, but they caused the people to offer some 24 sheep and maunds [measuring unit roughly equivalent to half a litre] of wine downside towards [countering the advance of the] cholera. The cholera was bribed in time and did not come up even to Rogi.

Deotas single-handed or with the help of Kalis (to be dealt [with] in [a] later, separate chapter) bring down rains for the good of the crops. The writer of this note knows his village deota, the Nag of Sangla. Whenever there is drought he is asked to bring down rains. He asks for a black coloured goat and offers it to kalis and brings down rains. He offers a goat to his [original] home side sometimes. His home is in 'Borár' in Mazibon Kanda, the source of the Tons River [in Rohru]. He sometimes goes to the Barar Lake, his home, [in order] to see his home folks and to bring down rains. If he goes there rain is certain to come, but his going there is expensive to the public. Some twenty sheep and goats are required to offer to the kalis [encountered] in the way and [also] for his home gatekeepers, the 'Prolias'.<sup>14</sup>

Some deotas and devis are more prominent and their prominence was

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14 Prolias=the guard at gate, gatekeepers [PD p.104: *praul* 'gateway of ruler or chief'; KD p.118: *prauli* 'the king's gate'].



recognised by the state rulers of past times and they are still enjoying the[se] prominent position[s]. For instance, Bashahr Deota of Rampur side is awarded with a fairly big ‘muafi’ [stipend] in cash annually, which is a fixed sum recorded in revenue papers. He is a State Deota for bringing rains when required and stopping rains when no more required. Maheshwar of Sungra, a village [between Sangla and Rampur, more on which below], also enjoys an annual ‘muafi’ for presiding over the Dasahra (Dasmi) festival ceremony. Badri Nath of Kamru village performs [the] ‘raj tilak’ [ceremony] of a new Raja of Bashahr ascending to the ‘Gaddi’.<sup>15</sup> [The] raj tilak [is performed] by Badri Nath and that is performed in Kámru Fort. The new rajah has to go there (to Kámru Fort) for Rajtilak.

[The last two lines of this page are crossed out in the notebook, but they can still be made out to have read: ‘Chandike Devi of Kothi is [consulted] to ward off epidemic diseases into the state.’ This phrase is repeated in a slightly different form at the close of the chapter, below-AM].

Kámru is the biggest seat of deotas and devis in Bashahr with reference to its connections with the state throne. Badri Nath Deota, [along] with other deotas and devis in Kamru Fort and devis at Astangche (a place midway from Sangla and Kamru), foresee and forebode the coming evils and fortunes to the Royal family. The predictions are made once a year and that in the month of Mágh (January-February). Other deotas within the state also make predictions for the throne in the same month of Mágh annually, but [the] fore-tellings of Badri Nath are correct in precision to a word.

Royal family members, when [they] pass away from this world, their souls pay [a] visit to Kamru Fort and pay their respects in the way of farewell to Gods and goddesses within the Fort. Some 7-8 years back, when the writer’s father, negi Ram Sukh of Sangla, was the Kārdār, the State Darogha [head of police] in Kamru Fort, he with Gita Ram Kaith were sitting within the fort in their morning prayers, Sandhia.<sup>16</sup> It was about 8 pm [when] two women in Gágrá and Choli<sup>17</sup> came flying in the air and they entered the fort through one of the loopholes of the fort. [These] loopholes are not big enough to

15 Raj-tilak=coronation ceremony; gaddi or gadhi=throne.

16 Sandhia=morning and evening prayers to god.

17 Gagra=old Indian women dress worn below waist down to foot; Choli=old Indian woman dress for a modern shirt [KD p.50: *chóli* ‘a woman’s upper garment’].

receive in the body of a woman. But the two souls passed through without bending. Wonder! They then went on to the body (Murat [*murti*]) of the first goddess [and] paid their homage to the goddess by sitting on their knees and drooping down their heads. After this they passed away through the same loophole, flying in[to] the air. Negi Ram Sukh was simply aghast and did not dare to talk with his companion, Kaith Gita Ram. When the two women[']s souls were no more near about the fort he uttered, 'what a wonder we have seen today'. Kaith Gita Ram said, 'nothing of that'. Kaith did not see the two souls. Negi Ram Sukh then related to him what he actually saw with his [own] eyes. It was not a dream. It was living reality. Negi Ram Sukh is a strict monotheist and he has got only one Parameshwar<sup>18</sup> (all mighty god) in his mind. His nine-year's residence in Kāmru Fort seems to have shaken his belief in monotheism. He is never given to gossip and lies.

In those days when the two women entering the fort through loopholes and going away through and via [the] same route were perceived by N. Ram Sukh, State Darogha, two of the Ranis of the Raja Padam Singh [r. 1914-1947] were seriously ill. A couple of days later the sad news of [the] passing away of both the Ranis were received to the grief of all [the] public.

The state has sanctioned budget provision for puja in the Kamru Fort and at Astangche. The provision is renewed from year to year. Every third year the state goddess Bhima-Kali or Māhā Mai comes to Kamru to meet the goddesses at Astangche and in the Kamru Fort. These Goddesses are elder than her (Bhimakali) – 100 goats are cut at Astangche by the state when Bhima Kali meets those goddesses at Astangche. In the fort there take [place a variety of] regular 'pujas'. Some of the deotas in the fort want he goats only. Some want she goats. Some want sheep, while Lankura<sup>19</sup> wants rams. The Devi wants pudding- Parshadr [*prasad?*].

Again, from the foregoing narration it will be assumed that each village has only one or two deotas or devis. That is not so. Generally each house has its Kim-Shoo<sup>20</sup>—a house god. Trifling matters of ailments, [the] fixing of a day for going out for a journey, [the] striking of an auspicious day and hour for sowing fields and [the] selection of this seed or that seed are settled

18 Parameshwar=omnipresent and all-powerful God, the only God of the universe.

19 Lankurá=a state god that lives at Sarahan, Rampur and Kamru.

20 Kim=house (kanwari), Shoo=demigod (kanwari), together 'house god' [KD p.88: *kim* 'a house, home, dwelling, from Tibetan 'Khyim'; KD p.134: *shú* 'a village deity in [the] ground, the village god'].

at home by the house god, the 'Kim-Shoo'. Of course there will not be a foolish zamindar to repeat[edly sow] the same crop. There are alternatives for the change [of crop] and the best alternative is required for the heaviest return in the harvest. A man does not know what crop will succeed in a particular year or a season. But the deotas and devis know the future and their decision for the better into the future is sought for.

The state has different deotas for different purposes. As Bashahru Deota is for the weather, Badri Nath is for the Raj Tilak [ceremony], Maheshwara of Sungra village is for the Dasehra festival performance. [Thus] the state, as has already been mention[ed], has deotas responsible for [the] prosperity of the state. Chandike Devi of Kothi is for checking the prevalence of epidemic diseases in the state. Narain Deota of Jabbal [Jubbal] Village in Rohru Tehsil is for warding off evil spirits causing harm to the royal family. Now, Sir Emerson, the late Governor of the Punjab, was in Bashahr as the State Manager in his early service period. He was touring once in Rohru Tehsil and one of his little babies fell ill at or near about Jabbal Village. The zaildar of that ilaqa suggested to Sir Emerson that the deota of Jabbal be consulted and be asked to cure the baby of its trouble. The deota was accordingly consulted about the ailment of Sir Emerson's child. The Narain Deota of Jabbal said that he would make the 'Tanda'<sup>21</sup> from over the child and he would be alright.

The suffering baby's treatment was resorted to the 'Tanda' by the Jabbal Deota. By the next day, after [the] 'Tanda', the child recovered fully well, relief coming by slow degrees and commencing immediately after the 'Tanda' process. Narain Deota of Jabbal enjoys a lump sum Muafi annually from the state revenue. Similarly there are other deotas in the state responsible for this or that time of living.

[The] end with deotas and devis.

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21 Fanda or Tunda or Tuna=a ceremony performed by a deota or a devi from over an ill person to ward off the evil from him. It often consists of offering a sheep or goat for relief of the diseased. [See also PD p.127: *tunda* 'one who has no hands'].

## Chapter II: Kālis or Jogins (Joginīs in Kulu) or Sonigs the Fairies, the angels and ‘Matingo’<sup>22</sup> the earth Goddesses

Greeks and Romans had their angels the fairies. Bashahr and other adjoining hill states have their fairies, the Kālis or Jogins or Sonigs and Matingo, the Goddesses under [the] earth [/ground]. Those elderly people who ever had the chance of seeing these spirits—the ‘Kalis’ and ‘Matingos’—make almost no difference in their appearance. They wear black garments and they keep their head uncovered with[out] any headdress. They have long golden hair flowing down to their waist. They never grow old and they are ever in their bloom. Kalis live in high mountains, [among] their peaks and in their depressions, the lakes, while Matingo[s] live under [the] earth, lower down the mountains and near habitations. Kālis like flowers and live amidst them in mountains. In summer fairs flowers are brought by youths for the village deotas and devis and it is believed that Kalis also come down with flowers and meet with the village deotas, enjoy [the] sight of [the] fair and then go back to their home.

Kalis and Matingo are more powerful than village deotas and devis. They are able to bring down rains, [and] able to cause hailstones to fall down to the destruction of crops when they are angry. They do lots of things that are beyond the power of men and women. Kalis haunt human habitations of their [own] accord. The following stories will show Kalis haunting human habitations.

### *Story no. 1:*

Some two hundred years or below have rolled away when Kalis were [last] seen in Sangla Kanda. An old woman who was one eye blind had to remain in her dogri [a shed for sheep and goats] in Sangla Kanda behind all [the] other villagers. Her people were late in threshing barley and wheat grown in Kanda and the old woman was left behind to keep watch over the harvest.

In Bashahr, in old houses and dogris, people kept and still keep only one door-leaf [open] so that as little air goes in the room opened by the door as possible.

In about the centre of the door leaf a hole about as big as an eye socket is bored through so that the door leaf could be bolted with an iron key called

22 Matingo=Mating=Earth; o=belonging to – i.e., living under castle = goddess living under earth [KD p.102: *māting/mātyāng* ‘earth, mud’; KD p.110: o ‘in, appended to noun’]; Kālis=[lit.] attired in black garments=goddess in black dress, fairies living in mountains.

'onthangsatang'.<sup>23</sup> The old one-eye blind woman had to live in Sangla Kanda in the month of Katak [October-November], when it is severely cold in there. Once it was a moonlit night and she had already closed her door. She heard somebody talking outside but she was sensible enough not to open her door. She kept the door closed, but fixing her operative eye socket in the keyhole, [she] had a glance outside, when she saw 12 black-garmented virgins, the Kalis, the fairies, dancing in a circle hand in hand and round about and round about they danced to a chorus of song sung by them and [that was] about the old poor one-eye-blind woman inside the walls of the dogri. The [lyric] of the song was 'there is nobody in upper dimanthan [place name?], nobody in lower dimanthan and nobody in upper serio but there is one in lower serio. She is one-eye-blind old woman and she is peeping at us through her door hole but we fear her and her eye'. They danced together [in] full enjoyment of the dance and [at] the chorus they brought forth upon the old woman. Then they went away. The old woman was not harmed by the Kālis, the 12 Jogins/Joginis.

*Story no. 2:*

Phagli Fair comes around every year in the month of Phagan (February-March). Once upon a time there was this Phagli Fair going on in Yangpa [near today's villages of Rispa and Ribba], the last village in Bhabe Valley [apparently the name of that portion of the Sutlej Valley that runs from Peo to Morang, i.e., along the northern aspect of the Kinner Kailash]. It was daytime and the circle dance was going on. One [person], Pobi by name, of Ráotain[?] family, was leading the dance. He was a very handsome youth and was very expert in dancing. It must be remembered that fairies, the Kālis, enjoy [the] sight of fairs [even] though we are not able to see them. Pobi was dancing, leading the circle dance. All of a sudden, in the broad daylight, a swarm of humming bees came round about 'Pobi', the dance leader, and the circle dance. The 'Sonigs',<sup>24</sup> the Kalis, came in the form of a bee swarm and hissed him into nothing for human beings and carried him in their midst. A search was made for Pobi by all in the dance and in the

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23 Onthangsalang=bolting key [KD p.111: *onthang* 'a strong wooden bolt'). A sketch of a hook appears next to the footnote with the caption 'shape of a bolting key'. The 'leaves' mentioned in the text are, in fact, wooden planks that are vertically situated one next to each other to form a door-Ed.].

24 Sonigs=joginis, kális, the fairies.

village. [There was] no trace of him but his ‘chogā’<sup>25</sup> sleeve that was found on a mountain peak above Yongpa village. [That] the fairies took Pobi with them was certain and Phagli [Fair] consists of singing songs in honour of Kāli, and Kalis are given offerings of incense (‘dhoop’), good edibles and libations of wine (‘sharing’).<sup>26</sup> But [what] did [the] Kalis do with Pobi nobody knows. Kalis are offended with white or black garment[s] of men, they say, and [a] nice singer and dancer is also likewise undone by Kalis.

Kalis are very particular in preserving wild mountain game. They are offended when high-lying mountain game is shot. The following story (no. 3 under this chapter) will illustrate the anger of Kālis at Shikaris that shot a ‘thofo’, a ‘warr’.<sup>27</sup>

There was a shikari [hunter] called Mālū of Chetha, a family in Sangla Village. This story of Mālū is not very old, as Mālu was younger than the writer of this story’s grandfather. This story is at the most 65 years old [i.e., 1871 CE]. One day, Mālu with another Shikari companion went out a-hunting and scaled up Kailash Mountain that stands at the back of Sangla village. In search of shikar, the two shikaris reached the higher region of Kailash beyond which even grass fails to grow. Mālu’s companion refused to go on further. Mālu climbed up the cliffy Kailash when he came across a herd of Blue Sheep, the ‘warrs’. He shot one of the ‘warrs’, which rolled down to his exhausted companion. Malu hastened down to his companion to join in [the] joy of his fellow shikari to see the ‘warr’ shot dead by Mālu. The skinning of the shikar was at once started by the two shikaris and the work was yet half complete when they ([the] two shikaris) heard Kālis calling out [to] one another higher up in the Kailash and talking about the shot [animal] and [the] diminishing [of] their cattle<sup>28</sup> by one. The two shikaris heard the Kalis saying: ‘all [the] other cattle have come but [a] one horned ox which is missing seems to have been killed by yonder human beings’. The shot ‘warr’ happened to be one horned while the other horn was broken somehow or other, perhaps in the fight with others or due to a

25 Chogā=a man dress for a coat. In Kanawr it is called ‘chhubā’ [PD p. 25: *chogā* ‘a kind of long cloak’; KD p.48: *chhubā* ‘a garment, cloak’].

26 Dhārang/Shārang=(Kanawri)=libations to deotas, devis and kalis, etc.

27 Thofo, warr=(kanawri)=blue sheep [KD p.158: *wārr* ‘a deer’; KD p.130: *shárr* (in upper Kinnaur) ‘hill antelope’].

28 Cattles of Kalis=wild mountain game animals, the blue sheep, the Tibetan sheep, the Langrols [?] and the shears [tigers?] are the cattle of Kālis. It is said that these are used by Kalis to fetch up rice grams and shan; shān=rice grains with husks still unpounded, paddy.

fall that might have [been] had by the 'warr'. The reply to the first talk from new quarters by other Kalis was: 'if our one horned ox is undone by those shikaris, the shikaris, in case they do not compensate our loss of our ox, should suffer heavily'. This last sentence of the Kālis in Kailash Mountain was reverberated by Kailash Mountain as if it confirmed the sentence of the Kalis for the two Shikaris. The shikaris came home with the day's earnings in warr meat and a gloom in their minds for the worst that they were sure to befall to their lives. That night passed away and the following day brought pain and unrest for them shikaris. Sangla Deota was consulted and the Kalis were offered 2 goats from the shikaris and libations by the deota of Sangla. Malu's fellow shikari recovered alright. But poor Mālu! He became crazy and mad. He lived long after in craziness.

*Story no. 4:*

The Kalis are offended when cow or an ox skin is put in any of the high lying lakes. When there is a great drought year the village deotas cause a cattle skin to [be] put in high region lakes and the Kalis, [in order] to purify the lakes, shower down rains. It is said that there was a lake above Chini village from which [there] gushed out water for the ample water supply of Chini and the villages near about Chini. On a drought year day, [in order] to make the Kalis bring down rain, a cow skin was thrown into that lake. [The] kalis did not make the sky rain, but the lake goddesses transformed themselves into two doves and flew off to the other side of the Sutlej River into Barang Forest [opposite Chini, on the left bank of the Sutlej on the northern aspect of the Kinner Kailash Range], where water gushed out just after the two doves sat down on the earth. The lake above Chini went dry and it is not ever likely to have it again [filled] with water. The fairies became very much offended here with the cow skin and left the lake forever.

The Kālis are thought to use the wild mountain game animals as their pack animals and [to] bring shān [unpounded, husky rice grains] upon them from the rice growing valleys and ravines at the foot of the mountains. Many years [have] passed [since] when the following story, no 5, was told and heard:

Ramasarain is a good rice-growing valley in Tehri Garhwal State [south of the Baspa Valley]. In that valley, rice crop was expected to yield the highest outturn in kind in a particular year. It was just ready to be mowed when it hailed heavily in hailstones so that the rice crop, the shān of Ramasarain,

was half destroyed. The Kalis managed this fall of hailstorms with the sky [so as] to snatch away the part of [the] rice harvest from Ramasarain, and that in their usual [mode of] invisibility. The winter following that hailstormy autumn passed away and the spring came in when licensed or unlicensed shikaris were out after shikar [game] that [had] descended to lower elevations with [the] snowfall of the previous winter. Those shikaris of Garhwal, as well as of Bashahr, in their respective shikar jurisdictions in high elevations, [both] saw ‘shān’, the husky rice grains, fallen along the highest mountain ridges in a regular track way. Some of the shikaris thought that the storms blew up the shān and struck against the mountain ridges and [that] the latter squeezed the former (storms) and made to shed shān on them. Other shikaris thought a bit in a different way. For them, the ‘shān’ seen by them on high ridges was due to [a] whirlwind which might have passed through and over, encircled [the] paddy in its action and took [it] up to [the] sky, which threw the shān back on [the] ridges [that were covered] with snow. It was at last that a shikari saw a ‘warr’—a he blue sheep—dead in a high mountain Nulla [valley] with a sack full of Paddy on his back, as ordinary pack animals would do often. Birds of same feathers flock together. Shikaris often meet one another and exchange their experience in shikar. The story of [the] paddy track along [the] high mountain ridges was told and admitted to be a fact, a reality, by others, while at last the story of a dead ‘warr’ with [a] paddy sack on his back was made known by a party of shikaris. The Kalis brought ‘shān’, the paddy from Ramasarain, on their pack animals, the blue sheep, via [the] high mountain ridges to Kailas or [the] Rupan Series of mountains and [the] paddy kept falling off [along] a regular track, and [it was concluded] that one of the loaded blue sheep, the warrs, [had] slipped down [a] high mountain side and died of the fall with [a] sack stuck to his back [only] to be [subsequently] found by humanity.

Enough with talk and stories on Kālis.

‘Matingos’, the goddesses under [the] ground, the sisters of Kālis, will be jealous of their sisters and will curse us. The earth goddesses resemble Kālis in their dress, in their behaviour and in their ‘Karāmāt’.<sup>29</sup> But they do not live on high mountains. They live under ground in valleys near about

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29 Karāmāt=manifestation of power for the good of humanity by superhuman beings.



habitations. There are several Matingos, the earth goddesses, in outer Tukpa, the tract above Raturang [Rarang] Gorge to Chhitkul [the last village in the Baspa Valley], and two of them are well known. One is at Batseri Bridge on the left side of the Sutlej River [sic; the actual river is, of course, that of Baspa] and the other at Astangche, midway [between] Sangla and Kamru. These earth goddesses are very powerful. Those at Batseri Bridge are given 'puja' by [the] deota of Batseri [a village further up the valley from Sangla, midway to Rakcham] generally, and occasionally by the deotas of Sangla and Kamru for the welfare of their respective villages. But whoever the 'puja' giving deota may be, the deota of Batseri must be there to preside over the 'puja' ceremony of the Batseri Bridge Matingos.

Astangche Earth Goddess, the Matingos, are given 'puja' [by] Badrinath Deota of Kāmru once every month and the expenses are borne by the state along with [the] Kamru Fort expenses. These goddesses are so elderly, as has already been told in the first chapter, that the state goddess Bhima Kāli comes to Kāmru Fort every third year (on the month of November) when 'parnāwth'<sup>30</sup> fair takes place.

*Story no. 6:*

Once upon a time, during the reign of Rajah Mahendar Singh of Bashahr [1815-50], Maheshawar Deota of Sungra Village, at the concluding of Dasehra Festival at Sarahan, solicited the then Rajah's permission in writing to go up to Kāmru and to offer 'puja' to the earth goddesses at Astangche. [The] Rajah [at] first refused permission, saying that anything bad may happen since the earth goddesses know Badri Nath Deota of Kāmru alone and no other deota ever did go there. Maheshawara Deota persisted and the Rajah's permission had but to be given. Maheshawara of Sungra, with all pomp and show [and] with all his musical instruments being played upon, went on to Kāmru. A warm reception was offered by Badri Nath of Kāmru for his guest deota, the Maheshawara of Sungra. A peaceful night [passed] for the deota and his 'parja'<sup>31</sup> [*praja*, subjects] of Sungra at Kāmru.

[The] next morning, Maheshawara asked Badri Nath to accompany him to Astangche to offer 'puja' to the great earth goddess there. Badri Nath

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30 Parnawth=a religious fair held of Kāmru when the [state goddess of Bashahr] Bhimakali comes there once every third year and various 'puja' ceremonies are followed by [the] gathering together of [the] deotas of Baspa Valley and a dance in Kāmru Fort.

31 Parja=progeny, the public, the ruled, the subjects.

refused to go with Maheshawara and advised him not to go himself too, saying that no other deota ever gave 'puja' at Astangche but Badri Nath himself, and that the idea of Maheshawara's going there should be dropped lest any harm may befall to either of the parties concerned. The resolute Maheshawara would not drop his idea and alone he went to Astangche. He bowed down his head to the earth and [raised his] feet up in the sky. Whenever any deota goes to meet and to offer 'puja' to any Matingi, the earth goddesses, the deota throws his 'yak' hair head down in the earth and his feet go up in the air so that the deota assumes the posture of a man's summersault. Maheshawara Deota assumed this posture at Astangche. Lo! He could not rise up, his head sticking to the ground. The earth goddesses at Astangche were enraged at having a stranger deota at their place to offer them 'puja'. From under [the] ground, some of the earth goddesses managed to catch hold of [the] hair of the deota's head and held him firm with his head downward.

Badri Nath was informed of the Maheshawara's [being] stuck to the ground with [his] downward head at Astangche. He (Badrinath) ordered Kalan<sup>32</sup> Singh Deota's arm, the pole, to be sent on spot at Astangche and to put one end of the pole sufficient[ly] down below the earth near the stuck head of Maheshawara and then to pull up the pole with a jerk, as if the deota of Sungra was a big stone or a log stuck to the ground, and [the] lifting up was to be done by a big pole [that was] held and being manipulated by so many hands. The process was acted upon and up erect the deota of Sungra rose, but with him and stuck firm to his gigantic yág [yak?] hair head, rose two Matingos, the earth goddesses, in rage [and] holding the deota head hair in their clutches. They were attired in black and their golden hair waved down their waist. They were very beautiful virgins, but they were seen by [the] Sungra and Kāmru people [assembled] there [so] they flew down to Gurguro near Sangla and the two Matingos have since then become [the] Gurguro 'Matingos' [who] are given 'puja' by Nāg [Deota] of Sangla. Poor earth goddesses! They were enraged with the deota of Sungra and they insulted him very much [by] keeping him stuck to the ground. But they themselves also lost their home for their becoming [exposed in]

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32 Kalan Singh Deota=next deota to Badri Nath in Kāmru, bearing the ratha as Badri Nath does. This deota is the soul of a raja, grand father of late Rajah Shamsher Singh. [AM:] the person alluded to is most likely raja Ugar Singh (r. ±1775-1810), who died during the Gorkha invasion of Bashahr, c. 1809-1815.

public. They could not, and still cannot, go to Astangche as their home. Later on they were seen by many in the daytime going to Astangche to see their sisters underground at Astangche and then to return [on the] very [same] day to their new abode, Guguro. Nay, even some people heard [the Astangche Matingi] calling, 'Oh Gurguro living elder sisters; come to us, have a talk with us and then go back to your place, Gurguro'. [The] Astangche living earth goddesses liked their elder sisters going to them for a chat and then back to their new place [that they'd] earned by their wrath at Maheshawara. As for Maheshawara, he could not dare to go to Kamru from Astangche but home at Sungra he went, [travelling for a] day and [a] night with his dignity lowered down by the earth goddesses of Astangche.

### Chapter III: Other spirits and ghosts.

Besides deotas and devis, kalis and earth goddesses, there are, it is said and believed, other spirits, which stand in between good and evil spirits. [The] 'ban shira'<sup>33</sup> spirit is of this category. Ban Shira guides a man in his night journey through a forest and quarrels with ghosts for a man and overpowers ghosts the evil spirits. But at times Ban Shira causes men and women ill and he has to be offered this or that offering for curing the diseased on account of his 'doshang'. In all cases of fairs, good edibles are cooked in each house and then offered in the name of Kalis, earth goddesses, the village deotas and devis, 'Kim-Shus', and Ban Shira is also named while making offerings. The belief is that all good spirits participate in the offerings, the 'pujas', provided they are named while making offerings. So ban shira is a deota and not a rakshasa, the ghost.

'Chan' or 'Chon'<sup>34</sup> is much dreaded, as whoever comes across this ghost cannot live. This ghost has one eye beset in the centre of his forehead and the eye is very sharp and glaring and never misses to spy whatever comes in front of it and within its range. Fortunately, it cannot see side ways nor can it see upwards and downwards. It sees quite straight in front like a gunshot. Kalis let it loose during [the] night and it descends along spurs and mounds to the rivers in search of cremation grounds by the riversides. 'Chon' licks up ashes of burnt dead bodies and he likes it as much as cattle would like

33 Ban shira=a spirit living in the forest and in big trees [KD p.34: *ban, banang* 'forest'].

34 Chau or chon/chou=an apparition having horse-like body and a man's head with only one eye in the centre of forehead. It is believed to be the Kalis riding horse [see also KD p.47: *chho-gyäll* 'the deity Yama, from Tibetan'].

licking up salt every now and then. It is for this purpose that Chon has to come down from mountain peaks, the home of Kalis, to the riverbanks. Chon walks on with a noise resembling that of ‘argās’,<sup>35</sup> the bell-wreath green [placed] round the neck of riding ponies and horses in Kanawar, and in Tibet as [a] horse ornament. So it is fortunate that so cruel a ghost as Chon has to give alarm when walking. In case anybody happens to hear a Chon passing nearby he has simply to sit down not in the passage of a path or a road but by the side [so as] to avoid sight of the ‘Chon’. Generally, the spurs, the Dhárs, are seen having waving rags (flags) and ‘Māni-Phani’ stone heaps. This is done to keep the Chon away from there. The flags (Dhar Chhad) and the Mani-Phani stone heaps (Māne) are near about villages where Chon, if not driven away, would do [a] lot of harm to the people.

Some stories on Rakshasas will now justify the closing of this chapter.

*Story no. 1:*

There is a big cave just on the left side of the Themgarang Khad near Sangla [about halfway up the valley to Batseri, alias ‘Boning Saring’]. Ag,<sup>36</sup> the cave, affords accommodation for hundreds of sheep and goats and their phawals, the shepherds, and the cave is called ‘Bhujalang Ag’. In this cave lived two shepherds of Sangla Village with their flock of sheep and goats. One day, one of the two shepherds went home for fetching up rations for themselves with a word to return back by evening of that very day. He could not return with rations and his companion had to live alone with sheep and goats in ‘Bhujalung’ cave. There used to live a ghost in Bhujalang. He was on the watch to see the two shepherds part from each other [so as] to play mischief with one of them when alone. The chance for the ghost therefore came. The shepherd with flock at Bhujalang cooked food for himself and his fellow shepherd who was to return out of the remaining rations to their complete exhaustion. Light of the day diminished by slow degrees and the darkness thickened likewise. No companion returned for [the] Bhujalang cave shepherd. Just when it was quite dark he called out for his expected colleague but the ghost responded [instead and said] that

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35 Argās=a number of small bells wreathed in a leather strap and put round the neck of riding horses and poneys in Kanawar and in Tibet [KD p.31: *argā* ‘a garland of small bells for ponies’].

36 Ag=a cave [KD p.29: *agg* ‘a cave, den’].

he was going to him. The shepherd not knowing that the answer was from the ghost, was very glad that his companion returned to him and did not leave him alone. The ghost, assuming the form of the body of a man, came on. The ghost had no clothes on his body, but had long hair like monkeys or apes. Goats are more sprightly and alert than sheep. They sneezed and flocked together as if a leopard pounced upon the flock. The ghost proceeded on to the fireside and took his seat just opposite the shepherd who was pale with fear. The shepherd and the ghost did not enjoy any indulgence in talk nor [had] they stood up for boxing. The ghost assumed imitative behaviour. So, if the shepherd stood up the ghost too stood, and [if] the shepherd offered fuel to the fire the ghost would do the same. If the shepherd feared the ghost, the ghost repaid. When the shepherd spread out his bed for sleep the ghost jumped in the bed and was ready to sleep with the shepherd.

The shepherd rose up and had a stick in his hand and lifted up the stick for striking at the unwelcome companion, the ghost. But the ghost did not fail to have another stick in his hand and rose [as] if to strike at the shepherd. The shepherd lost courage and let his stick down and the ghost followed immediately his example. The poor shepherd was fatigued after all [of this] and felt sleepy in spite of the fear of the ghost. He slept a little while sitting and the ghost is said to [have] be[en] going away laughing and shrieking when the shepherd woke from his nap. Poor shepherd! He ought not [have] go[ne] to enjoy his nap. He lost his soul while he was asleep [in] a nap. The ghost had the upper hand and snatched away the soul of the shepherd when he was inactive in sleep. But he lived for some time later after this event, but actually to what period nobody can now say. [The] next day, the home-gone shepherd came with rations to hear the story of the visit of ghost to his companion at Bhujalaing. The story of the ghost was related in full details to his companion that came with a load of rations by the shepherd who had the bad luck of having a ghost the previous night. The story was narrated in sobs as the experience of the preceding night was so bitter and the arrival, after all, of his colleague, so comforting and relief-inspiring that the story was doomed to come out in sobs.

*Story no. 2: Of a skin ghost.*

Some 35-45 [c. 1895-1905] years ago, a skin ghost is said to have been seen and have been encountered in Sangla Village. One of the Māthes of Sangla

Deota, named Phulma Nand (now dead), was going from his (home) house to the deota temple to join with his colleagues in keeping watch at the temple. When he was halfway [to the temple], a skin rolled [to] this side and that side in [front of] his feet so that the effort of the skin was to fell down the Māthes. He took courage and did not fall but kept treading on the rolling skin ghost till at last the skin ghost was tired and transformed itself into a tree-like, long erect shape. He looked like a 'prai'<sup>37</sup> in darkness and went on growing thicker and still longer whenever Phulma Nand the Māthes looked up at him the ghost, Phulma was about to lose courage when he recollected two things said of ghosts—(1) never to fear them but to take them as toys for man's play and (2) never to look up but to keep the eyes looking downside so that the ghosts are never able to defeat a man nor are they able to grow up bigger and bigger. Phulma kept his eyes down and gathered himself, ready for the wrestle with the ghost. The ghost became as little in size as a man. Phulma caught hold of him and they went on boxing. The Māthes Phulma got the ghost within his embrace, pulled off some hair of [the] moustache of the ghost, [a portion of] which hair, it was said, the Māthes possessed during the whole of his afterlife, to show to people and to relate the story. Unfortunate it is for the writer of these few pages [that he] missed seeing the ghost moustache hair with Phulma Nand, the Māthes. When within the strong embrace and [as it] was losing [its] moustache hair, the poor ghost wept and shrieked shrill[y] and grew thinner and thinner till at last [he] transformed himself into nothing and got out of cruel Phulma's grasp and ran away shrieking in [a] shrill [voice] again and again. A ghost is a toy for a man!

*Story no. 3:*

As has already been told that Phagli fair comes round every year in the month of Phagan and the Phagh Fair at Kāmru lasts for [a] full 15 days. Badri Nath Deota of Kamru has seven elderly deotas, the Le-Shu, in Kamru Fort, who come out to preside over Phagli and give 'darshan' to the public.<sup>38</sup> Each deota has his metal face (muhra or morang) and the seven faces of the seven elderly deotas are taken to Shuwindang, a place about half a mile [on the] Sangla side from Kamru. There at Shuwindang is a prai [pole; see fn

<sup>37</sup> Prai=a long post erected just in front of temples generally.

<sup>38</sup> Le-Shu (Shoo)=leg or le (Kanwari)=elder or elderly; shu=deotas, demi-gods; darshan=conspicuous sight of big sould or deotas enjoyed by others, the public.

37, above] and this is decorated with cloth and then the seven faces of the seven elderly deotas are set in the clothed prai in a column for 'darshan', the public view of the seven gods. The seven villages above Brua Khad are represented on that auspicious day of 'darshan' of [the] seven deities by a fairly big number of people from each village. [It was] for this fair at Shuwindang that villagers of Chauzu came once in a bad, snowing weather. In the number was a woman who left her little baby in preference to [having the] sight of [the] seven deotas. After full enjoyment of the darshan, the day was closing and the villagers of Chauzu stayed at Kāmru for the night, but for the woman who left her little child behind. She could not rest for a night of Kāmru but ran away alone for Chauzu, though it was getting dark when she left Kamru and her companions. Pulio is a place midway from Chauzu and Raturang [Gorge]. There lived a ghost, 'Pulio Rakshasa'. The poor woman was benighted and the ghost stood in her way at Pulio. Nobody knows how, but the poor woman running home for her child was transformed into a stone [that is] still lying there and her ornaments, worn by her that day for the fair, are also said to be there in the form of 8 stones set in that big stone, the [petrified] body of the woman. [The] next morning, the fair-going party from Kāmru returned, but the mother of that little child, [who was] being looked after by its father, never returned. [An] enquiry was made on her [fortune], but she had left Kāmru for Chauzu the previous evening when the fair concluded and when it was getting dark. Even at Kāmru a search was made, but they [only] found at Pulio an unusual stone in the path with small stones set in it. 'Pulio ghost devoured her and transformed her body with ornaments on it into this stone', was the judgment passed by the searching party. We do not know if Pulio Rakshasa is still so cruel as it was when it transformed the poor woman into stone.

*Story no. 4:*

Once upon a time Phulio Fair was going on at Sungra, nearly 2 miles [on the] Sarahan side from Nacher. All the people having danced [they] went home, but one man [stayed there] asleep, as he was remaining at the temple. When no human being but himself was there, a gang of Rākshasas, the ghosts, came in the Santang<sup>39</sup> saying: 'there is a human smelling here about and

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39 Santang=dancing ground attached to a temple [KD p.128: *sāntan*, *sāntang* 'the enclosure of a temple, where the village people assemble to sing and dance at certain ceremonies'].

the human being will make a nice morsel for us'. This is translation of their dialogue in Kanawri. The utterance of Rakshasa was: 'Mānus gānan dundule, āng e-grassāng'.<sup>40</sup> The man was courageous, he ought to [have] be[en]. He rose on his feet and said: 'do not devour me now but let me lead a dance of your party.' He snatched away the 'Pyurg', a small three edged sword, from the hands of the Rākshasa, the ghost who was about to lead the dance, and the dance went on whirl about and whirl about, but he, the only man leading the dance of ghosts, was busy thinking of getting out of the gang of dancing Rakshasas. He thought of a water-well near Sungra temple and led the dance of ghosts to that direction. All the ghosts were fully absorbed in the dance and it came to the well site. The man with 'gurze' [dorje?] in his hands jumped into the well, which was not more than knee-deep. He turned himself under [the] half roping of the well, but the ghosts, too, were good engineers. They thought of 'measuring' [the] water depth. They had a ball of woollen string. They tied a small stone at the end of the thread and plunged it in the water. The man, being under [by] half [the length of rope] of the well, kept rolling up the thread again into the ball, so that the ghosts finished their ball of thread and said: 'the water is endlessly deep and we can do nothing to have the man out of it now. Alas, we lost the first chance of devouring him. We lost a ball of fat in that man'. [And in Kinnauri:] 'grosu petingo Panang Chhos ne māmima Fone zhub'<sup>41</sup>, [that is:] 'we [should have] devoured that man of Sungra village, [with] a ball of fat in his stomach, when we first saw him'.

The day dawned and the gang of ghosts could no longer harm the man in [the] well. They had vanished. The man came out of the water well, related the story and showed the 'gurze' of the ghosts. The man was of [the] 'Borantu' family of Sungra and in honour of his cheating the ghosts, his successors have to dance with that very 'gurze' of [the] Rakshasas for three rounds compulsorily, leading the dance in Phuliach at Sungra every year.

Now, away with ghosts.

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40 Manus=of men, of humanity; gānam=smell; dundule=prevailing sharply; āng=me, my; e-grersang=one morsel; gurze=a small three edged sword for dancing.

41 Grosu=a man belonging to Grosnam (Sungra); petingo=in the belly; panang=a ball (of butter and fat generally); chhos=fat.



#### CHAPTER IV: Bāyuls,<sup>42</sup> the hidden habitations.

In Kanawr, there were a number of Bāyuls, the hidden habitations, once, and there are still some, while the others have become known to the outside world. Nesang, opposite Kānam on [the] other side of the Sutlej, and Enla near Urni [west of Chini], are the two villages which once were hidden from the outside world. These two villages were Bāyuls. The people of Bāyuls have no connection with any country near and far off, but they enjoy a blissful life. They have everything and anything at their disposal. It is not certain to say whether the people of Bāyuls have any connection with spirits, the super human beings. The moment they become known they forget their past life and it is long before they can adapt themselves to the means of our living, [here] with us [in the] outside world. One thing Bayul people never take is salt that is not enjoyed by Bāyul men and women so long they are in [a] Bāyul, [a] concealed habitation. The shepherds of Murang side [Moran, east of the Kinner Kailash Range] played mischief with Nesang and so [did] those of Urni with Enla Bāyuls. They came across, at both the Bayul places, [some] regularly fashioned water springs, the 'Bāyus'.<sup>43</sup> The shepherds grew curious and told the stories of nicely fashioned bayus to their home people, who advised them to throw salt in the water springs. The experiment was made. No sooner [than] the salt in [the] water was used by the Bāyul people, then the screen of their concealment broke away and they with their hamlets became visible and known to the world outside. But they forgot their previous life. There are still some places suspected to be Bāyuls. Bitingla opposite Sangla Kanda on the right side of the Rokli River, Kashang, above the present cultivation, and in Lishnam Gad [opposite Urni on the left bank of the Sutlej]. These are the three places known to the writer of these notes. At Bitingla and in Kashang, drums and trumpets are beaten and other musical instruments played, and the sound is heard at just [the moment when] night falls or [at the] dawn of day or at mid day time. Two stories that are known to the author of this narration are herein reproduced for the diversion of the reader.

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42 Bayul=a hidden or concealed habitation of humanity, but not of deotas, devis or kalis etc., [rather] of good spirits.

43 Bāyu=public water place=flowing of water through a channel or then falling on the ground from a height of 3' so that when required water pots are placed at the mouth of the channel and water fallen in [KD p.37: bāyū 'a pool, an oblong water pool'].

*Story no. 1:*

Many years ago, when a shepherd used to take his flock of sheep and goats for grazing in Bitingla,<sup>44</sup> there he used to see a nice water spring where he daily got seven very thin shelled walnuts and some other fruits ('palus') for him to eat, but those edibles were never known as to by whom and how they were daily kept there for the shepherd. [The] curiosity of the shepherd grew keener and keener every day, till at last he took home the seven walnuts to show his home folks and to make [them] partake of them. When the walnuts were delivered to [his] home people, who cracked them to eat them, inside something else but [a] kernel was found. What of that? Unfortunate! In each of the walnut[s] was found a snakeling and not the usual kernel. The shepherd's home people, who had the opportunity of having a walnut, ran outside the house to throw away the contents of the seven walnuts in all and then back to the fireplace they came and went on cursing the shepherd. They thought that the small snakelings were [purposely] enclosed, one within each of the seven soft-shelled walnuts, [in order] to befool them by their shepherd member. But the shepherd was very honest in this particular dealing with his home folks. Next morning he again drove his flock to 'Bitingla'. Leaving his flock to follow him up, he ran to the bāyu, the water and spring site, to find if the daily present for him in seven walnuts and 'palus' was there that day, too. Nothing was there that day. Even the water spring from which sweet sparkling water was daily enjoyed by the shepherd was hidden, concealed by [the] inhabitants of Bitingla. They became angry with the shepherd who was trying to make known the secret of Bitingla. Since then nobody knows of the walnuts and the water spring.

*Story no. 2:*

Once upon a time there was a shepherd in Lishnam Valley lopping [a] Breli (Quercus Hex) tree for fodder of his flock of sheep and goats. The tree was a big one and the shepherd happened to have a fall off the tree. There was nobody near about. At the fall he shrieked and fell into [a] swoon. His flock flocked together just before nightfall and went to its dogri. The family members of the shepherd thought him to be coming later with a load of

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44 Bitingla=(Biting=a wall, and La=cliff, cliffs)=a cliff-walled place just opposite Sangla Kanda on the right side of the Rokli River.

lopped leaf fodder for the kids fed at the dogri. But the time went on and it grew dark and no shepherd came. A search was made with lit up torches but he could not be found. The search had to be put off to [the] morrow's daylight.

The poor shepherd had many serious wounds and was senseless for hours together. The Lishnam Bāyul people took compassion upon him and carried him into their hidden abode, washed his wounds and healed them with various herbs. There were many people there but he could not recognize any of them. They talked in the [sic] language that was not known to him, but they were very obliging people. The shepherd regained his health and was happy with the Bāyul people. Anything he thought for having—that was offered [to] him immediately. To him it appeared that there was nothing that cannot be had in [the] Bāyul of Lishnam, and that the Bayul people were so expert to read the inmost desire and thoughts of a man that even the faintest emotions and sensations could not avoid their knowledge. On complete recovery, the shepherd, though [he] was eased with every comfort and having no mind to come out of the Bāyul, went [on] a [certain] day out for a walk. Unfortunately and unknowingly, he happened to cross the limits of the Bayul when an idea of returning back to his hosts struck him and backward he turned his steps and walked on. This time he was not walking within the Bāyul, where everything seemed in bloom and in bountiful. He was walking in the forest and in the waste but could not reach where he wanted to go in[to]. He missed the hidden habitation and had to go home. Since that hour, Lishnam Bayul was never seen again. Shepherds are said to have heard [a] local band beating and the cocks crowing every now and then at midday time or just at dawn and at [the time of it] getting dark.

Only so much as has been narrated is known to the writer of these notes about Bāyuls, the hidden habitations.

### **Chapter V: Life and Death.**

In high-lying countries like Bashahr and its [sub-region of] Kanawr in particular, even [the] earning of a meagre living is not easy. The people have to toil hard from morning to evening and that all [in] field work. In [the] execution of daily work, many a man and a woman had their lives cut short by a fall over a bridge, a slip, by failure in crossing streams or rivers,

by falling down a mountainside, by falling off a tree climbed for animal fodder lopping or for having [to bring] down the fruits or nuts as the case may be, and being washed away by floods in summer rains and by snow-slips, the avalanches, in winter.

So accidental deaths are many. But an accidental death of a member of any family is harmful to the family as well as to the deceased. The deceased man or woman's soul not knowing as to how it lost its carnal body, hovers about the place of [the] accident and haunts his home folks. The soul is heard shrieking and weeping about the site of death and sometimes near about its home. It would be seen then that the soul [would have] liked living more, but could not do so due to the mishap [that happened] to its life, and that there is something real in [the] life of humanity besides the carnal body. [The] soul is there and [it is] real.

When the soul of a person who suffered accidental death is heard during night-time weeping or shrieking about the place of [an] accident, Lāmās (followers of Buddhism) are brought there to guide the soul away to heaven from that place. To do this, the lamas read their prescribed precepts from their books, erect a heap of Mane-Phane stones and a flag to wave over [it]. The soul is [thus] guided to heaven and does not roam about there. In case the departed soul cherishes ill-feelings towards its family members, the effect of that ill-feeling is very bad upon the life of [its] family members and of their prosperity: this or that family member shall be keeping ill, cattle would not milk, would not increase in number, and the field crops fail, fruit trees would not [bear] fruit, but would dry [instead]. This state of things following the death of a person is attributed to the ill feeling of the deceased and is called 'shi-dai'.<sup>45</sup> To ward off 'shi-dai' also the Lamas are resorted to. They go to the house where the evil spirit of a dead person causes harm and out of their books the prescribed readings are read out and meanwhile a clay, small sized statue or idol to represent the evil spirit of the dead is got ready and kept there, where the reading of Buddhist books is going on. A day is enough for this. After night fall any oil of nuts or seeds is boiled in an iron vessel (karai) and with reading of 'Mantaras', the clay small idol is thrown into the boiling oil in the vessel so that the evil spirit of the dead is burnt and destroyed

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45 Shi-dai=(shi=dead, dai='dain', an ill, evil)=evil spirit of a dead person causing harm to alive relatives.

and no more harm can it do now. The destroyed mass is thrown to a river or buried in the ground. Throwing of barley along the passage of the destroyed idols is also done to make sure of the evil spirit's destruction doubly sure.

The soul of the dead body more often enters in another man's living body to express its desire, [just] as the spirit of the deotas and devis do in their Chailas [chelas], the Malis or gurs. This thing is not uncommon. When a person dies he leaves his will behind, which is the case all over the world. His will has to be executed. Whenever a dead person had been a very strong minded one in life and after his passing away his will is not found being executed, his soul enters the living body of his dearer relatives and expresses his sorrow and grief on that account. The following stories will bring the subject matter quite at home to the reader:

*Story no. 1:*

Some 45 years ago, a girl of Bari village [a few kilometres west of Nichar on the left bank of the Sutlej] was married to a brotherhood at Chagaon [some 20 kilometres distance up the Sutlej Valley, on the right bank just before Urni]. The girl happened to love only one of the 4 brothers and did not like to talk even with the remaining 3 brothers. Unfortunately, the girl lost her husband just after a couple or two of her marriage [years?]. She would not like to have any of the three remaining brothers of the dead person. The girl's father came to Chagaon with two other men, common relatives to him and to his son-in-laws. He wanted his girl to love and live for the 3 brothers or any one of them, but she said that she was [a spouse only] for the dead and none else, and that she wanted to pass away her life at her father's [home] in the sacred memory of her lost husband. Her father, seeing his daughter determined in her own way, agreed to have his daughter back to his home and they were about to go when the soul of the dead man, the girl's husband, entered into the body of one of the two men that came to Chagaon with the father of the girl. He fell down all of a sudden and trembled forcibly, just [as] a man does when having high temperature in Malaria fever. He was caught hold by 3 men there in the house and was cooled down by making him drink water and [they] enquired of him the cause of that. He replied that he was the soul of the dead husband of the girl and he did not like her going to her father's. He said he would like her [to] stay at his home and live with his brothers as their wife. She, the girl, having great love for

the dead husband, had to agree to the wishes of her husband's soul. She is still alive and is living with one of the deceased husband's brother[s] as her next husband. The soul afterwards never returned to [possess] any relative.

*Story no. 2:*

In 1934, an old man died in Bai Village in Bhabé Valley. He remained ill for many months and he knew that the time for him to leave this world of human beings had come. He was a rich man, but [he] did not go beyond Wangtu [the western limit of Kinnaur] during his whole lifetime. He did not know where Sarahan and Rampur [the state capitals of Bashahr] were. He had a large flock of sheep and goats to look after. Though he had shepherds in a [great] number for that, but he would like to have a complete supervision over his shepherds and home servants [and therefore never left Kinnaur]. Now that the death would come was certain in his case and he wished that his ashes be carried to 'Hari Dawar', the Ganges. After his death, his two sons that were there held a council and decided that as one of them was keeping bad health and the other was required to look after home affairs, while the third absentee could not be expected back from the Rajah's 'durbar' [court], it was decided in the private council of the two sons that the ashes of the deceased father should not be picked up for being sent or carried to the holy Ganges. The soul of their father entered the body of their relative woman, [who was] sitting in another room with women, and after the usual quivering with high temperature of another spirit in the same body, [she] said: 'my last wish for you, my sons and home folks, was to see my ashes carried to and drowned into the holy Ganges, but just after my leaving my body forever you have forgotten me and the ashes are not to be sent to the holy Ganges. This is the only pain and concern for me, which makes me remind you of my last words'. The two sons agreed to have the ashes picked up and carried to the Ganges and the soul of their father left the relative woman alone, in whom it [had] manifested itself for [the] revision of his last word even after his death. The ashes were carried to the Ganges and no more trouble arose from the soul of their deceased father.

The soul of a deceased person entering into another person's living body to express its last word is called 'Grohas'.<sup>46</sup> So the 'shi-dai' and 'grohās'

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46 'Grohas' or 'Gorhach'=soul of a deceased person entering into a living person's body and speaking out its desired words through the tongue of that living person's body [see also, KD p.70: *grová* 'a goblin'].

are the same one thing appearing in two different colours. 'Shi-dai' has ill-feeling for his family members and harms in many ways as described before, while 'grohas' enters the living body of another man and speaks out whatever it desired last to be done by its living members. It has no ill feeling if his words, spoken through the medium of another living person, are properly carried out. On the contrary, the 'Grohas' turns into shi-dai if it is not obeyed. When a person dies, his body is carried on a bier to [the] cremation ground. Generally, a white sheet of cloth is held up by two men, one on each end, so that the broad side hangs down waving in the air. This stretched sheet of cloth is moved just ahead of the bier of the dead body. It is believed that this white stretched sheet of cloth guides the soul out of the house and away up to the cremation ground to make it know that the body has been burnt and nothing of it remains at home so that the soul may not return home to trouble its living relations. Barley is thrown, broadcast in the track through which the bier is carried to the burning ground. It is said that the soul of the deceased is guided by this way also to the cremation ground and that it does not return afterwards to home.

A death that takes place in epidemics and [in which case] the dead body is buried in [the] ground in place of being burnt, is thought to be very profane. The soul does not find its place in heaven and has to remain midway so long as the relatives of the dead do not go to Kurukh-Shetar [Kurukshetra], a pilgrimage of Hindus and offer 'Pind-dan'.<sup>47</sup> Now in Kanawr, at the death of a man or a woman, a number of Lamas are called for and their holy books about life and death are read to guide the soul to heaven through the darkness. The deotas and devis and any good spirits have no control beyond [the] life of a man. When a person dies the good spirits can do him no good at all. Now, the growing belief here about [this] is that Buddhism purifies a person while alive and guides [his soul] to heaven when dead.

The Lāmās' most common prayer is 'Om mani-padme-hum'. This [can be] translated in many colours. When it is cited in a prayer to Him, it means that the almighty god lives within a lotus flower. When it is read for the dead man's soul, it tells the soul to leave the paths of demigods, the deotas, of spirits (midway [between] demi-gods and men), of men, of beings other

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47 Pind dan=giving material offerings in the name of deceased of pilgrimages. The 'tirthas' the sacred places, a metal body is made and put through the process of cremation so that the dead is provided with a body for the next life after rebirth.

than humanity, of the animate and inanimate world, and to choose the upper most white path that leads to heaven direct.

A word may again be said of that white sheet of cloth kept before the bier. It also makes a white track way for the soul to guide it to heaven.

Buddhism, [which is] good as in its own unadulterated form, has condescended [sic] to the living of its followers. Buddhism here means a means for earning bread for Lāmās.

Finish

Mr Das, FR,

ROC dated 3-6/9/38

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