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Himalayan Polyandry and the Domestic Cycle

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Reviewed work(s):

Source: *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Intra-Cultural Variation (Feb., 1975), pp. 127-138

Published by: [Wiley-Blackwell](#) on behalf of the [American Anthropological Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/643539>

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PART II. SITUATIONAL DIVERSITY

Himalayan polyandry and the domestic cycle¹

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Polyandry has fascinated and challenged anthropologists from the early evolutionists to contemporary structural-functionalists.² Nowhere in the world, save perhaps Tibet, does this form of marriage and family organization occur more consistently than among the people of the mountains (the *Pahari*) in certain regions of the western Himalayas of North India, especially in Himachal Pradesh and northwestern Uttar Pradesh. I have elsewhere described and analyzed the polyandry of this area with reference to the general literature on polyandry, focusing on the people of the mountainous subdivision of Dehra Dun District known as Jaunsar Bawar, in the northwestern corner of Uttar Pradesh (Berreman 1962). That account contrasted the fraternally polyandrous system of Jaunsar Bawar, as reported in published accounts and by people who had worked there (cf. Majumdar 1944, 1953, 1955a, 1955b, 1962; Jain 1948; Saksena 1955), with the marriage and family system of the nearby and culturally and ecologically similar monandrous (non-polyandrous) people of Garhwal, among whom I had done intensive research (Berreman 1972). My aim was to examine, by reference to these data, various factors which had been proposed as causal for polyandry or as in one way or another accounting for its occurrence. I concluded that none of these explanations was convincing and that, moreover, "polyandry . . . is evidently not a sufficiently unitary phenomenon to be

The fraternal polyandry of Jaunsar Bawar in the western Himalayas of India is described by examining the domestic groups it creates. The form and composition of these groups vary within the society so that structures commonly associated with the terms monogamy, polygyny, and group marriage, as well as polyandry and polygynandry, occur simultaneously in any community and, over time, in many families. All are manifestations of a single set of principles and beliefs about the nature of marriage, family, and the domestic group. The variations are the result of changes in family composition during its life cycle (the developmental cycle) and in response to circumstantial and optional factors. Generalizations about polyandry, its causes and consequences, can only apply to this society if they encompass the temporal and situational diversity of the domestic group. The developmental cycle of the domestic group explains most of the intra-cultural variation in the Pahari family.

explained in the same terms everywhere" (Berreman 1962:72). Pahari polyandry seems not to be significantly similar to a number of other systems also called "polyandry" in the literature, although it may well be significantly similar to *some* such systems. That is, it may be useful to discuss the origin, function, and consequences of polyandry₁, polyandry₂, polyandry₃, etc., but not polyandry *per se*.

My intention in the present paper is to further describe the fraternally polyandrous family of Jaunsar Bawar and its variations in time and circumstance. I do so in order to describe and account for the high degree of intra-cultural variation in family type that has been noted for Jaunsar Bawar. I do so also to throw additional light on the nature of this "polyandrous" system of domestic organization and its implications for general and theoretical statements that have been made about both Himalayan polyandry and polyandry in general.³ Such statements have failed to take into account the temporal factor in family composition and organization—the life-histories of families—which Fortes (1971) has called the developmental cycle of the domestic group. Yet, as I shall show, the temporal factor—the developmental cycle—largely explains the apparent diversity in family organization in this region. As Fortes (1971:3) warned: "the developmental factor is intrinsic to domestic organization and to ignore it leads to serious misinterpretation of the descriptive facts." Such misinterpretation includes the assertion that Pahari polyandry is like some quite dissimilar instances of polyandry and that it inevitably implies significantly fewer married (and reproducing) women than men and hence fewer children and heirs than other domestic arrangements—an assumption which underlies virtually all attempts to explain the phenomenon in functional terms (cf. Berreman 1962). By following the developmental cycle of "polyandrous" Pahrai families, one can achieve a more realistic understanding of the structure and functioning of the family in this society, its intra-cultural variety, its existential reality, and its theoretical and practical implications.

A brief general description of polyandry in Jaunsar Bawar is necessary in order to provide a context for that which follows. In this society a polyandrous union occurs when a woman goes through a marriage ceremony with the eldest of a group of brothers, all of whom thereupon become the woman's husbands. Subsequent wives may also be taken, and in fact usually are. If so, each wife is individually married in a ceremony with the eldest brother, or, if the woman has been previously married, she simply moves in with the brothers (after necessary arrangements regarding bride-price have been made with her previous husband[s] or with her family of orientation). The new wife is shared, along with her co-wives, by all of the brothers unless one or more brothers wish to break away from the joint family. No brother can remain a member of the joint family and claim exclusive rights to a wife. Nor can he do so and claim exclusive rights to land, houses, cattle, clientele, etc., for in all of these respects, as in the case of their relationships with wives, children, and parents, brothers are regarded as equivalent (cf. Mandelbaum 1938). The eldest brother dominates with respect to the wife or wives, as he does in other domestic matters, but he has no exclusive rights, sexual, reproductive, or otherwise. A woman considers all of the brothers to be her husbands. Children recognize the group of brothers as their fathers: they address all of them as "father," and the sons inherit from all as a group without regard to paternity or maternity within the polyandrous family (Majumdar 1944:178; 1953:179; 1962:101).⁴ In cases of division of the patrimony, special portions may be given to the eldest (and sometimes the youngest as well) of the brothers. If the family is divided while the children are young and unmarried, paternity may be assigned by lot, by mother's designation (she is supposed to assign paternity to the first husband who had sexual relations with her after her last

menstruation prior to the child's conception), or by order of birth (whereby the eldest child is attributed to the eldest father, second child to next-eldest father, and so on in a sequence which rotates back to the eldest father to begin again if the number of children exceeds the number of fathers) (cf. Majumdar 1944:144f). Physical resemblance between a child and a particular father may also be a basis for assigning paternity. In cases of familial fission, wives are assigned their husbands by preference and agreement wherein affection, relative age, and marriage sequence, as well as maternity (i.e., trying to keep mothers together with their young children) are likely to be taken into account. This latter factor also affects the designation of children's paternity in that the child of a favored wife may be assigned the paternity of the husband who favors her. Such familial fission among brothers is, however, rare and is rarer still after children have been born.

In other respects, the ethnography of the region is very similar to that of nearby Garhwal as described in *Hindus of the Himalayas* (Berreman 1972; cf. Majumdar 1962). In both areas the economy of the majority high-caste population is primarily agricultural, with a secondary dependence on animal husbandry, while low-status artisan castes live by their craft specialties serving a largely high-caste clientele. Land is valuable but not as scarce as in most of North India. All property is owned jointly by male members of the patrilineal, patrilocal extended family. If property is divided among brothers, they usually receive equal shares, although in some regions (as indicated above) the eldest and sometimes the youngest may receive special shares. Normally brothers continue to hold the patrimony in common, and among non-polyandrous groups division occurs in the next generation, among patrilateral parallel cousins. The eldest active male dominates in the joint family but cannot compel younger men to remain within it. Marriage takes place within the caste and outside the sib and mother's sib. It entails payment of a bride-price which must be returned if the marriage is dissolved, as it can be by either party, unless in the dissolution the husband is clearly at fault. Where dowry is used it is exceptional and evidently of recent origin, having diffused from the plains as an aspect of status emulation of plains people. A man's initial marriage should always be to a previously unmarried woman selected by his parents in consultation with a priest. The initial marriage of a man or a woman should always be effected through a formal marriage ceremony, and rules of exogamy and endogamy must be scrupulously observed. Subsequent marriages for both sexes need not be ceremonialized, and rules of exogamy and endogamy are occasionally contravened. In monandrous Garhwal, levirate is the rule upon a husband's death, and repayment of the bride-price must be made to his family if his wife wishes to go elsewhere.

Although in Jaunsar Bawar, fraternal polyandry is the ideal and, as described by Majumdar, is also "the common form" of marriage, it is not a system wherein a group of brothers necessarily or even usually shares a single wife. Neither in the history of any particular family or individual, nor at any given moment in any community, is classic fraternal polyandry, such as that described for the Iravas of central Kerala by Aiyappan (1935:114ff), likely to be the only form of the domestic group. "Monogamy, polygyny, and fraternal polyandry, including a combination of polyandry and polygyny approximating fraternal 'group marriage,' appear in the same villages and even in the same lineages (cf. Majumdar 1944:167f)" (Berreman 1962:61). Moreover, as Majumdar has observed more recently, "the types of family referred to are not stable, and there is a constant shift from one type to the other due to frequency of divorce and of taking multiple wives, and even a polyandrous and polygynous family may be reduced to monogamous unions" (Majumdar 1962:80). In the two Jaunsar Bawar villages for which figures are available, *Lohari* (Majumdar 1955b:165) and *Baila* (Majumdar 1962:78), it is

reported that of a total of 146 domestic units, 44 percent are polyandrous, 20 percent are polygynous, and 36 percent are monogamous. For one of the villages (Lohari), Majumdar gives figures showing that while 49 percent of the families are “polyandrous,” 61 percent of those unions had as many (or more) wives as husbands. (Note that a plurality of husbands constituted “polyandry,” and the number of wives was considered irrelevant in Majumdar’s terminology at that time, except in the case of “polygyny” where there was only one husband.) Comparing the figures for Lohari with the demography of a similar village I had studied in adjacent, monandrous Garhwal, I concluded, in 1962, that the incidence of fraternal polyandry reported by Majumdar was about as high as was demographically possible (Berreman 1962:73n), suggesting that it was indeed the “common” and preferred domestic arrangement.

Subsequent to his report on Lohari, Majumdar (1962:73) coined the term “polygynandry” to refer to any marital union involving a multiplicity of both husbands and wives. (Therefore he, like his students and colleagues, had called all multiple-husband unions “polyandrous” regardless of the number of wives.) Applying this newer terminology to the village of Baila, Majumdar reported eighty-nine marital unions, of which 33 percent were polygynandrous, 9 percent polyandrous, 25 percent polygynous, and 34 percent monogamous (Majumdar 1962:78).

Table 1. Marital arrangements in Jaunsar Bawar villages.*

Source:	Polygynandry (multiple wives and husbands)	Polyandry (multiple husbands only)	Polygyny (multiple wives only)	Monogamy	Number of Units
Village Baila (Majumdar 1962:78)	32.6%	9.0%	24.7%	33.7%	89
Village Lohari (Majumdar 1955b:165)	49.0%		12.0%	39.0%	57
District sample (Jain 1948)	47.0%			43.0%	593

*In the cases of village Lohari and the District sample, the authors lumped all marital arrangements involving multiple husbands under the term “polyandry,” regardless of the number of wives. In the District sample, the calculations were made with reference to the number of married women rather than to domestic units as such. Thus, in that sample the only factor distinguished is the number of husbands per wife.

The only other precise figures available for marital arrangements in Jaunsar Bawar are those provided by Jain (1948), based on a sample of 593 married women comprising all of the currently married women in three families in each of three villages in each *khat* or administrative subdivision of Jaunsar Bawar. Of these, 57 percent had multiple husbands ranging in number from two to nine, and 43 percent had only one husband. However, of the 43 percent recorded as monandrous, one-fourth (12 percent of the total) were partial widows who had previously had multiple husbands. The remaining three-fourths of the monandrous women (31 percent of the total) were monandrous, as the author notes, “mostly because the husband had no other brother” (Jain 1948:31).⁵ In short, few were monandrous by choice. These figures provide further evidence that fraternal polyandry with multiple wives, i.e., polygynandry, is the common and preferred domestic

arrangement in this region. This being the case, how then does one account for the reported presence of “monogamy” and “polygyny” in this “polyandrous” society, and how does one account for the variable ratio of married men to women even in the “polyandrous” unions? The reasons are to be found in developmental, circumstantial, and optional factors of domestic organization, rather than simply in a tolerance for diverse social forms.

developmental factors

“Developmental factors” in the domestic cycle are those structural features which emerge as characteristic phases in the life histories of particular domestic groups in society—as distinguished from the distinct structural types which they may resemble. Fortes (1971) has noted that the papers which his essay introduces describe societies in each of which a variety of types of domestic organization and residence could be cited, with results that would be confusing. “But when it is recognized that these so-called types are in fact phases in the developmental cycle of a single general form for each society, the confusion vanishes” (Fortes 1971:3). I will demonstrate that the polyandry, polygyny, polygynandry or group marriage, and monogamy of Jaunsar Bawar are variations (many of which are attributable to developmental factors) on a single general form rather than distinct coexistent types of structures, and that moreover they are so regarded by the people who comprise them. Their coexistence seems to the latter no more puzzling or complicated than the coexistence in the community of families including three, two, and one generations, or of families with no children, few children, and many children, or with widely differing proportions of the sexes or widely differing age-distributions among their children.

In order to describe developmental factors in Jaunsar Bawar, I have constructed an ideal-typical hypothetical family. I have done so because I want to use an illustrative example, and I do not have precise data on an actual Jaunsar Bawar family through time. However, this case accords with the structural and demographic facts of family life reported synchronically for two villages by Majumdar (1955b; 1962:78), for a sample of villages by Jain (1948), and with those recorded over time for families in Sirkanda, the monandrous Garhwal village I know best, some thirty-five miles to the east. This case accords also, I believe, with the experienced reality of the lives of the people of Jaunsar Bawar; that is, they would find it true to life.

For simplicity I will describe only a single generation in a single family, ignoring the co-resident parental generation and the emergence of children, both of which would be expectable in such a family. For illustrative purposes, I have invented an agricultural (land-owning) family with more spouses than the average, but well within the expectable and reported range in any agricultural village of Jaunsar Bawar. I think that the total number of working adults (hence spouses) in agricultural families in Jaunsar Bawar, as in nearby Garhwal, is more or less proportional to the amount of cultivable land held by the family (cf. Berreman 1962:64-65; 1972:150ff; Majumdar 1962:76). Women are as productive in agricultural work as men, and with the exception of plowing and other activities involving draft animals, they do virtually the same farm work. Thus, a family of three or four brothers with modest land-holdings (four to five acres) might be most likely to have one or two wives, while a family of one man or two brothers with an equal amount of land might have two to four wives. Families with less land would generally have fewer wives. Families without land at all would have less incentive to acquire multiple wives, for in such cases women’s work is primarily household work that can be handled by one or

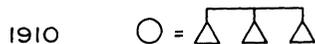
two women. For similar reasons, such families have little incentive to adopt male household members or to hire servants. They also have less incentive than the landed to retain the common patrimony through joint-family organization among brothers. In the absence of land there is little for the brothers to share and little work that can best be done in common. The result is that family size is smaller among the landless, and multiple marriage is somewhat less common. This is the case in the Garhwal village of Sirkanda (Berreman 1972:146f), and is reported to be the case in the village of Lohari in Jaunsar Bawar (Majumdar 1955b:170; 1962:75). This principle is illustrated most graphically in the distribution of family size, polyandry, and multiple wives among the low castes, most of whose members are landless. Thus, Majumdar notes for village Lohari: "the Kolta who do not own land, and live as agrestic serfs, have a lower incidence of polyandry [than do the land-owning Rajputs], viz., 36.36 percent as contrasted with 68.96 percent among the Rajput. The incidence of joint family among the Kolta is 45.45 percent while it is 62 percent among the Rajput" (Majumdar 1955b:168). It is clear, however, that the "polygynandrous" union described by Majumdar is found in all castes (cf. Majumdar 1962:78), as are monogamous, polyandrous, and polygynous unions. Table 2, a summary of caste-specific data on marriage types in village Baila (the only such data available), illustrates caste differences in domestic organization, which in turn reflects landed-landless differences.

Table 2. Marital arrangements in village Baila, by caste groups
(after Majumdar 1962:78).*

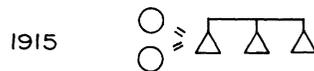
	Polygynandry	Polyandry	Polygyny	Monogamy	Number of Units
High castes (<i>Brahmin</i> and <i>Rajput</i>)	40.0%	6.0%	28.0%	26.0%	47
Low castes (<i>Badi</i> , <i>Sunar</i> , <i>Bajgi</i> , <i>Kolta</i>)	24.0%	12.0%	21.0%	43.0%	42
Total	32.6%	9.0%	24.7%	33.7%	89

*High castes (*Khas*) are the landed castes, and low castes (*Dom*) are for the most part landless.

In order to describe and understand the coexistence of these arrangements of marriage and family, it is useful to observe one family over time. Let us assume that in a Jaunsar Bawar village in the year 1910, there were three young brothers in a moderately prosperous Rajput farming family, ages 18, 15, and 12. (Since all sisters will marry and reside patrilocally, none will be included here.) In that year, the eldest brother underwent a marriage ceremony with a fifteen-year-old girl of the same caste and of an unrelated sib, as is prescribed by custom. She thereby became the wife of all three of the brothers in common, as is also prescribed by custom. The domestic group in this generation then became, structurally, a typical fraternally polyandrous one (although, of course, in fact the youngest brother—perhaps both of the younger ones—did not begin to have sexual relations with the wife until they reached about sixteen years of age):⁶



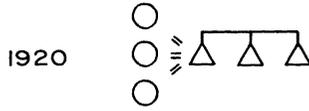
Five years later, a second wife, sixteen years old, was married in the same manner as the first, becoming the second common wife. The domestic group was thereby transformed into one which Majumdar would term “polygynandrous” (1962:72), and which might be described structurally as comprising fraternal group marriage. If there had been only one husband (i.e., if he had had no brothers, as is not infrequently the case), the same event would have created a typical polygynous household. A number of reasons might be cited by the brothers for adding another wife—all within the context of the general fact that polygyny (a multiplicity of wives) is as common and as legitimate, although not as remarked in the region, as polyandry. Additional wives may be sought: (1) in order to produce children (especially sons), if the first wife (or wives) is barren, has only daughters, or has few sons; (2) in order to increase the adult labor force in the family (e.g., if there is more land or other work than the adults already present can effectively handle); (3) to provide increased or improved social and sexual companionship within the family.



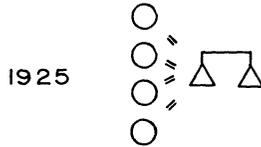
Note that at this point our data contradict the common assertion that group marriage nowhere exists. Bohannan, for example, says: “There has never been discovered a kinship group that contains within it all of the ten basic kinship relationships [wife, co-wife, husband, co-husband, mother, father, daughter, son, brother, sister]. A family based on the group marriage of Morganian tradition would have contained all” (Bohannan 1963:72). The “polygynandrous” family of Jaunsar Bawar frequently does contain all of these relationships, although the children, who are acknowledged by all of the men, are not acknowledged by all of the women in the group as Morgan postulated they would be in group marriage. That is, the paternity of the children is regarded as shared by the “fathers,” unless some unusual circumstance of family fission requires that they be apportioned among the men (at which time a child is likely for the first time to be associated with a particular father). In contrast, the biological mother of each child is known and socially recognized as such even within the family and despite the fact that a child addresses and refers to all of its fathers’ wives as “mother” (*jji*) (cf. Berreman 1962:62; Majumdar 1944:144f, 1953:179, 1962:101, 122).

Returning to the example, we might find that five years later a third wife was acquired. Inquiry would reveal similar reasons for this marriage as for the second. This wife, however, might well have been a widow or divorcee of, say twenty-three years of age (as might have been, in fact, any but the initial wife), in which case no ceremony would have marked the marriage—she would simply have moved into the household. (If she had left a previous husband in order to do so, he would be reimbursed by the new husbands in the amount of the bride-price.) Thus, in 1920, the domestic group in this generation comprised three brothers, ages 28, 25, and 22, with their three common wives, ages 25, 21, and 23. This arrangement has been most frequently called simply “polyandry” (Jain 1948; Majumdar 1944, 1955a; Saksena 1955), and in one instance, more precisely, “polyandry with an equal number of husbands and wives” (Majumdar 1955b:165). From the point of view of structure, it could as well have been termed “polygyny” or “polygyny with an equal number of husbands and wives.” In the terminology of the time it might better have been called “fraternal group marriage with an equal number of husbands and wives.” In the terminology of his 1962 book, Majumdar would have called it “polygynandrous,” to which one might add his earlier

modifying phrase, “with an equal number of husbands and wives.” This seems to be the most precise descriptive terminology. In any case, this marriage was a turning point in the demography of the family in our example, because the number of husbands no longer exceeded the number of wives. This precluded the oft-cited unique consequences of polyandry for fertility, reproduction, and demography.



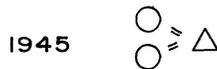
In another five years, a brother might have died—let us say the middle one—and an additional wife of twenty years of age might have been acquired with the thought of replacing the labor of the dead brother. Then the women in the family would outnumber the men four to two, with obvious reproductive implications. This large a plurality of wives is unusual but not improbable. Such families Majumdar earlier termed “polyandrous with unequal number of husbands and wives” (1955b:165), and more recently simply “polygynandrous” (1962:72), neither of which is very illuminating about the sex ratio in the family or its reproductive implications.



In the course of ten years, a wife—perhaps the third one—might have departed (since divorce and remarriage are commonplace), and another—perhaps the first—might have died, leaving two wives of ages 36 and 30 and two husbands of ages 43 and 37, returning the spouses to sexual parity.



In the passing of another decade, the first brother might have died, leaving a “typical” polygynous family (wives of ages 46 and 40, husband of age 47).



Following the death of the first wife during the next ten years, a “typical” monogamous household would be created, in this case one beyond the age of reproductivity.



The remaining wife might have survived her remaining husband for a few years.

Upon her death that generation of the domestic unit would have disappeared, and their children and grandchildren would be well along in similar cycles. This, then, describes the rise and fall—the domestic cycle—of a “polyandrous” or “polygynandrous” family of Jaunsar Bawar. The family looked quite different at various times in its cycle, yet the same structural principles and the same processes were operative throughout, and the same value system supported it in every phase. A static account of the structure of family, lineage, village, or region would immortalize and fossilize these variations, giving them the artificial appearance of discrete formal types.

circumstantial and optional factors

Variation in the composition of the domestic group also results from factors which are not primarily developmental, temporal, cyclical, or the product of the familial life-cycle. Those which are beyond intentional control might be termed “circumstantial”; those which are matters of choice can be called “optional” factors. Some of the variations described in the above example are of these kinds while others are not.

For example, there might have been only one male in the generation under consideration—a man without brothers. In that case circumstances would have prevented polyandry from being either a possibility or an actuality; monogamy, polygyny, and the developmental cycles characteristic thereof would have been the structural possibilities (the unmarried state occurs only in cases of the severely physically or mentally handicapped). This lone husband might have chosen to have only one wife in his lifetime (as a result of economic or affectional considerations, for example), or only one wife at a time, or he might have taken a second wife late in life. On the other hand, he might have taken more than one early in life. These are optional factors which determine the composition of the domestic group, the structural form it takes, and the developmental cycle it follows.

In the hypothetical group of brothers there might never have been more than one or two wives acquired. A plentitude of sons, paucity of land, or the preferences of the initial wife or wives might have led them to opt for only one or two wives. Also, of course, different individuals in the domestic group might have survived and died, stayed and left—circumstances which would alter the proportions of the sexes and the reproductive potential of the group.

Other circumstantial and optional variations come to mind and appear in the data as possibilities. A much younger brother might have been born, fifteen to twenty years after his siblings. When he reached maturity he would have been likely to demand an additional wife appropriate to his age. If he had also demanded exclusive sexual access to her, then he would have had to separate economically from his brothers, for no brother can have an exclusive relationship with a wife and still share in other aspects of the joint family. This would have established another, monogamous, domestic unit. Similarly, any one (or more) of the brothers might have formed a separate household in order to live separately with one (or more) of the wives, or in order to work a share of the land independently (cf. Majumdar 1955b:164f).

Like the developmental factors which are inherent in social organization with the passage of time, such circumstances of fate and choice as those described here—non-

cyclical but prevalent—affect the composition of domestic units and must be taken into account if one is to understand Pahari polyandry and Pahari domestic organization.

conclusion

In Jaunsar Bawar, an individual may experience in his or her lifetime a single spouse, a multiplicity of spouses (serially or simultaneously or both), a co-spouse or a multiplicity of co-spouses. Through time he or she may experience any or all of these marital states. At any moment a single village is likely to include all of these arrangements. Viewed statically, these appear to comprise a high incidence of intra-cultural variation in marriage and family organization—a wide variety of structural types—the most unusual of which are polyandry and polygynandry or group marriage. Both the fact of formal variety and the occurrence of unusual forms are likely to excite our anthropological “exotic bias” (Naroll and Naroll 1963), distorting our theoretical understanding by focusing attention on those features while ignoring others that are equally significant in what proves to be a coherent and unified pattern of domestic organization based on a single set of rules or assumptions about marriage and the family. Among the most significant of these assumptions are that: (1) the family is patrilineal, patrilocal, extended, and joint; (2) sons live and work with their parents, and, as they become adult, brothers share equally in the property and labor of the family, with the eldest exercising primary authority; (3) marriage is a contract between a group of brothers and a woman (generally effected through arrangements by their respective families of orientation, entailing a “bride-price”); (4) married women live with the group of brothers who are their husbands and contribute their labor, sexuality, and reproductivity collectively; (5) any number of marriages may be contracted by men without terminating previous ones; (6) only one marriage may be contracted by a woman unless the previous one is terminated; (7) any marriage contract can be broken by either party, but children remain with their father(s), and the wealth given in exchange for a woman must be returned to any husband(s) whom she leaves; (8) brothers who are unwilling to share equally in their common patrimony, labor, wives, and children must divide all of them as equably as possible—they cannot share some aspects of joint family life while dividing others. The domestic unit can assume any form permitted by these rules. Thus, in the course of time, and according to circumstances and choice, families occur which take the forms commonly described as monogamy, fraternal polyandry, polygyny, and fraternal polygynandry or group marriage, with the number of wives and husbands varying.

No account of Pahari polyandry and its implications can ignore these facts, and no comparative or theoretical discussion of polyandry can include Pahari polyandry without attending to them.

The variables and processes of domestic organization in Jaunsar Bawar described here have been demonstrated by reference to a hypothetical but realistic example. Their consequences for the incidence and duration of the various forms of domestic units and for fertility await statistical documentation. As Fortes (1971:13) points out, quantitative data are essential for the complete analysis of the developmental cycle. The qualitative facts, as the people of Jaunsar Bawar experience them, however, are clear and are prerequisite to the interpretation of the quantitative data which describe their incidence.

As a rule—that is, other things being equal—Pahari polyandry can be described as a group of brothers married to one or more women. But as in all human affairs, other things are rarely equal. We cannot claim to understand or explain the rule unless our understanding and explanation comprehend also its exceptions and variations. The

developmental cycle and the circumstantial and optional variants in Pahari polyandry are crucial to its understanding and explanation, for they are as important as the rule itself—in fact, they too are the rule.

notes

¹ I have developed this material over a number of years, for use in teaching. I am indebted to my students and to Irven DeVore and John Rowe, whose interest inspired me to write it up.

² Polyandry can be defined simply as that form of marriage wherein a woman has more than one husband at a time. If the husbands are necessarily brothers, the polyandry is fraternal. (See Fischer 1952; Leach 1955; Gough 1959; Prince Peter 1963.)

The fascination with polyandry is no doubt partly because it is unusual, appealing to our exotic bias (Naroll and Naroll 1963). However, one cannot overlook the possibility also of an androcentric bias. Most anthropologists have been men and/or trained by men. Polyandry has seemed to them puzzling and challenging, while its sexual mirror-image, polygyny, is not only more common, but also evidently seems more plausible, expectable, and perhaps agreeable to them. The former has elicited innumerable and often tortured attempts at explanation (cf. Berreman 1962:63-69), whereas the latter attracts little attention, creates little curiosity, and generates only the most casual explanation. I have difficulty dispelling the suspicion that this article and its predecessor might be manifestations of this same phenomenon.

³ I base what I have to say primarily on published accounts, supplemented by data and explanations derived from colleagues in India who have worked in the western Himalayas (notably M. K. Raha, Ramesh Chandra, and their colleagues in the recently established North-Western Branch of the Anthropological Survey of India, in Dehra Dun), and my own work in adjacent Garhwal together with my acquaintance with a few Jaunsari people and two very brief excursions of my own into Jaunsar Bawar.

⁴ Terms of reference for the fathers (*baba*) are often prefixed to indicate the senior-most and the junior-most, while if there is more than one intermediate “father,” they may be specified with prefixes indicating their occupational sub-specialties within the family (Majumdar 1962:101).

Majumdar (1962:101) also reports that a common term (*jji*) is used in addressing one’s mother and her co-wives. When used in reference, it is prefixed with the woman’s village of origin. Nevertheless, individual maternity is clearly recognized within the family as individual paternity is not.

⁵ Note that Jain (1948) records only the number of husbands per wife. He does not record or make any mention of the number of wives per husband or per family. Therefore his figures do not distinguish polygyny from monogamy nor polyandry from “polygynandry,” nor the number of women in any multi-husband marriage. This is another frustrating artifact of the preoccupation, among authors of accounts on this region, with polyandry to the virtual exclusion of broader interests in marriage and family organization.

⁶ This group and their subsequent offspring would doubtless live as a joint family with the brothers’ parents so long as they lived.

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Date of Submission: February 13, 1974

Date of Acceptance: May 16, 1974