

Book Title

The Tibetan World of the Indian Himalaya: An Ethnography of the 'Garden of the Dakini'

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Publisher

New Delhi: Manohar

Abstract

In the Lahul region north of Himachal Pradesh, Hindu and Tibetan cultures coexist. This region is also known as 'Garsha Kandoling' to Tibetans, which means 'Garsha, a garden of Dakini'.

The people of Lahul live 3,400 metres above sea level in a challenging mountainous environment. Despite their Indian nationality, most of the original inhabitants are Mongoloid, and believe in Tibetan Buddhism. Their traditional ways of life are also Tibetan-like, and suitably adapted for the rigors of life at high altitude.

This book is based on field work conducted from 1987 onwards. In the first half of the book, anthropological data about Lahuli society is presented. Various topics are discussed, such as the means of inheriting wealth, gender issues, and marriage customs, including the practice of adopting a bridegroom into the bride's family. The discussion is thematically focused on the issue of opposing principles between the household (*Kyum*), and family (*Jinmad*). Polyandry, a unique form of marriage in Tibet, can be understood as a means of mediation between these principles.

The second half of the book describes a utopian religious movement that developed in the early 1960's. The leader of this movement - Terton Tulshuk Lingpa(1916-1963), was a Ningmapa yogi from Tibet. He led an ill-fated expedition with many Lahuli people in the Kanchenjunga area, to search for a *beyul*(hidden land) called Demojon.

Following India's independence in 1947, Lahuli society and culture has been transformed dramatically. The people of Lahul have successfully re-organized and adapted their way of life, whilst preserving their traditional values and religion.

This book is an intimate portrait of a unique people who live in the narrow valleys of the Himalayan range, as drawn by a Japanese anthropologist.