CHAPTER-I

GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURE AND CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL SURVEY

Himachal Pradesh, is a region of scenic splendour in the Western Himalayas. Its centuries old culture rightly warrants a deep interest and respect. The geographical spread, size and the population of the State is characterised by a process of gradual evolution, of a unique complex of history and culture, consisting of many strains, both native and foreign, in which indigenous religion and belief predominates. On the one hand Himachal Pradesh maintained ancient indigenous traditions and on the other it adopted the highly developed culture influence of the Indian Plains and the cultural inflow of the north east. The inherited and imported elements made an amalgam which gave Himachal its distinctive character.

Himachal means snowy mountains (him-snow, and achal mountain), the state (Pradesh) taking its name from snow bound peaks, which are a part of the great Himalayan mountain range.

The hymns of Rigveda were composed nearly 1500 years before Christ on the plains of the Saraswati. There is a reference to the mountain Munjavant in
Mantra 1 Sukta 34 Mandale 10\(^1\) wherein it is stated that:

Som-Lata was found on the said mountain. Therefore, the home of Soma the Mujavant or Munjavant hills is located to the north of the Punjab and thus indicates the (region) from which the sacrificial rituals developed\(^2\). According to Zimmer, this mountain was probably to the south of the valley of Kashmir. As the Soma plant was grown on the mountains north of the Punjab, the Vedic Aryans must have had some sort of contact with the original inhabitants of the immediate Himalayan valleys. In the later ages some vedic saints and sages with their disciples and followers came to the lower Himalayan valleys as peaceful settlers and established their hermitages at several places. Among these, the Renuka lake in Sirmour district is associated with Jamdagni,\(^3\) the Vashishtha Kund located in the Kullu valley with Vashishtha Rishi, Nirmand with Parshurama, the Beas cave of Bilaspur with sage Vyas. The Puranas extensively mention the people and places lying between the Yamuna and the Chandrabhaga. In the Puranic age this region

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1. प्राणेणा कुरुतो मादयन्ति प्रवा तेना द्वैताना:।
2. सर्वस्तेव भौजवत्वे भृश विभीदोंि जागृतविद्या मक्षाय।।

2. Majumdar, R.C., History and culture of Indian People: Vedic age, London, 1952, p. 2165

was known as Jalandhara Khanda of the Himalayans. While praising the region now known as Himachal, the Skanda Purana says”, He who thinks of Himachal though he should not behold it; is greater than he who performed all worship in Kashi, and he who thinks of Himachal shall have pardon for all sins and all things that he lie on Himchal and all things that in dying think of its snows, are freed from sin.”

"In a hundred ages of Gods I could not tell the of the glories of Himachala where Shiva lived and where the Ganges falls from the foot of Vishnu like the slender thread of Lotus flower." According to Mahabharata the Himalayan region, now forming Himachal Pradesh was divided into a number of tribal republic. The important ones of this region were Audumbara, Trigarta and Kuluta lying between the Beas and Ravi valleys and Kulindna between the Sutlej and Yamuna valleys. The existence of the Janapadas is

4. पूर्व खंड हिमालयस्य कथिता नेपाल: कुर्मावली । कैसरपथ जलधरोपण्ड सिंवर: दति संतो तिमः

Quoted by Dr. Shivanand Nautiyal in his book Kidar-Badri Yatra Darshan (1986), p. 10


further proved by the discovery of their coins in different parts of this region. Hemchandra in the fourth century AD also named this region "Jalandhara". He further mention: Jalandhara Trigartah Syud" meaning Jalandhara, that is Trigorta. 7 Mention of Trigarta and the adjoining region is also found in Rajatarangini or the history of Kashmir by Kalhana. In the Muslim historian's accounts Trigarta is mentioned as Kangra or Nagarkot. George Forester was the first European who, while travelling from Bengal to England by land route passed through Sirmour, Kahlur and Kangra in 1783 when Ranjit Singh (Later Maharaja of Punjab) was only three years old. During the Muslim period and early British period the Shimla Hills were known as Bara Thakurais or twelve Lordships and "Athara Thakurais" or Eighteen Lordship.

Himachal Pradesh is spread over an area of about 55,673 square Kilometers. Its population is about 51,11,079 persons (1991 census) living in 16,916 villages and scores of towns. In the north it is bounded by Kashmir, in the east by Tibet, in the south east by Garhwal and Utter Pradesh plains and in the south and south east by the Haryana and Punjab. 8

General map of Himachal Pradesh
Himachal Pradesh can broadly be divided into three regions. First the long Shiwalik ranges, which is the youngest and a comparatively low feature stretch in Himachal Pradesh from Kangra to Sirmour, sometimes in a single fold sometimes double and which include the plains of Kairda Dun. The Shiwalik ranges consist of scattered stony and sandy hillocks. The greatest height of these ranges is not more than 915 metres above the Gangetic plain. Often densely forested, it is the home of tigers, leopards, bears and other wild animals.

Second, the lesser Himalayas is a complex of older mountains. The average height of mountains in this zone is about 4,500 metres. This is a populated part and consists of high mountains and narrow valleys. There is a great variety of flora and fauna. The tree-line reaches up to a height of 3,500 metres. Dense tropical forests cover the lower slopes of these mountains in the east and in the west their place is taken by magnificent coniferous forests, consisting of majestic deodars. Facing the Indian plains, are hill-station like Dalhousie, Manali, Shimla, Nahan at altitudes varying from 1,500 to 2,200 metres. The two ranges of the lesser Himalayas are the Pir Panjal and Dhauladhar.
Third, the Greater Himalaya that axis and the crystalline core of the whole system is composed fundamentally of intruded granites and gneisses. The crust of the greater Himalayas rarely fall below 5,500 metres except at the great Sutlej river gorge and at the well known passes.

**Drainage:** In Indian sub-continent the Himachal region has the unique distinction of providing water to Indus and Gangas basin. The major river systems of the region are Yamuna with its tributaries of Tons, Pabar and Giri Ganga in the east. The Sutlej or Satudri, Beas or Vipas, Ravi or Purushni, Chaneb or Asikni of the *Rig Veda* are in the west. The catchment area of these rivers are located in the snow bound regions. These snowfed rivers, perennial in nature, play a very significant role in the social cultural and economic life of the people of the region.

The Sutlej, Satudri of the *Rig Veda* contributes most to the Western drainage system. The Sutlej rises from the southern slopes of the Kailash mountain, the elysium or Shivas' paradise of Puranic lore. After flowing about 320 kilometres from Rakshtal, it enters the eastern part of Himachal Pradesh at Shipki pass.

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9. इस गंगे यमुने सरस्वती शत्रुंगि स्तोम तवता परशुरा
असिन्ध्या मल्लवर्धे वत्सलया जौहर श्रीस्वर्या युष्मेगयः

*Rig Veda* Mandal 10, Sukta 65, Mantra 5-6.
(16,608 metres above the sea level). It receives the waters of the Spiti from the north, Baspa from the south and the Nogli Khan near Rampur Bushehar and many other streams. When it enters the Punjab plains at Bhakra where it forms one of the largest man-made lakes called Govind Sagar. Three district cultures flourished on the banks of this river.

Beas, the Vipas of the Rigveda rises from the 3,978 metres high Rohtang pass. It takes the water of several streams and springs and passes through Kullu, Mandi and Kangra valleys. At Mirthal it leaves the Pradesh. The valleys of Kullu and Kangra are culturally very rich. Since these valleys were not deeply affected by foreign invasions, they afford a wonderful opportunity to study the history and original culture that flourished here since times immemorial.

Parushni, the modern Ravi was an important river which played a decisive part in the Dasarajna (battle of the ten kings), by drowning the enemies of the Sudas. This river rises from the amphitheatre-like basin Bara Bhangal, a branch of the Dauladhar. It flows through Lahaul and Chamba and leaves the Pradesh at Kheri. Archaeologically Chamba region is very rich. Chamba town, the ancient capital of Chamba

state and now the headquarters of Chamba district, stands on the right bank of the Ravi.

The fifth and the last river is Chandrabhaga or Asikni of Rigveda. The Chandra and Bhaga two sister streams rise on the opposite sides of the Baralacha pass at an elevation of 4,891 metres, the Chandra on the south east, the Bhaga on the north west. These rivulets unite at Tandi (2,286 metres) and form one river of great size and volume. After flowing through the Pangi valley it leaves the district at Sansari nala and enters Padar valley of Kashmir.

The hills and valleys of Himachal Pradesh are studded with beautiful lakes. Most of the lakes are sacred and therefore play an important role in the social and religious life of the people of the state. Those worth mentioning are the Renuka lake of Sirmour, Chander Nahan lake of the Shimla hills, Prashar and Rewalsar lake of Mandi, Bhrigu lake of Kullu, Dal and Lama lakes of Kangra, Khajiar and Manimahesh lakes of Chamba. Govindsagar and some other lakes play a significant part in the economic life of the local population.

Hot springs which are found in many places in Himachal Pradesh, are also connected with various legends and therefore, are considered sacred places. On important dates, people take a dip in the hot water
spring. The water of these springs also have medicinal properties. The most famous springs are of Tatapani in Karsog, Vashishta near Manali and Manikaran in the Parvati valley of Kullu.

Himachal Pradesh is a mountainous region with elevation ranging from 350 to 7,000 metres. The climatic conditions here accordingly vary from the semi-tropical to semi-arctic. The climate of Kangra, the Beas valley, Siwalik area and Kirda valley in summer is severe and winter is pleasant with only a moderate variation between the day and night temperature. Snowfall is rare. The climate in the mid or lesser Himalayan ranges and the Ravi valley, is pleasant in summer, very cold in winter with heavy snowfall. In the Chandrabhaga and Kinnaur valleys the climate is temperate in summer and semi-arctic in winter. Snowfall begins in October and after December the whole valley is under snow till March or April. Communications remain cut off and the villages become almost isolated. In winter the inhabitants move to the lower hills. Mountainous topography and varied climatic condition have shaped the social, cultural and economic life of the people of Himachal Pradesh.

To study the fairs, festivals, customs and manners of the people it is necessary to study the composition of the society the cultural heritage
and history of the land. A series of migrations took place over the centuries. The migrants came principally from the Indian plains and also from some other areas. Four major cultures, each distinguished by its characteristic socio-economic features can be seen here.

First, the people of proto-historic Indian culture came to the Himachal area from the south settling in the southern and central hills. The distinctive features of this culture were Kolarian language, indigenous, religious-system and a mixed economy. Today's Koli, Hali, Chamars, Rehars, Chanals, Lohars, Beri, Dagis, Dhakis or Turis etc. are the descendents of this race. They form the lower strata of society and are mostly artisans by profession.

    "    " Punjab District Gazetteer:Kangra District, Lahore, 1907, p.85.
The second strain was that of the people of Aryan origin the Khasha\textsuperscript{14} who penetrated from north-west and settled in the mid-mountain belt of the Himalayas from Kashmir to Nepal. The principal features of their culture were the language, closely allied to sanskrit\textsuperscript{15} now known as Pahari.\textsuperscript{16} Today they form a large majority of the population.

The Indo Mangoloide known as Kirata or Bhota in Sanskrit literature came from the north-east.\textsuperscript{17} The people of this culture settled in the northern most fringes and in the course of time intermingled with the indigenous population. Their characteristic features includes Tibeto-Burman Language\textsuperscript{18} Lamastic Budhism and a mixed economy.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Punjab Government, Punjab Gazetteer: Mandi State, Lahore, 1920, p.85.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Griesson, George Abraham, Linguistic Survey of India-Indo-Aryan Family, Vol.9, Part-4, Calcutta, 1916, p.2.
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Singh, M.G.S., Himachal Pradesh: History, Culture Economy, Shimla, 1988, p.18.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Griesson, G.A., (Linguistic Survey of India- Tibets: Burman family,) Delhi, 1967, p.8.
\end{itemize}
The Indo-Aryan$^{19}$ culture penetrated from the north Indian plains. The Indo-Aryans came from these areas from time to time for a number of reasons. The most important reason was the location of holy places in and around the Himachal areas. High caste Hindus migrated to the hills during the Muslim invasions of north India from the 12th to 15th centuries. The distinct features of their culture were Indo-Aryan language, Vashnavism, the caste system and settled agriculture.

Although the people of Himachal Pradesh comprise of four major cultural groups, the predominant cultural characteristics have been provided by the Aryan people—the Khashas and their kith and kin, the kanets$^{20}$ who laid the foundation of much that is considered to be typical of the area to-day.

Their descendants form the majority of the population of Himachal Pradesh. Today they are known as Koli, Hali, Dom, Kinnaurs, Kirates, Lahaulas, Spitians, Gaddis, Girths, Gujars, Khashas, Kanets, Rajputs, Brahmans etc. The majority of the population of Himachal Pradesh are Hindus$^{21}$ but buddhists, Jains.


21. Parmar, Dr.Y.S. Polyandry in the Himalayas, Delhi, 1975, p.8.
Sikhs, Muslims and Christians also form a sizable portion. The people of all groups enjoy perfect freedom to pursue their own way of life, Customs, conventions and beliefs.

It is not only the Indian civilization and culture that influenced the life of the people of Himachal Pradesh but also the culture of neighbouring areas like Kashmir, Tibet and Central Asia. Of these the influence of Peninsula India was the strongest, because there was a steady contact between the people of the hills and the plains of the sub-continent and a lesser contact with the people of Central Asia.

But inspite of its general unity, culture was not of a uniform pattern throughout the length of the region. Even today this varies from place to place and from valley to valley. There has always been distinction between the Indo-Aryan speaking areas of the southern hills an Indo-Tibetan speaking areas of the north. Other differences may be attributed to climatic conditions and religious background. The people of Himachal Pradesh are bound together by ties of common religion, though religious observances differ. By and large they have maintained their original forms of worship. The large majority is Hindu by faith, devoted to traditional gods. The people have a firm almost, a blind belief in the village dieties, whether the deity is a god, a hero,
a Rishi or otherwise. It is called Devta, because it is the source of inspiration for all the villagers. Almost every village has a temple where the people congregate for common worship. The village dieties are carried in palanquins to places of religious interest and to the fairs and festivals. The deities are propitiated to obtain timely rain or good harvests or other favours. People believe that their gods are generally well disposed towards the worshippers, and confirm their blessings on them. If, however, they are not worshipped in proper form, they become angry and in their wrath, allow the evil spirits to prey on men in the form of epidemic diseases and other calamities. They believe that spirits live in the hill ranges and tree tops and occasionally disturb their peace. The people protect themselves under the sheltering care of their village dieties. Thus a common belief is to ward off the evil effect of their spirits by worshipping the gods.

The people of Himachal Pradesh are amongst the most pleasant and lively people in the world. They are humourous and light-hearted even in adversity and are found of good living and almost entirely without guile. They are, good looking. Most of them have prominent and well formed features and are simple and unsophisticated. They are honest almost to a fault. Offences involving even thefts are rare. They have generally a great regard for truthfulness. Except for a few towns, there is hardly any urban life in the hills, the people live mainly in
villages consisting of a few hamlets dotted over the fields. In the lower hills houses are usually single-storeyed with thatched roof while in the upper region, there are generally two storeyed with slate roofs. In the highland, however, the houses are three storeyed, the ground floor or basement being used for keeping cattle. The people of Himachal Pradesh, depend on agriculture for living and keep big herds of goats and sheep. More than 90% of the people living in villages earn their livelihood directly or indirectly from agriculture. There are terraced cultivated fields in the altitudinal zone, Kangra, Balh and Paonta are the famous valleys. They love taking their cattle out into jungle for grazing and singing there merrily to the music of a flute.

The villages are generally self-sustained units. In the sphere of social relations, an important feature is the strong family affinities and the joint family system. The environment has greatly influenced the social status of women. The sturdy and self-reliant women of the Pradesh enjoy a greater degree of freedom.

and respect their counterparts the rest of the country and elsewhere. The striking feature of the women here is their heavy costumes and jewellery. Jewellery is almost an article of dress. The style vary from village to village.

The people are found of dancing too. Though each region has its peculiar style, the basic technique is the same in the entire Pradesh. They are invariably group dancing. Men and women usually dance separately. Women form themselves into two groups moving in a circle. They gracefully sway their bodies halfway with each step raising their arms. Such dancing is invariably accompanied by singing in two groups alternatively repeating the same couplets "Take time off to dance, it is the privilege of the gods" so they believe. Among the musical instruments, they favour the tambourine, drum, trumpet, cymbal and pipe. The tambourine is the most popular.

Folk dramas are an important medium of entertainment in Himachal Pradesh. These are generally staged in winter all over the Pradesh, when people have leisure time after the hectic months of sowing and harvesting. The village folk gather at a public place like the temple courtyard and sit there through out the night watching a folk drama. Popular music and dances are introduced in between the various caricatures in order to make the programme interesting.
The most popular type of folk dramas are Kariyala, Banthara, Jhanki, Swang, and Bhagat.

Of the various games and sports played in the rural areas, wrestling is by far the most popular in Himachal Pradesh, especially in the lower hills. It is a very exciting part of the village fair where young wrestlers from the surrounding villages come to grips in a trial of strength. The winners are rewarded. They bring a name not only to themselves but to their villages also.

The other popular game is archery locally called Thoda. Only those who are young and stout play this game. The women and children have their games, also. Mostly these are indoor games. In winter when the fields and forests are covered with snow, women and children spend their leisure hours in playing these indoor game. Majority of the population understand and speak the common lingua franca - Pahari which is akin to Hindi. But in the tribal areas of Lahaul, Spiti and Kinnaur etc., they have their own dialects. However, the main dialects that constitute Pahari are Sirmuri, Keonthali, Baghati, Kului, Mandiali, Kangri and Chambiali. Linguistically Pahari language has

26. Thakur, S.S.S., Kariyala: Folk Theatre of Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, N D.

characteristics of its own, which distinguish it from its neighbouring languages like Hindi, Punjabi, and Dogri. The richness of Pahari language is seen in its folklore and literature. During the hey days of Pahari painting several manuscripts were written and illustrated for hill rulers, scholars and temples. These included the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Gita and Durga Saptashati. Some are on medicine and astrology.

In recent times, however, quite a substantial amount of work has been done on Pahari literature and more books are likely to come out in the near future. Whereas the culture of a community, region and country is evolved by its people, the history is made by the kings and heroes of that land. In order to understand the cultural heritage of Himachal Pradesh, it is worthwhile to acquaint oneself with the historical past.

The history and tradition of the Himachal Pradesh goes back to the dawn of civilization. The pre history of Himachal Pradesh is the tale of the migration of people of the affiliated races from the Indian plains and Central Asia. Its history is perhaps

the most unique and remarkable compared with that of any other region of the Himalayas.

The age of the Indus civilization has been assessed to be between 2500 B.C. to 1500 B.C. This civilisation covered an enormous area from the Arabian sea to the Ganges. It covered the whole of the Punjab from the Himalayan foot-hills in the north to the inner valley of the Yamuna and its tributaries in the north-east. This Indus valley civilisation spread over such a vast area that it was not a city culture but an unified empire. On the fringe of the Indus valley the tribes inhabiting the Himalayan foot-hills were Kols (Proto-Austral-oid). In Vedas they have been called Dasas, Dasyu and Hishadasa, etc. In post-vedic literature they were mentioned as Yakshas, Kinnaras, Kiratas and Nagas. Who inhabited this region before them, is not known. The people of this area are the descendants of the neolithic man in Himachal Pradesh. Perhaps the Kolis, Halis, and Dums of Western Himalaya


33. Rig Veda, Mandala 1, Sukla 130, Mantra 7, 11.9.6.

and Chumangs and Domangs of Kinnaur, Lahaul and Spiti are the Descendants of that very ancient race. During the Rig-Vedic period, they were the master of the hills and according to Rigveda, their strong king Shambra had ninety-nine strong forts in the hills, between Beas and Yamuna rivers.

In the same period a more powerful race, the Khashas, an offshoot of the Aryan race, entered the racial arena of Himachal Pradesh. When the Aryanas left their Central Asian home, one of their branches crossed the Pamirs to enter Kashmir and then slowly moved forward to the middle belt of the Himalayan ranges. They subjugated the aborigines and established their colonies in the hills from Kangra to Nepal. They became the new masters of the land. They turned the Kannuar-Kirat Desh into Khash-Desh. They assimilated the tribes and were, in turn, influenced by them thereby evolving a new social structure. When they were well settled, they organised themselves into a distinct village-based society. These early settlers organised themselves into a unitary group or a circle. In every circle the members elected a representative from among themselves. They called


37. Mittoo, H.C. *Himachal Pradesh*, Delhi, 1978, p.21
him Mavi or Mavana meaning the strong man who was duly authorised to receive tribute from his subjects.38 These Mavana Thakurs incessantly fought with and plundered each other. The stronger Mavanas subdued the weaker one and added their circles into their own. This unitary system of administration also came to be called Mavanas. In turn these Mavanas developed into petty republics popularly known as Janapadas.

According to the Mahabharata, and also as attested by Panini (5th century B.C.) the important Janapadas of this region were Trigarta, Audumbra, Kuluta and Kulinda.39 The existence of these Janapadas is further proved by the discovery of their coins in different parts of this region.

The coins of the Andumbras40 have been found in Pathankot, Jawalamukhi region of Kangra and at Hoshiarpur. This shows that the Andumbras at one time ruled over the western part of the modern Kangra district, that is, the entire region of Gurdaspur and Hoshiarpur districts, situated on the great route of commerce whih ran from the Gangetic plains to Takshila. Their popular leader was Tharaghosa. He not only

Anonymous: "हिमालय की माहौल अभ्यास इतिहास" हिमालय कल्पनाम् 148 1965 प• 12
39. Agarwals, V.S. India As Known to Panini; Lucknow p.53-54,56.
checked the advance of Indo-Greek power, but also extended the boundaries of his Republic upto the Sutlej and further east word.

The Audumbaras issued copper and silver coins. They were issued in the name of the community and the king. These coins date from the 1st Century B.C. and have legends in both the Brahimi and Kharoshti scripts.

Trigarta finds repeated mention in Sanskrit literature. The Trigarta country corresponds to modern Kangra and the land between the rivers Ravi and Satluj. Trigarta denotes the geographical region drained by the three rivers, Ravi, Beas and the Satluj.

The first historical mention of Trigarta is to be found in the 5th century B.C. writings of Panini. It is described by Panini as a confederation of six states known as 'Trigarta Shashthas'. The six members of the confederancy were: Kaundoporatha, Dandaki, Jalmani, Brahmagupta and Janki. The evidence of Trigarta as an independent Republic in the 2nd Century B.C. is indicated by coin with the legend 'Trakata Janapadasa' in Brahmi characters. Traces of some inscription in Kharoshti on the obverse are also visible on this coin which is square in shape.

41. Agarwals, V.S. India as Known to Panini. Lucknow 1953, p.53-54.
Kulutas earliest mention is found in the Ramayana and Vishnu Purana. The Kulutas are mentioned along with Audumbaras and Kulindas.\(^{42}\) They were close to the Audumbaras with Kulindas as their eastern neighbours. The territory of the Kulutas was located in the upper Beas Valley which on Palaeographic basis find may be dated for the first or second century A.D. The legend 'Virayasasya Rajna Kulutasya'\(^{43}\) is practically in Sanskrit, which shows that this coin is not very early whereas the survival of the Prakrit 'rana' in Kharoshti on the reverse shows that it cannot be very late. Thus, a date around A.D. 100 seems to be indicated.


\(^{43}\) Handa, (Dr) O.C. *Numismatic Sources on the early History of Western Himalayas*. Delhi, 1984, p.62

Kulindas or Kunindas\(^{44}\) are mentioned in Mahabharata and Puranas. The Kulindas were hill people. They lived in the area between the rivers Beas, Satluj and Yamuna (Shimla and Sirmour hills and between Amabala and Saharanpur in the plain). This is also proved by the fact that a large number of coins of the Kulindas were found in the country between Ambala and Saharanpur and in the Shiwalik hills.

From the extent of the country of the Kulindas, we may identify them with the Kanets or Kunets of our time, who, form the bulk of the population of Kullu, the Shimla hills and the Sirmour hills. The name 'Mavi' and 'Mavana' given to the Kanets and the Khashasa designates the ancient possessors of the hills. Their tradition says that both the Kanets and the Khashas, were the masters of the hills before the great Aryan migration.

Numismatic finds of the second and the first century B.C. in this region show that at the time the Kulindas were independent and that the republic was administered by a central Assembly. Their coins were struck in the name of the king and the political community. They issued silver and copper coins bearing Brahmi and Kharoshti inscriptions. So far as the economic situation of the tribe was concerned, we may infer from their silver coinage that they were fairly prosperous.

Those republics which flourished into the Gupta period of Indian History, (of which we know from Ashtadhyayi the Puranas, Budhist literature Arthashastra, Greek accounts and coins) disappeared in the fourth century A.D. for which perhaps the Imperial Gupta were responsible.

The great Mauryan empire builder, Chandragupta (324-300 B.C.) negotiated an alliance with Parvatkas
people of Himalaya). His grand-son Ashoka extended his boundaries to the Himalayan country and erected many Stupas in that region. One of those stupas existed in the Kullu Valley about which the Chinese traveller Huien Tsang (in India 630-645) has made a mention in his book Si-yu-ki. Another evidence is that of Ashokan rock inscription of Kalsi on the confluence of the Tons and the Yamuna in Jaunsar-Bawar region probably those tribal republics remained tributories to the Mauryan empire.

After the Mauryas, the Shungas come to power. They could keep those tribal republics under their way. But the Kushanas who followed the Shungas established an extensive empire within and beyond India's borders from Central Asia to Mathura in the South and Banaras in the east. The Kushana weakened the Janpadas of Audumbaras Kulindas and Kulutas. On the dissolution of the Kushanas, another power known as Guptas rose from east India. Their great kings Samudragupta and Chandragupta Vikramaditya brought this area under their sway and some to the Janpadas like Madras, Audumbras and Kunidas disappared from the scene and probably their territories formed part of the great Gupta empire. On the disintegration of the Gupta empire in the sixth century A.D. the petty local barons known

as ranas and thakurs probably rose into power and became independent.

Early in the seventh century (in 606 A.D.), Harsha came to power at Thaneshwar. He established a very powerful empire in India with his seat at Kanauj. All the hill chiefs including Jalandhara Trigarta, Kuluta, Satadru and Shrugna acknowledged his supremacy. 47

After the break up of Harsha's empire there was a great political upheaval in the plains of India. The Rajputs appeared on the scene. In Indian history of period of 400 years from eighth century to twelveth century is called Rajput period. They founded many principalities in India. Some of the adventurous Rajput princes penetrated into the central and western Himalayan valleys. They succeeded in subduing the local barons, ranas and Thakurs to establish their own principalities. They also encouraged other Rajputs and Brahmins of the plains to settle in their kingdoms. The Rajputs from the plains were also invited to join the forces against the local people.

Right from the sixth century to the fifteenth century there was a constant inflow of these Rajput clans. They founded several small states from the Duns

to the lesser Himalayans and further beyond to the higher Himalayans. The important among them were Kangra, Kullu, Chamba, Nurpur, Suket, Mandi, Kahlur (Bilaspur), Bushar, Jubbal Keonthal, Baghat & Sirmour. There were several other small hill states.

Trigarta (Kangra) was the oldest among the hill states. It is known to have been founded by Susharma Chandra at the conclusion of the Mahabharata was although this theory has been questioned in recent researches. On account of the constant inroad of invading hordes from the north-west, the Kangra Rajas shifted their capital from Jalandhar to Nagarkot in the hills in 1070 A.D., with the passage of time the Trigarta-Kangra Kingdom split into small principalities like Jaswan, Guler, Siba and Datapur.

The second oldest state was Kullu. Archaeological findings place this state back into the first or second century A.D. The founder of the new dynasty of Kullu was Behgamani.

A Nirmand copper plate of the 6th century A.D. states that at that time Spiti was ruled by a Hindu Raja Samudra Sen. In the upper Satluj Valley,

49. Ibid., Vol.1, p.123.
Bushahar was the oldest state probably founded before the Christian era by one Pradhuman, Chamba was founded by Maruwarman in the middle of the 6th century. Suket was established by Vir Sen and Keonthal by his brother Giri Sen in the 12th century. Mandi was the offshoot of Suket and came into existence in 1526 A.D. Ancient Sirmaur principality was probably founded some time in the 6th or 7th century A.D. by a Rathore prince. It is the end of the 12th century (C.1195) A.D., a heavy flood in the Giri river completely swept away Sirmauri Tal, the ancient capital of Sirmaur. Raja Ugar Chand was drowned in the flood, while his three sons were at the Hatkoti. They were on a pilgrimage to Haridwar. When he learnt about the destruction of the Sirmaur Tal and he at once asked his son to march on to Sirmaur. Thus, a second dynasty of Bhatti Rajputs was established in Sirmaur in 1195 A.D. The three sons of Ugar Chand, stranded at Hatkoti, divided Hatkoti and the adjoining areas amongst themselves. The


52. Gautam, Som Krishan, Vansavali or Historical Record of the Chandra Bansi, Lunar Dynasty and Maharajas of India, Suket Darbar, 1940, p.19-20.


eldest son Karan Chand became the ruler of Jabbar while Mul Chand and Duni Chand ruled Sairi (extinct in 1864 A.D.) and Rawingarh respectively.

Kahlur (Bilaspur) was founded by Bir Chand a Chandel prince, in C.900 A.D. 55 Hindur (Nalagarh, and offshoot or Kahlur) was established by Ajai Chand in the 12 century A.D.

The other states were: Baghal, Bhaghat Kumharsain Bhajji, Mahlog, Balson, Kulhar, Kanihar, Mangal, Beja, Darkoti, Tharoach, Sangri, Koti, Theog, Mahdana, Ghund, Ratech, Delath, Dhandi. These were also founded from the time to time by influential Rajput Princes from the Indian plains. 56

During the supremacy of Kanauj, especially when it was under the Palas and the Gurjara-Pratiharas, the hill estates acknowledged the over lordship of Kanauj. But they remained virtually independent and the central powers did not bother to interfere in their affairs probably because they thought that they had nothing to extract from these minor hill states. Secondly, the


56. India Government, Memoranda on Indian States, Delhi, 1940, p.242-58.
Rajputs, then did not think of any major campaign against these hills States as such which remained untouched.

Muslims too left these hill barons on their own except in two or three cases where they tried to subdue the hill rajas, but were bravely resisted. Mahmud Gazanvi in 1009 A.D. penetrated as far as Nagarkot. Ferozshah Tughluq\(^{57}\) sent a large force to bring this area under his way. Mughal Emperors Akbar and Jahangir also tried to annex Kangra,\(^{58}\) but the brave Katoch rulers withstood the trials.

In the second half of the 18th century, a new tribe known as Gurkhas rose to power. Under the leadership of Prithvi Narain Shah, they spread like wild fire and engulfed the whole of the Western Himalaya as far as Kangra,\(^{59}\) They occupied Kumaon and Garhwal in 1803 A.D. and by 1805 A.D. they captured Kangra fort. In 1809 A.D. Raja Sansar Chand of Kangra, with the help of Maharaja Ranjit Singh pushed them beyond Satluj river, but they were able to keep their hold on the area east of Satluj.

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People were tired of their harsh and tyrannical rule. They united themselves and took a stand against them. The English also came to their help and in 1815 A.D the Gurkhas were compelled to leave this country. But the British help turned out to be a trap for them. They compelled the local rulers to sign certain Treaties according to which the paramount power from the hand of these rulers, passed on to the British Government of India.

In the plains of the Punjab, Maharaja Ranjit Singh did not lag behind and brought the country between the Satluj and Sind (India) under his sway but the second Sikh War of 1848 put Punjab under the Britishers consequently, Kangra, Nurpur, Kullu, Lahaul and Spiti became a part of British India, whereas the states of Chamba, Mandi and Suket were returned to their rulers. This caused great resentment among the Katoch and Pathania chiefs. In 1857 they revolted along with some other princes, one of whom was Raja Sansar Singh of Bushahr. The Britishers succeeded in suppressing the revolt but not the spirit and the volcano of the freedom movement erupted in the twenties of present century and came to be known as the Praja Mandal Movement. The torch-bearers of this movement were Bhag Mal Sautha of Jubbal, Pandit Padam Dev, Mansha Ram, Dr. Y.S. Parmar and many others.

61. Punjab Government Records, Lahore, 1911, Vol. 8 part-1
At last the country attained freedom. On the 15th August 1947. But that was not the end of the struggle for the hill people. The national leaders invited the princes to join the mainstream. They felt the pulse of the time and signed the instrument of accession. On 8th March 1948, thirty odd princes of Shimla and Punjab hills met in Delhi and inscribed their signatures on the document surrendering their centuries old Raj to the masses. And thus Himachal Pradesh in the form of a unit, came into existence on the 15th of April, 1948.

This was the first step towards the integration of the hill areas. In 1950 the enclaves of Kotkhai, Kotgarh, Bharoli were handed over to Himachal Pradesh in lieu of Sanjauli which was given to Punjab. In 1954, Bilaspur, which was previously left out and kept under separate rule was merged with Himachal Pradesh. In order to carve out a greater Himachal on the 1st of November 1966, Kangra, Kullu, Lahaul & Spiti and Shimla districts of the Punjab were merged into it. Full Statehood was granted to Himachal Pradesh on the 25th of January, 1971, and the Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi inaugurated it.

63. Singh, M.G. Himachal Pradesh, Shimla, 1988, p. 31