CHAPTER VI

TRADE MARTS AND TRADE FAIRS

The organisation of commercial activity and markets are interdependent and flourishing on each other. It has already been stated that trade and commerce activities in the hill states were relatively limited in scope and there were therefore markets of a somewhat restricted nature. The import and export activity was mainly carried out during the annual fairs of different states. But in real sense most of the hill states had no regulated markets. Bashahr, Mandi, Kulu, Shimla, Lahaul and Spiti, Sabathu and Una had business places which could be termed as markets. These markets catered to the local requirements and also served as entrepots.

The expansion of the Gurkhas to the Western Himalaya placed all the practical trade routes through the Himalaya to Tibet and Ladakh under their control. The Gurkha policy of excluding foreign and even Indian traders and controlling all trade between Tibet and the plains prevented the British and Indian merchants from the commercial exploitation of the hill markets. Lt. Ross, in-charge of the relations with the cis-Sutlej hill states suggested that the government should probe the possibilities
of a commercial connection with the raja of Kulu, a small state across the Sutlej which straddled the main trade route from Ladakh to the Punjab. He pointed out that the trade in shawls and shawl-wool could be tapped in Kulu and drawn off into the company's territory. But in view of the Governor General, the plan was 'liable to considerable objections, since it might be viewed by Ranjit Singh as an attempt to form a connection with countries lying on the other side of the Sutlej and as justifying any measure on his part to renew his intercourse with the Sikh Chief on this side.....' Fear of offending Ranjit Singh undoubtedly weighed heavy with the government. But at the same time the company was also deliberating upon the expediency for the British government of appropriating to itself hill tracts east of Sutlej. They wanted to control these areas, not so much with a view to collecting revenues as for the security of commercial communications with the country of Tibet where the shawl wool was produced. Tibet was also the richest source in the world for borax and the musk. The plains of the north-west were the meeting place for merchants who used to come by land from Tibet, Ladakh and Kandhar. In the western Himalaya the valley of the river Sutlej provided a broad natural highway directly linking the Punjab plains with the plateau of western Tibet. The small state of Bashahr in the upper Sutlej valley had acquired great importance as a convenient half way stage on the route from Ladakh and Tibet. It was at Rampur, the capital of that
state, that sellers from Kashmir, Ladakh and Yarkand came
down to meet the lowland traders and to exchange the
precious merchandise of central Asia for the wheat and
manufactured goods of the plains. The inhabitants of
Bashahr betrayed by their politeness and probity a long
tradition of commercial experience. In the words of James
Ballie Fraser, who visited Rampur in 1815 AD that "they had
become the commercial carriers between Hindustan and
Tartary, as also between Tartary and Kashmir, frequenting
the routes from Leh in Ladakh to Lhasa and Shigatse and
Nepal, on trading speculations. It was by the Sutlej route,
no doubt that Indian merchants travelled, when they went to
the great annual fair at Gartok, capital of Western Tibet,
where every September traders from Ladakh, Kashmir, Tartary,
Yarkand, Tibet, China and Bashahr haggled, bartered and
bargained". This was the area where the very best shawl
wool was produced—a fact which, together with the monopoly
enjoyed by Ladakh and Kashmir, made the western Himalaya the
natural centre of the trade in this immensely profitable
commodity. The hill region between the Indus and the Sutlej
were placed with roads, pathways and river valley-plexus of
ramification from arteries of commerce which led to the
Punjab in south, to Kashmir and Ladakh in the north and to
Tibet in the east. Thus the East India company became
interested in Himalayan trade. This was because it offered
the possibility of making available another Indian
commodity, shawl wool which the company would be able to use
as a vehicle for transferring funds from India to England profitably. Thus, the British Himalaya policy in 1814 AD was, therefore, fashioned by two types of necessity that created by local border problems, and that deriving from economic and strategic issues. Therefore, on November 1, 1814, the British declared war against the Gurkhas.

Soon after winning the Gurkha war in 1815 AD, the British East India Company made enquiries about the trade potential of the hill region, particularly of Bashahr state. Capt. R. Ross, Assistant Agent to Governor General deputed one Munshi Karimuddin to Garo and Ladakh for the purpose. He submitted a remarkable report to the government detailing routes, distances, commodities of trade with rates of selling at Garo in Tibet and Lavi fair in Rampur, the capital of Bashahr state (see Appendix I).

Rampur was situated on the left or eastern bank of the river Sutlej. It was the only market in Bashahr state and was considered the emporium of these states. It was nearly 70 miles from Shimla the summer capital of British empire in India. Its elevation was 3,300 feet and Hindustan-Tibet road passed through middle of the bazar.

Rampur was founded by Raja Ram Singh (1767-1799), the 116th in line, sometime in the eighteenth century AD. Before this Sarahan, high up in the hills, was the seat of
the state. What were the actual reason for the transfer of capital to Rampur is not known. Probably territorial expansion towards the south, administrative convenience and building a mart for marketing general merchandise brought into Bashahr state by traders from Spiti, Ladakh, Zanskar and Western Tibet and also local products of Kinnaur and Kulu. Sarahan was perched high on the slope and, therefore, more secure, was a very cold place in the winters. Ram Singh moved his capital to a more, climatically, conducive place in the valley and called it Rampur. This place was easily approachable both from the north and the south.

Capt. C.P. Kennedy, Assistant Deputy Superintendent, Hill States, in his report of 1824 mentioned to Lt. W. Murray, Deputy Superintendent, Hill States that "the inhabitants appear very industrious and have a manufacture of coarse shawls and other woollens. There is an excellent bazar, and at three periods of the year fairs are held which are attend by people from Sikh plains, Cooloo, Kunawur, Tartary, Ludaik and Cashmere...... The streets in the bazar are broad and well laid out; the house stand in square, have an area in the centre, appearing neat and possessing great convenience and comforts."

"Rampur may be considered the emporium of these states. It is a channel of commercial communication between Chinese Tartary, Ludauk and Cooloo. It is the resort of people of many countries, characters and customs. The Tartar was observed putting his wool in one scale and receiving its weight in tobacco, or coarse sugar, from the trader of the plains of India, neither of them being able to comprehend each other's language. The common steel yard was observed in general use in the fair for weighing articles of the trade."

"The marks of Nepal oppression meet the eye constantly in the depopulated and decayed houses in Rampur. The town begins now to wear the appearance of progressive improvement, and in the course of a few years, if the present Raja retains his senses and proves a blessing to his country, this capital may be fairly expected to resume its former flourishing trade. There is an air and appearance here altogether different from the character of Asiatic town."

Rampur was the only mart in the hills. All shopkeepers in Rampur were natives of the Ambala, Hoshiarpur, Kangra districts, or of the Patiala state.

Their method of dealing with the zamindars at the time of the Rampur settlement in thus described in the Assessment Report of that tehsil.3

"Every shopkeeper keeps two kinds of weights, one equal to 5 seers (pukka) and the other weighing 4 seers, which for the purpose of sale is considered a five seer weight "pachsera". Those articles which are given to the cultivators are weighed with the latter, while those things which are bought from them are weighed with the former. Thus there is always a difference of 25 per cent, between both weights."

"The measures also are of two kinds, one yard is equal 16 girahs in length, while the other is 13 girah only. Things purchased from the zamindars are measured with 16 girah yard, while those sold to them are measured with 13 girah yard."

"The weights used for the purchase of grain are also of two kinds and are known as tamat and patha".

From Rampur a considerable part of the shawl-wool was exported to British India. This wool was brought to Rampur market by the hill people, both of the Spiti 3. Gazetteer of Simla Hill State : Bashahr State, 1911, p. 60-61.
mountains and of Chinese Tartary. Part of it was used for the manufacture of shawls known as Rampuri chaddar, but the greater part was bought up by merchants for exportation into British India. Besides pasham the fine shawl-wool, common kinds of wool were also brought in large quantity to Rampur for exportation to British India. In 1840 the value of pasham imported to Rampur was valued by Capt Alexander Cunningham at about Rs.90,000. Mr. Baden Powell mentioned that "about 2,000 maunds of wool are annually brought to Rampur and about half that quantity of pasham".

The principal items of trade at Rampur were: wool, pattu cloth and blankets, pashmina cloth, neoza (edible pine nut), zera (cummin), honey, ghi, karru, violets, dhup, apricots, grapes, yak's tails and mohra (aconite, white and black). These articles were brought into Rampur and sold these at the annual fairs. The Kinnauri traders used to bring from Tibet wool, pasham, salt, borax, numdas, carpets, and charas, and disposed of them at the Rampur annual fairs of which there were three (1) Lavi from 22nd, Katak (10th November) to Ist Magh; (2) Dhal from 12th to 25th Poh; (3) Loi Jeth from 22nd Baisakh to Ist Jeth.

5. Gazetteer of Simla Hill States. 1911. p. 61.
6. Ibid., p. 62.
7. Ibid., p. 61.

HP District Gazetteer : Kinnaur Simla, 1971. p.188.
The first named was the most important and was an interesting spectacle. The Kinnauri traders used to bring down large herds of sheep and goats laden with bundles of pasham or little bags of salt and borax from Kinnaur, Tibet etc. Tiny donkeys laden with pattu, blankets, neoza, zera etc. came from various parts of Kinnaur. There were lama horse-dealers too. Kulu dealers used to bring pattu chiefly. Besides this, phulli (a kind of soda), salt and musk, were bought in from Changthan, which were brought up both by local traders and by travelling merchants from the Punjab. In return of these commodities, brocades, broad cloth, sugar candy, kiriana (drugs, groceries etc.) cotton piece goods and rice were bought in from the Punjab and neighbouring states, and found a ready sale.

There are various versions of the origin of Lavi fair. One connects it to the shearing of sheep (or loi in local dialect, which word, in time, it is believed, got corrupted to Lavi). An other, from where it takes its origin, links it to the historic trade treaty between Bashahr state and Tibet concluded in the 17th century (c.1681). The treaty with Tibet was formalised in the time of Raja Kehari Singh (1639-1696 AD). There are various

8. Gazetteer of Simla District, 1889-89, p. 73.
versions of why this treaty was concluded. According to one, the border regions were dominated by brigands. The frequent incursions of these raiders into the Kinnaur region, then a part of Bashahr state, were a constant irritant for Bashahr.

Once Raja Kehari Singh went for an outing with his guards and crossed the Shipki into Tibet (presumably after the brigands). There he was challenged by the commander of the Tibetan army and a skirmish ensued. Which, instead of bitterness, resulted in a longlasting friendship. The trade agreement was, it is said, a product of the meeting. However, there is an other version, which is supported by the evidence of a scroll, in Tibetan script, found in Namgia village about 12 km from the border. The scroll, which runs into 45 lines, says that Tibet was annexed by Ladakh in the time of Gyalden. When Gyalden was marching with his army towards western Tibet, to liberate it, he met Raja Kehari Singh in the region of the Mansarovar lake. And there a treaty was concluded between the two rulers which began with,\textsuperscript{10} "In the name of the Supreme Saint Buddha it is announced that till the Mount Kailash, the abode of the omniscient gods and situated in the centre of the Earth, will have snow, till the sacred Mansarovar lake will have water, till the judgement Day, this friendship will last."

The clause of the treaty provided that "In addition to the trade, the safety and convenience of the travellers will be ensured, and once in three years an ambassador from Bashahr will visit the important trade centres of Tibet." This treaty resulted in the liberation of Tibet, a deeper friendship and free and increased trade between the two states. The Lavi fair, it is said, started as a memorial to that treaty. The treaty is believed to have been executed in 1881 and the antiquity of the fair is thus marked to that date.

Where the first Lavi was held is not clearly recorded. For Rampur was established by Raja Ram Singh11, successor of Raja Kehari Singh, after whom the city was named. But Rampur proved to be an ideal site. It was one of the hottest spots of the kingdom and to escape the rigorous winters the shepherds gathered here in November.

Since the earliest time Lavi was known for its trade in sheep and pashmina wool and a shepherded felt it compulsive to be present here. The main imports from Tibet used to be horses (especially the Chamurthi and Gunth breeds), mules, and better breeds of sheep and goats. These usually came loaded with woollen fabric, Pashmina, shawls and woollen rugs (gudma and namda) etc. The caravans used

to start well in advance of the fair, for the journey was long and many days had to be spent on the road. These goods are bartered for neoza and almonds, chulli, black cumin seeds, shilajit (a natural potent on rocks), Kuth, etc. A variety of handicrafts were also popular with the traders from abroad.

During princely days Lavi was the biggest trade fair in the hill regions, if not North India, that commended participation from Tibet and all the surrounding regions.

The traditional trade between Bashahr and Tibet has been disrupted a few times and this has had its effect on the Lavi fair. One such incident was when the Gurkhas occupied Rampur and the other was in the time of Raja Gulab Singh of Kashmir, who being interested in diverting the Tibetan tradesmen to his own territory, sealed the routes between Tibet and Bashahr on account of which the flow of shawl wool to Rampur dwindled\(^\text{12}\) to a trickle and Dogra rule reached Rudak and Gartok.

**SIMLA (Shimla)**

After the expulsion of the Gurkhas from the hills the British Government decided to retain a foothold in the

strategic areas. Two such important posts were Subathu and Kotgarh. It is said that the area, which later on came to be known as Simla was first traversed by a British Officer in 1816 AD who recounted its beauty to his colleagues on his return to his headquarters at Subathu. But it was only in 1819 AD that the then Assistant Political Agent in the hill states, Lieutent Ross, set up the first British residence. It was a mere cottage of wood and thatch but it marked the beginning of a settlement which has left an indelible mark on the history.

His successor, Lt. Charles Pratt Kennedy, erected the first *pucca* house in the area three years later in 1822 AD. Simla's First Settlement Report recounts that from 1824 AD onwards "European gentlemen, chiefly invalids from the plains, had, with permission of these chiefs, established themselves in the locality, building houses on sites granted rent free, and with no other stipulation than that they should refrain from the slaughter of pine and from the felling of trees, unless with previous permission of the proprietors of the land".


"The station became gradually favourably known as a Sanatorium, and in 1830. The government directed that negotiations should be entered into with the chiefs of Patiala and Keonthal, for as much land as was deemed sufficient to form a station." Accordingly Maj. Kennedy, the then Political Agent, negotiated an exchange with the Rana Keonthal for his portion of the Simla hill. The climate of Simla soon became famous, many more English and Indian people resorted there and built houses. Accordingly, the population of Shimla began to swell, and finally Shimla was rendered fashionable by the Governor General Lord Amhest who visited the station during summer 1827 and stayed there for two months.

Throwing light on the early growth and trade activities of Shimla Pamela Kanwar\textsuperscript{15} mentioned that "to provision Simla with essential foodgrains, the construction of several new routes and the diversion of others was required. Simla did not lie on an established trade route; traders from the Mandi (wholesale markets) of Hoshiarpur and Jagadhri had to travel there. The creation of chowkis by hill rulers charging transit duties posed a problems here. Along the Pinjore-Sabathu-Simla route, the Patiala ruler framed out chawkis at Barh and Haripur to the higher bidder. The ruler of Bilaspur levied a tax on traders travelling

from Kangra and Simla. In 1824, all duties levied by hill rulers were abolished\textsuperscript{16}. "To trace an alternative mule road a link to Simla via Subathu across Nahan, with the markets at Jagadhri, was made. In 1832, octroi and other transit duties imposed at sale were abolished and traders were free to trade without search, detention or question" The traditional items of trade between Bashahr and the plains passed through Simla market, the principal imports the plains being grains, cloth, cotton, silk, copper and brass, while the exports included hill produce-opium, cumin, seed, borax, shawl-wool, ginger, walnuts and honey."

Capt C.P. Kennedy distributed potatoes for planting to villages along the route between Fagu and Theog. The potato flourished and became a cash-circulating medium and trade item for impoverished hill villagers\textsuperscript{17}

With the growth of Simla and its population many traders from Kangra and Hoshiarpur came to Simla. They built shops and started their business in lower bazar. In 1848 AD, William Edwards planned a market called the Gunj (later named Edward Gunj) where traders from the surrounding

\textsuperscript{16} Indri Krishan. \textit{An Historical interpretation of the correspondence of Sir George Russel Clark.} Delhi, 1952, p. 366.  

hills and from plains could sell their grains to retailers at their own risk. The gunj was below the lower Bazar, in a shaded spot. Free accommodation was built for itinerant traders. When Edwards found that traders did not settle at the Gunj he ordered that nothing was to be bought or sold except at the Gunj.

Since the early nineteenth century, the Indian Bazar had grown in the heart of the town on a flat piece of land which was later converted into the Ridge. With the growth of the town over the next forty years, it had spread over the hill side to cover the southern slope. In 1861 a Deputy Commissioner proposed the removal of the Bazar from the central part of the town:

"My idea is to give Simlah as much as European tone as possible...... I look forward to the gradical removal of the Bazar at Simlah which is at present occupied by natives and to subsutute European traders in their stead; in improved buildings." 18

By the eighteen hundred eighties the Mall was flanked by European style shops. Millioners, saddlers, clothiers, chemists, jewellers, dress-makers and general

provision stores, mostly owned by British traders, catered to the needs of Shimla's European population. The great demand for European imported goods was met by British traders, many of whom had come from Calcutta and Lahore and established a branch at Shimla.

Lower Bazar was the hub of Indian commercial activity. There were broadly two types of Indian shopkeepers: Those whose shops were a branch of one at Delhi or Lahore and the Sood traders who maintained a permanent business interest in Shimla. Sood traders, largely from the twin villages of Garli and Paragpur (Kangra District), and some from Hoshiarpur district, had migrated annually to Shimla since its inception in the early nineteenth century to set up business as retailers, wholesalers and moneylenders. The wealthier of them were commission agents (Ahrtis) and controlled the wholesale trade in foodgrains, pulses and edible oils, carried on in the heart of Lower Bazar at Edwards Gunj. They procured these commodities from the mandis at Hoshiarpur for sale to wholesalers and retailers, charging a commission for the task of procuring weighing and selling. As commission agents, wholesalers and moneylenders, they were in a position to manipulate prices and the availability of their

goods. The commission agents organised the Ahrties Association of Shimla in 1931.

Shimla became the focal point where no less than sixty three routes, directly or indirectly connected by intervening routes, converged hill products such as opium, honey, borax, fur, woollen cloths, store, goats and ginger and also neoza, kala zera, walnuts from Kinnaur for which Shimla was an important market. Some Shimla Ahrtis served as modis to the Ranas and Thakurs of the hill states supplying various commodities ordered by them.

SULTANPUR (Kulu)

Sultanpur (called Kulu since 1920) was the capital of Kulu state. It was situated at the junction of the Beas and the Sarvari at an elevation of 4,092 feet above sea level. It bed to the west of the Beas and north of the Sarvari, occupying the plateau on the top of the high bank overlooking the two streams. It was situated on the trade route from Punjab plains to Leh, the great mart and capital of the Ladakh. This route passed through Lahaul and Spiti. Kulu valley was visited by a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, Hiuen Tsang in 635 AD. In November 1631 two Jesuit

20. Gazetteer of Simla District, 1904, p.84.
missionaries Francisco de Azeveda and John de Oliviera travelled back to India from Leh through Kulu. In 1820 two famous British horse traders William Moorcroft and George Trebeck also travelled from India to Leh. It shows that this was an important trade route which passed through Kulu.

Ancient capital of Kulu was Nagar high up in Beas valley. Jagat Singh (1637-1672) expanded his principality towards the south and defeated the Thakur Sultan Chand of Lag. The latter was a great warrior, but was killed. The territory of Lag was then annexed by Raja Jagat Singh of Kulu, probably about A.D. 1650-51. He named it Sultanpur after Sultan Chand. He shifted his capital from Nagar to Sultanpur, probably about 1660 AD. Uptill the 1920's all guide and travel books refer to the capital simply as Sultanpur, but after this the town came to be known as Kulu for the district and its headquarters. Maj. Gen. J.D.F. Newall mentions that "the modern capital

Sultanpur, 12 miles lower down, also on the left bank is a
great mart for traders of many provinces and covers a large
area of ground."

William Moorcroft who passed through it in 1820,
described it as an insignificant village. There were nearly
500 houses. Kulu gazetteer of 1897\textsuperscript{28} mentions that "the
suburb forms the winter quarters of a considerable colony of
Lahaulis; who have to seek a refuge from the rigours of
their native climate. It boasts of a number of shops, owned
by tradesmen from Kangra, Lahaul and Ladakh, and a sarai has
been erected. The traders of the town are all foreigner,
from the Punjab or from Lahaul and Ladakh, engaged in the
transit trade between the plains on the one side and Leh and
Central Asia on the other."

An event which happened in Jagat Singh's time may
be mentioned, as it had an important influence on the socio­
economic and cultural history of Kulu. Jagat Singh coveted
a treasure said to be in the possession of a Brahman (a
jewel according to the Brahman armals, but may be it was a
daughter).\textsuperscript{29} The Brahman, unable or unwilling to consent
and pressed to the uttermost, set fire to his house, and
perished with all his family in the flames. A curse fell
\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Gazetteer of the Kangra District: Part II. Kulu.,}
Calcutta, 1897. p.123.

\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 21.
upon the Raja, everything he saw, smell or tasted, seemed to him to be smeared with blood. By the advice of the Pandits, in the hope of removing the curse, he sent a Brahman to Oudh, who stole, and with miraculous aid brought to Makaraha in Kulu in 1651 AD a famous idol of Thakur Raghunathji. The Raja put this idol on the throne, proclaimed himself to be merely the first servant of the temple. A great feast or yagya was also held on the occasion. In this way the curse was removed. When Jagat Singh transferred his capital from Nagar to Sultanpur, probably about 1660 AD, he built a palace for himself and a temple for Raghunathji. To commemorate the installation of Raghunathji on Kulu Gaddi a fair of Dashehra on Vijay Dashmi day was started. All the gods of the valley were obliged to visit Sultanpur on this day in order to pay their homage to Lord Raghnathji.

Wherever people get together, a market normally springs up. Such a growth supplements, the annual fair as well. Kulu being on the ancient trade routes connecting Yarkand, Ladakh, Tibet and Lahaul and Spiti on one end and the plains of Punjab on the other, this festival also turned into an annual market with the week long fair in October every year later on it came to be known as market fair.30

The wool brought from Rudok in north west Tibet, and Rupshu in Ladakh, carpets and silk goods brought from Yarkand through Leh were sold in large quantities at the fair. An equally important fair for bartering of wool with barley and tea was held at Patseo in Lahaul in the month of August.31

This autumn season fair was held in Dhalpur maidan. The fair marked the celebration of the Dashehra festival which was the most important fair in this region, indeed in the whole Punjab Himalaya. The gods of the neighbouring villages were brought down in gaily-caprisoned palanquins to the accompaniment of drums and trumpets are laid at their assigned places. Large number of booths and shops were set up. Brisk trade in local products like pattu, patti, shawl, honey, opium, walnuts, walnut bark, jewellery etc. from various parts of the valley and namdas, rugs, carpets, wool, borax, raw silk, ponies from Ladakh and Yarkand32 Charas from Yarkand was also traded under import permits which were issued at Sultanpur,33 before they were to proceed to the marts of Hoshiarpur and Amritsar. Gold and silver were also brought down in small quantity and about 1883 there was considerable import of sapphires owing to the discovery of a 'pocket' in Zanskar, which was worked for some time without the knowledge of Kashmir government.

33. Gazetteer of Kangra District. Part II, Kulu, 1897.
The chief export from Kulu was cotton goods, indigo, skins, opium, metals, manufactured silk, sugar and tea occasionally. Korans was also exported. Hindu traders called papralas used to come from Ambala and Patiala to purchase hawks. They used to teach and then sell at a profit in the plains. The price of a young hawk was about Rs.60/-

**MANDI**

Mandi the capital of princely state of the same name was situated on the left bank of Beas river. It was 2,557 feet above sea level.

The earliest mention of Mandi occurs in the Trilokinath temple inscription dated 1442 of Saka era equivalent to about 1520 AD. This temple inscription is in old Mandi town. Ajbar Sen (1499-1534 AD), 19th in the line of Mandi rulers, shifted his capital from the right side of the Beas river to the left bank and founded the new town of Mandi in 1527 AD. He built a palace for himself and temple of Bhutnath.


Various guesses have been offered to explain the name. Dr Hutchison and Dr Vogel have interpreted it as "market" connected it was the Ladakh and Yarand trade which passed through Sultanpur and Mandi to Hoshiarpur and Punjab Plains. It was a centre of busy trade on the ancient route connecting central Asia with Punjab plains. Though the State itself had little interest in the Ladakh and Yarkand trade, the passage through its territory and capital of many hundred of mules each year stimulated exchange, since on return journey the beast of burden were not usually fully laden.

The trade of Mandi was chiefly in the hands of Khatris, but there were a few Bohras and others.

There were clusters of shops scattered over every kardari. Quite apart from the trade, the exchange between Mandi and plains was large. Mandi had salt mines and it was exported in very large quantities, carried on mules, ponies, camels and bullocks. Timber, tea, ghi and potatoes were important items of export. The other items were hides, hawks, soap nuts, wooden goods, herbs, musk.

Important imports to Mandi market were European piece-goods, household vessels of brass, copper and other metals, gold and silver from Amritsar market, gur, oil and country made cloth from Hoshiarpur district and a certain amount of Khewra salt (about 5000 mounds). Traders from Simla used to visit the Gujjars of Mandi at their home for milk and milk products.39

In the hills the religious fairs were (and are) occasions for trade as well as devotion. Shivratri fair of Mandi was also an important religious as well as trade fair of mid-Beas valley which was celebrated annually in the month of February. It is not known when this fair was first celebrated at Mandi. To have an idea of this we have to look into the history of Mandi state. It is mentioned there that Ajbar Sen (1499-1534) acquired some level tract on the left bank of the Beas river and decided to shift his capital there from the opposite bank known as Purani Mandi. There he built a palace for himself and a temple of Bhutnath. Before this, his queen Sultan Devi had built a temple of Trilokinath in 1520 AD at Purani Mandi. It is also said that Panchvaktra temple at the confluence of Beas and Suketi rivers was also built during his time. He was a Shaivite. This helps us to conclude that with zeal and enthusiasm Shiva worship lead to this famous Shivratri fair from the

time of Ajbar Sen. It can be presumed that during Raja Ajbar Sen's time, the festival was held for a day or two. But in the course of time, the festival started to be held in the honour of each temple for a day. The fair continued for a week or more as we see it now.

Hundreds of gods and goddesses used to visit Mandi Shivratri fair every year. They were accompanied by their worshippers temple bands and dancers. During the fair many traders used to come from the Punjab plains and neighbouring hill areas of Kangra, Kulu, Simla hills and Bilaspur. Brisk trade was carried out in local products like woollens, opium, moneys, ghi, walnut and walnut-barks, and general merchandise brought by Punjab and Kangra traders.

A very large number of villagers used to attend the fair for shopping at cheaper rates. In olden days there were no shops in the interior. On one hand it was an enjoyment and on the other it was a gainful shopping. Gur, molasses, salt, sugar, tobacco, and utensils were the items they required. Local women and girls were interested in jewellery.

During the fair the market was set up on the roadside at Seri and in front of the Bhutnath temple. Apart from the shops, stalls and booths, there used to be peddlers and hawkers in this religious trade fair of Mandi.

KANGRA REGION MARKETS

The lower Beas valley was formed by whole of Kangra district and Una area of Hoshiarpur district. The principal centres of internal trade\textsuperscript{41} of the region were Kangra town, Palampur, Nurpur, Jawalamukhi, Haripur, Sujanpur, Hamirpur, and Dharamsala. All these places were permanent markets where the normal trade of the Kangra district was transacted.

Kangra town: Kangra more properly called Kot Kangra, was the principal town of the region. It was the capital of the Katoch rulers of Kangra principality. After the annexation of Kangra in British India, Kangra remained the headquarters of the district until 1855 when it was removed to Dharamsala. In olden times it was known as Nagarkot and on account of a temple of goddess Brajeshwari it was a great centre of pilgrimage where thousands of people used to come far and near during navratras days in the months of March and April every. Much business was done at these annual fairs at Kangra.

\textsuperscript{41} Gazetteer of Kangra District, 1904. p. 176-77.
Kangra was one of the districts in which foreign trade was also registered. A clerk was stationed at Sultanpur in Kulu for the registration of foreign trade with Ladakh and Yarkand via Lahaul.\textsuperscript{42} The most important imports were borax, charas, raw silk and wool. The import of rough sapphires from Zanskar mine, which was of considerable importance. The chief exports were cotton piece goods, indigo, skins, opium, metals, manufactured silk, sugar and tea and occasionally Korans. The important trade route through this trade was carried was over the Rohtang and Baralacha passes.

Jawalamukhi: was of considerable importance on account of the temple of Jawalamukhi which was visited by thousands of people throughout year. Thus it grew up into a trade mart of the area.

The Principal inhabitants of the town were Gosaine. Their enterprise as whole sale traders gave a certain commercial importance to the town as an entrepot for traffic between the hills and plains.\textsuperscript{43} The main item of trade was opium, collected from Kullu and passed on to the plains, to the value annually of perhaps 1 1/4 lakh of rupees. Rolia, a drug prepared from the fruit of the anola, was also exported in considerable quantity.

\textsuperscript{42} Gazetteer of Kangra District, 1904, p. 176.
\textsuperscript{43} Gazetteer of Kangra District., 1883-84. p. 254.
At the temple of Jawalamukhi two fairs during the navratra days in the months of March and October were held. Traders from the neighbouring areas and Punjab plains visited these religious-trade fairs. These fairs were of great commercial importance.44

Haripur was situated opposite the bank of Banganga, a tributary of the Beas. It was the capital of Guler state founded by Raja Hari Chand of Kangra in 1405 AD.45 There was a large bazar, the main streets of which were paved. In princely times it was an important trade centre.

Nurpur was an ancient State of commercial importance. Its principal inhabitants were Pathania Rajputs, Kashmiris and Khatris. Kashmiris migrated to Nurpur in 1783 due to a grievous famine. Some Kashmiris came in 1833. They carried with them the national manufacture of their native valley, that shawls of pashmina wool, and made of town famous for the production of these and other woollen clothes. The value of the annual turn out of pashmina goods was estimated in 1875 to be about two lakhs of rupees.46 They found a sale in the province, but seldom penetrated to foreign markets. The pasham used was

44. Gazetteer of Kangra District, 1904, p. 255-56.
imported in part direct from Ladakh and in part from Amritsar. After Franco-Prussian war this trade dwindled down and later on confined to the manufacture on the small scale of shawls and woollen fabrics.

Sujanpur-Tira was a local trade centre of considerable importance. There was a colony of gem makers and jewellers introduced by Katoch princes from Gujarat and Delhi. It was noted for gold and enamel ornaments.

**PALAMPUR**

The important industry of Kangra region was tea manufacturing. Tea cultivation was introduced in Kangra by Dr. Jameson in 1849 AD. Out of 44 plantations 34 were owned by Europeans. The total area under tea in Kangra district in 1892 was 9,537 acres out of which 8,047 acres were in Palampur. The tea production became a cottage industry organised on a primitive method of cultivation and manufacturing. Thus Palampur grew up into a tea trade market in the Punjab Himalaya and it was very much demanded in Afghanistan, Ladakh and other central Asian countries. It was nearly all bought up locally by green tea merchants

47. *Gazetteer of Kangra District*, 1904, p. 245
49. *Gazetteer of Kangra District*, 1904, p. 120.
or 'dalals' principally in Palampur, who exported it to Amritsar and were, as a rule local agents of larger Amritsar firms. Many outsiders from Hoshiarpur, and Jullandhar districts settled in this district and functioned as trade intermediaries between India and Tibetan countries. To foster the tea trade with Central Asia, a fair was established by the government in 1868. In that year 19 Yarkandis were present. They brought with them silk, charas, pasham, carpets and ponies for sale. The fair was held annually till 1879 when it had dwindled to a merely local gathering and was then abolished.

In the inner Ravi valley Chamba was an important ancient town and trading center which was bounded in the west by Jammu north west by Kashmir and in the north by Zansker.

Chamba was the capital of the same name of state. It was situated on the junction of the Saho with Ravi river between 32° 33N and 76° 8' East. Many routes from Kangra and Punjab plains to Jammu, Kashmir, Zansker and Lahaul passed through Chamba.

50. Gazetteer of Kangra District, 1904, p.123.
Chamba anciently known as Champa was founded by Sahila Varman (c. 920-940 AD) when he conquered lower Ravi valley and then shifted his capital from Brahmour to a place in the lower Ravi valley which he named Champa after the name of his daughter Champavati. Later on it came to be known as Chamba. 53

Chamba was a busy market. The bazar presented a cheerful vision of industry and thrift. The shops were very clean and neat. Many of the shopkeepers were Muhammadans. Salt and brass were principal articles dealt in, and cheap country jewellery, of which the local people were extremely fond, was sold in the majority of the shops.

Woollen pattus were made in all parts of the state and were brought to Chamba town by the producers from where these articles were exported accordingly via Shahpur. Excellent chapals known as 'Chamba Chapals' were made in Chamba which were generally regarded as superior to those made anywhere else in the hills. Chamba rumals were made by women. Pangi produced pattu along with thobis and exported them with zira or cummin, Kuth, thangi, edible pine, tilla. Once hops were sent to the brewery at Murrea. The articles of trade were ghi, honey, kuth, banafsha, walnuts,

walnuts bark, zira, attis (medicine) Chamba had rich forests and timber for railway sleepers were floated down in Ravi river to Pathankot and Punjab plains.

There was no fair organised for wholesale trade and commerce. However, Minjar mela was held annually in the month of August where brisk trade in woollen items and other local products were bought and sold to local and alien traders.

Chamba proper was the main clearing venue. The imports by and large, were first brought to the town and then taken into the interior. Likewise the export, for the most part, passed through the town.

NAHAN

In the Shiwalik hills the chief local centre of trade was the town of Nahan.

Nahan was situated on a route which started from Calcutta to Kashmir and on which the notable travellers were:- George Forster (1738), James Ballie Fraser (1815), William Moorcroft and George Trebeck (1820), Lord Amherst (1827), Lord Combermer (1828), a French botanist Victor Jacquoment (1830), Lord Auckland (1837) and many others.
Nahan was also well connected by roads to the market centres like Jagadhri, Ambala etc.  

With the growth of the town it became an important trading centre of Sirmur and other adjoining hill states and British Indian districts. People used to carry surplus grains and other produce of the hills down to Nahan or a nearest market. They generally brought down wheat, maize, rice, potatoes, chillies, gram, turmeric, dried ginger, opium, honey, ghi, dried pomegranates seeds, walnuts resin, herbs and medicinal plants.

Grain was exported to Ambala district from Dun and Nahan but only by foreign traders. It was also exported to Simla, Dagshai, Kasauli, and Solan whichever was nearest to the producer's home. Sometimes traders bought these articles in the hills and carried them down themselves. Contractors after obtaining permission of the state used to float down in Yamuna to Jagadhri Railway Station cut logs, shafts and sleepers of sal and deodar from the forests.

Raja Shamsher Parkash was an able ruler. He started a foundry at Nahan in 1867, which was one of the largest and pioneer foundaries in Northern India. The foundry made considerable progress both in regard to production of items like weights and measures, cane crushers, hand chaff cuters, *hukkas, prats*, agricultural implements; special type of *angethies, hamams* of special type and several intricate moulds for the glass works were also prepared. These articles were generally supplied to various customers in the Punjab, the U.P., the N.F.P., Bhawalpur and Bikaneer states and other places of India.58

All kinds of cloth, metal and other utensils, salt and sugar were imported to Nahan from where these imports were purchased by the traders from the interior hills.59

No trade fair is held at Nahan, but a worth mentioning religious and trade fair of local interest was held at Rainka in the month of November every year. People from the neighbouring hills used to bring their produce especially ginger, turmeric, walnuts, honey, *ghi*, opium, agricultural implements, etc. to the fair for sale. Traders and shopkeepers from Nahan and plains used to come to the

fair to purchase local produce like ginger etc. in large quantity. An other fair of considerable importance was held at Tilokpur in March-April.

Nomayash fair was held at the Nahan in October or November. This fair was started by Raja Surender Bikram Parkash in 1900 AD to promote agriculture and industry and increase the local trade.\(^{60}\)

Sirmur had two Tea Estates namely:

(i) Kowelagarh Tea Estates, and

(ii) Annfield Tea Estate in District Dehradun.

The nearest market for this tea was Amritsar. It was however sent to Kashmir, Calcutta and North West Frontier Province and Kabul. The management of the Estate was carried out by a Manager under the direct supervision and control of the Controller of Tea Estate and the Finance Minister.\(^{61}\)

TRADE MARTS OF THE NORTH

In the north beyond the boundaries of our area of study in the trans-Himalayan region there were a number of

61. Ibid., p.53.
marts which had good trade relation with the Punjab Himalaya and Indian Plains. The most notable marts were Gartok in Western Tibet and Leh in Ladakh. These marts were situated on the trade routes to Tibet, Yarkand, Kashmir and central Asia in the north and Indian plains in the south.

Western Tibet, though cut off from India by the formidable mountain barrier of the Himalayas, was nevertheless visited every summer by Indian traders especially Kinnaurus who bartered grains and cloth for wool and borax. Under the Anglo-Tibetan Trade Treaty Regulations 191462 a British Trade Agency had been established at Nartok63, the capital of western Tibet to protect the interest of these Indian traders. Thakur Jai Chand of Lahaul was British trade Agent in 1910's64 and in 1920's Rai Sahib Devi Dass of Kotgarh also remained British Trade Agent at Gartok.

Gartok also known as Garyarsa was the capital of Ngari district in the Western Tibetan highland.65 It was the seat of the Garpons (Governors-General) of Western Tibet

and headquarters of British Trade Agency.\textsuperscript{66} British Trade agent was appointed under the Treaty of Lhasa.\textsuperscript{67} It was a trade mart of Tibet, situated on the bank of Indus on the road between Shigatse and Leh, to the east of Simla in India through the Shipki pass. This route was centuries old and used by the traders of Bashahr state.

During the summer season a brisk trade was carried on between the nomads from the southern plains, the Zhikatse merchants and the traders of Kinnaur and from India and Nepal. The official government merchant, or Yungchong used to come to Lhasa with commodities of every kind, such as carpets, tea, cloth, etc. to sell at the market. Regular fairs were held throughout the summer attracting as 2,000 people daily with hundreds of tents littering the bare plain and hill side during the night.\textsuperscript{68} This fair was attended by traders from India, Ladakh, Kashmir, Tartary, Yarkand, Lhasa and China. At this annual gathering business, both official and mercantile, was transacted, and is blended with pleasure in the shape of horse-racing. There were prizes for the first fine ponies to come in. These prizes were presented by Lhasa Government. These horses used to fetch high prices in the market.

\textsuperscript{68.} \textit{Encyclopaedia Britannica}, Vol. G. p.3.
Leh, the capital of Ladakh and an important mart, was situated 4 miles from the right bank of the upper Indus about 100 miles east of Srinagar and south of Yarkand, Sinkiang and 11,500 ft above sea level.

Leh was a centre of Buddhist monasteries and of the trade between India, Sinkiang and Tibet as it was the meeting place of routes from Kashgar, Yarkand, Khotan and Lhasa. The two chief roads from India to Leh traversed the Zogi La pass (11,578 ft) via Srinagar and the Kulu valley respectively. Another route from Leh to Bashahr in Shimla hills and down to the plains passed through Sutlej valley. Similarly from Leh the Janglam trade route to Lhasa and China passed through the Masiam La Pass into the valley of the Tsangpo (Brahmputra). 69 Subsequently speaking Leh was the great emporium of trade which passed between India, Chinese Turkistan and Tibet. Here met the routes leading from the Central Asian Khanates, Kashgar, Yarkand, Khotan and Lhasa. Under commercial treaty with Maharaja of Kashmir, a British officer was deputed to Leh to regulate and control the trade and the traffic, conjointly with the Governor appointed by Kashmir State. 70

---

The main items of export from Leh were wool pashmina, felt, borax to Punjab and Kashmir, grains and dry fruit to Tibet and sugar and spices to Sinkiang. The main items of imports were wool, salt, tea and borax from Tibet and sugar, hardware, cotton textiles and household goods from Punjab and Kashmir.71

In the south the important trade centres of Punjab which had intimate trade relations with the hill states were Jagadhri, Ambala, Churpur, Hoshiarpur, Jullundhar, Amritsar and Pathankot. Commodities of daily use like clothes, gur, cooking oil, salt brass and bronze utensils were imported and from the hill state opium, herbs, wool, ghi, skins, etc. were exported to these centres. This trade was generally carried out by traders from the Kangra, Hoshiarpur, Jullundhar, Amrisar and Pathankot. Some traders from these areas settled in the hill states.