The above survey of the regions of Kapisa (i.e., Begram and its neighbouring areas to the south or south-east of the Hindukush and up to Laghman in Kafiristan, modern North-Eastern Afghanistan) and Gandhāra (i.e. the Peshawar district and perhaps also the Rawalpindi district of modern Pakistan) and the territory lying between these two areas reveals some important aspects of their cultural history.

The society under the rule of the Turkish and Hindu Shahis included a large number of foreigners. In fact, waves of immigrants merged in the sea of regional population throughout the period as in the earlier ages. Nevertheless, the broad traditional structure of the society was not altogether discarded. The fourfold caste system was known. People belonging to different castes were perhaps expected to follow traditional vocations. However, there were instances of persons of one caste taking up vocations assigned to members of other castes. Thus, a Brahmana could have sometimes taken to the practice of tilling a field, a work not traditionally assigned to a member of his caste. The occupations of the Vaisyas and the Sūdras were easily interchangable. Presence of a large number of people of foreign origin and even of a number of Muslims in the later phase of our period were perhaps responsible for loosening the rigidity of the caste system in the areas concerned. For their unorthodox outlook, the people of these areas were looked upon with disfavour by the orthodox population of the interior parts of India from an age even much earlier than that of our period.
Peoples of different ethnic and religious affiliations lived in harmony due to the general unorthodox religious and social environments. The followers of Islam, who unlike earlier immigrants were never merged with the Brahmanical society, lived at least for some time amicably with local population after some initial conflicts. With the assertion of political power of Islam the situation changed. Large scale massacre, looting and destruction of cities and temples, and capture of men and women by the Islamic power changed the liberal approach to religion among local population. The society of the areas concerned reacted sharply against the onslaught of Islam and closed its door to the foreigners both Muslim and non-Muslims. Al-beruni noted that any contact with foreigners through sitting, eating or drinking together was forbidden. Even any contact with anything that touched the fire or water used by the foreigners was prohibited.

Very little is known about the marriage rites practiced in the regions concerned. Hsuan-tsang's statement suggests that eight forms of Brahmanical marriage were prevalent. Inter-caste marriages were also known. Presence of foreigners suggests the plausibility of the practice by them at least of marriage customs pertaining to their faiths.

The women of the areas concerned, generally were dependant on the male members of the society. Chastity and devotion to one's husband were some of the qualities highly prized there. There is no evidence of the prevalence of
"purdah" system. A few queens, like their counterparts in other areas of India, issued charters in their own name, recording erection of temples dedicated for religious purposes. Even an ordinary lady, called Ratnamāṇjārī, erected Śiva temple in the reign of Vijayapala. Sometimes women rose to fame and eminence. Poetess Rusā's work was translated into Arabic in the court of the Abbasid Caliphs. However, in the later part of the period concerned, the position of women was worsened. There were also cases of abduction of women, who were sold as slaves.

The food used by the people of the areas concerned included a few items which were not very popular in the interior areas of India. Among these, were meat, preparations with garlic or onion, wine, etc. Their addiction to wine was again and again censured by the people of Middle India. Regarding the dinner etiquette, Al-bīrūnī said that the Brahmanas did not favour the practice of taking meal from the same plate by several persons at the same time.

The dress of the people (men and women) of the regions concerned consisted of trousers and tunics (short and long sleeved), made of wool and serge in colder climate and cotton in the area of milder climate. Women also used sari and blouse. The use of a long flowing garment like ghāghrā was also not unknown. High boots and other types of footwear were used. Both men and women used to keep
long hair which was arranged into different varieties of coiffure and hairdo. The hair was further adorned with turbans, crowns, tiaras, crest jewels, kusti and flowers. Both male and female members of the society were very fond of ornaments like bangles, armlets, round-earrings, finger rings, pearl-necklaces. Use of flowers was also popular.

The people of the regions under consideration were very fond of music and dancing from an early period. This is apparent from references to the name Gandhāra, as one of the seven svaras of Indian music, and also references to Gandhāra-grāma and Gandhāra mārga, in the Ramāyana, Mahābhārata, Harivamsa, Bharata's Natya Śāstra and others.

The education system was generally similar to that of Mid-India. Both the guru-kula and monastic systems of teaching were in vogue. Study and teaching of different sciences like medicine, arithmetic, astronomy, etc., besides the sacred scriptures of the Buddhists and Brahmanas, were practised. Sālāatura, the birth-place of Panini was one such centres of the Gurukula system. The Kanishka Mahāvihāra was one of the famous centres of learning like the Nalanda monastery. Interestingly enough, not only Buddhist but also Brahmanical scriptures were taught here. Its alumni Viraḍeva was honoured by the Pāla king Devapāla. He was elected as the president of Nalanda Mahāvihāra. This shows the high status enjoyed by the Kanishka Mahāvihāra in India's academic and religious world.
At least, three scripts and three types of languages were in use in the regions of Kapiša and Gandhāra. At the beginning of the period under survey, Greek, Pahlavi (middle Persian) and Gupta Brahmi characters were in use. Later on, Greek script fell into disuse and post-Gupta-Brahmi and its offshoot the Saradā script began to be used by the people of this area. Among the languages prevalent here, we can refer to a form of Prakrit heavily influenced by Sanskrit and enriched by loan words from Iranian, Pahlavi (or Middle Persian) and Turkish languages. Due to the patronage by Hindu Shahi, Sanskrit became in the later phase of our period, the medium of instruction. With the assertion of the power of Islam, Kufic script and the Arabic language came into use in the areas in question.

The economy of the regions concerned was fairly stable during the period under review. Agriculture and small scale or cottage industries formed its base. Trade was widely practised. Discoveries of coins of other regions in the areas in question and of local coins (like those of Samantadeva) in other countries indicate the link of Gandhāra and Kapiša with international trade and also with the other areas of the Indian sub-continent. The importance of our territories in international trade was realized even by Sultan Mahmud, who tried to resume the trade links between Khurṣan and the Indian sub-continent by making peace with Anandapāla.
Different religious beliefs were practiced in the areas during the period concerned. We may refer to Buddhism, Brahmanism with its different sects (Saivism, Vaishnavism, and cults of Sūrya, Devī, Ganeśa and Karttikeya), Jainism and Iranian sun-worship, and fire-cult. However, during the period under survey, Buddhism gradually declined here and Brahmanism re-emerged as the dominant religion. During the last phase of our period Islam became well-known in these territories.

The art and architecture of the period under survey were mainly affiliated to religion. Initially the themes were mainly Buddhist. But later, Brahmanical sects began to dominate the themes of art. The religious architecture has been divided into two groups, viz. (1) the structural temples and (2) rock-cut sanctuaries belonging to both Buddhist and Brahmanical faiths. The Buddhist stupas and monasteries, belonging to the first of the above two groups, retained plan and type of the earlier period. The monastic complex of Fondukistan shows its indebtedness to the architectural plan indicated by the Buddhist institution at Takht-i-Bahi. The central courtyard was adorned with a stupa in the middle and the cloisters were arranged on the inner side of the perimeter. The roof of the cloisters was arranged in a semi-circular arch over each shrine. The structural temple belonging to the Brahmanical group shows the evolution of a temple building style resembling the Nāgara variety of North-India, with square sanctum, small porch, and tapering
sikhara. Later on, the architectural style was further developed, as is exemplified by the Bilot group. The Khair Khaneh group represents another variety of temple architecture.

All these stupas and monasteries and temples were adorned with a number of terracotta, clay and stone sculptures and minor architectural decorations. The stone sculptures reveal a style which absorbed elements from Gupta and Iranian and Kashmiri styles. Out of these absorption, two local schools appeared in Kapiśa and Gandhāra. Stone sculptures of Kapiśa, though disproportionate and heavy, preserved much of the classical features of Gandhāra style. To it were added elements of Gupta and Kashmiri styles. The Śiva head from Gardez, reveals some of the stylistic features discussed above (Chapter on Art).

The local school of Gandhāra shows stunted disproportionate treatment of the figures created by its sculptors. The school also absorbed Gupta elements (like smooth treatment of body, etc.) and also some of the features of art of central Asia and Kashmir. The British Museum pieces discussed above, illustrate this point (Chapter on Art).

The terracotta and clay sculptures preserve much of the classical features which absorbed Gupta and Central Asian elements. This is true also of Fondukistan terracotta sculptures, even though they betray some sort of mannerism in style. The Iranian (Central Asian) influence in Fondukistan is evident in the dress worn by several figures and in certain
stylistic details. This tendency for inter-mixing of the styles is further developed in Bamian.

Terracotta sculptures of Gandhāra illustrate the fusion of Gandhāra and Kāsmīra styles. Three heads, illustrated by Barrett, show overwhelming influence of Kāsmīra.

Bronze sculptures show intermingling of Gandhāra and Kāsmīra styles. "Two wooden sculptures shows depiction of south Indian themes with the help of Byzantian and Nestorian styles".

The style of painting is only known from few fragments found at Hadda. However, more well preserved painting are found at nearby localities like Samian, Fondukistan, Kakrak and Dukter-i-Noshirvan, reveal a distinct style in which Indian and Iranian stylistic features predominate. Interestingly enough Hsüan-tsang refer to painted walls of a monastery of Kapišā. Unfortunately no remnants of painting has been reported from Gandhāra.

The inhabitants of Kapišā and Gandhāra, no doubt, followed to a some extent the pattern of life known in several other parts of the Indian subcontinent. Nevertheless, they developed, as discussed in earlier chapters, certain distinctive features, enriching the panorama of the history of the Indian subcontinent. Topographically, Kapišā and Gandhāra, were the veritable meeting grounds of Indian and "occidental" cultures. During our period they played well the role which topography assigned to them.