CHAPTER - I.
INTRODUCTION

A

The regions of Kapiša and Gandhāra roughly comprised the modern Begram area in Kohistan and Kafiristan in northeastern Afghanistan, and the Peshawar district, and sometimes also the region of Taxila, to the east of the Indus and the locality lying between them (See Chapter II). Thus, a part of the regions concerned was situated within the Indian subcontinent, and another part lay beyond it. These territories were exposed to Indian and also Central Asian influences. Some of the important routes connecting the interior of India with outside world, ran through these regions. As if, one of the gateways to India was situated here (See Chapter II). Following these routes different peoples came to India and settled in its different parts. As such, from the remote past, various races and tribes met and intermingled here and contributed to the growth of the local society, religion and material culture. There is therefore, no gainsaying the apparent importance of these areas in the history of the Indian subcontinent and its borderlands.

B

A landmark in the history of the regions is provided by the date of the advent of Islamic power in the political arena. Al-Beruni gives the date as A.D. 1021. In A.D. 1021 Shahi Trilochananāla suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of Sultan Mahmud and most of his territories came under the Sultan's possession. Al-Beruni stated that Trilochananāla's
son Bhimapala tried to recover his paternal territory, but was killed in A.D. 1026.

The coming of Islam as a political as well as religious force, was apparently bound to affect the socio-religious and economic as well as political life of Kapiśa and Gandhāra. The crescent of Islam did not begin to shine in the sky of Gandhāra and Kapiśa all on a sudden. It was looming large on the horizon for a long time. By A.D. 651, the Sassanid empire of Persia, which included much of Afghanistan fell to the rising power of Islam. Islam began to knock at the portal of Kapiśa and Gandhāra.

The local situation, immediately prior to the advent of Islam in this part of the world is known from the account of the Chinese pilgrim Hsüan-tsang, who visited the areas between circa A.D. 629 and 645 A.D. So the year A.D. 629 may conveniently be taken as the starting point of a study of the cultural history of Kapiśa and Gandhāra during a period, when they were either in contact or had the capacity to make contact with Islam. This condition was changed as indicated above in A.D. 1021. The apparent importance of an attempt at reconstructing the cultural history of the strategically situated areas like Kapiśa and Gandhāra during the period concerned can hardly be over estimated. And in depth study of the cultural history will allow us to have a clear idea of the socio-economic and religious situations of two regions lying close to an area under Islamic occupation. Such a study, in fact, is a desideratum for a proper understanding of the development of
the composite culture of the Indian subcontinent. We propose to fulfil this end in the following chapters.

An attempt at reconstruction of the cultural history may be made on the basis of archaeological and literary data. The Shahi coinage provides us with enough material for preparing a basic framework for Shahi chronology. But the Shahi inscriptions, most of which are fragmentary in nature, are not of much help in this regard. Nevertheless, these epigraphs as well as coins throw some light on the age and the areas under consideration. A few Arabic and bi-lingual inscriptions furnish information for the political history.

Many of the ruins of the monuments of the regions concerned and datable to the period of our discussion have remained unexplored. Nevertheless, data gathered from such archaeological sites as Shah-ji-ki-dheri, Sahr-i-Bahlol, Und, Taxila, Bilot and Kafirkot, Hadda, Jelalabad, Bamiyan, Khairkhaneh, Chigha Sarai, Gardez, etc. and also detached sculptures found at various places helped us in reconstructing the history of art and architecture of the regions of Kapisa and Gandhara.

Literary evidence can be gathered from three different sources, such as, 1) Chinese, 2) Muslim and 3) Indian texts. The Chinese literature preserved more or less dated accounts of these areas from about A.D. 629 upto the middle of the 9th
century A.D. As already mentioned, Hsuan-tsang's itenerary called Ta T'ang-Hsi-yü-Chi, gives us a graphic idea about the political, social, economic and religious conditions of Kapisa and Gandhāra in the fourth and fifth decade of the 7th century A.D. Hsi-yü-Chi's information is corroborated and sometimes enlarged by another work, Ta T'ang-tzu-en-ssu-san-ts'and-fa-shih-chuan ("Life") written by Shamana Hui-Li, who helped Hsuan-tsang in his translation of Sanskrit books. Another book She-kia-Fang-chi is based on the information collected by Hsuan-tsang and supplies a few more details. I-T'sing's work K'iu-fa-ko-Sang-chuan, furnish a few facts.

Next in importance to Hsi-yü-chi is the T'ang Annals. This is a mine of information and provides materials for the reconstruction of the political history of the countries of Kapisa and Gandhāra from the beginning of the 7th century upto 9th century A.D.

The itenerary of one Chinese ambassador Ou-K'ong throws light on the history of these parts on its various aspects between A.D. 750-790. The work of Hye-chao, a Korean pilgrim, makes a few more details about the zone and the period concerned available to us. The Chinese source, on the whole, supplies a connected and dated information about the regions of Kapisa and Gandhāra during the period concerned.

The Arab historians and geographers recorded the Muslim invasion and occupation of these areas step by step. Of the
early geographers, mention may be made of Sulaiman (231 A.H. = A.D. 851), Abu Zaidul Hasan of Siraf (303 A.H. = A.D. 916), Ibn Khurdshadeh (300 A.H. = A.D. 912), Masudi (300 A.H.-345 A.H. = A.D. 912-956), Istakhari (340 A.H. = A.D. 951), Ibn Hawkal (331 A.H. = A.D. 943) and others who refer to these territories and their routes, cities, people etc. Hudud-Al-Alam, a geographical work of 10th century throws illuminating light on the geography, trade routes, important centres of commerce, articles of trade, cities and trading community etc. of the territories of Kapisa and Gandhara of the period under review.

Among the Muslim historians, Abas Ahmad Al Baladhpuri was the foremost person to record the early days of Arab Caliphate. His book Kitab-Futuh Al Buldan narrates the early conquest of Islam over many parts of the world including Seistan, Zabolistan, Khorasan and the regions under consideration. Next in importance is Akhbar Makka, written by Abu-al-Walid Muhammad be Abd-Allah b Ahmad al Azaraqi at about the middle of the 9th century. Akhbar Makka bears direct evidence to the Arab conquest of Kapisa and Gandhara at about A.D. 815/16.

Famous scholar Abu-Rihan Al-biruni in his Tahiq-i-Hind gives valuable information about kings of the area under review. It is Al-Biruni who refers to them as Shahiya. He traced their origin to KaniShaka and called his descendants Turki Shahiyas. Turki Shahiyas were supplanted by Hindu
Shahiyas at a later date. Al-Biruni mentions not only the genealogical list of the Shahiyas, but also records their struggle with the Muhammadans and their destruction in the end. Incidentally he refers to the Shahiya court its geographical position, patronage of learning etc. and praises Hindu Shahiyas for their large heartedness and bravery.

Different stages in the destruction of the Shahi empire are also noticed by historians of Sabuktigin and Sultan Mahmud's court. Mention may be made of Utbi, Baihaki, Bufi, Girdizi among them. Later historians like Firishta, Rashid ud-din also recorded the struggle between the Shahiyas and the Muslims.

Scattered pieces of information on various aspects of life in these regions during the period concerned are available from the following Sanskrit treatises: Banabhatta's Harshacharita, anonymous author's Aryamañjuśrī-Mūlakalpa, a 7th century work, Kuvalaya mālā, a Jaina work, Rājasēkhara's Kāvya Mimamsā, Vāgbhata's Astāṅga hriḍāya, Hemachandra's Abhidhāna Chintāmāni, Abhidhāna Ratnamāla, Yādava Prakāsa's Vijayanti, etc. Kalhana is the only Indian author who describes the history of the Shahis in some detail in connection with writing the history of Kaśmīra.

The data, thus collected will be used critically and judiciously for reconstructing the past. As history of a
region cannot be understood without the knowledge of its geography, our study must be preceded by a discussion on historical geography of Kapišā and Gandhāra.

Again, since the significance of cultural history cannot be properly understood without referring to the contemporary political conditions, we must draw an outline of the political history of Kapišā before reconstructing the cultural history of the period under review.

As a cultural history of a region is primarily concerned with society, our study proper should begin with an attempt to determine the social condition of Kapišā and Gandhāra during the period concerned. We should next study the economic condition of the people. This will be followed by an examination of the data relating to religious conditions of Gandhāra and Kapišā.

Art, which is the handmaid of religion, should also form a subject of our study. In concluding section we shall try to summarize the main features of the cultural history and shall try to determine the impact of Islam on the spiritual and material culture of Gandhāra and Kapišā in a period immediately prior to the end of the dominance of the rulers professing Brahmanical faith.
Notes and References


3. Different aspects of the spiritual as well as material culture have already been studied by various scholars of 18th, 19th and present-century, like J. Prinsep, E. Thomas, Sir A. Cunningham, Charles Masson, H.H. Wilson, Sir H.M. Elliot, Raverty, Sir M.A. Stein, G. Buhler, J. Ph. Vogel, Foucher, M. Hackin, H.C. Ray, Dr. R.C. Majumdar, C.V. Vaidya, M. Habib, W. Haig, M. Nazim, S.R. Sharma, M. Baqir, A. Rkzad, H. Goetz, D. Barrett, D.C. Ganguly, A.L. Srivastava, O. Caroe, G. Tucci, M. Taddie, D.C. Sircar, L. Gopal, Humbach, P. Banerjee, R.C. Agrawala. Recent study on the cultural history has been made by Dr. D.B. Pandey and Jogendralal Misra. But none of these studies touches upon all the relevant points. It is therefore, not possible to get a comprehensive idea from any of these studies. An attempt here is made to present a comprehensive account of the cultural history of these regions.

4. See note 2.


12. Ibid., Extracts, pp. 7-11.

13. Ibid., Extracts, pp.13-17.


15. Ibid., Extracts, pp.26-30.

16. Ibid., Extracts, pp.31-40.


Peshawar. *Akhbar Makka* mainly deals with the history of Makka. But it preserves copies of two inscriptions of Al Mamun which has important bearing on the conquest and occupation of the zone under our study.


23. HIED., II, pp. 154-201.


34. *Vaijayantī*, ed. by Gustav Oppert, Madras, 1893.