motives for carving various architectural parts, ornamentation being one. According to Hindu philosophy, everything that is ornamented is beautiful and auspicious, the rest should be rejected as undesirable and ugly. The profuse decoration expressed joy in earthly existence and was deemed to be capable of warding off evil forces by a depiction of celestial beings as well as auspicious symbols. Another and more important motive was to provide visual education to all those who visited the temples. The sculptural carvings served the purpose of picture books from which the people could learn of their artistic, cultural and literary heritage. The Hindu temples and Buddhist stupas in ancient India were used for imparting knowledge of religious literature to the masses. Religious literature has been one of the principal sources of artistic inspiration and provided the creative impulse for artistic output. To illustrate by pictorial parables all the beautiful sentiments associated with religion was the loftiest aim of the craftsmen.

Very few wooden temples are carved in classical style; the rest are all in folk style. The style of carving, for the most part, was determined by the taste and means of the individual donor and the skill and ingenuity of the carver. J.Ph.Vogel has condemned the crudity of folk style woodcarvings in the Kulu valley temples. He has attributed it to the "comparatively modern date of these buildings as well as to the nature of the Kulu people, whom the Chinese pilgrim Hieun Tsang described as coarse and common in appearance, and hard and fierce of nature." These words sound strange coming from a man who had earlier written the following lines:
"After describing Jalandhara, he (i.e. Hieun Tsang) gives an account of Kiü-lu-to, Lo-u-lo (Lahul) and Mo-lo-so (Marpo or Ladakh), though apparently he did not visit these countries personally. He had evidently received his information during his stay at Jalandhara from traders who had travelled to Central Asia by this route."6

It is not comprehensible why Vogel based his views on Hieun Tsang's opinion when he knew that it was based on hearsay, not on actual experience and when he himself had travelled extensively all over Kulu district and actually seen the temples as well as the people.

It is wrong to assume, as Vogel does, that the folk style carvings of Kulu temples - we may as well include those of Simla hills and Kinnaur - are the work of craftsmen completely lacking in artistic inspiration and technical skill. These carvings, with their simplicity of vision, are the most pure and sincere form of rural art. As art, they are completely unself-conscious. Like the classical style carvings, they are inspired by the same religious beliefs and spiritual experience. It is sufficiently clear that the means at the disposal of these folk carvers were in accordance with their cultural level most suited to their surroundings. It appears that the pahari carver worked both from life and instinct, and that his creation was true to the optical impression of the model as observed at a given moment from a given angle. Apart from its delineation of the great religious dramas of Hinduism in its domestic character, the folk style carvings reflect the beliefs of the rural people, thus producing an artistic folklore of unusual interest and presenting innumerable graphic aspects of Hindu religion in a popular manner. A variety of local styles exists in these woodcarvings, but an underlying similarity of shapes
decorative motifs and expression give to this art a high degree of homogeneity.

It is not possible to present an uninterrupted chronological account of the wooden temples. There are very few ancient structures still extant such as Laksana Devi temple in Brahaur, Sakti Devi temple in Chhatrarhi (both dating back to circa 700 A.D.), Markula Devi temple in Udaipur village (Lahul), Dakhani Mahadeva and Candika Devi temples in Mirmand (Kulu district), both carved sometime in the 9th-10th century A.D. All the other wooden temples were either built, reconstructed or repaired sometime between 15th and 19th centuries. Such is the case, in my opinion, of the Khaji Naga temple and Camunda Devi temples in Chamba, Parasara Rsi temple in Mandi and Hidimba Devi temple in Kulu.

It goes without saying that all these structures are constructed of deodar wood which, if well seasoned, lasts for more than one thousand years. This wood is abundantly available in Himachal Pradesh, and lends itself more easily to the rounded accents of the chisel. The general practice in this area has been to construct anew temple structure when it decayed, preserving what was left of the old one. Even then, a number of ancient temples have disappeared for lack of repairs and due to unfavourable climatic conditions, i.e. heavy rains and snow, conflagration, internecine wars among the ranas and thakurs (the petty local chieftains) that mar the history of these areas in the medieval period. In the following pages, we study the wooden temples of Chamba, Kulu, Mandi, Simla hills and Kinnaur according to their architectural styles.
In our opinion, there are four principal types of wooden temples in Himachal Pradesh. According to the classification suggested by Col. A.F.P. Harcourt, there are four types of temples in this region, namely, the stone temples in the sikhara style - these fall outside the scope of our present study - the chalet style, the tower temples, and the pagodas. Penelope Chetwode, by and large, accepts this classification, but includes the chalet and tower temples in the same category. According to her, these temple styles should be studied together as representing one architectural type, because the tower type temples are composed of a combination of a tall rectangular structure surmounted by an overhanging wooden structure that resembles the chalet type temples in all its details. Our view is different from her standpoint. It is possible that tower type temples may have been an offshoot of chalet temples, but the two styles are different. These two structural types form distinct groups and deserve to be studied separately. The purpose of building tower temples was purely defensive and structures in this peculiar style are confined to a limited area of the western Himalaya, i.e. the Simla district, southern Kulu, Ladakh, Kinnaur and Lahul, such as structures in Gondala village in Lahul and Kamru fort in Kinnaur. They are very few in number. The structures mentioned above are fortresses, not temples, built by the thakurs in the mediaeval period. The existence of such structures in Simla hills, villages of Kulu district lying on the north bank of the Satluj river, i.e. opposite Hindustan-Tibet Road, Kinnaur, Lahul and Ladakh makes us think that they might have been modelled on similar fortresses of Tibet, although the latter
buildings are constructed entirely of unbaked bricks and have flat roofs. The tall towers with timber-bonded walls and an overhanging wooden balcony with a sloping roof were evidently an innovation of the western Himalayan masons and the reasons for constructing them in this manner have already been discussed in Chapter three.

In the third category Chetwode has placed the pagoda type temples and has coined the term "Satluj valley style" for the fourth category of wooden temples "in the absence of an appropriate term." The reason stated by her for coining such a term is that she found temples in this style only in the Satluj valley. In our opinion, this peculiar architectural style was not an innovation of the Himalayan artisans alone, but was derived from the vastusastra and forms an integral part of the mainstream of Hindu temple architecture in as much as what we have termed the vimana style temples; for these latter, we are not using the commonly employed word pagoda for various reasons stated in the following pages. We have placed them in the third category. Before undertaking a detailed description of the four architectural styles of wooden temples, we would like to mention that the plans of all the temples are square or rectangular. The reason for it is that timber tends to give straight lines and consequently the structure assumes necessarily a square or rectangular shape. This is only a natural process, the inevitable result of evolution as architectural species adapt themselves to the materials largely used.
TYPE I: THE CHALET STYLE

In this category fall the hut-like structures (pl. 1) that have been rightly termed "chalet" by Harcourt and Chetwode on account of their resemblance with huts for which the French word is chalet. We think that these structures constitute the indigenous style and the earliest wooden temples were built in this manner. Temples in this style are to be found all over the state of Himachal, although they abound in Chamba and Kulu districts in assorted sizes and patterns. They are still being built in large numbers. They are constructed in a very simple manner. The shrine stands on a low plinth or raised platform of stone. In most cases, the entire structure is built of wood; only the sub-structures and spaces between the timber-framed walls are filled in with rubble masonry which alternates with the horizontal layers of roughly hewn logs. The wooden pillars support the pent roof and form a veranda around the sanctum. This veranda may be open or closed, forming a kind of circumambulatory passage (pradaksina-patha in Sanskrit and parkarma in the local parlance) around the shrine. The entire structure resembles a peasant's hut, except that the timber planks are larger and more numerous. The deodar wood is invariably used. The gable front usually has a carved wooden window through which a certain amount of light passes into the dark interior. The sloping roof is covered with shingles or roughly hewn slates. A heavy ridge beam decorated with wooden or metal finials runs along the top of the roof. Smaller temples usually have plain gables. Rows of wooden fringes of pendants (stalactite knobs) hang from the eaves, as they do from all types of Himalayan temples, barring the stone temples in sikhara style which have no eaves.
The amount of decorative woodcarving varies from temple to temple. Sometimes, there is no carving at all. But in a large number of temples that we visited, we found the door jambs and lintels, windows, pillars, spandrels and ceilings carved with a variety of motifs which we shall discuss in greater detail in our study of individual temples herebelow. The temples in this style vary greatly in size, the largest measuring about 30 ft. in width and 40 ft. in length and the smallest about 4 ft. by 5 ft.

Laksana Devi temple, Brahmaur, Chamba district

The temple of Laksana Devi (Laksana Devi in vernacular) is one of the earliest wooden temples not only in Chamba but in the entire western Himalaya, which has survived the ravages of time, climate and other kinds of vandalism. Situated in the upper reaches of Chamba district at a height of 7000 ft. above sea-level and about 67 kms. from Chamba town, Brahmaur is connected by a jeepable road running along the river Ravi. This ancient capital of Chamba kings is today a small village surrounded by fields and pastures. In the midst of the village stand some stone temples in sikhara style dedicated to Siva worshipped as Manimahesa, Ganesa and Narasimba. These temples immediately remind us of the Laksmi-Narayana temple complex in the heart of Chamba town. Near the chaugan stand the shrines of the 84 siddhas who are believed to have accompanied the Saint Carpatanatha, who was probably the guru of Raja Meruvarmana. On account of these shrines, this area is called the caurasi. On the hillside of the caurasi stands the temple of Laksana Devi. With the exception of the woodcarvings on the facade and in the interior which consists of the
mandapa, the pillars and the sanctum, the entire structure, i.e. the walls and the sloping roof, has evidently been repaired and renovated innumerable times since it was first built in the latter half of the 7th century A.D.

We have fixed the above date for the construction of this temple on two grounds - the style of relief sculptures carved in wood and the inscription engraved on the pedestal of the metal image of the goddess enshrined in the temple. Before going on to a study of the inscription, we would like to mention that the style of the bronze statuette of Laksana Devi and that of the wooden relief sculptures on the temple structure are identical. This has been accepted by Vogel, Goetz and all those who have actually seen and studied them. In fact, this similarity has enabled us to date the woodcarvings. The inscription has been translated and interpreted competently and authoritatively by Vogel. Running into two lines, it reads as follows:

"Born from the own house (gotra) of Moshuna and from the solar race, the great grandson of the illustrious lord Adityavarman, the grandson of the illustrious lord Meruvarman, for the increase of his spiritual merit, has caused the holy image of the goddess Laksana to be made by the workman Gugga."

This inscription is not dated, but it informs us that King Meruvarmana was responsible for getting the image cast and understandably for getting the temple constructed. We accept the valuable judgement of Vogel in dating this inscription, which he places around 700 A.D. We quote the passage that informs us how he arrived at this conclusion:
"Inscriptions of Meruvarman are not dated. According to Cunningham, the character would be that of the 9th and 10th centuries. It should be noted that the script of Meruvarman is much earlier than the Sarada character, which must have existed as a distinct type as far back as the 10th century and was in common use in Punjab hills by that time. Hence it is difficult to assign to these inscriptions a later date than the 8th century. On account of the striking resemblance of these scripts to that found on the Multai copperplates of circa 700 A.D., I am inclined to place them rather in the beginning than at the end of that century." 19

On palaeographic evidence, we conclude that Raja Meruvarmana ruled over Brahmaur sometime in the middle of the 7th century A.D. And that the Lakshana Devi temple must have been built around 650 A.D.

It is not possible now to decide as to what the original structure looked like. From outside, it looks like an ordinary hut constructed of alternating layers of huge beams of deodar wood and rubble masonry plastered with mud. The sloping roof is covered with slates and on top, above the gable end, stands majestically an iron trident that betokens the presence of Durga and Siva all over the western Himalaya. It is a common practice to offer such iron tridents to both the deities on the fulfilment of devotees' vows and wishes.

In the centre of this humble facade stands the magnificently carved wooden doorway (prol) surmounted by a huge triangular pediment (pl.7), its apex touching the gable end. The carvings on the doorway (pl.6) are not so fresh on account of continual exposure to inclement weather for thirteen centuries, yet it has retained much on its ancient grandeur till now.

The doorway consists of five successively receding frames (sakha in sanskrit) and five corresponding lintels. These frames are
flat and fairly wide and carved with elaborate and stylised leafy scrollwork consisting of oval tendril spirals. This kind of beautiful bands of foliated patterns on artistically carved scrollwork are called patravali or patralata in sanskrit and pattara in pahari dialect.

Similar designs adorn the pilasters and doorways of almost all the temples built between 500 and 750 A.D., as is evident from the Visnu temple of Deogarh, Ajanta, Ellora, Badami, Aurangabad caves, early stone temples of Orissa, namely the Khiching temple, Rajivalocana temple in Rajim, Parvati temple in Nachna, and the monolithic temples of Masrur (Kangra district). Flanking these frames in the lowermost niches are seated couples, whose posture recalls that of the gandharvas and apsaras. They recur on the doorway to the temple of Masrur mentioned above.

On both sides of the next frame, we see four figures of deities on each side. It has not been possible to identify them on account of their decayed condition, but presumably they are Siva, Lurga, Visnu, Brahma, Indra and various manifestations of the first three deities. In the lowermost niches are depicted yaksas supporting the niches enclosing the anthropomorph images of the river goddesses Ganga and Yamuna on their vahana, viz. makra (crocodile) and kachhapa (tortoise). Both the figures are flanked by female attendants who are much smaller in height. These figures are again derived straight from the repertoire of Gupta temple architecture. They always flank the principal entrances of the temples, e.g. the Ramesvara cave at Ellora, Ajanta cave 20, etc. In early period shrines,
viz. Ajanta caves 1, 4, 16 and 21 and the Dasavatara temple of Deogarh, the river goddesses occupy the left and right corners of the porch doorways. They came to flank the temple entrances probably sometime around 600 A.D. This also enables us to determine the period of construction of this temple.

The corresponding lintel carries the figures of flying godlings carrying garlands; in the centre is a full-blown lotus. We are familiar with this motif of flying godlings (kinnaras) carrying garlands from the Naranarayana panel from Deogarh, now preserved in the National Museum of New Delhi, Ellora cave II, the lintels of the Madhukesvara temple in Orissa and of Masrur temple.

This is followed by a frame and its corresponding lintel which are in the shape of a round moulding on which are carved profuse scrollwork patterns. The next frame again has four niches on each side enclosing the figures of deities whose missing attributes make it difficult for us to identify them. These jambs are supported by kneeling yaksas who occupy the lowermost niches touching the ground. This motif figures on the pilasters and door-jambs of Ajanta cave 17. Five couples of gandharvas and apsaras can be seen on the lintel. Being the celestial musicians, each of the gandharvas carries musical instruments in one hand, while with the other hand they support apsaras. They resemble their counterparts painted on the ceiling of Ajanta cave II and carved in innumerable temples of Gupta and post-Gupta periods, viz. on the ceiling and pillar-medallions of Badami caves 1 and 3 (now preserved in the
National Museum, New Delhi), the ceiling slabs of the Durga temple of Aihole, Aurangabad cave 7, Masrur temple and on the lintels of numerous stone temples of Orissa of early period such as the Madhukesvara temple.

The outermost frames and their lintels on top are richly ornamented with floral and foliated patterns. Their notable features are the stylised winged leogryphs carved in the left and right lintel corners. In early temples constructed between 400 and 500 A.D., these corner niches were reserved for the river goddesses Ganga and Yamuna, as we can see on the doorway to the Dasavatara temple of Deogarh. When the river goddesses came to flank the temple entrances, the leogryphs or vyala, as they are called in our architectural texts, replaced them. They also replaced the mithuna couples occupying this place in Bhumara and Aurangabad. In Ajanta cave 1, they figure on the right and left corners of the doorway as in the Laksana Devi temple, but they were carved in a variety of ways in later temple architecture and sculpture, sometimes on the back or pedestal of the Buddha sculptures as we see in Ajanta cave 16 and sometimes on both sides of the alties in relief sculptures. They figure in identical posture in Mahabalipuram and Conjeevaram.28

On top of the doorway is fixed the carved pediment with a triangular gable (pl. 7). This is placed on a heavy horizontal beam from which hang the horns of sacrificed animals. The triangular gable has a trefoliated arch enclosing the figure of Visnu vaikuntha.
perched on the back of his vahana Garuda. Cunningham, who was the first to discover this significant temple, thought that the seated figure was Kali. Later, Vogel identified him as Surya the Sun god. He mistook Visnu for Surya because of the position of his legs. Perhaps he had in mind the relief sculpture of Surya from the Sun temple of Martand in Kashmir, which is more or less identical. But here we have Visnu vaikunthamurti which aspect represents this god as having four heads. But in sculptures, only three heads - that of a boar (Varaha), a human being, i.e. Visnu always in the centre, and a lion (Narasimha) - are visible, the fourth one of Kapila is always at the back and hence is invisible from the front side. We have discussed in detail the origin and development of this aspect in our analysis of the Markula Devi temple of Lahul in the following pages. This image has twelve arms, in each of which the god wields emblems such as parasol, a mace, a lotus, an arrow, a trident, a disc or chakra, a bow etc. He is flanked by two attendants who also figure in most metal images of Vaikuntha from Kashmir, Swat valley, Gandhara and Chamba. In the corners of the triangle, just behind the attendants, he carved two peacocks which are purely ornamental motifs. The bargeboards and the horizontal beam at the base of the triangle carry highly stylised ornamental patterns composed by profuse foliage.

Before discussing the significance of gable and the Visnu image carved within, we complete our description of the pediment by studying its three sections, for which Goetz uses the word storeys; these are horizontal panels, each divided into ten niches. The lowermost panel has niches formed by circular arches
resting on short and massive pilasters capped by pot-and-foliage capitals. We had earlier noticed this kind of arches, pilasters and capitals on the caitya facade of Karli cave (early 2nd century A.D.). The mithuna or amorous couples depicted in these arched niches are shown in various attitudes of love making (pl. 7). They occasionally appear as part of the doorway decoration in almost all Gupta and post-Gupta period temples. The portrayal of erotic couples on the door lintels of this and other wooden temples of this region is evidently a Gupta convention, its function being, like that of the navagrahas (nine planets) who also figure on the lintels, to ward off all evil and to promote auspiciousness. It is probable that the craftsmen in the western Himalayan region, like their counterparts in Ajanta, Ellora and other parts of northern India, were guided by the injunctions laid down in the silpasastras as well as in Varahamihira's Brhatsamhita. The latter author writes: "The remaining part of the doorway should be decorated with auspicious birds, Swastika designs, vessels, mithunas, leaves, creepers, etc." No doubt the mithunas were treated as a decorative motif. We may take care to explain that the word 'decoration' is not used in a superficial sense. In Indian art and culture, decoration has a deeper connotation, for it is associated with luck and prosperity and has auspicious properties.

The kirttimukha masks with large protruding eyes - most of them are almost obliterated now and not very clearly visible - are carved above the pilasters. On top are projecting brackets with the standing figures of dancers, which connect the first and third sections, and also divide the niches in the middle section. These
niches enclosing the figures of seated yaksas are similar to those of the Siva temple in Bhumara, while the friezes of the middle section correspond to the cornice of the Visvakarma and Lankesvara caves of Ellora. The gavaksa or kudu arch that forms the vajramastaka on the facade of most Gupta period temples of Orissa, are used here as an ornamental device on top of the yaksa figures. It needs to be noted here that the Kudu arch carved here represents its earliest form, and is broken into two in the middle of the lintel. It figures in this form on the outer doorway of Cave 23 of Ajanta. The same motif recurs on the doorjamb of the Dasavatara temple of Deogarh (500 A.D.). The double gavaksas or one ornamental kudu arch surmounted by another, like the one we see on the facade of the early stone temples of Orissa, also figures in the Visvakarma cave of Ellora.

Sculpted on the cornice connecting the last section with the gable are the navagrahas (nine planets) seated within trefoil niches. According to the Hindu system of astrology and astronomy, the nine planets are Surya (sun), Chandra (moon), Mangala (Mars), Budha (Mercury), Brhaspati (Jupiter), Sukra (Venus), Sani (Saturn), Rahu and Ketu. The niches are separated from one another by squat pillars supporting the arches. The nine planets figure very commonly on the lintels of stone temples all over north India and Orissa, viz. the Svarnajalesvara and Madhukesvara temples, built between 6th and 8th centuries A.D.

The triangular gable enclosing the trefoil arch and resting on an imposing pediment on the facade of the Laksana Devi temple has given rise to a lot of controversy. Goetz who studied this
temple in detail for the first time refused to accept that it formed part of the original temple. He has given reasons for thinking so in the following manner:

"The upper gable of the Laksana Devi temple is a characteristic Kashmiri product, as it represents Visnu in his three-headed form, whereas the temple is dedicated to the Devi, it seems to be the last remnant of a Visnu temple erected in Ajyavaraman's reign, re-used, after its destruction for filling the gable of the simple roof with which the Devi temple was covered in later repairs."  

Elsewhere the same author writes:

"The image of Visnu could never occupy the main gable of a Devi temple. The gable must be the last remnant of the Narasimha temple erected in the reign of Ajyavarman by the exiled Brahmins from Kanauj and salvaged from the destruction of the Kira-Tibetan invasion."  

What has led Goetz to think in this manner are three things - the triangular gable, the trefoil arch and the image of Visnu vaikuntha. In our analysis of Markula temple, we have shown that the vaikuntha aspect of Vishnu was not an innovation of Kashmiri artists. Such images were made for worship all over northern India from 1st century B.C. onwards. The triangular arch that has come to be associated with Kashmiri stone temples of 7th-8th century A.D. was not borrowed from Roman architecture as assumed by Goetz and many others like him, but was derived from tantric literature centering around the worship of Siva and Sakti. This literature is rich in symbology which, unfortunately, has not been studied properly according to it a triangle standing on its apex symbolises the cosmic Energy or Sakti while an inverted triangle denotes Siva. While this usage of triangles featured commonly in ritualistic diagrams used by the tantrics for worship, the triangle continued to be used as an ornamental as well as symbolical device in architecture. 

The trefoilated arch, that is commonly used in Gandhara architecture,
is symbolic of mount meru as well as linga-yoni, again a tantric symbol. In architecture, it came to be employed purely as decorative device. It figures again and again as such on the lintels of temple doorways (6th-8th centuries A.D.) and from the aureoles of Siva and Parvati, Surya and other deities carved in Orissa, Bengal and Bihar as late as the 10th and 12th centuries A.D.

There is no evidence that the original temple of Narasimha in Brahmaur was a wooden structure. The gable placed on top of the doorway fits very well on the doorway to the Laksana temple; it is neither too small nor too big. It is not understandable why the image of Visnu could never occupy the main gable of Devi temple as observed by Goetz. The Visnu images figure on the doorways to all Durga temples - the doorway to the inner sanctum of the Sakti Devi temple has an exquisite standing image of Visnu; on the jambs of Markula temple are carved the ten incarnations of Visnu and the Trivikrama panel on its window is also a vaisnava theme. More examples can be multiplied. There is nothing unusual in the depiction of Visnu on the gable of a Durga temple, for in ancient times, in the entire area comprising the western Himalaya and the Punjab plains, the combined worship of five deities, viz. Siva, Visnu, Durga and Ganesa was prevalent and no hard and fast distinctions ever existed. It is true that the triangular gable is an isolated example in wood but similar arches enclosing a trefoil arch figure in stray stone reliefs in late Gupta style that are to be seen in the temples of Bhavan (Kangra), Naggar (Kulu), Sarin and Manali in Kulu and Maylang (Lahul). This proves that such gables were not
a peculiarity of Kasmiri temple architecture. Why they figure more commonly in Kasmiri temple architecture was probably on account of its being the ancient stronghold of tantricism. There can be no doubt that such triangular pediments served the same purpose as the vajramastakas do in early stone temples of Orissa.

The interior of this temple is very simple. The mandapa (ante-chamber) is rectangular, supported by four pillars joined by railings on both the sides. This leads to the inner sanctum (garbha-grha) which enshrines the superb bronze statue of Laksana Devi and which is provided with a carved wooden doorway. Before studying the carvings on this doorway, we shall take into account the mandapa, the most striking feature of which are the pillars (stambha in sanskrit and thama in pahari dialect).

These pillars are square wooden posts, the lower two-third portions of which are left unornamented, while the upper one-third portions are circular and carved with kirttimukha masks, bands of pearl strings and inverted lotus petals, on which are placed circular rings symbolically supporting the kalasa (water vessel) overflowing with highly stylised foliage (p1.10). This auspicious symbol of abundance and prosperity and all the decorative motifs mentioned above are typical features of Gupta art and architecture, as is evident from Ajanta cave nos. 1, 2, 21, 23, 24 and 26, Aurangabad cave nos. 1 and 3, in most early temples of Orissa, and Ellora caves 14 and 21. The pot-and-foliage (ghata-pallava) here forms the capital on which rests the square abacus ornamented with delicate floral
patterns. The sridhara brackets on top are decorated with a central piece on top of the capital representing some Hindu god with his vahana sitting in a niche formed by two miniature columns and a round arch rising from the snouts of two makaras; the lateral pieces only slightly rounded off at the lower edges of the ends have reliefs of the ganas and flying deities "kinnaras," and on the level of the arch, a decorative frieze ending in a scroll. In one or two brackets, the lower bodies of the flying godlings are those of birds, from whose feathery tails issue profuse foliage. Similar figures occur also on the rockcut Siva and Jain temples at Aihole and on the plinth of the Basesara Mahadeva temple of Bajaura in Kulu valley (8th century A.D.). The pillars with sridhara brackets that we have described above have their prototypes in Ajanta cave Nos. 1, 2, 24 and 26, Aurangabad Cave No. 3 and Badami cave No. 1. The pearl strings on the pillars are also a common feature of Ajanta frescoes.

The mandapa has a lantern ceiling. This type of ceiling is a common feature of stone temples of northern-western India, which points to its wooden origins. The tradition of constructing this kind of ceiling in wood and stone continued uninterrupted in the western Himalaya for several centuries. It was composed by "covering each corner with a triangular slab extending from the centre of one side to that of the next, the square of the ceiling is reduced by the same procedure until the central opening has become small enough to be covered with a single slab." The triangular slabs comprise floral and geometrical patterns enclosing the kirttimukha and makara motifs in the centre. Some of these slabs enclose the figures of ganas or yaksas, wearing curled wigs and holding garlands (pl. 8).
Their stylistic affinities with those figuring in the Naranarayana panel from Deogarh already referred to, similar figures in Ajanta cave Nos. 21, 23, 24 and 26, Aurangabad cave nos. 1 and 3, Ellora cave nos. 12, 14, 16 and 21, and almost all early stone temples of Orissa, especially Madhukesvara and Markandesvara temples are notable. An enormous full-blown lotus occupies the centre (pl. 9), its large petals carved in a naturalistic style display the carver's ingenuity and keen powers of observation.

Finally, we come to the carved wooden doorway to the sanctum. It is carved exactly in the same manner as the principal doorway outside, the same successively receding jambs and corresponding lintels, etc. The only difference is that no figures of deities or demi-gods are depicted here. The stylised figures of two lions occupy the corners of the mouldings which are carved with scale patterns that intersperse with square panels enclosing lotus rosettes. All the other frames of the doorway are ornamented with foliated patterns which do not have a creeper spiralling around them.

Sakti Devi temple, Chhatrarhi, Chamba district

The Sakti Devi temple of Chhatrarhi (pl. 13) is as important a wooden temple as the one discussed above on account of its antiquity as well as sanctity - these temples rank among the three holiest shrines of Himachal Pradesh, the third one being the Bhavani temple of Kangra. The village of Chhatrarhi is situated off Chamba-Brahmaur road on a mountain slope, not very far from the confluence of the Budhal and Ravi. One can go by a vehicle upto Gehra, from
where one has to take a bridlepath uphill and walk about 7 kms. in order to reach the village.

There are conflicting views regarding the construction of this temple. Tradition attributes it to Musunavarna, the legendary progenitor of the old Brahmaur dynasty. According to the inscription enshrined in the temple, King Meruvarmana had commissioned the casting of this image as well as the construction and carving of the temple structure. The English rendering of the inscription as given by Vogel is as follows:

"There was an eminent chief of a pure race, the illustrious Devavarman of celebrated fame. His son charming by every virtue is the illustrious Meruvarman renowned on the earth. First, for the sake of the spiritual merit of his parents he, out of devotion, caused the image of Sakti to be made, after having conquered his foes in their invincible strongholds, he who has prolonged his life by glory, fame and religious merit."54

It is to be noted that while this inscription mentions the name of Meruvarmana, not a word is said about the craftsman who cast this image. The local tradition, however, asserts that this image and the temple were the last work of Gugga, the master craftsman who had earlier been commissioned by Meruvarmana in Brahmaur for casting the image of Laksana Devi as well as for carving the temple built in her honour. We are inclined to accept this version, for we are convinced by the stylistic similarity that the brass images of the goddesses and the temple carvings are the creations of the same artisans. The facial features and expression, slim, elegant and lithe bodies of the deities, the folds of their draperies and skirts, their ornaments on arms, ears, neck and around the waist are exactly identical. This leaves us in no doubt as to their being the work of the same man, and also enables us to fix the year 700 A.D.
as the date of construction of this temple.

The hut-like structure of the Sakti Devi temple (pl.13) reminds us of the Laksana Devi temple already discussed. Evidently, the structure housing the treasure of ancient woodcarvings has been repaired a number of times over the centuries. Like the Laksana Devi temple, its walls are also built of rubble masonry and massive horizontal planks of deodar wood plaster-coated with mud. Two carved wooden doorways, the principal entrance to the temple (pl.14) and the one to the sanctum (pls.15 & 16), have their prototype in the Laksana Devi temple, although here the triangular gable that lends dignity and grandeur to the former temple is absent. Twelve massive wooden pillars hewn out of deodar wood and surmounted by sridhara brackets support the ceiling (pls.11 & 17).

We begin our study of this temple by the principal doorway which stands no comparison with the imposing and elaborately carved doorway of the Laksana Devi temple. The outermost jambs and lintels appear to have been originally carved with bands of scrollwork which are completely corroded now due to continual exposure to elements. Only here and there, we can trace badly decayed patterns. The next lintel carries eight figures seated within trefoil arches alternating with decorative metal bosses which figure again on the innermost jambs and the corresponding lintels, and also on the left and right corners of the outermost lintels. Eight deities standing in tribhanga posture (pl.14) within the niches are carved on both sides of the middle jambs. All of them are male deities except the one occupying the lowermost niche on the right side, who is a female deity. They sport three- or five pointed tiara like the deities carved on the doorway.
to the sanctum, and hold some attributes in their hands which it
is not possible to identify now due to the decayed condition of
the carving. We could make out that the right hands of the third
figure on the left jamb and the second figure on the right jamb
are raised in abhaya mudra (gesture of reassurance). The second figure
on the left jamb and the third figure on the right have a sword or
staff in their right hands. It has not been possible to identify
the female deity. She cannot be the river goddess, since no vehicle
(vahana) is shown accompanying her. In fact, the vahanas have not
been carved along with any of the figures here. The corresponding
lintel has trefoliated niches enshrining seated figures. They are
the navagraha (nine planets). The fourth lintel on top again has
thirteen trefoliated arches resting on short and massive pillars
enclosing seated figures.

The use of the trefoil niches, the three or five-pointed
tiaras of the deities, the condition of the wood and the style of
carving - all suggest that the carvings are ancient, possibly as old
as the temple itself. They are not characteristic features of Kasmiri
sculptures of early mediaeval period, but were in common use over a
larger area including not only Chamba but the entire western Himalaya,
as is evident from the large number of stone sculptures from Bajaura
and a number of other places in Kulu, Kangra and Simla hills. The
trefoil arch is not a peculiarity of Gandhara and Kasmiri archi-
tecture, it figures in early stone temples of Orissa also, for example,
the lintel of Svarnajalesvara temple in Bhuvanesvara. Goetz,
writing in his usual vein, has indulged in a lot of conjecture
when he expressed his views on this doorway:

"This exterior entrance, though an old piece, has been transferred from another lost shrine. This seems possible because there exists another lost shrine. This seems possible because there exists another ancient idol at Chitrari, likewise known as Sakti Devi, but actually the bust of a male deity. The door might have belonged to the vanished temple of this image." 56

In our opinion, the doorframes and lintels belong to the original doorway intended for this temple. This is evident from the striking resemblance between the style of execution of the figures carved here and those on the inner doorway - the same crowns, the same flexed stances that bestow grace on them, the same symbols, same treatment of foliage and fruits (sriphala) in the background, etc.

Originally, they must have been well modelled sculptures, but now they have lost all their suppleness, grandeur and grace. They have decayed considerably due to continual exposure to hostile elements. No wonder, they look stiff now. It seems to me that the original doorway consisted of a number of successively receding jambs and lintels, like the doorway to the sanctum, but they are lost now having succumbed to inclement weather. Probably, the metal bosses were nailed onto it later to prevent further decay.

In sharp contrast stands the doorway to the sanctum which is indeed a masterpiece of woodcarving and in a good state of preservation. It has successively receding jambs and lintels, a regular feature of all Gupta temples. At the two ends of the outermost lintels are carved elongated and stylised figures of the lions. Just below these niches are placed yaksas who seem to support the niches above. Similar figures can be seen supporting the niches
carrying the figures of the river goddesses Ganga and Yamuna on both sides of the doorway. They resemble the yaksha figures depicted in the Visnu temple of Deogarh, now on display in the National Museum of New Delhi, Ellora caves, Ajanta cave nos. 1 and 2, Mahisa Mandapa in Mahabalipuram, etc. The jambs on both sides of the entrance are covered with bands of intertwined scrolls and a riot of ornamental floriated patterns of increasing complexity and refinement alternating with figural jambs. Flanking the entrance are ganas sporting curled coiffure and seated in the lowermost niches. They have their counterparts in the stone reliefs from Visnu temple of Deogarh. Four niches carved on both sides of the second jambs reveal to us in the lowermost niches, Ganga and Yamuna standing on their respective vahana, makara and kachhapa and carrying a water vessel (kalasa), which is symbolic of their being the river goddesses, in one of their raised hands. Above them, on the right jamb, stand three male deities, each having four arms which are now broken. The absence of attributes and emblems held in their hands makes it difficult for us to identify them. On the left jamb, we see (starting from top to bottom) a four-armed male deity, probably Visnu, four-armed goddess Durga Mahisamardini and a male deity. The depiction of Durga Mahisasuramardini is amazingly impressive. The victorious goddess stands heroically, her right foot resting on the back of the vanquished buffalo-demon who is not shown as half-human and half animal as he is usually portrayed, but as an animal; her trident is stuck into its body. With her two hands, Durga is tearing apart her enemy's snout; the latter writes and twitches in pain while the goddess looks on with a calm expression on her face (pl. 15).
The next jambs consists of semi-circular mouldings covered with elaborate scrollwork. These are followed by figural jambs again divided into four niches. Here animal or human headed figures of pot-bellied dwarfs alternate with the figures (on the right jamb) of six-headed Karttikeya and Indra whose vahana, Airavata the white elephant, can be seen standing at his back. On the left jamb, similar dwarfish figures alternate with the figures of the four-headed Brahma and Siva wielding a trident and a rosary. The attributes in Siva's two left arms are not clearly visible. Nandi, the bull vehicle of Siva, is shown standing at his back. The depiction of Brahma is rather unusual, for he looks more like the Buddha at one glance. He stands in the samabhanga posture. In his lower right hand he holds a staff, while his upper right hand is held in the gesture of reassurance; a rosary (aksamala) is placed between his fingers. One of his left hands is placed on the head of a voteee, a tiny figure standing with folded hands on his side. A swan (hamsa), Brahma's vahana, carrying a pearl string in its beak is visible between the staff and the god's right leg. We notice the same kind of treatment, i.e. the niches containing dwarfish pot-bellied figures of yaksas alternating with those of Hindu deities on the doorjambs or Visnu temple of Deogarh (500 A.D.). The navagrahas (nine planets) sit in crossed legs posture on the lintel corresponding to the second jambs. Celestial creatures such as the gandharvas and apsaras, kinnaras (flying godlings), guardians of the four points of the universe (dikpalas) on the successive lintels add to the aura of otherworldliness. All the figures carved here display remarkable vitality and strength; their postures are impressive, their modelling sensitive and their costumes, ornaments and
coiffures elegant. They rank among some of the most exquisite creations of sculpture trained in post-Gupta art traditions.

The pillars along with their sridhara brackets are conceived and carved exactly in the same manner as those of the Laksana Devi temples (pls. 11 & 17). The carved pillar capitals carry a variety of motifs such as flying deities on the lateral pieces flanking a seated deity in the central niche, seated animals such as bulls, lions, etc. and scrollwork. Compared to those of Laksana temple, the carving of the deities here is far more elegant and fluid; the decorative patterns are far more impressive and variegated.

We conclude the study of these temples by making a few observations. From aesthetic point of view, the carved doorways of the temples of Laksana Devi and Sakti Devi are highly appealing. The mithuna (erotic couples), the group of nine planets (navagraha), gandharvas and apsaras, dwarfish male figures of yaksas and ganas, flying godlings (kinnaras), intricate scrollwork, etc. are typical features of Gupta art and architecture. The pillars with their pot-and-foliage motifs and sridhara brackets, ornamental patterns, the successively receding door frames and lintels faithfully conserve the Gupta art traditions. More so, the bodily proportions, anatomical treatment, coiffures, costumes and ornaments of the Hindu deities and the minor godlings. The carver seems to have been fully conversant with the Hindu canon of ideal beauty prevalent in the 5th and 7th centuries A.D., as is evident from the graceful suavity of their excessively slim bodies, curved lines of eye-brows, lotus-shaped eyes, bursting sensuous lips, rather small hands, affected hand gestures, elegant quiet postures, wig sported by gandharvas, yaksas, ganas.
and kinnaras. The same features characterise the figures painted in Ajanta frescoes in Cave nos. 2 and 17, frescoes from eastern Turkistan on Buddhist themes and early bronzes from Nepal. What accounts for this similarity is the dominant influence of Gupta art and architecture which was not only confined to Indian subcontinent but spread far and wide over Greater India, i.e. Indonesia, China, Nepal, Tibet, Afghanistan, eastern Turkistan, etc. This very idea has been expressed by Goetz in the following words:

"The last stages of the Gandhara style are flooded with Gupta inspirations and adaptations. This is evident from the art and architecture of Hadda, Bamiyan, and Foudukistan in Afghanistan and Khotan, Kucha, Ming-0i, Qumtura in Eastern Turkistan, in the art of the 7th century Nepal and to such a great extent that it left its mark on the whole later development of Nepalese art." 62

In short, the sculptural carvings of these wooden temples up the various rhythms that had been perfected over the 5th and 6th centuries A.D. These temples are a perfect tribute to the creative genius of the Gupta sculptors who conceived nobly and with equal elegance gave plastic form to their ideas.

Camunda Devi temple above Chamba town

The Camunda Devi temple stands on a hill shoulder overlooking the Chamba town. (pl. 19) The great beauty of its setting on a high plateau framed by mountains at the back contributes immensely to the impressiveness of the temple. It can be reached by climbing up an imposing stone stairway which starts from the bazaar near the bus stand in Chamba town and leads us up in 355 stone steps to the entrance of the quadrangular court enclosing the sanctum. The flight of steps is interrupted by a platform, about 15 ft. in height, where on a raised platform stand two stone statues of lions facing the shrine. From here, another flight of stairs leads us up
to the temple which stands on a raised platform about 4 ft. high. Thus, it has a double platform providing passages for circumambulation on two levels. Some years ago, there was a gateway of stone slabs, where the stairway is interrupted by the first platform, supporting a crescent-shaped arch carved with reliefs of various gods and crowned by an amalaka, which, according to Goetz, was in imitation of the later types of brass frames placed behind the cult idols.

The temple occupying the centre of the quadrangle forms a square cella conforming in plan and elevation to the usual features of chalet type temples. On all the four sides, there is a passage about 4 ft. wide, along which are ranged stone pillars, four on each side, seems to be supporting the thin square wooden shafts painted in green colour. The passages on the sides and at the back are evidently intended for pradaksina. In front of the shrine, there is a mandapa about 10 ft. in width. The sanctum has no decoration of any kind.

The temple as it stands today is a modern structure, built on an ancient site. In our opinion, the original temple is as old as the temples of Laksana Devi and Sakti Devi. This is evident from the style of the metal image of Durga mahisasuramardini enshrined in the sanctum. Goetz too shares our view:

"Probably, the wooden Chamunda temple above Chamba town had already been in existence in Sahilavarman's time (c.920-940 A.D.)." Unfortunately, nothing remains of its ancient structure, because the temple was destroyed several times in the middle ages. If we learn from the vamsavali of Chamba kings. The original structure might have survived till the mid-17th century, for it is mentioned
in the inscription of Raja Balabhadravarman (1589-1641). The monuments of the time mentioned in this inscription include the temple under study (sacrificial tax, 1630 A.D.) and the Khajiar temple (1632 A.D.). It seems to have been destroyed or damaged again sometime between 1630 and 1640. We have no information how this happened, but we can infer such an incidence from the fact that it was reconstructed or repaired sometime after 1641 at the behest of Dai Batlu, the wetnurse of Raja Prithvi Singh. This lady had assumed considerable power during this king's reign because she had saved his life in his childhood. No records exist to inform us as to what the structure built by her looked like. We know that the two platforms on which the temple stands and the two stone statues of the lions date back to this period (mid-17th century). So do the two wooden relief panels that can still be seen in the left corner of the ambulatory. We are able to arrive at this conclusion by comparing them with the figural wooden panels that, prior to the earthquake of 1905, adorned the Brahmaur state kothi as well as the fragments of reliefs still preserved in the Hirma temple of Mehla, all of which are in Basohli style.

Hardly one hundred years had elapsed when the temple was burnt down by the huge conflagration that had engulfed the entire Chamba town in 1735. This was the work of Raja Ugarasingh who had resorted to this destructive act to prevent the army of his enemy Dalel Singh from marching ahead, since the latter had already deposed him. Raja Umed Singh (1748-1764) undertook the reconstruction of this temple and got the ceiling of the front veranda carved with figural and ornamental panels. The huge bell that hangs from the central cavity bears the inscription mentioning the year 1762 and
the name of Pandit Vidyadhara who ordered its casting on behalf of the king it seems that the carving on the ceiling had not been completed during his reign and this task was accomplished by his son and successor Raj Singh (1764-1794). Sham Singh got the pillars renewed in 1890. The carved ceiling covering the mandapa is the most interesting part of the temple. In the centre is a hollow circular cavity, from which hangs an enormous metal bell (pl.23). On the four sides are placed projecting bracket-like figures in high relief that almost gives them a three-dimensional appearance; they are probably the guardians of the cardinal directions. Rectangular wooden panels between these figures are engraved with four figures in standing posture and in flat relief; three of them are Hindu deities dressed in dhotis, sporting typical Pahari crowns and carrying a lotus bud in one of their hands, while the fourth figure is that of a warrior wielding a sword in one hand, a shield is strapped onto his back. He is dressed like a Rajput chief, wearing trousers and an angarakhi (tunic). The flowing ends of the scarves thrown over the shoulders of the deities, their dhotis, crowns and ornaments and the entire treatment of their figures have striking stylistic affinities with Visnu and Krsna images painted in the miniatures of Basohli Chamba and Kangra schools.

The rest of the ceiling is divided into three rows of coffers by two mighty cross-beams running along its length. Four minor beams are placed across them. The space between these beams is in the form of lantern ceilings. In the centre of each of these ceilings is carved the design of a full-blown lotus; the treatment of lotus petals differs from ceiling to ceiling, which suggests that
it was the work of a number of carvers with varying degrees of skill. The triangular panels in the corners formed by the squares placed diagonally are filled in with floral designs and human heads sporting turbans sloping back with a cross-band - the Rajput style turban popularised by the Mughals. Some heads are portrayed in profile, while others are in three-quarter profile, all seem to be emerging out of out-stretched wings. We agree with Goetz that this was the legacy of Mughal painting to provincial schools. We do not know whether the carver of these panels copied them directly from Mughal miniatures depicting Christian angels or from their copies made by some Chamba artists. It seems more probable to us that the inspiration came from similar figures painted on the doors of the royal palace of Chamba (now no longer in existence, but the door leaves are preserved in the Bhuri Singh Museum). The treatment of spread out wings and head-dresses is certainly exotic, not indigenous. The same is true of the Gandharvas and apsaras.

The triangular panels and the cross beams depict themes from vaisnavism, saivism and saktism that form common subject of woodcarving as well as all art forms here. All the figures on the beams are enclosed within octagonal frames formed by joining two cusped arches. There is no uniformity of style. Most of the figures such as Visnu seated on a lotus throne, ardhanarishvara, two male deities astride a horse and an antelope (Surya and Candra), Durga mahisamardini, gandharvas and apsaras are carved in Basohli style, as is evident from features - a receding forehead, high nose delineated in an unbroken continuity, lotus-like eyes, shapely and elegant figures, adorned with necklaces and other ornaments, a high
pinnacled crown or turban with a cross band, similar to the one
sported by Raja Kirpal Pal. These panels either belonged to this
very temple or some palace in Chamba town and were used in the ceil­
ing when it was reconstructed in mid-18th century. It is not possible
to say anything decisively in the absence of concrete evidence.
There is another possibility that a highly competent carver-cum-
painter trained in Basohli style executed them in this period.

The figures carved in Chamba style are Ganesa sitting with
crossed legs on a padmasana, Uma-Mahesvara riding on Nandi, Camunda
and Mahesvari, the tantric manifestations of Durga widely worshipped
in this area, dancing Krsna (pl.20), Siva carrying a drum, a trident,
a cup and a rosary, a male deity carrying a fly whisk and a lotus,
pairs of ganas on the brackets (they bear a striking resemblance
to those in Camunda temple of Devi Kothi), crowned musicians play­
ing on pahari instruments such as long pipes (narasingas).

We can trace yet another hand in the carving of figures
such as Visnu anantasayin accompanied by Laksmi, Durga riding on
a lion, Yasoda churning milk while baby Krsna looks on, another
figure perhaps Balarama is shown standing at her back, carrying
milk pots. These panels in folk style appear to have been executed
by a less skilled carver who was used to working in this style.
The figures are crude but not as distorted as those we come across
in the wooden temples of other areas.

We can trace these three styles in a few panels depicting
secular themes - a pahari girl playing with a ball in Basohli style
(pl.22), a lady dressed in a long skirt and a veil and carrying
offerings in a tray in Chamba style, and two very crudely carved female figures, one flanked by peacocks and the other by gazelles, are in folk style. All the figures have stylistic affinities with Basohli and Chamba schools of painting which were at their acme then. Evidently they owe a great deal to them or we may say were inspired by them. It is highly likely that the carving was done by artisans who were basically painters. The strong influence of painting is evident from the stylistic delineation of figures, common use of cartouches and cusped arches. The figures on the cross beams framed as they are within arched niches carved out in rectangular blocks of wood remind us of similar panel divisions in the wall paintings of Chamba. The most striking feature of these carvings is the depiction of tantric goddesses mentioned above, which is a novel theme in woodcarving and not attempted elsewhere. It was also borrowed from contemporary painting.

All the panels have a border running along the edges of the panels and cross beams and are filled in with variegated patterns such as floral designs linked by meandering creepers. The foliage is elaborately lined and twisted. This treatment is also akin to painting. The decoration on the panels of secular themes inserted in some of the ambulatory pillars consists of octagonal motifs alternating with cartouches. Goetz has attributed these to mughal architecture as mentioned earlier but we have shown elsewhere their link with sakti cult. Their sudden emergence coincides with the immense popularity of tantricism in Chamba at this time.
Camunda Devi temple, Devi-ri-kothi, Chamba district

The village of Devi-ri-kothi is situated at an elevation of 7705 ft. in Chhaura tehsil, on the western slope of Khabala nala which is a side valley of the Baira nala. Going from Chamba to Tisa, we take the second side road that runs up the Baira nala and passes through Devi-ri-kothi, once the seat of a rana, the ruins of whose castle can still be seen. Also known as Caunde-ri-Devi, the village commands a breath-taking view of snow-capped mountains, forests and pastures. Devi Kothi literally means the house of the Goddess Camunda-Devi, an appellation Durga had acquired after killing Canda and Munda, the demon brothers.

No one knows exactly when the temple (pl.1) was first constructed. A number of legends are woven around it, one of them asserting that it had been founded by a resident of Hail village. Raja Umed Singh of Chamba (1748-64) in order to propitiate the goddess. This we learn from an inscription in Tankri script engraved on the temple door which has been deciphered by Vogel in the following manner:

"In the year 30, the (month) of Bhadon 21, on that date the illustrious Maharaja Umed Singh has built the temple of Goddess Chamunda. The superintendent (sardar) of the temple, the illustrious Mian Bishan Singh, the stewards, the Ghanyam, the Nilheri, and Jhagru of Sungal; the carpenter Gurdev and Jhanda, the stone masons Debu of Hail and the Chelu (? )Dyal; written on 29th of Poh." 74

The present structure dates from mid-18th century. The temple is a wooden structure of chalet type and stands on a platform 6 ft. in height. The side and back walls are completely covered with wooden planks. On the front side, four wooden shafts are erected, of which two flank the entrance while the other two are placed
in the corners. Two ornamental struts project from the central pillars and support the slanting roof. In the centre of this roof we see the notched head of a makara. This roof rests against a large gable of wood which is fully covered with cusped arches carved in low relief in horizontal sections enclosing the figures of Rama, Hanuman, Brahma, Parasurama, Guru Vasistha, devotees, musicians, birds and animals such as peacocks, lions, etc. The style of carving is distinctly Rajput, as is evident from typically Rajput costumes that were worn by members of feudal class in the 18th century. Richly carved decorative panels in primitive style can be seen on the gables of wooden temples of Mindhal, Porthi and Gulabgarh-Atholi in Padar. Architecturally all these temples are constructed on the same lines as that of Devi-ri-Kothi with large sloping roofs covering the entire structure. The cusped arches enclosing figures of divinities are a common feature of wall paintings and painted doors not only of Rangmahal palace of Chamba but of all the hill states of western Himalaya in the 18th-19th centuries. The entire structure is covered with a sloping roof whose sides project a little over the facade in order to protect it from heavy rains and snow. A number of metal finials decorate the ridge beam of the roof. Iron tridents are stuck into it as well as onto the pillars. A number of metal bells hang from the heavy beam above the entrance.

When we stand at the entrance, we see two more than life-size male figures carved in high relief on both sides of the temple door (pl.24). They stand beneath cusped arches. The round faces, robust bodied figures wear a typical pahari crown with high pinnacles, such as the one sported by Rama, Krsna and Visnu in pahari miniatures of this period, a dhoti and a scarf thrown over the shoulders,
its loose ends falling vertically over the knees. A spear is held in their hands. According to local tradition, they are the statues of Bhima and Arjuna, the Pandava brothers. On the pillar brackets are carved the crowned ganas with handsome faces and heavily ornamented; they are not conceived in the round as in most stone temples in classical style. They have remarkable stylistic affinities with their counterparts in the Camunda Devi temple above Chamba town. They are misinterpreted by the local villagers as representing the Kaurava brothers who are punished in this position by the Pandava brothers. This appears to us mere fantasy on the part of the villagers who are in the habit of weaving legends around everything they see. In our opinion, the figures flanking the entrance are door guardians and those on the brackets are ganas.

That the carver had full knowledge of the right material for carving is seen by the rich effect lent to the knees and cheeks of the ganas (pl.25) and the door guardians by the grain of deodar wood. In fact, the grain is an integral part of the sculpture, flowing with the form, reinforcing the directional movement: and at the same time enriching the surface.

The wooden frames all around the door guardian figures are embellished with conventional floral and leafy patterns such as were common in the wall paintings of the 18th century. In the lowermost niches flanking the entrance to the sanctum are depicted four figures, two on each side, one male and one female, standing also within arched niches. The female figures sport a crown, are dressed in a dhoti, have a long garland (vanamala) around their neck flowing down in a rhythmic manner. They carry a water pot and a
lotus stalk in their hands. Their vehicles, crocodile and tortoise, help us identify them as the river goddesses Ganga and Yamuna (pl. 26). The male figures are chiselled in the same manner as the guardian figures flanking the doorways to the temples of Tripurasundari (Naggar) and Laksmi-Narayana (Chamba). They wield a staff and stand in a relaxed position. Another feature of Gupta and post-Gupta architecture retained here are the navagrahas occupying their usual place on the door lintel. It is likely that all these figures were carved on the panels adorning this temple before it was reconstructed, and when the carver was entrusted with the task of renovating the temple, he tried to retain some of the features from the ancient carvings. Another possibility is that the carver had the Vaikunthadvara of Chamba town and the Khajiar temple in mind when he was executing these carvings, for the door guardians and the navagrahas are strikingly similar to those in the latter. The figures are in Rajput style which had left its deep impact on pahari painting of this period. This is evident from the rhythmically flowing lines of the carved figures, their vivid gestures and movements, the predominance of themes from Krsna and Rama legends and Rajput costumes. It is more than probable that the paintings on the walls of the sanctuary executed simultaneously influenced the style of woodcarving. Another probability is that the carvers of these panels were equally adept at painting or had their basic training in painting, as we have already observed earlier. Goetz opines that here an older Basohli style seems to be struggling with provincial Mughal manner. We are not inclined to accept this view, for we feel that here the older Basohil style had already been superseded by Chamba style which by this time was already born.
The same is true of the carving on the ceiling of the circumambulatory passage around the garbhagrha which comprises rectangular wooden panels, 115 in number. The carving in low relief shows mythological themes mostly derived from vaisnava, saiva and sakta legends. In addition, there are panels depicting rsis, yoginis, hunters, deer, lions and birds. A notable feature here is the octagonal motif enclosing the figures of the deities. This kind of treatment is to be met with in woodcarving and wall painting from 18th century onwards. Vogel and Goetz attribute the sudden emergence of this motif in this period to the immigration of painters from mughal court to Chamba and other hill states of the western Himalaya. In our opinion, this is an indigenous motif derived from the symbol of Sakti who is the patron deity of this region. Octagonal caukis of wood and metal intended for ritual purposes are used in all the temples of Himachal Pradesh, some of them bear inscriptions that place them in the pre-mughal period. The presence of these motifs on the mughal palaces is due to the fact that their builders were local craftsmen who drew non-figural motifs from their repertoire of traditional designs and motifs, not from Islamic religion with which they were not familiar. We have traced the origins of astakona motif in chapter 9. The same is true of the cusped arch which, according to the above-mentioned scholars, is a typical feature of mughal architecture. This arch figuring commonly on all Rajput buildings had its origins, according to A.K.Coomaraswamy in the Buddhist caitya arches and gavaka. K.C.Aryan has traced its origins to the hieroglyphic symbol of dhanur (bow). So we can not say that mughal architecture influenced wooden architecture and carving of this period. All the
carved panels were originally painted, but the colours have peeled off now and the carvings acquired their natural look.

Sandhya-Gayatri temple of Jagatsukh, Kulu district.

The picturesque village of Jagatsukh near Manali has a beautiful wooden temple of Sandhya-Gayatri (pl.27) standing in a courtyard, next to the local school playground. Like the temples of Camunda Devi above Chamba town and at Devi-ri-Kothi, it is also erected on a raised platform about 4 ft. in height. It is built on the ruins of a stone temple of post-Gupta period, as is evident from the stone carving on the lowermost portion. What still survives of the original temple are the walls, doorway, ceiling, windows and the subsidiary shrines, the most remarkable being the one in the backyard which is very similar to the Siva temple of Naggar. Goetz has compared its doorway to the famous landmarks of Javanese and Cambodian architecture:

"The entrance is on one of the shorter sides of the rectangle, as in the Phnom Bayang; the subsidiary shrines remind us of those of early Javanese temples, the windows of those of the Parasurame-svara at Bhuvanesvara in Orissa or of Cambodia, the roof seems to have had some similarity with that of the Teli-ka-Mandir at Gwalior. The sculptures are not very different from the earliest work at Osian in Marwar." 82

We will not comment on the observations made by Goetz in the above passage, for our present consideration is woodcarving and the wooden structure that encases the stone remnants and offers a completely contrasting spectacle, especially the carvings in folk style. The structure in wood forms the upper two-third portion of the temple and was constructed in early 15th century by Raja Udham (Udhran or Urdhan) Pal of Kulu, according to an inscription engraved on a stone slab at the doorway dated sastra samvat 4
which, according to Vogel and others, works out to 1428 A.D. The present structure seems to be comparatively modern and was probably renovated in the end of the 19th century.

This temple has all the features of a chalet style temple. The cella with its bare and dark interior is much bigger than that of the Camunda temple above Chamba town. A circumambulatory passage runs all around it and has elegant wooden pillars (pl. 31) supporting the sloping roof which juts out so as to protect the structure from the heavy rains. An interesting feature of this temple is the carved wooden window on the gable (pl. 29), the origin of which date back to hoary antiquity and which was a common feature of rock-cut cave temples and caitya halls of the Buddhists built at the dawn of the Christian era. The purpose of this window was to let in the sunlight to relieve the darkness and gloom of the temple interior.

The stone doorway of the original temple of 7th century A.D. consists of three successively receding jambs and lintels. In our opinion, it probably served as a model for future artisans who designed and carved the doorways to later wooden temples in the Kulu district on the same pattern.

On all the sides of the veranda, we see wooden pillars, two placed side by side, one in front and the other at its back. They are shaped in the form of a cypress tree; some are ornamented with scaly patterns, while others are left unadorned. On the latter we see undulating figures of snakes carved in a vertical position. (pl. 32) The serpents look like a rippling line and probably have a protective purpose, they figure repeatedly in all
folk style woodcarvings of 18th and 19th centuries not only in Kulu but all over the Himalayan region. On account of the resemblance of the pillar with cypress tree, we would like to coin the term "cypress pillars" for them. Goetz has termed them Mughal pillars. It is true that the carvers of these columns were inspired by cypress trees figuring commonly in pahari miniatures and wall paintings of the 18th and 19th centuries, but we are not inclined to call them Mughal pillars. Another possibility is that the carver of this temple himself was a painter and instead of leaving the square shaft as it was, he gave it a more beautiful shape. Such cypress pillars are generally associated with pillared verandas and are a common feature of wooden temples of Patan in Nepal.

The cypress pillars of Sandhya-Gayatri temple have a square base resting on remnants of ancient stone pillars and are carved with variegated floral patterns. The tapering ends of the shafts are surmounted by an amalaka connected with the pillars and the square capitals by lotus petals. The decorative motifs on the capitals are mainly floral, spirals and scrolls, but occasionally we come across other motifs such as animals, erotic couples, birds, etc. carved in folk style. The human figures are lively while the animals are drawn with considerable verve and vigour. The capital brackets carry gracefully carved ornamental patterns composed of lotus petals. On these brackets rest the most remarkably conceived and equally competently carved cinque-foil arches which are a common feature of stone temples of Mandi of 18th and 19th centuries. But here the foils are deliberately elongated which
creates a bold effect (pl.28). The two ends of the arch formed
by the spandrels on both sides are curled and look extremely
impressive. On the friezes, we see a number of birds and animals
such as geese (hamsa), peacocks, horses, elephants, cows, etc.
in a single file as forming a procession (pl.28). They remind
us of similar friezes in the temples of Bahena Mahadeva and Hi-
dimba Devi in Kulu.

The most intriguing feature of this temple are the full-
length panels (pl.30), one placed in the right hand corner of the
façade and the other adjacent to it on the side wall. Apart from
conventional designs of lotus rosettes, foliated and ornamental
patterns, crude but impressive male figures wearing hats and carry-
ing guns are depicted on them. The human figures carved in folk
style are frontal and stiff and display some disregard of accu-
racy in anatomical detail, yet they possess vitality. The carvings
display remarkable ingenuity and skill. The depiction of guns and
hats gives us a clue to the approximate date of the carvings as
having been executed sometime in the last two or three decades of
the 19th century. We have been aided in determining this date by
a sketch of this temple reproduced in Calvert's book "Vajeeri Rupi,
the Silver Country of the Vazeers in Kulu" done by him in 1869.87
The structure as shown in this sketch looks altogether different
from the present one; it looks like a mere hut without pillars,
arches, side panels and carved friezes - all of which appear to
have been added in the end of the 19th century.
Candika Devi temple, Kothi, Kinnaur district

The village of Kothi, a corruption of Sanskrit name Kostampi, is renowned all over Kinnaur district for its temple of Candika Devi (pl. 33) who is the most powerful and the most dreaded goddess in the district. A two miles steep descent from Kalpa leads us to this village, overlooked by Kinnara Kailasa. On the way we pass through giant deodar forests and sleepy hamlets. The temple stands in a paved courtyard whose walls encompass a number of double-storeyed houses. Near the temple is a storehouse (bhandar) which resembles a tower type temple and is identical to the storehouse of Ukha Devi temple. No information is available as to its history or date of construction. In our opinion, the local villagers erected the temple on the ruins of an ancient temple about two or three centuries ago, the same is the view of the compilers of village survey.

The temple is a regional variation of chalet style. There is a low stone plinth on which is erected the wooden structure of the shrine. In front there is a veranda fringed with four wooden fluted pillars supporting cusped arches, which are a common feature of all the wooden temples of Kinnaur. The carpenters here seem to have borrowed it from the old palaces of Rampur and Sarahan. The pillars have square base topped by a number of circular rings and, as it rises up towards the ceiling, the pillar resumes its square shape. The front side of this square portion depicts delicately carved floral sprays. The balcony panels on both sides of the entrance are embellished with conventional lotus patterns, bands of lotus petals and finely chiselled foliated
patterns. On the spandrels we see minutely delineated patterns composed by foliage, flowers and meandering creepers - identical patterns can be seen on the principal doorways to the residential houses in Chamba town. The entrance in the centre is provided with two miniature door leaves which are hinged to two pieces of wood nailed onto the fluted pillars. On these wooden hinges we see crude human figures similar to the ones figuring on the doorways of Kotesvara Mahadeva temple near Kumharsain. The depiction of four figures, two on each side of the door makes me think that they probably represent the door guardians. Full blown lotus rosettes adorn the door leaves.

The front veranda of the mandapa is covered with a sloping roof jutting out from the wall of the garbhagriha. On this roof, we see two dormer windows, the sloping roofs of which are covered with nicely arranged slates. Wooden ridge beams run through the centre of the sloping roofs and are crowned by wooden finials - similar finials are to be seen on the beam placed in the centre of the sloping roofs above the sanctum. The left dormer window is adorned with floral motifs - an immense lotus rosette occupying the whole surface while two tiny lotuses similarly carved are squeezed into the corners. The horizontal beam forming the base of the gable has several motifs such as two lions similar in treatment and style to the ones engraved on the repoussé worked doors of this temple and the bhandar of the Bhimakali temple of Sarahan. The lions flank a very crudely chiselled seated figure, probably Siva, and another figure perhaps a devotee. All the figures are in folk style and delineated with considerable vigour. The right dormer window is fully covered with jali (criss-cross)
pattern. On the corner beams of this sloping roof are placed wooden figures of lions similar to the ones on the Naggar and Sungra temples.

The doorway to the garbhagriha is plated with silver sheets and engraved with variegated designs; it reminds us of similar doorways in the Sarahan palace. The walls of the sanctum are built in indigenous timber-bonded style. The sloping almost concave roof is covered with slates and three wooden finials are placed on the wooden ridge beam. The gable is completely covered with stone blocks and wooden beams placed horizontally. We did not come across carved sun window on the gables in the wooden temples of Kinnaur. The long horizontal beam at the base of the main gable shows some carved motifs such as a lion, a human figure carrying a garland, Durga astride her vahana, a group of devotees standing in a row, two conventional designs of lotus rosettes, peacocks drinking from a vase, effigy-like human figures and a full blown lotus. The carvings in folk style are uninhibited, realistic and straightforward, and remind us of Mahesura temple, Sungra. Immediately under the roof ends are placed wooden bells hanging from the eaves; which are a common feature of wooden temples of Simla and Kinnaur.

Ukha Devi temple, Nichar, Kinnaur

The Nichar village is situated between Taranda and Wangthu, lying on the northern declivity of a mountain sloping down to the right bank of the Satluj, 208 kms. from Simla. Within the hamlet of Nakayang or Nanganio stands the Ukha Devi temple (pl.34). A main gate leads to the temple complex. It has a large wooden door plated with copper worked in repoussé. This complex comprises
four structures — storehouse (kothi) where masks and belongings of the deity are kept and which stands in close proximity to the temple, a five-storeyed building known as shu-kothi, the temple and the guest house.

Ukha Devi is the patron deity of Nachar sub-division. The goddess Usha, daughter of Banasura and wife of Anirudha, grandson of Krishna. These legendary associations indicate that the site is ancient. No records exist to inform us as to when the temple was built. The present structure has been repaired considerably and looks different from the one reproduced in the Nichar village survey. The latter has two circular umbrella-like canopies. In the present structure, the back portion is the same and there are two dormer windows on the sloping roof of the mandapa. Architecturally it belongs to the category of Candika Devi temple of Kothi. Rows of wooden pendants hang from the eaves-boards on all the sides. This temple is a specimen of bold innovative experiment in chalet style. It might have been modelled on the Kothi temple.

The double dormer windows in this temple, however, are not carved as in the Kothi temple nor are they provided with sun windows; they are simply covered with wooden planks. A wooden head of an elephant with an upturned trunk is installed at the apex of the sloping roofs of the gables. Carved gargoyles project from the ends of the sloping roof; their purpose, as everywhere else, was functional, to drain off water. Their attractive shapes lend a decorative touch to these temples.
The veranda in front of the garbhagrha is covered on all sides. The facade consists of three sections - in the centre is the entrance while the left and right sides are covered with horizontal panels, each carved with mythological themes centering around Siva, Durga and Krsna. The horse and elephant rider figures suggest the influence of Rajput folk art. The carving seems to have been done recently. All the figures are carved boldly and display remarkable spontaneity. Zigzag patterns, knots, lotuses, floral sprays etc. are seen on the side panels.

The temple treasury nearby looks far more impressive on account of its tall tower - like structures with projecting balconies and narrow windows peeping out from timber-bonded walls.

(pi.34)

**Bijli Mahadeva temple, Kulu**

This temple situated 8076 ft. above sea level at the head of the bluff overlooking the Bhuin village between Beas and Parbati valleys has legendary associations with Raja Sidha Singh. About a hundred years ago it had been noticed by Harcourt who has left us the following description:

"The temple is situated on the extreme western spur of the range that flanks the right bank of the Parbati river. This temple is both large and substantially built, being 30 ft. in length and 24 ft. in breadth. The lower portion of the walls is of cut stone; no plaster is used throughout. Round the building runs an overhanging covered veranda of well-cut deodar supported on beams from the walls and the roof of six tiers of massive deodar planks secured along the upper surface by a solid beam surmounted by cut blocks of wood ornamented with tridents, overhangs and is supported at the doorway (which as in all these temples faces west) by fancifully carved uprights that join onto the veranda that on this side is of open work being pierced with arched windows; handsomely ornamented. The timbers throughout are very strong."
The present structure differs a great deal from the above description, the reason being the destruction of the original temple by fire a century ago. Earlier it looked like a tower, but now due to its reduced platform it looks like a chalet temple. The interior was saved from being engulfed in fire by a timely cloudburst. Soon after, its walls were rebuilt.

The temple is rectangular on plan. The successively receding jambs depict scenes from Rama and Krsna legends, which had gained popularity in the 18th century all over Himachal due to painting. The depiction of gun in the scene of battle between Rama and Ravana helps us determine the period of these carvings as being between 1890 and 1910. The square pillars in the front veranda carry the common serpent motif (pl.39); similar undulating figures of snakes are seen on both sides of the doorway. In addition to familiar motifs of lotus rosettes, peacocks, horse and elephant riders, there are some unusual devices such as designs formed by knots and tassels, civet cats etc. The most impressive is the depiction of Hanuman who figures but rarely in woodcarving; his figure with flexed arms and legs is animated in pose.(pl.39)

Trigaresvara temple, Janog (Simla district)

The hamlet of Janog in Theog near Simla has a little known wooden temple in chalet style dedicated to Siva worshipped as Trigaresvara. It stands in a desolate corner away from dwellings in a state of neglect. Like all Type I temples, it is erected on a platform about 3 ft. in height. The sanctum sanctorum, rectangular in plan, enshrines a crude image of Siva in its gloomy interior. The mandapa in front is surrounded on all sides by square wooden
pillars. The facade of the sanctum, the ceiling of the mandapa and the pillars are embellished with elegant carvings in folk style. In the centre of the mandapa ceiling is a circular cavity decorated with astadala padma (eight-petal lotus) enclosed with a square placed diagonally within another square. The entire ceiling and the facade of the sanctum are carved with profuse scaly patterns interspersed with fishes whose wriggly and rhythmic movements have been captured admirably (pl.35).

The doorway to the sanctum displays impressive carvings (pl.37). The small door is covered with a central square exquisitely carved with four rows of circles formed by full blown lotuses. The inner corners of the square are filled with elegant floral designs. Bands of lotus petals decorate the top and bottom panels. The figural jambs of the doorway alternate with the ornamental ones covered with foliated patterns through which meander the spiralling figures of snakes. The figural jambs are much broader, each divided into square niches; these are a conglomeration of mythological themes such as Visnu visvarupa (this has been mistaken for Ravana by Lloyd and Gerard), Siva, Arjuna aiming his arrow at fish, the Dasavtara, Durga and Naga deities holding snakes. The ceiling of the mandapa is carved with Hindu deities interspersed with profuse ornamental scrollwork. The wooden architrave has several panels depicting vaisnava themes which are repeated on the pillars, the most interesting being the depiction of Gajendra-moksa, the release of an elephant from the clutches of a crocodile (Graha) by.Visnu (pl.36). Other panels depict Ganesa flanked by elephants, Kali worshipped by devotees, Durga astride a lion, etc. All the figures have short legs, slim and
elegant bodies and graceful smiles radiating their handsome faces that remind us of the brass masks of Durga worshipped in Kulu during the navaratra festival. They have stylistic affinities with the figures of Visnu and other deities carved on stone slabs lying in the courtyard of Bansi Gopal mandir in Chamba. This suggests the universality of folk style. In sharp contrast to the short figures of the doorway, those depicted on the pillars are elongated and carved with the same verve and vivacity. The carvings appear to have been done by a competent carver. Stylised and extremely attractive confronting peacocks flanking a jar figure on the pillar capitals.

Chunqarsa Devi temple, Chunga village, Kulu

This temple dedicated to Durga stands above the ruined fortress in Chunga village in the Parbati valley. Like most temples in chalet style, it is erected on a stone platform, a flight of steps leading to its entrance. The garbhagrha is surrounded by a covered veranda on all sides. The arched door in the middle is flanked by jagged windows, two on each side. Similar windows figure on the residential houses in Kulu. Ornamental struts support the projecting roof.

The most unusual feature here is the elaborately carved wooden screen that divides the interior of the sanctuary into two parts. We agree with Chetwode that this magnificent screen is the only one of its kind in the entire region. The trunks of two elephants are joined to form an arch to this door and on the spandrels we see two figures of roaring lions facing each other, very similar to stone and wood statues of lions outside Durga temples. The topmost frieze displays the figures of navagrahas...
enclosed within arched niches. Two vertical panels flanking the
doorway separate it from the windows, and are carved with inter­
linked serpents which have been mistaken for reef-knots by Chet­
woode.96 The side windows are very similar to those of Hidimba tem­
ple in Dhungri. The rest of the screen is carved with floral de­
signs, spirals, whirls, conventional floral motifs, two girls
playing kikli (this theme appears to have been borrowed from
contemporary wall painting), peacocks, horseriders etc. The supe­
rior craftsmanship suggests that two carvers worked on the screen
and the doorway.

Gautama Rsi temple, Gosala, Kulu

This small temple (pl.38) stands on a mountain slope in
Gosala village near Manali. According to Jettmar, it was built
during the reign of Bidhi Singh(1672-1688).97 In our opinion,
it was built or repaired in the latter half of the 16th century
when its doorway was embellished with sumptuous relief sculptures
which have a striking stylistic affinity with the Hidimba temple
carvings. Further credence to this view is lent by similar themes and motifs. The motifs of spirals, looking back over its shoulders and spouting forth foliage, stylised peacocks, sejant lions in the lintel corners, floral designs, gandharvas playing on traditional musical instruments. Durga mahisamardini, Ganesa occupying the central niche on the overdoor, mithunas, navagrahas, devotees standing with folded hands etc., are carved with the same accuracy. The similarity is so striking that if one looks at the photographs of carvings of this temple, one can very well mistake them for those of the Dhungri temple. The only addition here are the writhing figures of serpents on the outermost doorjambs.
On the rafters we see a row of bare chariots and palanquins decorated with tinsels and flowers.

Although known as the temple of Gautama rsi, it enshrines a stone linga in the sanctum. Two wooden pillars in front support the sloping roof and there is a small wooden window above the doorway, similar to that of the Sandhya Gayatri temple.

Devi Temple, Prini village, Kulu

This: Durga temple is located in Prini village near Hamta pass. The most interesting aspect of this temple are the vibrantly carved relief sculptures on its doorway. Its carver—seems to have been inspired by the carvings of Dakkhani Mahadeva temple (Nirmand) and the Dhungri temple. This is evident from the carvings on the doorway. The slightly projecting central niche (lalatabimba) depicts the seated figure of pot-bellied Ganesa wielding his emblems. A seated figure probably Garuda holding snakes occupies the niche above. The projecting heads of the kirttimukhas, the navagrahas, the profuse ornamental patterns, triangular configurations with conventionalised bird motifs, deer looking pot-and-foliage pillar capitals—all appear to have been borrowed from the Dhungri temple. Likewise the lowermost niches of the doorjambs have the same figures of Hindu deities—Ganga and Yamuna accomplished by their respective vehicles, Uma-Mahesvara, Durga simhavahini, Visnu astride Garuda, Durga mahisamardini, Indra, and kinnaras. All the deities are clad in dhotis, and carry a scarf around their shoulders, the flowing ends of which fall elegantly on their knees; they stand in tribhanga posture and sport a high pinnacled diadem which is worn by all deities carved in classical style stone sculptures from mediaeval period onwards.
All the deities are carved in low relief. The facial features have been rubbed off. The rural carver working in folk style has made a successful attempt at merging primitivism with classical sculptural tradition which is evident from the mellow contours of the bodies of the deities, the curves of their shoulders, their oval faces, etc. All the figures radiate amazing elegance and rhythmic grace. No inscriptions or records exist to inform us about its date of construction. The style of carvings suggests 17th century as the probable period of its construction.

**Ayodhyanath temple, Rampur Bushahr, Simla district**

The temple of Ayodhyanath, an appellation of Lord Rama, stands behind the bus stand in Rampur town, next to the Buddha temple. It is surrounded on all sides by residential houses inhabited by the priests' families. It is not essentially a wooden structure, but is significant on account of its wealth of relief sculptures in wood, its abundance of finely wrought decorative details and the spirited quality of its vibrant carving.

The temple consists only of a sanctum sanctorum constructed in the centre of a raised plinth. Around it is a wide veranda which is covered on all sides. The front veranda is a kind of an open mandapa with four wooden pillars supporting the ceiling. It may be noted that only the ceiling of the mandapa and the pillars supporting it are embellished with carvings. The rest of the ceiling is left unornamented. The lantern ceiling is chiselled with a full blown lotus flower, the twelve elegantly chiselled petals
of which cover the central portion, from which hangs the temple bell. (pl. 40). The triangular panels formed by the diagonally placed squares and the side panels are carved with simple designs of flowers and leaves in conventional style. Then there are three squares, each bigger than the one placed inside it; the triangular panels formed by two of these diagonally placed squares carry the figures of winged apsaras, dressed in skirts and blouses and the positioning of their legs make them look like mermaids. All the figures have rigid postures. They remind us of similar figures, although carved in a different style, on the ceiling panels of the Camunda temple above Chamba town. We would not suggest that the carver of this temple had been to Chamba and seen this temple. The simple reason for this similarity is that all these features formed an essential part of the traditional repertoire that the artisans all over the Himalayan inherited as part of their training and continued to work in the traditional framework without questioning.

The triangular panels in the outermost corners of the lantern ceiling depict scenes from Hindu legends such as Durga riding on a lion and flanked by Hanuman and Bhairava—a theme that had gained wide popularity with the painters in the 18th and 19th centuries—Rama, Sita and Lakshmana sitting in a grove with two peacocks carved in the corners of the triangular panel etc. The rectangular panels along the four sides of the outermost square depict a host of Hindu gods and goddesses—Kartikeya perched on peacock, Narasimha (man-lion) incarnation of Visnu, Arjuna aiming his arrow
(a scene from Drupadi svayamvara from the Mahabharata), Vasudeva carrying newly-born Krisna across the river Yamuna, a meditating rsi(sage), Hanuman, Bali and Sugriva coming to grips and scenes from the Ramayana. The Rama legend naturally is given more prominence, for the temple is consecrated to him. The most interesting is the decorative treatment of the river Yamuna; the rippling waves of the river are suggested through a number of oblique lines; only folk imagination could conceive a river in this manner. The carving seems to have been done by two or three different hands. Most of the figures are proportionately carved; the delineation of the limbs speaks of fairly advanced craftsmanship. Then there are some figures carved in folk style such as Durga riding on a lion flanked by Hanuman and Bhairava, three female figures in the corner in dancing posture two male figures in the panel adjacent to the one depicting Karttikāya which are so crude that they almost verge on the primitive. These figures are frontally depicted; the positioning of legs and arms is markedly clumsy and inelegant. They seem to have been executed by a less skilled carver. The female figures are dressed in long skirts, blouses and veils (odhni) and the male figures wear dhoti, a crown and a long scarf over their shoulders. The figures are carved on blocks of wood that make up the ceiling panels.

All the figural panels are enframed by decorative designs of great variety. Most of the decoration is based on the leafy scroll and undulating stem, within the curves of which are placed highly stylised foliage; these designs figure commonly on horizontal wooden beams running through the walls of most wooden temples in Simla hills. Then there are scrolls with a winding
creeper and its curling tendrils, a creeper running through like a vertebrate band. A number of designs based on full-blown lotus flowers are interspersed with them. A new feature here is the kadamba tree associated with Krsna, which is chiselled delicately. All the panels appear to have been carved in early 19th century.

The most impressive feature of this temple are the four wooden pillars supporting the ceiling of the mandapa. The square shafts are unornamented but have elegantly carved capitals displaying animated figures of animals such as rams and lions carved in the round on the brackets projecting from the abacus on all the four sides. (pl.41). The animal figures carved sensitively display soft and delicate modelling, a fluency of form and linear grace that is most striking. Complete technical competence is displayed in the balancing of these figures. Here it seems that long years of sculptural experience have crystallised into faultless shapes and dimensions. These pillars appear to be much more ancient than the ceiling panels, perhaps they are more than 400 years old and the work of a highly competent carver. He has displayed his talent not only in the carving of these animal figures but also in highly finished ornamental designs adorning the square abacus. The square shaft is chiselled into eight sides and towards the top it resumes its square shape. All these portions are decorated with bands of ornate scrollwork displaying an unparalleled delicacy of touch.

As in the case of most wooden temples, no history of this temple is available nor any inscription is to be found here. The temple, no doubt, is ancient, but it is not known who founded it and when.
TYPE II : THE TOWER STYLE TEMPLES

The temples in this style are tall structures rising sometimes to five or six storeys and at one glance give us the impression that they are watch-towers (pl. 2). The lower portion that comprises about three-fourth of the structure is in the form of a rectangle, all the four walls being constructed of alternating courses of dry stones and long horizontal beams of deodar wood. At times, the walls built in this manner are whitewashed or thinly coated with mud-plaster. No mortar is used - nor is it required - for joining the great blocks of dry stones.

On top of this overhangs a structure entirely of wood and surrounded on all sides by balconies. This structure contains the sanctuary enshrining the worshipped deity. It is always covered by a gabled roof, along the ridge of which runs a huge beam consisting of a complete trunk of a tree usually carved into animal heads at either end. Immediately under the roof is a wooden veranda often with a carved balcony that runs around the four walls of the structure and is supported by the uppermost beams of the tower which runs through the structure either way. The veranda enclosed by balconies projects about six to eight feet from the walls, while the roof above projects some feet beyond the balconies. From the eaves of the roof and the bottom of the veranda hang continuous rows of wooden fringes (khururu in pahari dialect).

In villages which are situated at a height of 8000 ft. above sea level, the horizontal beams used in the construction of the walls are of deodar wood, while the higher regions, spruce or silver fir replace it.
The idea behind constructing such lofty towers was purely defensive. In times of warfare - the local Rajput chieftains known as the ranas and thakurs were always fighting among themselves over petty issues - or any other crisis, all the villagers used to collect inside these structures which, in most cases, stood in the middle of the village and the topmost storey of which was always used as a shrine of the presiding deity. A notched ladder was used for climbing up to the balcony. When all the villagers had climbed up, the ladder was pulled up. This way, the enemy could neither harm the villagers nor loot the temple property. These temple structures served the purpose not only of offering shelter to the villagers but of a watch tower, from where the enemy could be easily seen. From the balconies, the village fighters attacked the enemy.

This type of structures are found in inner and outer Saraj areas of Kulu district, Simla district and Kinnaur. We have already mentioned in chapter two that originally such structures were intended to be fortresses of the ranas and thakurs and came to be built in the 15th or 16th century. Outstanding examples of fortresses in this type style exist in Gondala village in Lahul, Bajaura, some structures in Kamru fort in Kinnaur and thakurs' castle-towers in Banjar in inner Saraj. It seems that the same fortresses were later converted into temples and, in some cases, into bhandars (temple store-houses).

**Bhimakali temple, Sarahan, Simla district**

Sarahan, the ancient capital of Bushahr rajas, is a village surrounded on one side by snow-capped mountains and on the other by pine forests. The temple of Bhimakali (pl. 44) is situated
within the complex of old palace-fortress. This tower-type temple stands on a raised platform facing the temple treasury which is also in the same style. This is the best specimen of Type II temple architecture.

Almost all foreign travellers and writers have mentioned it in their books, prominent ones being J.B.Fraser,100 A.H. Francke,101 Tucci,102 and J.C.French.103 All of them have written about its concave roofs that reminded them of Chinese structures104 and human sacrifices that were offered to the Goddess then.

The lower two-third portion of the tower consists of four walls built of alternating layers of solid deodar beams and stones. Overhanging above it is the double-storeyed wooden structure, the upper storey of which consists the garbhagrih enshrining the silver image of Kali. The roof covering it is not simply a slanting one; it has a dormer window on each of the four sides. The dormer windows are covered by umbrella-like canopies. From the centre above these dormer windows rises the sloping summit surmounted by a ridge beam which is coarsely carved at each end into a makara head. These beams are crowned by three metal finials, each consisting of a kalasa, an amalaka and the bindu which glitter like gold in the sun. To the central finial are attached two flags of the Great Goddess. Hanging down from the cornices of the overhanging roofs are rows of wooden pendants. Finely carved wooden bells hang from each corner of the eaves. These bells are a peculiar feature of wooden structures of the western Himalaya. The tradition seems to be old. All the roofs are covered with slices of precipices.
This description differs from that of Lloyd and Gerard who visited it in the 19th century:

"It has two very lofty turrets with concave roofs and between them rises the third turret much higher and crowned with a gilt ball, under which is the goddess's image." 105

This description is applicable to the structure reproduced in an aquatint by Fraser in "Views of Himala mountain". 106 These show that the temple complex has changed very little. But it must be borne in mind that the structure referred to above is the present-day treasury standing by the side of the temple. Originally the Goddess was worshipped in this structure, but fifty years ago, Raja Padma Singh got the image installed in the other tower and converted it into a treasury. He also got the new temple renovated and balcony panels carved. This is the reason why the treasury has a number of wooden windows with old carvings.

The panels of the overhanging balconies are chiselled with minute and delicate floral and foliated patterns, and sometimes fretwork and lattice work is also seen. Cusped arches of the balconies rest on fluted pillars and are completely covered; holes are pierced through them for enabling the inmates to peep out without being seen. Only two windows are provided with door leaves (pls. 50 & 51).

On all side walls of the lower portions of the temple and the storehouse we see a number of narrow wooden windows carved in folk style (pls. 45, 46, 47, 48 & 49). The carvings on them
and the wooden beams placed horizontally at regular intervals in the walls seem to be of considerable age and present a striking contrast to the comparatively recent upper structures. The windows are modelled after the doorways of most wooden temples and have three or four successively receding frames; the middle space is divided by two or three vertical pilasters which are crowned by pot-and-foliage capitals (pls. 47 & 49). The outermost frames are carved with bands of lotus petals, spirals, triangular configurations, and a large number of simple designs based on conventional plants and floral forms. Other devices are derived from the general repertoire of Himalayan carver and include semi-lotus roundels linked by chains, etc. The carving shows a conventional approach in the handling of traditional motifs. The range of decorative designs is not great, although they are used in a vast variety of combinations. There is a remarkable absence of geometrical designs. On one or two windows, we see the dramatic depiction of the Goddess Durga astride her lion wielding all kinds of weapons in her arms outstretched in all directions (pls. 45, 46 & 49). Carved in folk style, the figures are crude and a little distorted, yet they possess an indescribable charm and grace. More than one carver seems to have worked on the windows and the horizontal beams running through the walls.

There are very few temples in this architectural style and they are to be met with only in the villages of Simla district. Other structures are located in Inner and Outer Saraj in Kulu district but they are used mainly as temple storehouses. This type of temples exist in Jubbal, Tikkri and Sainj valley, but most of them are plain structures. Herebelow we give a brief description
of three temples which merit some attention.

The Mahasu Devata temple in Gijari lies some metres below Theog-Jubbal road. Its lower structure is entirely built of stone blocks into which are thrust iron tridents. The over-hanging wooden structure consists of two storeys, both provided with balconies formed by cusped arches resting on fluted pillars. The only decorative feature here are the brackets supporting the balconies which are in the form of a highly stylised bird, a combination of goose and peacock. The tiny sanctum on the second storey is bare and enshrines a primitive looking image of Mahasu (corruption of Mahasiva). A narrow sun window is pierced through the gable covered with sloping roofs.

The tall structure of Mahesvari Devi (pl. 2) stands in the middle of Sari village surrounded on all sides by village houses. A steep descent from Sunaraghati on the Hindustan-Tibet road takes us to this village situated in the pit of the valley. This temple is about 60 to 70 ft. in height. A step ladder is used to reach the balcony overhanging the tower. The tall tower-like structure rises above these balconies to a considerable height. The sanctum has an ambulatory all around it, covered by arched balconies painted in red, green and white.

The Cakresvara Devata temple in the heart of Janog has all the typical features of a tower style temple. An interesting feature here is the step-ladder, the outer side of which is carved in folk style with figural and decorative motifs. The whole plank is divided into several sections, each depicting a small scene and enclosed on both sides by elegant designs occupying a fairly
large space. The scenes depicted are (from top to bottom) two highly stylised figures of lions engaged in a fight; Krsna playing on flute and flanked by gopis balancing pitchers - perhaps they are folk dancers or, in continuation of the Krsna theme above, gopis performing the rasa; this theme had become very popular in Himachal Pradesh in the 18th and 19th centuries because of painting; a female figure standing near a male figure who looks like a sadhu, perhaps Sita and Ravana, while two male figures carved below are shown wielding bows and arrows, evidently Rama and Laksmana. In the other scenes are depicted lions engaged in a combat. All the figures are simplified and have a remarkable boldness of form. The scenes are animated and display a keen sense for the dramatic. The female figures are dressed in typical pahari costumes, a long coat worn over a skirt reaching up to the ankles, full sleeve blouses and heads covered with scarves. The male figures are shown wearing dhotis and a head band.

The ornamental patterns are highly finished and consist of carrick bend patterns intertwined with bands of lotus buds and petals, scrolls, spirals and curvilinear creepers. Similar patterns figure commonly on wooden boxes from Kulu. All the designs are precisely composed; their variety shows a creative approach. It is not uncommon to find carved step ladders in Simla hills, but this one is a solitary example of the ingenious integration of figural carving and ornamental patterns.
TYPE III: THE VIMANA STYLE TEMPLES

The temples falling in this category (pl.3) have been wrongly termed "pagodas" by a number of western scholars and writers such as Harcourt, Longhurst, Chetwode and Heimo who also call them temple towers. N.R. Banerjea has coined the expression "Devala shrines" for these "multiple roof structures". Such temples are square or rectangular on plan and have a succession of superimposed pent roofs, each one a little smaller than the one below it. The walls of the ground floor, wherein is enshrined the image of the deity (the garbha-grha) are constructed in the usual indigenous timber-bonded style and this structure is erected on a raised platform entirely of stone. There are generally three, four or five storeys with tiered or step roofs, one on top of another and diminishing in size towards the top. The summit of the temple is crowned by a large wooden umbrella surmounted by a metal finial.

It was this umbrella-like form of these temples that led A.H. Longhurst who studied the Himalayan and Buddhist architecture in great detail in the early decades of the present century to think that the wooden temples of Kulu valley and other areas of the western Himalaya had been modelled on umbrellas that crown the harmika or square base on top of the Buddhist stupas. In support of his argument, he stated that umbrella as a motif had a remarkable effect on the architecture of India because here it is regarded as a symbol of regal authority and honour. He presumed that the Buddhist structures were the first to be so influenced and along with the spread of Buddhism, this motif was carried by the Buddhist missionaries not only to distant lands such
as China, Japan, Sri Lanka, Korea, Nepal, Burma and other Far-Eastern countries, but also within the country, e.g. to Kerala in south India. In Kerala, Longhurst continues his observation, the umbrella motif became so popular that it had a remarkable effect on the roof of Kerala shrines and this, in his view, accounts for the peculiar style of the wooden temples of Kerala. What made Longhurst surmise that structures in this style were first constructed by the Buddhists are the memories of the Chinese pilgrim-travellers, viz. Fa-hian whose long passage is quoted by him which gives us a description of the destruction of the seven-storeyed Jetavana monastery of Sravasti by fire, and Hieun Tsang who has left us the following account of the Buddhist monasteries in Kulu valley:

"The Sangharamas are constructed with extraordinary skill. A three storeyed tower is erected at each of the four angles. The beams and the projecting heads are carved with great skill in different shapes."  

We agree with the above writer’s observation that the Buddhists were responsible for introducing this architectural style in Nepal and other countries of the East, but we can not accept his view that it was a style peculiar to Buddhism or that the Buddhists had evolved it completely independently. The Chinese pilgrims have left us descriptions of only the Buddhist structures because they were mainly concerned with them, not with Hindu temples that are not even mentioned en passant. That the Hindu temples were built in this style also is evident not only from innumerable temples that still stand in our area of study but also from the stone temples of Kasmir which have pyramidal roofs rising in two or more tiers (pl. 55) that date from 7th-10th centuries A.D. Even the earliest Nepalese temple in this style is a Hindu shrine dedicated to Visnu worshipped as Cangu Narayana.
Its date of construction is said to be 5th century A.D. \(^{119}\)

Now we revert to a discussion of Longhurst's umbrella theory. There is no doubt that umbrella is regarded as the symbol of regal authority and honour in our country, but it does not appear to us that it influenced the temple architecture in the Himalayan region or in Kerala. In the vast literature on architecture that is available now there is no reference whatsoever to support the umbrella theory propounded by Longhurst without referring to any architectural treatise of our country.

Our interest in this subject urged us to delve deeper and deeper into the architectural texts and the conclusion we arrived at after considerable research is that the denomination of this architectural style should be changed from "pagoda" to "vimana". In our view as well as in the opinion of the authors of the silpa-sastra and vastu-sastra, the term "vimana" is used to denote the whole structure of the temple, from the base to the finial. \(^{120}\) In the preceding decades of our century, the term "vimana" has been used broadly to denote different parts of the temple by various scholars. According to some, it refers to the central shrine or the garbha-grha only. Noted French scholar Jouveau-Dubreuil used this term in this sense when he wrote the following lines:

"In the early Chola period, it is the sanctuary of the temple which one calls the Vimana that assumes all of a sudden gigantic proportions...." \(^{121}\)
Ananda K. Coomaraswamy used the term "vimana" only for dravidian temples. But in the treatises on architecture, we found that this term is consistently and uniformly used for the entire temple structure. Sankara, the author of Tattvasamuccaya, used the two compound expressions "vimana sikharam" or "vimanasya sikharam" meaning that the vimana is the entire temple structure, of which the sikhara is a part, and "prasada-paripradesam" means the upper portion of the prasada. Here vimana and prasada are used as synonyms, and the terms are used for the entire temple structure, from the base to the finial. Other architectural treatises also contain verses from which we infer that vimana, prasada, harmya, bhavana etc. are synonymous terms. For example, we cite the following lines from the Mayamata:

"vimanam bhavanam harmyam saudham dhama niketanam, prasadam sadanam sadma gehmanasakam graham." 125

A passage from the Kasyapasilpa enumerates the synonyms in this manner:

"prasadam sadanam sadma harmya dham niketanam, mandiram bhavanam vaso geham divyavimanakam, asrayam ca spadam caiva adharam ca kramana tu, adharapratidhisnyam ca harmyaparyaya vacaka." 126

The same views have been expressed in the Manasara and Saivasamanibandhana. 127 We can multiply examples to prove that in ancient India the term "vimana" was used to denote not one portion but the entire structure of the temple.

The "vimana" seems to us the most appropriate term for superimposed and successively diminishing roof structures for a few more reasons. First, vimana literally means a chariot or a processional car of the gods. Secondly, this architectural style symbolically represents a processional car and can be interpreted
in the light of its spiritual content which can not be delinked from Hindu temple architecture. Even foreign scholar: Percy Brown was fully aware of this when he penned the following lines:

"The outstanding quality of the architecture of India is its spiritual content. It is evident that the fundamental purpose of the building act was to represent in concrete form the prevailing religious consciousness of the people. It is mind materialised in terms of rock, brick or stone." 129

We take up both the points one by one. The car theory was advocated by E.B.Havell and Coomaraswamy. The latter was perfectly right in thinking that the temple forms were derived from the cars or chariots (ratha) of the gods. He writes that in the Ramayana, Ayodhya is described as having innumerable shrines that make one feel that it was the home of celestial processional cars. 132

The ritual of carrying images of the deities in processional cars is cited as an instance in point. Stella Kramrisch has given a more weighty argument based on the authority of ancient literature as well as the vastu-sastra texts:

"Vimanam denotes as well a chariot of the gods, the sky-travellers (AV, X, 8; 3; 4th rock edict of Asoka; of Arthasastra, 11, 32, 49 devaratha) and a temple construction." 133

Later she writes that all the ancient treatises on architecture mention the varieties of "Prasadas built in accordance with the five shapes of the chariots of the gods." 134 We are inclined to accept both these opinions because even today, in the western Himalaya, the processional car used for the deities on festivals is designed exactly like a temple. For instance, the wooden ratha standing in the Dhalpur maidan in Kulu town (pl.53) is a replica of chalet style temple on wheels. We strongly feel that two or
three tiered roof chariots, similar to vimana-style temples of Kulu, must have been in use in ancient times. Although we have not come across any specimen of this type in our area of study, the carving of a wooden chariot of this type can be seen on the window of the Nava Durga temple on the northern outskirts of Bhatgaon in Nepal (pl. 52) dating from the 18th century A.D. In Nepal, similar wooden chariots are still being used for religious processions. They look exactly like our wooden temples. It is highly probable that similar processional cars served as the prototypes of temple structures that are our present consideration, in later times when religious festivals and processions became essential conditions of an established system of worship and demanded a permanent structure for the abode of the worshipped deity.

Now we come to the second point regarding the spiritual content and symbolism inherent in this architectural style. The word vimana symbolically also means a chariot, that is, a vehicle capable of transporting the worshipper above and enabling him to unite himself with the Supreme Principle which is beyond form and above His seat or house of manifestation. The several tiers, one on top of another and gradually diminishing in size, symbolise the stages of spiritual ascent or heights attained by the worshipper. These very ideas have been expressed by Stella Kramrisch in the Hindu Temple basing her study on ancient architectural treatises:
"The raison d'être of the superstructure of such temples is symbolical. The main tiers or storeys are called Bhumi; they are levels of the superstructure and of the spiritual ascent of the devotee." 137

Further she writes

"From all the regions of space, from its walls in the four directions and their corners in the intermediate directions, the Vimana rises bodily towards its high point, tier on tier, until diminished in shape it forms the High Altar on which is placed the crowning High Temple or the Amalaka with its finial that ends in a point. In this repeated raising of the object of concentration on a higher level, an impetus finds expression in the vertical direction; concentration on the divinity and the elation that accompanies it bring about the elevation; the deity is extolled on ever higher levels until its worship reaches the highest point, the zenithal pole of realisation where this world ends and the other one begins, the point limit of the manifest and the unmanifest, the Bindu." 138

In ancient times, structures of this type were constructed in wood, as we learn from Buddhist literature, as well as from the accounts of the Chinese travellers. We have already referred to the Jetavana monastery of Sravasti which was seven storeys high; the description of its destruction by fire is given by Fa-hian. Another account comes from a Chinese pilgrim named Sung-yun who was sent as an envoy by the Wei Empress Tai-Hun in 518 A.D. to travel to the western countries and acquire Buddhist writings. Sung-yun has left us the description of the stupa built by Kaniska at Shahji-ki-dheri in the 1st century A.D. near Peshawar. This is the earliest specimen of multiple-tiered roof structure. According to Sung-yun, the superstructure of this stupa was constructed of carved wood and covered by roof composed of all types of wood. It was thirteen storeys high, rising up to 700 ft. Its spire consisted of an iron mast with thirteen gilded copper umbrella which attracted lightening and caused the
destruction of this structure.\textsuperscript{143} That such structures continued to be built in subsequent centuries is evident from the Dharmarajika stupa at Taxila of 3rd century A.D. which according to Sir John Marshall, was "composed of three tiers which diminish in size as they rise."\textsuperscript{144}

All the early structures in this style built in wood as well as stone seem to have perished partly due to inclement weather, partly due to fire and partly due to incessant invasions and iconoclastic zeal of the Muslims. Later specimens of this style are the Dharmaraja ratha temple at Mahabalipuram (7th century A.D.) and the satmahal pasada in Polonnaruva in Ceylon (12th century A.D.\textsuperscript{145}). In the former structure the storeys successively diminish in size, the "panjarams," each separately roofed, are along the margin of each floor and the "gavaksas" are reduced to decorative kudus along the cornices (kabodam)\textsuperscript{145}. The ground floor is pillared and walled, with an open mandapa. The satmahal pasada is a brick structure with marks of external timbering no longer extant.\textsuperscript{147} In Ladakh, the structures were similarly built as is evident from the sum-stek temple of Alchi. In the case of wooden temples of Himachal Pradesh, the structures were similarly built but each storey was covered with sloping roofs which it was necessary in order to protect the structure from heavy rains and snow.

It is understandable that the monolithic Dharmaraja ratha of Mahabalipuram is translation in living rock of the contemporary vimana forms, hitherto and traditionally constructed of wood or stucco. Scholars have often wondered as to what those structures looked like.\textsuperscript{148} The still existing wooden temples of Himachal
Pradesh that we have placed in the third category and which we shall study in the following pages individually, are the answer. One may call this statement into question and say that the earliest dated wooden temples, viz. of Parasara rṣi in Mandi and the Hidimba Devi in Kulu are later structures. The inscription engraved on the doorway of the latter temple mentions the year 1553 A.D. as the date of its construction at the behest of Raja Bahadur Singh of Kulu. And the inscription on the former temple places it in early 14th century. In our opinion, one must not rely upon inscriptions alone in tracing the origin and development of any particular style of architecture nor in determining the period of construction of a particular temple. They are useful in fixing the date of the structures but as a rule, they throw no light on the age of the style of the building. They only inform us that royal patronage had been extended to the temples in those particular centuries. It does not mean that the temples were not already in existence. The priest of Hidimba Devi temple told us that Raja Bahadur Singh had got the temple rebuilt and carved as a token of thanksgiving and gratitude after his victory in the battle, and before setting out for this battle, he had prayed at this shrine for success. The same view has been expressed by Vogel:

"The erection of the statue of Sakti Devi at Chhatrarahi by the same ruler seems to have been in fulfilment of a pious vow; for we read in the inscription incised on its pedestal that it was founded after Meruvarman had conquered his foes in their invincible castles, no doubt with the powerful help of the goddess. A parallel instance of more recent date of such a votive offering may be quoted from the neighbouring hill tract of Kulu. The temple of Hidimba Devi at Dhungri near Manali with its quaint wood-carvings was built by Raja Bahadur Singh in the year 1553 after his conquest of the valley in fulfilment of a solemn promise made previously to her, the patron-goddess of Kulu."
This suggests that the shrine of Hidimba Devi already existed on this very site and the king only got the temple reconstructed and embellished with carvings. The same is probably true of the Parasara rsi temple. In the western Himalayan region, the process of reconstructing and repairing old crumbling temples has been going on for centuries. We have touched upon this point in our analysis of individual temples.

Harcourt, the first writer to draw attention to temples in this style in 1871, had listed only four temples. But recent researches have brought to light as many as fourteen temples, all in Kulu and Mandi districts. A detailed analysis of these temples will be taken up in the following pages. It may be mentioned here that we notice two stages of development in this architectural style - the first represented by the temples of Hidimba Devi of Dhungri (pl.56) and Tripurasundari of Naggar (pl.3) and the second by Tarjugi Narayana temple of Dyar (pl.72) and Adi Brahma temple of Khokhan (pl.73). The Dyar temple retains the circular umbrella-like canopy of the above-mentioned temples, but introduces a new feature of wooden pilasters placed on the galleries supporting each of the step roofs through which one can see the landscape on the far side of the valleys. In later temples, all these features are retained except the circular canopy which is replaced by a rectangular one. All the wooden temples are erected on a raised platform. The ground floor has a veranda in front or running all around it fringed with wooden pillars crowned by elaborately carved capitals and sometimes ornamental struts or brackets. Heads of
mythical animals such as: makara, lion or ram project from the roof ends. A flight of stairs running upwards connects the ground floor with the topmost roof.

All these features are shared by the Nepalese temples in vimana style (pl.54). Nepal has been described by a number of scholars as an authentic replica of India, the first and foremost among them being Sylvain Levi. Longhurst has also expressed the same opinion and emphasised the fact that Nepal was the first country to construct temples in this architectural style, and from here it found its way to China and Japan via Tibet and Korea. Later he states that although this style developed on its own lines in these countries, it has retained till the present times all the basic features of the original style which are sufficient to indicate the place of their origin. Most writers who have studied Nepalese architecture agree with these views, the only exception is Stella Kramrisch who thinks that this style originated and developed in the two countries independent of each other:

"Attention has frequently been drawn to the similarity of certain Nepalese structures and the buildings of Kerala, the multiple pent roof towers of temples in Kulu valley also belong to the family. No influence should be seen in the affinity of these buildings." 158

Since 1940's when Kramrisch penned these lines, a lot of research has been done by archaeologists and art historians which is sufficient to prove how much this architectural style owes to India. A comparative study reveals that the Nepalese temples are in later style of development of Kulu temples. They are also erected on a high square base, have stepped roofs made of wood; the corner beams take the
shape of a makara or some fabled animal; the roofs are held up by supporting struts or brackets which slope upwards - we come across this feature in some Kulu temples such as Adi Brahma temple of Khokhan. Apart from these similarities, there are some differences also. The Nepalese temples are far more elaborate and ornamental. Their walls are made of bricks and the sloping roofs are covered with bricks, tiles or copper sheets. They are richly carved and colourfully painted and portray a pantheon of many-armed gods who seem to be looking benignly on the approaching visitors. The high plinth is provided with a steep stairway which is guarded by stone figures of lions. The abundance of decorative accessories covering the sanctuary lend the structures an indescribable splendour which enchants the onlooker. In comparison, the vimana temples of Himachal Pradesh look almost primitive.

The other group of temples recalling the style that appertains to our Type III wooden temples as well as Nepal is still more distant from the Himalayas as it is situated in the coastal region of Malabar. Percy Brown has singled out the ancient Siva temple known as the Mahadeva Kovil, located in the small seaport of Beyapore, south of Calicut, as the most outstanding specimen of this architectural style. This temple, according to the above-mentioned scholar, "in both design and construction appears to be a deliberate copy of a double roofed Nepalese temple of the late mediaeval period. He sought to explain this stylistic affinity by bracketing together the Nairs of Kerala and the Newars of Nepal as members of the same ethnic group. A.H. Longhurst ascribed it to the influence of Buddhism. We have already stated our view that this architectural
style was in vogue all over India at one time and it continued to be practised in the well-forested areas of the Himalayas and the western coast on account of the easy and abundant availability of wood.

There are a number of temples in south Kanara, Moodbidri and Kerala which have striking affinities with our Type III temples. The wooden fringes are a common feature of the temple roofs in both the areas and these fringes hang from the wooden eaves of the superimposed roofs over the shrine. The widely projecting eaves of Kerala wooden temples are supported from below by carved struts similar to those found in Himalayan temples. Most of the temples on the western coast stand on a raised platform built of stone. The shrine chamber is surrounded by an ambulatory path. The main entrance to these temples faces east and consists of a porch surmounted by an ornamental gable of wooden construction decorated with a carved bargeboard, pendants and a finial (fig:12). The bargeboards of the gable, like those of most wooden temples of our areas, are ornamented with wooden fringes. Among other points of resemblance, Percy Brown has enumerated the following:

"Although built of stone masonry, these buildings are clearly copies of wooden construction, as may be seen in the shape and design of their verandas which have pillars resembling chamfered logs of wood, sloping roofs imitating planks and gables formed on the pent house principle, with wide projecting eaves. And in the style of their architecture as displayed in the pyramidal roof of the overhanging stories, supported by brackets and struts, they recall the types common in the mountains of the north, as well as to a lesser degree the stone temples of Kashmir." 164
From the foregoing, it becomes amply clear that the structures in this architectural style were originally built in wood and are very ancient. In Percy Brown's opinion, the roof of the "gabled or multiple order" that characterises the ancient stone temples of Kashmir appears to be a survival of a wooden type and it was apparently not uncommon in India towards the beginning of the Christian era. This observation as well as the literary evidence provided by our ancient texts referred to above clearly suggest that the vimana style structures date from the pre-Christian era.

Hidimba Devi temple, Dhungri, Kulu district.

Winding paths through forests and glades of whispering deodars form the setting for the majestic wooden temple of Hidimba Devi in Dhungri village (pl. 56). It can be easily approached from Manali by walking on foot. It enshrines a black stone image of Durga mahisamardini while that of Hidimba Devi is barely three inches in size in sharp contrast to the towering height of her temple. Square on plan, the 30 ft. high structure is raised on a platform 12 ft. above the ground and consists of 4 superimposed multi-tiered roofs; the three lower ones are in the usual form of projecting canopies showing traces of wooden fringes here and there. The topmost tier, i.e. the summit of the temple, is crowned by a large wooden umbrella-like canopy surmounted by a metal finial. All the roofs are made of deodar wood and covered with narrow wooden planks. The walls of the ground floor are constructed as usual of wooden beams alternating with rubble masonry plaster-coated with mud and whitewashed. In front of the carved wooden doorway is a veranda, about 5 ft. wide and provided with four wooden pillars.
supporting the roof. The pillars, tall square shafts that were carved sometime in 1977, replaced the concrete columns that were installed when the original ones of deodar wood had crumbled down. 167

The doorway in the centre of the facade (pls. 58 & 59), is flanked by two wooden windows. Modelled on the entrances of Gupta and post-Gupta temples, this doorway too consists of four successively receding doorjambs and corresponding lintels. On one of the left doorframes is engraved an inscription in Takri script which informs us that the temple was built by Raja Bahadur Singh of Kulu in "sastra samvat 29, jeth pra. 20" which, according to Vogel, corresponds to 1553 A.D. 168 Earlier we have already expressed our views on the date of construction of this temple and do not think it necessary to repeat them here.

The quadruple doorframes are ornamented with carvings of the Hindu deities and exquisite designs. Longhurst, writing in the 20's, observed that the deities carved here are "too decayed for identification, but all are shown with dome-shaped umbrellas". 168 This is a misleading statement, for we visited the temple fifty years later and were able to identify all the deities; we did not find a single deity provided with "dome-shaped umbrellas". The centre of the overdoor is occupied by Ganesa seated in crossed-legs posture. On top, just above him is shown a horseheaded yaksi, very similar to the one carved on a roundel on the railing post of the stupa of the Saints at Sanchi (2nd century B.C.) 170. The two innermost frames and corresponding lintels carry delicate
and pleasing perforated cruciform designs and elaborate scrollwork and floral ornamentation chiselled in uniform patterns in the highest relief (pls. 58 & 59). Similar patterns with deep-cut leafy designs can be seen on the frames of the wooden windows.

On both sides of the entrance, the lowermost niches of the frames are carved with the figures of Hindu deities. On the right side, we have (starting from the innermost frame) Durga riding on a lion, a devotee standing with folded hands, Visnu and Laksmi perched on a throne and a female figure surrounded by a number of female attendants. (pl. 58). We shall refer to the latter figures in the following passage. The depiction of eight-armed Durgā standing on her vahana - her one foot resting on its head and the other near the tail - is very unusual; she seems to be thrusting the trident held in her hand into her vehicle's name. Both the figures display a dynamic vitality.

The lowermost niches on the left side show Durgā mahisasuramardini, a male devotee standing with folded hands exactly identical to the figure on the right jamb, Siva and Parvati seated on Nandi and two male figures wearing dhotis and carrying bows and arrows; their coiffure of matted hair makes us feel that they are Rama and Laksamana in exile. (pl. 59). If this were so, then the female figure surrounded by female attendants on the right side is Sita in Asoka vatika sitting amidst the demonesses appointed by Ravana. This also gives us a clue as to why a deer has been portrayed just above these niches on both the sides. Probably this is Marichi, the golden deer mentioned in the Ramayana. The
deer is represented as looking back over its shoulder and spouting forth foliage from its mouth. The depiction of Rama, Sita and Lakshman in this manner is rather unusual. Generally, in woodcarvings, Rama figures alone among the ten incarnations of Visnu. It is likely that the carver selected this episode from the Ramayana to please his royal patron who was a staunch worshipper of Raghu-nathji; this is evident from the importance of this deity in Kulu proper and of his temple within the Sultanpur palace-complex. It is possible that Raja Bahadur Singh himself had instructed him to depict this theme.

Durga mahisasuramardini carved on the innermost jamb dominates the scene, standing on the vanquished buffalo-demon shown in full animal form. Her trident penetrates into its back. The whole scene is charged with vigour and exudes an aura of vitality. The rest of the left jamb is carved with the figures of rsis and yogis, while on the right jamb, we have Krsna playing on the flute, Varaha the boar incarnation of Visnu, Durga seated on a throne (her figure is thrown into relief by a circular aureole) and Ardhanarisvara accompanied by the bull and the lion vehicles. The third jambs on both the sides are decorated with semi-lotiform and ornamental triangular patterns. On both sides of the triangles are beautifully carved peacocks with turned heads.

Like the doorways of Laksana Devi and Sakti Devi temples, here too, the lintel corners are occupied by elongated and stylised figures of the lions. The rest of the lintel (pl. 57) is covered with cruciform perforated patterns which almost engulf the kirttimukha masks, which become visible only if we look at the carving
closely. The navagraha group and several figures of dancers occupy the above two lintels. Most of the dancing figures are those of females dressed in saris and holding hands; a few male figures clad in dhotis can be seen standing among them. They are a 16th century version of ancient gandharvas and apsaras and look like folk dancers of the Himalayan region. The stylistic rendering of these figures calls to my mind the dancing figures carved on the plinth of the ruined temple in Nurpur fort (16th century). Bands of stylised lotus petals adorn the topmost lintel, in the centre of which is placed a large vajra (thunderbolt) motif carved in high relief.

Just above the wooden board bearing the inscription of Raja Bahadur Singh we see Durga simhavahini - it is not clear why she has been depicted here again - and Visnu visvarupa; both the deities have been forcefully and vibrantly executed; their vigour and might is clearly conveyed. On the left side, within the niches are depicted a horserider, an erotic couple (mithuna) and two women wearing skirts with long braids, grinding something in mortar and pestle. The last two motifs are repeated on the side windows. All the figures carved on the doorway are folk in conception and style, but not altogether untouched by sophistication. The depiction of erotic figures on prominent architectural portions of later wooden temples of the western Himalaya seems to be in keeping with traditional artistic conventions transmitted to the artisans by their forefathers. They are depicted on almost all wooden temples of Himachal Pradesh till the end of the 19th century. We may add that the obscene element in the portrayal does not suggest some ritualistic significance of erotic motifs in the
cultural patterns of the western Himalaya, nor was such a portrayal due to the widespread influence of tantricism that left its deep impact on different schools of painting of this area from 17th century onwards. The traditional artisans drew upon the repertoire of themes and decorative designs unquestioningly, of which the motif of an erotic couple formed an essential part for it is believed to be auspicious and as having protective properties.

The horse-rider figure mentioned above represents Raja Bahadur Singh, in the opinion of Vogel and Hutchinson. They write: "The Raja is mounted on a horse, sword in hand, the animal he bestrides being covered with harness." In our opinion, this is a depiction of Kalki, the last incarnation of Visnu who is yet to come. We are led to think so on account of the depiction of Varaha and Krsna and Rama incarnations of Visnu on the jambs. The other incarnations such as the Matsya, Kurma, Narasimha, Parasurama and the Buddha are not depicted. A frieze runs across the top of the veranda depicting elephants, lions, mythical animals, etc. carved in a single file, as though following one another in a procession. Similar friezes are a common feature of most wooden temples of Kulu district. All the figural panels, though carved in folk style, are charged with dramatic intensity. (pls. 56-63).

The two windows flanking the doorway (pls. 60 & 61) are modelled after it with recessed frames and are embellished with the same ornamental patterns. The windows are blind. In the centre is placed a wooden pilaster turned on lathe; its lower portion looks exactly like a bedleg used all over the hilly area. The upper
portion is a stylised rendering of pot-and-foliage motif surmounted by an abacus, above which a square panel shows two female figures standing on either side of a column-like object. Secular scenes of this type derived from everyday life of the hillfolks are a common feature of the folk art of this area. The panel on the other window shows an erotic couple. On both sides, we see ornamental arches composed of floral patterns; the lotus buds in the centre are linked to tendrils - this design seems to have been inspired by the linked snouts of two makaras that form decorative arches of this type in ancient woodcarvings of Chamba and Brahmaur. These windows show a development from the plain windows of the primitive pent-roof shrines into highly decorative architectural feature, although the main lines of the original design remain the same.

The carver of Hidimba Devi temple seems to have been inspired a great deal by the carvings of Dakhani Mahadeva temple of Nirmand (pl. 78), especially in the carving of intricate leafy scrollwork on the jambs and lintels, although the resemblance is not very striking, that is, he did not copy them slavishly which is a proof of his genius. The ornamental patterns adorning the topmost lintel of the Nirmand temple have been borrowed with exactitude, although in the carving of triangular figurations, bands of lotus petals, he has not been very successful. The idea of carving the image of Ganesa on the overdoor (lalatabimba) and of the worshipped deity above him is also borrowed from the Nirmand temple. The same is true of the depiction of Lakshmi-Narayana and Uma-Mahesvara figures on the lowermost niches of the doorjambs.
This wooden temple is one of the most significant wooden temples of Himachal Pradesh. It influenced the wooden architecture of this area for nearly 400 years.

### Tripurasundari temple of Naggar, Kulu district

This temple is dedicated to goddess Bhagavati who is addressed as Tripurasundari, the Most Beautiful One in the three worlds. It stands in the midst of the village houses within an enclosure in Naggar, the ancient capital of the Kulu Rajas. The presence of stone sculptures in relief lying around the temple make me think that this wooden temple was probably built on the site of a stone temple of Gupta period. There are no inscriptions or any other historical document to enable us to fix an exact date for its construction. According to the local tradition, it was built by Raja Sidha Singh sometime around 1500. Hermann Goetz and Roerich opine that it was erected sometime in the 15th or 16th century A.D. Jettmar places it in mid-16th century on stylistic grounds. She believes that this temple is contemporaneous to that of Hidimba Devi temple in Dhungri. Since no concrete evidence is available to help us date this structure, we are left with no choice but to base our opinion on its architectural style. In my opinion, the temple was built in Sidha Singh's time and probably furnished the model for the Hidimba Devi temple, to which it bears a striking resemblance. Both the temples are rectangular on plan and their successively diminishing tiered roofs are remarkable for their symmetrical arrangement and proportions. In fact, the classical harmony and elegant proportions of this temple
structure have impressed all the visitors in the past. The two lower storeys have sloping roofs covered with wooden planks, while the third and the topmost storey is covered with an umbrella-like conical canopy capped by a metal finial consisting of amalaka and Bindu. On all the four sides, there is a balcony decorated with rows of wooden fringes. The balustrades are said to have been destroyed in early 60's, but they were soon replaced by the local carpenters. On the projecting roof ends, we see wooden statuettes of lions carved in the round in folk style, which serve the function of the gargoyles and drain off rain water. Similar figurines can also be seen on the corner beams of the sloping roofs of Mahesura temple of Sungra and Candika Devi temple of Kothi village in Kinnaur district.

While the temple has striking structural similarities with that of Hidimba Devi temple, it does not have a richly carved doorway or facade that we see in the latter temple. As we stand in the courtyard facing the entrance, we observe that a narrow door (pl.68) is provided for the garbhagriha in which is enshrined a tall and impressive metal image of the goddess Tripurasundari. There is no mandapa in front. The absence of carvings on the doorway lend it a somewhat austere look. The door has an ornamental arch composed of the trunks of two elephants whose heads are carved out of the deodar wood and seem to jut out from the lintel corners (pl.68). Goetz is right in asserting that this arch was a later development of the original makaratorana. Similar arches are a common feature of stone temples of Mandi and Chamba from 1700 onwards. On top, in the centre of the lintel, is depicted the seated figure of Ganesa enclosed within an arched niche. Flanking the entrance are two figures of door-guardians (dvarapalas) similarly standing within cusped arched,
The cinque-foil arches and the costumes of the door-guardians suggest the influence of Rajput art and culture which had struck deep roots in the soil of Himachal Pradesh by the 13th and 14th centuries A.D. as a result of the successive waves of Rajput settlers. Similar dvarapala figures are a common feature of Chamba temples from 10th century A.D. onwards, where they replaced the figures of river goddesses Ganga and Yamuna, an essential feature of Gupta and post-Gupta period temples. Similar figures are also to be met with in Brahmur state kothi. Both the door guardians are holding a staff in one hand and a lotus in the other.

Parasara rsi temple, Parasara village, Mandi.

The temple of Parasara rsi or devata (pl. 69) is located in Mandi in a basin of verdant hills beside a small lake with a floating island at a height of 9000 ft. Its importance can be judged from the fact that all the kings of Seha dynasty of Mandi had to pay homage here at least once during their reign. It has an inscription that records that it was built by Raja Bana Sena of Mandi sometime in early 14th century. We agree with Chetwode's view that the carvings date from this period. We have this probable date because the vamsavali informs us that Bana Sena died in 1346 A.D. We have already stated elsewhere that the temple existed long before Bana Sena got it recarved. The temple is earlier than the Hidimba Devi temple of Dhungri and the decorative carvings on the doorway nowhere near equals the quality of that of Parasara temple.

The temple consists of three tiered roofs which are not as well proportioned as those of Hidimba Devi and Tripurasundari. The lowermost sloping roof covering the ground floor is inordinately large and is connected with the second storey by a small wooden
gALLERY which gives us the impression of an elongated figure with an attenuated waist. The third storey is capped by an umbrella-like circular roof. All the roofs are covered with slates. Struts support the projecting edges of the first roof on all the four sides.

The doorway to the sanctuary is as impressive and elaborate as that of the Dakhani Mahadeva temple and consists of seven frames, each enclosing Hindu deities in the niches, carved in folk style. The depiction of fat scaly interlinked snakes in one continuous design on the outermost jambs and lintels is extremely forceful. Chetwode has made an interesting observation that "the intertwined nags round the garbhagriha door resemble those round the green chlorite doorways at Konarak.\(^{186}\) The similarity is indeed striking. On the left side wall is a carved wooden slab depicting the standing figure of a female deity (pl.71). Chetwode has mistaken her for the river goddess Ganga.\(^{187}\) In our opinion, the figure is Durga mahisasamardini. The buffalo demon looks more like a leogryph with a crocodile's head; Durga is not holding its tongue as observed by Chetwode above but thrusting trident into its mouth. The pot in her right hand is a skull cup containing blood not a water vessel. The four arms of the goddess are extremely stiff. She is wearing a long garland (vanamala), a crown and girdle around her waist. The carver working in folk style was inspired by classical style sculptures which are often seen lying in the temple courtyards.

Closely resembling the above temple are the temples of Parasara Rsi in Kamand (pl.75) and of Brahma at Dhiri (pl.74). The former located in an enchanting grove of deodar trees has three tiered roofs, the topmost being circular and covered with deodar planks while the lower roofs are covered with blue slates which are
abundantly available in Mandi. He seems to have the above temple in mind when he did the carvings which are akin in most details such as seven recessed doorframes, identical themes and style, the pillars crowned by pot-and-foliage capitals. The birds flanking the purnakumbha look more like eagles; they have curved beaks, rings around their necks, attenuated bodies and stumpy tails dissolving into swirling foliage (pl.70). This motif is very unusual in these carvings, for peacocks figure on the pillar capitals everywhere. The purnaghatas symbolising prosperity are fluted and adorned with elongated lotus petals. These pillars, square in shape and twelve in number, are ranged along the ambulatory path. The wooden galleries supporting the pillars between the stepped storeys are carved with variegated motifs.

The Brahma temple of Dhiri (pl.74) is a three tiered roof structure. Its roofs and galleries are built in the same manner as the above temple. No ancient carvings are seen here, for it was renovated a few years ago. By its side stands a tall tower-like structure which is used as a storehouse.

Tari'ugi Narayana temple, Dyar village (Kulu)

The temple of Tari'ugi (Triyugin) Narayana (pl.72) in Dyar village opposite Bajaura is one of the few shrines consecrated to Visnu. A vimana style temple, it is square on plan and has three-tiered roofs rising one above the other. The walls of the ground floor that contains the garbhagriha enshrining the image of the worshipped deity are constructed in the usual manner, the alternating courses of wooden beams binding the rubble masonry. The sloping roofs of the lower two storeys are in the usual form of projecting canopies,
while the topmost one is in the form of a large umbrella surmounted by a tall wooden finial which itself is crowned by a tiny metal umbrella modelled after the metal canopies (chhatra) shading the images of the deities in most Himachal temples. The lower two roofs are covered with slates and the topmost one with shingles. The central and topmost roofs are raised on square wooden galleries which lend a graceful appearance to the structure. They are linked to the ground floor with a staircase. Both of them are provided with solid cornices from which hang wooden fringes. Wooden beams are placed on the corners of the sloping roofs, from the ends of which hang wooden bells.

The doorway and windows are thoroughly renovated and the carvings were executed in recent years.

A.H. Longhurst states that the Hidimba Devi temple is a development of the Dyar temple which it closely resembles on plan and in construction. It is not possible to say anything with certainty, as no inscriptions or any other evidence has been found in this temple to enable us to determine its date of construction and say which temple is earlier. But in my opinion, this temple along with the Adi Brahma temple of Khokhan might have influenced the Nepalese temples in this architectural style.

Adi Brahma temple, Khokhan, Kulu

This temple (pl. 73) stands by the roadside in Khokhan village situated at a distance of one-and-a-half mile west of Bhuntar in lower Kulu valley. A tall structure rising to the height of about 70 to 80 ft., it has four tiered roofs. The sloping roof of the ground floor is too large compared to the roofs on top. An unusual
feature here is that its topmost roof is not circular but rectangular as in Nepalese temples for which it probably served as a model. A heavy beam crowned by three wooden finials runs along the top ridge. The topmost storey almost looks like a chalet temple perched on a vimana style temple. This temple represents the third stage of development of this type of temples, the first two being represented by the Hidimba temple and Tarjugi Narayana temple. The Himalayan carver never ceased to experiment with his material. All the stepped roofs rest on square pilasters ranged along the wooden galleries. The elaborately curved, almost serpentine brackets supporting the projecting roofs on all four storeys lend the structure an elegant look. They issue out of the backs of birds. From the roof ends of the second and third storeys jut out stylised horse-heads carved out of wood; this is a notable departure from the traditional depiction of the heads of a ram, lion or makara which are believed to protect the structure from evil influences. Above these heads project stone tiles which protect the gargoyles from rain and snow.

The lowermost storey containing the garbhagriha consists of walls built in typical indigenous timber-bonded style. An ambulatory path runs all around the sanctum, along which are placed fluted pillars supporting ornamental arches, similar to those of Sandhya Gayatri temple. The recessed doorframes are ornamented with figures of Hindu deities in folk style. Rippling figures of snakes cover the outermost jambs. No precise date can be assigned for its construction in the absence of concrete evidence. It probably dates from the 18th century.
Type IV : THE VIMANA STYLE TEMPLES WITH MANDAPA

The wooden temples falling in this category consist of a mandapa (ante-chamber) and a garbha-grajā (sanctum sanctorum), and the whole structure is raised on a plinth of stone which is generally not very high. The mandapa in front is generally large, but it can be small also, as in Mahesura temple of Sungra (Kinnour district). The garbha-grajā does not have a common back wall with the rest of the structure; a narrow passage separates it from the back wall, the purpose being to enable the worshipper to go round the sanctum for ambulation known as the sandhara type. What differentiates these temples from other wooden temples is the way the roofs are constructed. The garbha-grajā is always covered either by a single circular roof or a large elaborate superstructure consisting of two or three tiered roofs, while the mandapa in front has a pent roof which slopes on two sides from a central ridge beam or on all the four sides from a central cap or ball. The roof is supported on cross beams resting on wooden pillars. Carving is done on the doorway to the sanctum, pillars and small windows which are divided into vertical sections by one or more squat pillars and on the open galleries between the storeys formed by each successively receding roofs. The carvings in folk style are executed in shallow relief, while those much more sophisticated are carved in high relief. The sanctum remains intact for a long time and is not renewed until it becomes absolutely necessary, but the roof is repaired or replaced from time to time. The walls are usually constructed of square sections of deodar wood used like matchsticks, while rough hewn stones are fitted within interstices.
A.H. Longhurst, one of the few writers to study the wooden architecture of this area, opines that this type of temple construction preceded the "free standing pagoda". Chetwode has accepted his opinion and writes that the four indigenous types of hill temples interact on one another so that an accurate chronology of the style is impossible. We disagree with both the writers. In our view, this architectural style has been derived from the vimana style temples studied above. The only difference is that here a mandapa with a sloping roof has been added in front of the garbha-grha. We strongly feel that the vimana style temples came to be built first and our long discussion on Type III temples sufficiently proves their antiquity. So it is not possible to accept Longhurst's view that temples in this style antedate the vimana style temples. Wooden temples in this style are confined to areas situated along the banks of the Satluj river, i.e. the villages of Simla, Kinnaur districts and outer Saraj area of Kulu district. It is highly probable that the inventors of this style were the carpenters of Kulu district where temples in this style abound, and they introduced it in Simla hills and Kinnaur district.

Any one who sees the wooden temples of Himachal is led to think with Penelope Chetwode that the four styles are indigenous to this area. In my view, Types I and II are indigenous and Types III and IV belong to the mainstream of temple architecture. We have already spoken about the striking affinities between Type III temples with those of south India. The wooden temples that we are placing in the fourth category also have their counterparts in south India in the stone temples of Muktesvara, Matangesvara, Tripurantakesvara of Kanchipuram and Perumal temple of Kuram, all
of which date back to the Pallava period. All these temples have a mandapa in front of the garbha-grha, on top of which rises a stepped pyramidal tower of two or three tiered roofs successively receding towards the top, which is crowned by a circular canopy and a finial, exactly like our wooden temples. Only the mandapa in front of these south Indian temples has flat roofs, in contrast to the sloping roofs of the porches of Himachal temples. The explanation for it has been given time and again in the foregoing chapters that in these areas, it was imperative to cover the structures with a sloping roof on account of heavy rains and snow. The Kanchipuram temples are elaborate structures, some provided with accessory buildings; but these were added probably in later times. The original plan, however, consists of a mandapa and a garbha-grha surmounted by several tiered roofs bearing a striking resemblance to our temples.

Since no specific term for this peculiar architectural style has been used by Rea, the author of Pallava architecture, we shall tentatively call them vimana style temples with mandapa. The term "Satluj valley style" coined by Chetwode seems inappropriate, for temples in this style are not confined to the Satluj valley alone. Vidya Dehejia has reproduced in her book on Orissa temples a Siva temple from Mohanagiri which, according to her, belongs to the latter half of the 7th century A.D. This temple also comes very close to our wooden temples and the Kanchipuram temples. These similarities make us arrive at the conclusion that this architectural style was not a local development. It seems that temples in this style were built in India since ancient times
and have survived only in Himachal Pradesh and south India now. Herebelow we study the temples individually.

Dakhani Mahadeva (or Daksinesvara) temple, Nirmand, Kulu district.

This temple (pl. 78) stands in splendid isolation in the midst of fields in Nirmand, southern Kulu in the Satluj valley. It is a simple structure with a three-tiered roof and a mandapa in front. At one glance, it appears to be tiny and unimpressive structure. Square on plan, it stands on a low stone plinth. Its walls are timber-bonded plastered with mud. A narrow passage runs around it on all three sides, the fourth is covered by fields. This passage must have served the purpose of circumambulatory path when the temple was in worship. Today unfortunately it stands in a state of neglect. Square wooden pillars, plain shafts, surmounted by pot-and-foliage capitals, support the sloping roof on all sides. The entrance faces west. Its interior is peculiar. The earthen floor is a mass of deep folds and hollows. The sanctum is a tiny square, about three ft. wide. Its walls are plastered with mud. It enshrines a massive stone linga-yoni. What lends a touch of grace to this plain structure is its wooden facade carved in classical style. We shall return to it after completing our description of the structure.

The second storey is constructed exactly like the first, although it is much smaller. All the four walls constructed of wooden beams and rough stones form a kind of square gallery surrounded on all sides by wooden pillars exactly identical to the ones on the ground floor. The third and last storey rests on the sloping roof of the second and is built entirely of wood. A square
gallery with perforated summit is covered with shingles, while the roofs of the lower storeys are covered with slates. From the wooden eaves hang wooden pendants.

The doorway to the sanctum presents a splendid array of dynamic images and decorative designs carved on its seven recessed frames. In the centre of the overdoor (lalatabimba) is a niche formed by two solid pilasters joined on top by an arch and enshrining the figure of Ganesa (pl.81). In his four arms he carries an aksamala, an axe, book and modaka. This is perhaps the earliest depiction of Vighnesvara on the overdoor. The tradition of depicting this god on the lintel perhaps started in the 9th or 10th century A.D. and has continued till now. The niche just above the Ganesa figure shows a shrine-like structure with linga-yoni very similar to the one enshrined within the sanctum. Two male devotees stand on both sides offering prayers, flanked by massive pilasters, similar to the ones seen below, but unornamented by hanging chains. Similar pillars, circular in shape and decorated with pearl strings on top, middle and lower portions, enclose all the figures of deities carved on the doorway. Such pilasters are a common feature of almost all stone sculptures of this period found in Sirmur, Ranganatha temple (Bilaspur), subsidiary shrine of Jagatsukh, and some temples of Rajasthan. The upper two lintels show the animated figures of celestial musicians and dancers and the navagrahas carved in the arched niches. The musicians play instruments such as drums, mrdangam, cymbals, flutes and the two seated figures in the lintel corners are blowing conches. The treatment of the navagrahas is conventional. The niches carrying these figures
alternate with ornamental floral motifs, on top of which we see decorative caitya arches (pls. 81 & 82), similar arches cap the navagraha niches on top which are separated by similar decorative motifs. Between the caitya arches are placed the flying godlings kinnaras carrying garlands whom we have already seen in post-Gupta period temples of Laksana Devi and Sakti Devi and elsewhere in India. All the features described above are derived from the repertoire of 6th-7th century art and suggest an uninterrupted continuity of tradition. The innovative features here are the seated male figures (yakṣas) occupying the right and left corners of the navagraha lintel, carrying water vessels, a rosary and a padma, and also two female figures standing in bigger niches flanking them (pl. 83). They are surasundaris (nymphs). The one on the right hand is darpanasundari, carrying a circular mirror in one hand and with the other holding the end of her scarf wrapped gracefully around her arm. The attributes held in the right hand of the other surasundari is damaged and the tassels of her scarf dangle elegantly from her other hand. Both the figures stand poised in the niches displaying a soft and sensuous modelling. They are portrayed with a distinct dehanchement. Round face, full cheeks, an elegant tilt of the head, soft curvatures of shapely rounded limbs contribute immensely to their sensuous charm. Ringlets of hair along the hairline are set off by straight hair flowing vertically on the right side of the face. The details of their costumes and ornaments are simplified with an emphasis on the flowing outlines of the body.
Like all wooden temples in this area, the doorway consists of seven successively receding frames, the outermost being adorned with bands of large lotus petals. This feature is common to some mediaeval period stone temples of Rajasthan, especially of Jaisalmer, Kiradu, and Jodhpur. The lowermost niches of other frames carry the vibrantly carved figures of (on the right side) Yamuna wielding her usual attributes, a leogryph-rider, a female figure (dvarapalika or cauri-bearer), a crowned male figure and Uma-Mahesvara astride Nandi (pl.79), and (on the left side) a female figure very akin to the salabhanjikas of ancient sculptures in a decayed condition, a male figure carrying a trident and a bird in two hands, and Visnu and Laksmi seated on Garuda (pl.80). The gracefully standing river goddesses with their beautiful and graceful bodies look more like voluptuous apsaras. The richness of the unending symphonic flow of their bodies is really enchanting. They are accompanied by their vehicles which are no longer to be seen now, having decayed on account of being buried in mud. The suggestion of skirts is made by engraving lines that form a kind of pattern. Each of the niches is capped by highly ornamental triangular arches composed by stylised leafy scrollwork.

The figures of leogryph-riders are carved with the usual verve and vigour and deserve special mention. We have already encountered them on the doorways of Laksana Devi and Sakti Devi temples. The depiction is not only similar to them but also to a stone image from Chaukhandi near Sarnath (5th century A.D.), to some temples of Orissa, Rajasthan, and Khotan.
All the figures are carved in high relief; they are so deeply cut that they look like three dimensional sculptures. They are portrayed in a vigorous and vivid manner that brings out their inherent power and dynamism. The carver has retained a number of features of late Gupta style sculpture, portraying them in deep relief; their well-modelled limbs show considerable understanding of anatomy on the part of the sculptor. The figures are rarely shown in stiff and rigid postures, and their aesthetic treatment reveals a highly refined and elegant tradition familiar from many sculptures of the 9th-10th centuries, that are common not only in the Himalayan foothills but also in U.P. hills, Rajasthan and Gujarat. A distinct change is noticeable here. The proportions of all the figures are not quite satisfactory; their legs are somewhat short. But the slight misproportions are not very disturbing, nor do they rob the sculptures of their elegance and charm. Their flowing linear quality places them among some of the finest examples of classical style sculptures in Kulu.

The ornamental patterns carved on the rest of the frames also seem to have undergone a similar change. Barring the figural niches, the entire doorway is covered with a riot of exquisitely carved leafy scrollwork, undulating creepers and triangular configurations composed by highly stylised lotus petals and leaves. The florid ornamentation is marked by an indescribable delicacy of treatment, and has no parallels in any other part of this region nor in other provinces as far as we know.
Nothing is known about the history of this temple. It is not known as to when it was first built and by whom. On stylistic evidence, we can say that it must have been built sometime in the 9th-10th centuries A.D. In this village of unique antiquity, there are a number of ancient temples dedicated to Ambika mata, Parasram etc. named after rsi Parasurama and a Visnu temple called thakurdwara (pl.172), but none of them have preserved such ancient carvings as the temple under study. Its unique importance and interest lies in the fact that this is the only example of wooden sculptures in Pratihara style of 9th-10th century, whereas numerous stone sculptures of this period are available all over Himachal Pradesh.

The exact replica of the wooden doorway of this temple is seen in Candika Devi temple in the same village (pl.85). The stylistic rendering of carved figures and ornamental patterns is identical which makes us think that the same sculptor carved both of them. We do not know what necessitated the carving of identical doorways; the latter, however, is weather-beaten. This temple was probably a wooden structure originally, but now it is a modern restoration from plain blocks of stone plastered with mud and whitewashed. Its sloping roof is covered with corrugated iron sheets.

Bahena Mahadeva temple, Bahena village, Kulu district.

On the main bus route from Simla to Ani is situated the village of Bahguna in the Satluj valley, 150 meters above the river near the confluence with the Ani khud. The splendid temple of Siva worshipped in the local parlance as Bahena Mahadeva stands just
a few metres away from the road (pl.76). It is the most imposing example of Type IV temple architecture. The temple stands in the midst of an open courtyard around which runs a walled enclosure of rough stones. Two stone steps lead us into the huge mandapa covered with a sloping roof; its gable is provided with a blind window which has all the typical features of its counterparts in other wooden temples of this area. Facing the entrance - it may be noted that there is no doorway to the mandapa - is the garbhagriha, the walls of which are constructed of wooden beams placed between rubble masonry. On top of the sanctum is a square storey joined on to the sloping roof of the mandapa. It has balcony panels of wood carved with figures of Hindu deities and animals in folk style (pl.91). On this balcony rest square pillars supporting the eaves decorated with rows of wooden pendants. This storey is covered with a sloping roof on all sides, above which is another storey identically constructed and capped with a circular roof surmounted by a metal finial. The sloping roofs are covered with large irregularly shaped slates and the circular top is roofed with rough wooden planks. This double storeyed superimposed roof structure above the sanctum corresponds to the sikhara of stone temples in classical style. The structure on the whole seems to be a wooden version of similar stone temples in Mandi, e.g. Pancavakra temple. Around the sanctum sanctorum is a gallery for walking around. There is a wooden balcony consisting of panels, each carved on the outer side with figures of Hindu deities, viz. Durga, Siva, Visnu and their diverse manifestations, and animals (pl.95), very similar in style to the ones on the lower roof described above.
The wooden beams of the sanctum walls carry the simple designs of spirals, zigzags, (pls. 96 & 97) etc. Heraldic animals are carved on two wooden beams inserted in its back wall. The door-jambs and lintels carved in the usual manner as in all the wooden temples of the area are covered with floral designs while the lowermost niches have the figures of Hindu deities - Laksmi-Narayana, Siva and Parvati and their various aspects (pls. 92 & 93). Richly carved solid pillars of deodar wood, square or hexagonal in shape, are similarly decorated with floral designs and figures of Hindu deities. The most fascinating portion of this temple is the carved window recess on the right side of the sanctum (pls. 95 & 96). Animals such as lions, horses, bulls, etc. depicted on the friezes are interesting examples of the carver's imagination. They seem to be either chasing one another or fleeing as though in fear upon being followed by a hunter. Five carved panels are placed in the blind window, of which the first and the last depict two standing male figures sporting a crown and dressed up in Rajput costumes worn by members of feudal society, i.e., an angarakhi (tunic) and tight trousers. They might be guarding deities. The central panel has the figure of Siva in sitting posture, whose vahana Nandi is depicted below. The flanking panels too are engraved with mythological themes. Unfortunately, it was not possible to figure out the themes because of two heavy stone stelae placed in front, which could not be lifted up. These sculptural reliefs in stone depicting Siva and Parvati and Visnu and Laksmi perched on their respective vahanas are in Pratihara style of the 10th century A.D. Similarly carved stone slabs depicting Ganesa and other Hindu deities are lying in the mandapa.
It is not known whether they belong to a stone temple built at this site or some nearby temple. They certainly suggest that this remote corner of Kulu district was also included in the area of influence of Gurjara-Pratihara style, but they do not help us in dating the woodcarvings which are in folk style and have a timeless quality. Nor do they help us in determining the period of construction of the temple. We can only guess that it might have been built about 400 years ago. Constructed entirely of deodar wood, the massive structure conveys the impression of solidity. In fact, it is the largest temple structure we have come across in this area.

Mahesura temple, Sungara, Kinnaur district

The village of Sungara is situated between Nachar and Paunda, a little below the road. The tall structure of the temple of Mahesura (a corruption of Mahesvara, i.e. Siva) stands majestically against the background of snow-capped mountains (pl.37). In sharp contrast to this tall structure is a miniature stone shrine with stepped roofs, a stone amalaka and a bhadramukha, just in front of the temple entrance. A stone lingam, the emblem of Siva, is enshrined in the garbhagrha.

As in the case of most wooden temples of Simla and Kinnaur districts, no inscriptions are to be found in this temple, nor any historical records exist to inform us about the period of its construction or who got it erected. So we are left with no choice but to presume that the temple owes its existence to the religious fervour of the local villagers.
This temple is the most daring experiment in Type IV architectural style. A doorway with four successively receding frames form the entrance into the rectangular chamber that forms the mandapa in front of the sanctum. Two massive wooden posts are placed on both sides of the door jambs which are left unornamented. Only on the upper portions, we see the motif of lingam and carved in relief. This is an unusual feature that we have not seen in any of the wooden temples covered by us. The doorway leads us into the mandapa and from thence into the garbhagriha, which is larger and the walls of which broaden out on both the sides. The sanctum is square on plan and has three sloping roofs, one on top of another, the lowermost being the largest and the topmost a circular canopy resembling a funnel crowned by a metal finial. The mandapa has a double-tiered roof, the second storey resting on a wooden gallery with square wooden pilasters. This gallery is connected with the one at the back by a passage on both sides, and is covered by a sloping roof jutting out from the gallery of the second storey of the garbhagriha. The wooden beam placed in the centre of the sloping roofs projects from the gable in the shape of a makara-head. The triangular gable has barge-boards carved with floral designs linked by meandering creepers, similar to the ones adorning the horizontal wooden beams and some windows of Bhimakali temple bhandar. To these friezes are attached wooden pendants that almost hide from our view the carving on the gable. We have to strain our eyes to see a seated figure flanked by some human figures, perhaps Siva and devotees; carved in folk style, all the figures are grotesque and these qualities lend them a weird intensity.
Long wooden beams are nailed onto the corners of each sloping roof, the projecting ends of which have the wooden figures of lions, similar to the ones standing on both sides of the temple entrance. In the centre of each beam is a gargoyle in the shape of a makara-head. The friezes around all the galleries are carved with a number of motifs such as a serpent with a sinuous body resembling a rippling line, an elephant delineated exactly as embroidered in folk embroideries of Himachal Pradesh and in the phulkaris of Punjab, stylised peacocks, conventionalised plant and flower forms, criss-cross patterns and distorted human figures.

The figures of Hindu deities occupying the niches on the jambs and lintels are carved in folk style, but seem to have been inspired considerably by classical style sculptures of Gurjara-Pratihara period which are lying scattered in the temple courtyards of Bhairava and Candika Devi in Kothi. These carvings are certainly much older than the friezes on the gable and around the galleries between the stepped roofs, which appear to have been executed when the roofs were replaced. In our opinion, the carvings on the doorway are about 300 years old, judging from the style of the figures.

Francke and Vogel have mentioned this temple but they do not go beyond giving very brief description of its structure. Both speak about its triple roof rising above the sanctum and the wooden figures of lions on the corner beams of the lowest roofs.
Jogesvara Mahadeva temple, Dalasa village, Kulu.

The temple of Jogesvara Mahadeva in Dalasa village (pl.88), situated at a distance of 25 kms. from Luri in outer Saraj along the north bank of the river Satluj, is an impressive structure. Like all Type IV temples, here too, the double-roofed shrine is combined with a ridge-roofed mandapa in front. A small square shrine is separated from the outer wall by a closed passage for circumambulation. The peculiar nature of the roof above the shrine chamber appears to be an attempt to construct a circular roof with materials which lend themselves only to angular structures. However, the meaning and origin of the uppermost roof is clear enough and even the large gable roof over the pillared hall in front of the shrine suggests a wooden model of a baldacchino rather than an ordinary roof. The concave form of the roof produced by carrying out the eaves almost horizontally from the face of the walls and the fact that the eaves are ornamented with wooden fringes and little bells of the same material at the angles support this idea. The large wooden umbrella above the sanctum sanctorum is ornamented with wooden fringes and surmounted by a small copper gilt umbrella.

Except for the foundations and the slates covering the main roof, the entire structure is built of deodar wood. The eaves of the roofs and the gable front were originally provided with wooden fringes. The shrine doorframes, the stout wooden pillars supporting the roofs and the panelled railing around the mandapa were carved recently and no effort has been made to preserve the original carvings.
Kotesvara Mahadeva temple, Koti village, Simla district.

Three kms. above Kumharsain is situated Koti village near Mandoli where this Siva temple stands in a walled enclosure (pls. 4 & 89). It has all the typical features of Type IV temples. When we stand at the steps leading us into the mandapa, we are reminded of the Janog temple because the carvings are executed more or less in the same style. The mandapa rests on square pillars and has a lantern ceiling. The sanctum has timber-bonded walls and a carved door. The side walls have carved windows, very similar to those of Bhimakali temple, adorned with floral sprays. The full blown eight petal lotuses linked by a meandering creeper carved on the frames bears a striking resemblance to the floral borders of embroidered rumals of Himachal Pradesh. Two extremely crude male figures with elongated legs are carved here (pl. 90).

The figural frames of the four successively receding jambs and lintels alternate with ornamental ones. Close to the innermost jambs, two fluted pillars are placed to support a cusped arch. On the pillars we see the motifs of interlinked serpents carved in vertical position, looking like chains hanging from the capitals composed of lotus leaves. These pillars make me think that perhaps this temple was carved in the 18th or 19th century, for fluted pillars supporting cusped arches became a common feature of architecture here towards the end of the 17th century due to the dominant influence of Rajput architecture. The door carries an immense lotus rosette covering the entire surface with floral sprays in the four corners. The sides are carved with interlinked serpent motifs.
The pillar capitals carry the motif of highly stylised peacocks with turned heads, while the front sides of the pillars carry the figures of Hindu deities. They are so distorted and crude that they look like effigies. They have small heads, attenuated proportions and nervous alert expressions. Evidently they are in distinct local style of the area.

The temple of Kusumba mata in Khetsu village near Luri in the Satluj valley is built on the same lines as the above temple. In our opinion, the carver who chiselled the doorway of this temple was the same man who carved the interior of the private temple in old Jubbal palace. Unfortunately the carvings could not be photographed due to gloomy interior. In the courtyard of this temple at one time stood a tower type temple dedicated to Siva, but it had crumbled to pieces when we visited it.

Dhanesvari Devi temple, Nithar Dhanah, Kulu.

This temple (pls. 77 & 86) dedicated to Durga stands on one side of the village green, 2000 ft. above Satluj river in Outer Saraj, 11 miles west of Nirmand. Like all temples in this style, it is erected on a stone plinth. The mandapa in front of the garbhagriha is enclosed on all sides by an open veranda fringed by square pillars. Bird motifs such as stylised confronting or addorsed peacocks surmount these pillars. A slightly concave roof covered with large stone tiles covers the mandapa while a square wooden gallery with four square pilasters on each of its corners rises above the roof of the garbhagriha; this is crowned by a circular umbrella-like conical roof covered with stone tiles and capped by a metal-fringed umbrella.
The walls of the mandapa are constructed in timber-bonded style, into which are inserted wooden panels at irregular intervals depicting Visnu and Laksmi, Gauri and Sankara, Durga mahisamardini, etc. The style of carving is folk. The figures of the deities are impressive; the flowing contours of their bodies lend them a rhythmic movement. They remind me of folk bronzes from Kulu. Bold patterns are carved on the friezes and galleries. The bird and animal motifs bear a striking resemblance to those figuring in contemporary folk painting and embroidery of this area. All the panels seem to be the work of a competent carver.

Mananesvara temple, Manan, Simla district.

This temple dedicated to Siva (pl.98) is located near Shilaru on the Hindustan-Tibet road, 45 kms. from Simla. The local tradition states it to have been 300 years old, a date recorded in a manuscript preserved with the temple priest. Apart from this, no evidence exists to inform us about its period of construction. The style of carvings in the interior support the local tradition.

It is one of the best examples of Type IV temples. The double-tiered roof rising above the garbhagriha rests on wooden galleries in the same manner as in the Bahena temple. In front of the sanctum is a mandapa with a pent roof. The eaves-boards under the projecting roofs on all sides carry the uniform pattern of hamsa holding pearl strings in their beaks. The ceiling of the mandapa (pl.100) is profusely carved; a circular cavity within a square, enclosed within another square placed diagonally and carved with more or less the same ornamental scrollwork. The architraves depict Hindu deities, manifestations of Siva and Durga, dressed in
dhotis and sporting pahari crowns. The side panels of the ceiling carry crude figures of lions, snakes etc.

The doorway to the garbhagrha (pl.99) is an imposing one, consisting of seven recessed frames covered with profuse arabesque patterns and figural themes from Siva and Durga legends. The square pillars are crowned by the usual confronting peacocks and jar motifs (pl.99). The carvings are said to have been executed by a local carver in folk style; the figures of the deities are well delineated but the garish colours painted on them have denuded them of much of their charm.

Markula Devi temple, Udaipur village, (Lahul).

From Keylang pass, as we go towards the confluence of Tandi and then north along the Candrabhaga, we reach the ancient temple of Markula Devi (pl.101) in Udaipur village standing above the river-bend. It is dedicated to Durga mahisasamardini worshipped as Kali. This image, 2ft. in height, has eight arms and silver en-crusted eyes. This temple is sacred not only to the Hindus but also to the Buddhists who address the goddess as rDorje-phag-mo, vajra-varahi in sanskrit. The depiction of Hindu deities in the sculptural carvings clearly suggests that originally the temple had been built in honour of some Hindu deity, it is not possible to determine which. The double depiction of Surya in the centre of the door lintels (pl.102) makes one think for a moment that probably it was dedicated to the Sun god. In the absence of concrete evidence, it is not possible to say anything on this point. Like the wooden temples of Brahmaur and Chhatrarhi, this temple was probably dedicated to Durga. The image originally installed here might have been destroyed or carried away by invaders. The image presently under worship
was made in the 16th century A.D., as we learn from the inscription in saradā characters engraved on its pedestal. The long inscription running into six lines informs us that the donor of this image was one named thakur Himapala, the ancestor of the thakurs of Trilokkenatha who got it cast by Panjamanaka Jinaka in the year 4645 which, according to Vogel, corresponds to the Christian era 1569-1570 or 1543-1544.

The temple is named after the village variously referred to as markula, marul, margula, mar-skul. It does not fall into any of the four categories mentioned above; so we shall study it separately as a unique wooden temple. Its walls are constructed as usual of alternating courses of rubble masonry and wooden beams. The inner sanctum is a square room with a circumambulatory path running all around it and a mandapa in front. A broad balcony window, which is an unusual feature, opens out from the southern side of the mandapa. Six solid wooden pillars support the ceiling of the mandapa which is covered with a sloping roof, while the steeply pitched roof above the sanctum is made of overlapping layers of wooden shingles (pl.101). I agree with Goetz's observation that the roof rising above in a steep pyramid resembles the sikha of Hindu temples in the plains.

Such a plain exterior is enough to put off anyone who visits this temple for the first time. It is only after going inside it through a side door that we become aware of the real beauty lying hidden inside. We begin our study by the richly carved doorway which has successively receding jambs with alternating figural and ornamental frames (pl.102), like the doorways of Laksanā Devi and Sakti
Devi temples. The innermost frame has a delicate scrollwork pattern carried over to the corresponding lintel, in the centre of which is a projecting image (lalatabimba) of Surya riding in his chariot driven by seven horses (pl.103). The lalatabimba was a feature of Gupta period temples (e.g. the Visnu temple, Deogarh) and figures in most later temples. The next frame, on each side, has four figures of dancing apsaras, each figure framed by meandering creepers - the same treatment is discernible on the bronze frame of the Buddha-avatara from Divasara (Kasmir) dating from King Sankaravarmanas reign (900 - 905 A.D.) now in S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar. The next frame and its corresponding lintel are carved with flowing wavy patterns. Flanking the lalatabimba are four figures of gandharvas (celestial musicians) in sitting postures playing on musical instruments such as cymbals, bowharps and staff citharas. This is a notable departure from the conventional depiction of gandharvas and apsaras who, till now, have figured as couples in flying postures. The lintel above this one has three seated figures enclosed in arched niches formed by pilasters supporting a trefoliated arch. In the centre, Surya is shown riding his chariot driven by seven prancing horses. The arched niche with his image is surmounted by an ornamental caitya arch within a gable (pl.104). The niches of the flanking figures are surmounted by two overlapping gables (pls.103, 105 & 106). The left one enshrines Agni, god of fire, sitting crossed-legs on a ram (pl.106) and carrying two tridents, a sceptre and a water-vessel. The figure on the right hand astride a lion and wielding a sword and a shield is Vayu (pl.105). All the three gods sport a three-pointed tiara, a typical feature of Kasmiri sculptures dating from 8th to 10th centuries A.D.
The next lintel has five arched niches (pl.103) capped by alternating gables and caitya arches. The first figure on the left is seated on a makara, his attributes held in four hands help us identify him as Varuna, god of water. The next figure riding on a bull is Isani, a form of Siva. The third figure is Visnu perched on Garuda; the fourth is Nairrti holding a sword, a staff, a trident and a shield in each of his four hands. His head is much larger than other figures and not sporting a crown (not prescribed in iconographical texts). His "big head, protruding eyes and grinning mouth" led Goetz to identify him as a Rahu, but it is not correct. He thought that this group of eight deities represents the planets (grahas) "regularly placed over the entrance of Hindu temples, although their usual number is nine." The last figure is Kubera, Hindu god of wealth, perched on the back of a yaksa whose two arms are held out to support the god's legs. With the exception of Visnu, the deities carved here are the regents of the cardinal points of the universe - Kubera rules the north, Agni the south-east, Nairrtti the south-west, Isani the north-east. All the figures look dignified and majestic sitting within the arched niches that look like shrines. We have noticed this treatment earlier in the post-Gupta temples in our analysis of Laksana Devi and Sakti Devi temples. Ornamental patterns composed of interlinked snakes separate all the niches. This lintel is connected with pillar-like round mouldings that form the next jamb, followed by a frieze decorated with a winding creeper.
The ten incarnations of Visnu occupy the arched niches on both sides of the jambs. In the lowermost niche on the left side, we see matsya (fish) placed on a pedestal of inverted lotus petals. This is balanced by the portrayal of kachhapa (tortoise) carved similarly in the lowermost niche of the right jamb. The same treatment can be seen in a stone relief panel from Bihar (10th century A.D.).220 The four niches above the matsya show Narasimha sitting in crossed-legs posture on a padmasana, Vamana(dwarf) carrying a parasol and a long staff, Visnu vaikuntha (pls.107 & 108) and the Buddha. On the right jamb are carved Varaha (boar) sitting on a padmasana - an unusual posture for him - Rama, Parasurama and Kalki astride a horse (pl.103) and holding a battle-axe in one of his hands. Goetz is right in pointing out that vaikuntha is depicted instead of Krsna221 and wields all the usual emblems of Visnu in four hands.

The next two frames, one narrow and the other broad, along with their corresponding lintels display floral and foliated patterns, full-blown rosettes and lotus petals strewn together by strings of pearls. Each of the two outermost frames is divided into three niches - the upper two being smaller than the lowermost ones. The river goddesses Ganga and Yamuna standing on their respective vehicles makara (crocodile) and kachhapa (tortoise) occupy the lowermost niches. Crowned with a three-pointed tiara, each has four arms carrying the same attributes - a water vessel, a long lotus stalk, a rosary and a book. Slim, elegant and delicately poised, almost life-size figures of the river goddesses no doubt have their counterparts in the Sun temple of Martanda (pl.114) and Avantiswami temple in Kashmir as well as in the wall paintings and rock-cut cave temples of western and
central India. Their superb execution and the exuberance of their lithe and graceful bodies single them out as masterpieces of Kas-
miri sculptural art. The river goddesses stand between two pila-
sters supporting an ornamental and stylised trefoil arch co-
nected by short and massive columns with the gables. In the centre of the gables is seen an elegant water-vessel flanked by two peacocks. The flying kinnaras are seen on both sides above the heads of Ganga and Yamuna; from their backs issues forth profuse scrollwork. Similar figures are seen in Ellora cave XXI (Ramesvara) on the facade of the veranda.\textsuperscript{222} Below these niches are small panels forming the base of the jamb enclosing the yaksa figures with arms raised up in the gesture of supporting the jambs and flanked by lions in frontal postures. Identical figures can be seen at the base of the stone pillars before the central shrine in Ajanta cave XVII.\textsuperscript{223}

The set of four niches above the Ganga and Yamuna figures enshrine four male deities sporting a three-pointed tiara. The two deities on the left jamb hold (top niche) a trident, a rosary, a shield and a fruit, and (bottom niche) a lance, a lotus and a water-
vessel; his fourth hand rests on his side. The top niche ends in floriated patterns, while the second niche has a stylised kirtti-
mukha in the centre of the arch surrounded by profuse arabesque patterns. The same motifs are repeated on the right jambs, where the top niche encloses a figure wielding a makara-staff, a skull-
bowl, a skull staff and the fourth emblem is broken. The figure in the next niche resembles its counterpart on the left jamb.
Their resemblance with the figures carved in the dancing Siva panel (pl.109) on the ceiling help us identify them as the four manifestations of Siva i.e. Tatpurusa, Isana, Aghora and Vamadeva.

The mandapa inside the temple has a lantern ceiling, a common feature of Hindu and Buddhist temples of Gandhara, Taxila, Kashmir, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh from the Kusana period down to the 19th century A.D. The triangular panels in the corners carry ornamental patterns. Highly stylised kirttimukhas are carved in the centre of the triangular panels, each flanked by equally stylised makaras whose snouts are joined so as to form a kind of arch. An immense full-blown lotus carved in high relief in conventional manner occupies the central square encircled by a row of stylised lotus petals forming a kind of ornamental pattern. The outer two rims are formed by interlinked vajras and stylised lotus petals.

Goetz has tried to show the link of this motif with western Tibetan art of the 10th-11th centuries A.D. His observation is correct insofar as its link with Buddhist art is concerned, but he overlooked the fact that the entire woodcarving at Alchi and Tabo was done by Kasmiri artisans. Extremely delicate and elegantly delineated figures of flying godlings on the four corners of the square seem to support the rows of circles with their hands. They have their prototypes on the painted ceiling of the inner shrine, Ajanta cave II and also the Siva temple at Pandrethan in Kashmir. They are probably guardians of the cardinal directions, the circle symbolising the universe (brahmanda) of which the full blown lotus is the manifestation according to Hindu philosophy.
Eight carved panels - four square and four rectangular - form a kind of border around the lantern ceiling. The square panels carry the conventional motif of full-blown lotus. The rectangular panels placed in the cardinal directions are exceedingly interesting on account of their themes. The eastern and southern panels depict four-armed gandharvas and apsaras in different postures, some holding crowns (pl.110). These celestial couples remind me of the mithuna figures in Ajanta cave 17, and similar figures carved on the pillars and ceiling medallions in Badami caves I and III. Their coiffures, costumes, ornaments, postures and musical instruments held in their hands are in Gupta tradition. The crowns held in the hands of gandharvas and those worn by apsaras also occur in the stone sculptures of rock-cut monolithic shrines of Masrur in Kangra and Ranganatha temple in Bilaspur (Himachal Pradesh), both dating from the 7th-8th centuries A.D. The friezes below this panel have male and female figures of dancers and musicians playing on flutes, drums and cymbals, and joining the celestial orchestra, thus further emphasising the theme of music and dance.

In the southern panel, the gandharvas and apsaras are carved again in the four square divisions. They are not engaged in amorous play. In the second and third scenes, six-armed gandharvas are seen offering worship to Sivalinga, while apsaras and divine couples in the flanking scenes play on musical instruments such as cymbals and vinas. The frieze below, like the eastern panel discussed above, shows musicians and dancers. Similar figures are commonly seen in the stone temples of Orissa, Rajasthan and Central India.
The assault of Mara on the Buddha (pl. 113) is the theme of the northern panel. This theme is described in texts like the Lalitavistara. The meditating Buddha seated on a vajrasana occupies the central position, touching the earth with his right hand (bhumisparsamudra). The daughters of Mara standing in highly provocative poses on both his sides try to distract him. Four demons in the foreground hurl tridents at the Buddha's throne in an effort to overthrow him, while others are shown inflicting pain on him by holding venomous serpents over his head. A third group of demons, some of whom have animal heads, is blowing trumpets into his ears, while others are playing on cymbals, drums and stringed instruments in order to disturb the Buddha's meditation. On the left, Mara standing in his chariot driven by four lions is aiming an arrow at the Buddha. He is accompanied by his daughters. On the right is depicted Mara's defeat - he is seen collapsing in his chariot in utter despair, his bows and arrows fallen by his side, his daughters kneeling over him, his lions rolling on the ground. And the Buddha sits serene on his couch, detached in mind and victorious over evil forces.

The depiction of the Buddhist theme has puzzled Goetz who thinks that panel was carved in the 16th century A.D. when the Ladakhis conquered this part of Lahul. But this observation is based purely on conjecture. The style of execution, the treatment of forms and figures is exactly similar to the doorway and other ceiling panels. Besides we know that the entire carving in this temple was done by Kashmiri sculptors who carved both Hindu and Buddhist themes with equal dexterity. A number of bronzes, ivory and wooden statuettes
in Kasmiri style dating from 8th century A.D. depict the same theme, which seems to have been immensely popular at that time.

The western panel is a remarkable portrayal of dancing Siva and Sakti accompanied by five male figures (pl. 109). Sixteen-armed Siva playing on vina held in two hands dances ecstatically, as is evident from his other arms swinging out in all directions. Sakti joins him in the dance, carrying a number of emblems such as skull-staff, cobra, vessel, knife etc. in her ten hands. Her gentle feminine qualities have been brought out admirably. Both the figures appear to be the direct descendants of their counterparts in Gupta sculptures. The same dynamism and soft modelling characterises the figures. Goetz has identified the accompanying male figures as Bhairavas. I am more inclined to accept Sivaramamurti's view that the whole group represents the glorification of Mahesa in his nartana aspect and since Devi is also shown dancing beside him, she may be taken to be Manonmani. In the Lalitasahsranama, Devi is described as "Mahesayukta-natanatatpara", i.e. joining Mahesa in the dance. The five male figures including Siva and the figure below Ganesa are Isana, Tatpurusa, Aghora, Vamadeva and Sadyojata, the five forms of Siva known as the Pancabrahmas. The modelling of all the figures is fleshy and voluptuous, perhaps in part influenced by Gupta style. On the lower frieze are portrayed the dancing ganas joining in the dance of Siva and Sakti. Their prototypes exist in Badami caves. They are sporting wigs like most figures in Gupta and post-Gupta sculptures. The figures flanking...
Siva and Sakti have their counterparts in early Pallava sculptures in relief.\textsuperscript{243}

Finally the two rectangular panels on both sides of the window representing the mythological themes of amrta-manthana (churning of the ocean) and Trivikrama (pl.112). The latter panel ranks, in my opinion, among the finest of relief sculptures. The treatment is conventional. The whole panel is conceived on the same scale as in Badami cave 3.\textsuperscript{244} The outstretched legs of the Trivikrama, the left one dashing across the panel with the irresistible power of a lightning flash, symbolise the power of the cosmic forces and the eternal presence of the deity. On top are shown the gods in heaven - in the right corner is Brahma pouring water on Visnu's left foot while Virabhadra, Karttikeya, Kubera, Balarama and Surya look on seated in their respective places. The horizontal strip at bottom on which rests Visnu's right foot, is the netherworld suggested by the naga deities. Just above it is narrated the story of Vamana with a parasol asking the demon-king Bali for three steps of land.

It may be noted that the Trivikrama wields the usual emblems of Visnu in his four hands and has three heads - the central human head flanked by those of a boar and a lion. Such images are known as Visnu vaikunthamurti in Hindu iconography.\textsuperscript{245} Vogel\textsuperscript{246} and Goetz\textsuperscript{247} have opined that such images were made only in Kasmir and Chamba and that the work in Chamba was done by Kasmiri artisans.\textsuperscript{248} Goetz even goes on to suggest that the boar and man-lion incarnations of Visnu were added later to Indian iconography due to and after the invasions of the Hunas in the 5th-6th centuries A.D.\textsuperscript{249} He and Vogel stated that such images were made only in the 8th century A.D.
and thereafter. But this view is not acceptable in the light of recent researches. Inspite of the heavy destruction of Hindu temples by the muslims, numerous vaikuntha sculptures have been found in U.P., Himachal Pradesh, Jammu, Kasmir, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. The earliest specimen so far discovered is a life-size stone sculpture from Bhita, now preserved in Lucknow Museum. It has been dated to first century B.C. Even if we do not accept this date, this sculpture, in my view, cannot be said to be later than second century A.D. Another stone sculpture found in Mathura dates back to Kusana period. A number of bronze and stone statue-ttes of vaikuntha have been unearthed from Gandhara (late 4th century A.D.), Uttar Pradesh, Kulu and Simla hills and Rajasthan. An excellent bronze image in Gandhara style collected from Swat valley has been dated mid-7th century A.D. by Haertal and late 6th century A.D. by P.Pal. Apart from these sculptures, we have detailed description of this aspect of Visnu images which is also known as caturvyuha and caturmurti, the four heads symbolizing strength (bala), aisvarya (sovereignty, spiritual power), jnana (knowledge) and sakti (energy). This is stated in the third khanda of chapter 47 of Visnudharmottara purana which is devoted to the making of Visnu images. Other texts devoted to this discussion are bhagavatapurana, pancaratragama, jayakhya samhita, aprajitapochha, devata-murtiparakarana and rupamandana. This discussion amply proves that the making of vaikuntha images was not confined to Chamba or Kasmir alone.
The panel facing the above-mentioned one illustrates the theme of the churning of the ocean, narrated in seven horizontal sections. Earlier we noticed this treatment in the central court of Kailasanatha temple of Ellora. In our panel, five male deities occupy the top three rows; all of them sport a crown except the first and fifth figures in the topmost strip. The first figure, rather tiny, is standing in the gesture of hurling a disc, while the last figure with a large body has a severed head. This gives us a clue to their identity; they are Visnu and Rahu. The latter has seated himself amongst the gods in order to drink nectar. Vogel and Goetz were able to identify these figures correctly but mistook the devas for navagrahas and four lokapalas. The fourth row presents a brief scene - three-headed Siva sitting on Nandi is flanked by Parvati whose vahana, the lion, sits near her, and six-headed Karttikeya astride his vehicle, the peacock. Parvati is wearing a blouse, a long skirt and a crown. This costume was worn by women in Kashmir in the early mediaeval period as we learn from Kalhana's Rajatarangini. This furnishes us the clue to the date of this panel that it must have been carved sometime in the 9th century A.D. There is no doubt that the figure lacks the remarkable finesse of other figures carved in this temple. The same is true of the Kalki figure on the doorway. I think both the figures were carved by an inferior hand. I am not inclined to accept Goetz's view that the window panels and the Kalki figure on the doorway were chiselled by Sakta tarkhana who had been commissioned to do the carvings in the Hidimba Devi temple in Kulu.
The scene of amrta-manthana is depicted in the fifth row - the mount mandara is placed on the back of a tortoise, the hydra-headed serpent vasuki thrown around it, the gods holding its tail and the demons its head. Just above the demons are shown the precious objects that emerged from the ocean after the churning, i.e., Dhanvantari, the divine physician, holding the bowl of ambrosia, airavata who later became Indra's vahana, the parijata (wish fulfilling tree), the moon etc. Other things such as a conchshell, a mace, kaustubhamani, surabhi (the sacred cow), white horse, Varuni and Laksmi are not shown probably due to lack of space.

In the lowermost row we see five figures whom Goetz misinterpreted as lamenting women. They are not women but the defeated demons bewailing the loss of nectar. The delineation of the figures is in late Guptas style.

The four architraves represent scenes from the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. The carver has concentrated mainly on the Mahabharata war, the Draupadi-svayamvara, the capture of Raja Virata's cattle by the Kauravas; the scenes from the Ramayana are mainly those following Sita's abduction by Ravana, i.e., Hanuman in Ravana's court (pl.111), etc. All the figures are competently executed.

According to Goetz, the original temple was constructed in the 7th-8th centuries A.D. then it was renovated by the Kasmiri queen Didda in the 11th century A.D. and finally some panels were carved by Sakta tarkhana in the 16th century. A careful on-the-spot study of woodcarvings makes me think that all the panels belong to the same period and are executed in Kasmiri style of the 8th-9th centuries A.D. This is clearly evident from
architectural features such as the steep-angled gables enclosing the trefoliated arches, three or five pointed tiaras sported by most figures, etc. Apart from these similarities, all the carved figures have marked stylistic affinities with Kasmiri sculptures in stone, bronzes and ivory belonging to the 8th-9th centuries A.D. They have the same anatomical ideals and facial features - ovaloid faces with full bloated cheeks, small mouths with bow-shaped lips slightly distended in a smile, petal-shaped eyes, fleshy chins pointed noses, broad and sloping shoulders, well-modelled chests, a predilection for rather heavy and sturdy bodies and naturalistic modelling which is particularly evident in the male bodies where both the pectoral and abdominal muscles are delineated in a contrived but perceptibly muscular manner. Apart from relating them to Kasmiri sculptures, all these features lend the figures a high plastic quality. The female figures have slimmer proportions which indicate a greater awareness of Gupta style. Well-shaped breasts, narrow waists, large circular earrings, hair tied in elaborate buns and decorated with pearl-strings - these features are common to all sculptures of female figures in Kasmiri style of the 8th-9th century A.D. They wear contemporary costumes as described by Kalhana in Rajatarangini - a lower garment wrapped like a skirt, a blouse that emphasises the curves of the breasts and gossamer scarf flung across the shoulders.

Another thing that gives us a clue to an 8th-9th century date is the Buddha panel. This was a favourite theme with Kasmiri
sculptors in that period as is evident from numerous statuettes in bronze, ivory and wood. The entire treatment of the figure of the Buddha, his throne and cushion etc. are identical to these images. All these factors plus certain affinities with post-Gupta sculptures already noted above enable us to place these carvings in the 8th-9th centuries A.D., if not earlier. Since the style of all the panels is uniform, we can not accept Goetz's view that some panels are "well-made copies" executed in later centuries.
REFERENCES: CHAPTER IV

2. ibid
4. Vogel, J. Ph.'s "Hill Temples of the western Himalaya" in Indian Art and Letters, New series, vol.XX, No.1, 1947; p.33
5. ibid, p.33
10. See chapter 3 of the present dissertation, pp.75-76.
11. Chetwode, Penelope, op. cit., p.132.
15. Vogel, The Antiquities, op. cit., p.1
16. Goetz, op. cit., p.75
17. Vogel, Antiquities, op. cit., p.142
18. ibid, p.142
19. ibid, p.141
22. ibid, pl. 25, p.61
23. Marg, Vol. XXXII, No.1; p.53, pl.II
24. Marg, Vol. XX, No.2, op. cit., p.61, pls. 21-24
25. Dehejia, Vidya: The Early Stone Temples of Orissa, New Delhi; 1978; p.151
27. See Kaladarshana, New Delhi 1980; fig.2
30. ibid
31. Goetz, Hermann : op. cit., p. 87
33. Manasara, ch.39
34. Varahamihira's Brhat samhita, ch.56, verses 14-15.
36. ibid, p. 47
39. Sterne, Phillipe : Colonnes Indiennes d' Ajanta et d'Ellora, Paris 1973; fig.177
40. ibid fig.178
41. ibid, fig.179
42. Goetz, Hermann : op. cit., p. 65
43. ibid, p. 101
44. Goetz, Hermann : Studies in the History and Art of Kashmir and Indian Himalaya, Weisbaden 1969; p. 57
46. Aryan, K.C. : The Basis of Decorative Element in Indian Art, New Delhi, 1981; fig.40
47. See also Madhu Khanna : Yantra, London, 1970; pl.2.
48. ibid, fig. 8
50. ibid, pl. 60
51. Goetz, Hermann : The Early Wooden Temples, op. cit.p.87
52. This form of worship was known as pancapuja and is still common in the villages of Punjab.
53. Goetz, Hermann : The Early Temples, op. cit., p. 88
54. ibid, p. 101
55. Vogel, J.Ph. : The Antiquities, op. cit. p.145
56. Dehejia, Vidya : op. cit., p. 66
57. Goetz, Hermann : The Early Temples, op. cit. p.90
58. Zimmer, Heinrich : op. cit., pl.111
59. ibid, pls. 227
60. ibid, pls 146 and 151.
61. ibid, pl. 284
61. Kramrisch, Stella, op. cit., pl. 48
62. Goetz, Hermann: The Early Temples, op. cit., p. 103
64. ibid, p. 135
65. ibid, p. 147
66. ibid, p. 149
67. ibid, p. 158
68. ibid, p. 155
69. ibid, p. 155
70. Goetz's "Rajput Sculptures and Painting under Raja Umed Singh of Chamba" in Marg, VII, 4, 1954, p. 27
71. See Randhawa, M.S.; Basohli Painting, Delhi, 1959; pl. I.
72. It is not uncommon to find painters who are good carvers and vice versa in Chamba. During our research tours in 1979, we came across two families of traditional painters whose hereditary occupation was carving and carpentry and they belonged to carpenter's caste; they were skilled carvers as well as competent painters and are still working in traditional Chamba kalam.
74. Vogel, J.Ph.: Antiquities, op. cit., p. 206
75. Iron tridents are stuck into the walls and other parts of the temple structure by the devotees on the fulfilment of their wishes. So also pieces of rags.
77. Vogel's "Hill temples of the western Himalayas", op. cit., p. 34
78. Goetz's "The Coming of Muslim Cultural Influence in the Punjab Himalaya", India Antiqua, p. 158. Also "Rajpur Sculpture and Painting under Raja Umed Singh of Chamba", op. cit., p. 30
79. ibid
80. See Coomaraswamy, A.K.: Early Indian Architecture: Palaces, 1975; Figs. 68-84
82. Goetz, Hermann: The Early Temples, op. cit., p. 68
Voigel, J.Ph.: Antiquities, op. cit., p. 257
Harcourt, A.P.P. op. cit. p. 201
84. Goetz, The Early Temples, op. cit., p. 68
85. We observed during our research tours in Himachal Pradesh that carpenters are equally adept at carving and painting.
89. ibid
90. No history of Nachar village is available. According to the revenue records, three Thakurs once ruled over this area. Usha, daughter of King Banasura who ruled over a vast kingdom with his capital at Sarahan (ancient Shonitapura), wanted to include this area in her territory; to achieve this purpose, she attacked and defeated the Thakurs and established herself as the presiding deity of Nachar.
91. See Nachar: A village survey, Himachal Pradesh, Census of India, 1961 (illustrations at the back; no plate or page number is given).
92. Jettmar, Gabriele: Die Holztempel des Oberen Kulutales, Wiesbaden, 1974; p. 71
95. This temple was first noticed by Calvert who has reproduced two bad coloured lithographs in his book "Vazeeri Rupi: The Silver Country of the Vazeers in Kulu", op. cit.
96. Chetwode, Penelope's "Temples of the Western Himalayas", op. cit., p. 138.
97. Jettmar, Gabriele: op. cit., p. 60
98. See Khosla, Romi: Buddhist Monasteries of the Western Himalayas, Kathmandu, 1980; pl. 8.
99. See Jettmar, Gabriels: op. cit., pl. 38 (a)
100. Fraser, James Baillie, Views of Himala Mountain, London, 1820
101. Francke, A.H., Antiquities of Indian Tibet, I, Calcutta, 1914; p. 9
Here we would like to make it clear for the benefit of readers that in ancient Indian literature, the term "prasada" (pasada in Pali) was used to signify both temple and palace. In fact, the temple is regarded as the abode of God, i.e., the palace of God; hence Amara's expression "vasah prasado devabhujam". In later period, the kings started using the word prasada for their palaces, for they considered themselves the envoys of God on this earth. The term mandir, which is specifically used for temple was also used for royal palaces. As late as the 15th century, we have Raja Man Singh of Gwalior naming his palace "Man Mandir".
In my view, the temple architecture of the Hindus has to be studied against the spiritual and philosophical background of Indian culture. The spiritual content is the most vitalising feature of Hindu culture. Therefore, we should be familiar with not only the material aspect of Hindu sacred architecture but also with its mental and spiritual aspects. The ideal of sacred architecture of India was born of the true Indian conception of "divinity in a spiritualised body."

Further up Kramrisch writes: "The shapes of these Prasadas should be in the likeness of the five Vimanas, the chariots which Brahma had created for the gods with the purpose of carrying them on their heavenly ways. As the gods are accommodated in heaven so are they accommodated on earth... As in heaven, so on earth, are the Vimanas of the gods; they are made of substances which are proper to each, of stone and burnt brick, especially should the temples be built in towns; for those which are known as Vimanas on the ways of the gods (suravartamani) are called prasadas when they are immovable (stahavara, S.S. LV, 104-105)."

In her footnote to the above passage, Kramrisch writes that "in some of the temples, this various of their origin is overdone; built of stone, they yet have wheels, carved in stone; even this, inappropriate form, has a great Sthapati to build it in the Sun temple at Konarka. Other wheeled, stone built temples belong to South India, the shrine at Darasuram, for example." pp. 288, fn. 96.
138. ibid, p. 170
139. The Buddhist texts are quoted by A.K. Coomaraswamy in "Early Indian Architecture: Palaces" pp. 2-4.
"At Loyang alone (Honanfoo) there had been erected (350 A.D.) 42 pagodas, from three to nine stories high, richly painted and formed after Indian models." (p. xxiv)
141. Rau, Heimo: op. cit., pp. 122-123
142. Goetz, Hermann: The Early wooden Temples of Chamba, op. cit., p. 63
143. Rau, Heimo: op. cit., p. 122
146. ibid, p. 14
147. ibid, p. 15.
149. Vogel, J.Ph.: The Antiquities, op. cit., p. 257
150. Chetwode, Penelope's "Temples of the western Himalaya", op. cit., p. 136.
151. Vogel, J.Ph.: The Antiquities, op. cit., p. 40
153. Chetwode, Penelope: op. cit., p. 137
156. ibid, p. 200
157. ibid, p. 260
161. ibid, p. 160, pls. CII, figs. 1 & 5
162. ibid, p. 161
163. Longhurst, A.H.: The Story of the Stupa, Colombo, 1936; p. 29
165. ibid, p. 159
166. Penelope Chetwode writes that when she visited the temples in 1965, she found the carvings painted in bright reds, blues and greens. This was the work of a traditional drummer who had been blessed with a son just then and he sought to express his gratitude to the goddess in this manner. When I visited the temple in 1976, I was glad to discover that the paint had been completely removed and the carvings had regained their natural grandeur. It may be mentioned here that the carvings were executed by a carver called Sakta Tarkhan.

167. This information has been furnished by the temple priest.


169. Longhurst, A.H. op. cit., p. 261

170. See Kramrisch, Stella : The Art of India, op. cit., pl. 14

171. Ohri, V.C. (ed.) : The Arts of Himachal, pls. 32 & 33


173. The same view has been expressed by Gabriela Jettmar in her book "Die Holz-temple...", op. cit., p. 46

174. Vogel, J.Ph. : Antiquities, op. cit., p. 259

175. Goetz, Hermann : Studies, op. cit., p. 153

176. Roerich, S. : Art in the Kulu valley, Naggar, 1967; pl. 15

177. Jettmar, Gabriela : op. cit., p. 47

178. ibid, p. 47

179. ibid, p. 47


181. The same observation has been made by Goetz, op. cit., p. 153 and by Jettmar, op. cit., p. 47

182. Chetwode, Penelope's "Temples in the western Himalaya", op. cit., p. 137

183. ibid

184. ibid, p. 121

185. ibid, p. 121

186. ibid, p. 121

187. ibid, p. 137


189. Longhurst, A.H.'s "Himalayan Architecture", op. cit., p. 260

190. ibid, p. 311


193. ibid

194. Chetwode's "Temples of the Western Himalayas", op. cit., p. 133

195. Dehejia, Vidya : op. cit., p. 122

196. This is evident from the depiction of Ganesa on the lintels of entrances to some Buddhist monasteries of western Tibet carved by Indian artists in the 10th-11th centuries A.D. (cf. Francke, A.H.: Antiquities, op. cit. p. 41).


199. Pal, Bhisham H. : op. cit., pl. 88


201. Dehejia, Vidya : op. cit., p. 118


203. Kramrisch, Stella, The Art of India, op. cit., pl. 123

204. See, Aryan, Subhashini : Himachal Embroidery, Delhi, 1976; pl. 51.

205. Francke, A.H.; Antiquities, op. cit., p. 9

206. Vogel, J. Ph.'s "Hill temples..." , op. cit., p. 30

207. Vogel, J. Ph. : Antiquities... op. cit., p. 249

208. Goetz, Hermann : Early Wooden Temples...op. cit., p. 108

209. Goetz has expressed the same view in his "Early wooden temples..." op. cit., pp. 112-113.


211. ibid

212. ibid
The Chamba Gazetteer, op. cit., p. 43 ff.
214. Goetz, Hermann: Early Wooden Temples..., p. 113
215. In the western Himalaya, all later structures, both sacred and secular, have the image of Ganesa, god of luck and remover of obstacles, in the centre of the overdoor.
216. See Goetz, Hermann: Studies..., op. cit., pls. XXVI & XXVII.
219. ibid
221. Goetz, Hermann: Early Wooden Temples..., op. cit., p. 98
223. ibid, pl. 176
224. In later temples, the trunks of two elephants were joined in the same manner to form ornamental arches.
226. See chapter 5 of this dissertation, p. 223
228. Kak, R.C.: op. cit., pl. LXVI.
229. See chapter 9 of this dissertation, p. 337
230. This motif continued to be carved on the wooden ceilings in most temples of Himachal Pradesh.
231. Zimmer, Heinrich: op. cit., pl. 168
232. ibid, pls. 132, 134 & 135.
234. See Rawson, Philip: Indian Sculpture, Dutton 1966; illustration on p. 142
235. See Michell, George: The Temple of India, 1977; pl. 60
236. Lalitavistara, ch. XXI, French trans; Musee Quimet, Paris, 1884
237. Goetz, Hermann: Early Wooden Temples..., op. cit., p. 113
238. See Dwivedi, V.P.: Indian Ivories, pls. 74, 76 & 77.
Motichandra's "Ancient Indian Ivories" in Prince of Wales Museum Bulletin, pl. 6
Pal, P.: The Bronzes of Kashmir, op. cit., pls. 22 a & b.
240. For this information I am indebted to Late C.Sivaramamurti.
244. Zimmer, H.: op. cit., pl. 125
247. Goetz, H.: Early Wooden Temples, op. cit., p. 81
248. ibid
249. ibid, p. 85. Also see fn. 34
250. Vogel, J.Ph.: Antiquities, op. cit., p. 257
252. ibid
256. ibid pls. 1, 2, 3 & 14.
261. ibid
262. ibid
263. Mitra, Debala, op. cit., p. 14
265 & 266 Goetz, Hermann, Early Wooden Temples, op. cit., p. 108
268. Goetz, Hermann, Early.....op. cit., p. 109
269. ibid, p. 109
270. ibid, p. 91
271. ibid, p. 112.
272. ibid, p. 109
275. Dwivedi, V.P. : op. cit., pls. 74 - 85.
Motichandra : op. cit., pl. 6
276. See pls. 167 & 168 of the present dissertation.