CHAPTER VI

DOOR-FRAMES OF THE WOODEN TEMPLES

The use of wood as building material for temples in the mountainous region of the Himalayas is very natural, because of the thick forests that provide high quality timber for the purpose. Besides it is easy material to handle, as compared to stone or brick. It was because of this reason that the earliest temples in Himachal Pradesh were built of wood. Though no extant examples of wooden temples prior to the 7th century AD have come down to the present times, there is ample testimony in the form of portraiture on the tribal coins of the region to their existence as early as the 2nd century B.C. The figures of temples, some times two or more storeyed, on the coins of the Audumbaras and the Yaudheyas clearly indicate that they were made of wood. However, the earliest extant examples of wooden temples in Himachal Pradesh belong to the seventh-eighth century of the Christian era and there is a long gap thereafter. Again we start getting examples of wooden-temples in the region from about the 15th-16th century, a practice that continues to the present day. Herman Goetz while writing on the subject in his excellent monograph has also noted the long gap in between the examples of the extant wooden temples in Himachal Pradesh and generally appears to be of the view that the tradition of the stone temples was borrowed from the plains, that replaced the local tradition. He also seems to be inclined to attribute it to foreign penetration of the Hūnas and the Gurjaras in the mountains. However, we would like to draw attention to some other possible factors for the scantiness of the early wooden temples. Wood is
perishable material and has shorter life. It is quite possible that many of the early wooden-temples have perished and lost for ever. Only those which were located at high altitudes, where decayance is much less as compared to lower heights because of the cold climate, have survived. This is easily applicable to the temples of Bharmaur, Chatrarhi and Udaipur-Markula, the known places of the early extant wooden temples. Another noteworthy point in this connection is that the so-called wooden temples are not completely made of wood. Generally alternate courses of wood and stone, locally known as kāṭha-kunī technique, is used for the construction of walls which are then plastered with mud-plaster. However, the extensive use of wood in these temples for the door-frames, façades, interiors, ceilings, pillars, etc. fully justifies them to be classed as wooden-temples.

Only a few temples of this category within the period under discussion (AD 650-1250) are available. Amongst them the prominent ones are the Lakṣaṇā Devī temple, Bharmaur, Śakti Devī temple Chatrarhi, Markulā Devī temple, Udaipur (Markul) and Dakshinēśvara Mahādeva temple, Nirmand. The Chāmunḍā Devī temple at Chamba is another wooden temple whose date is uncertain. The only available date on a brass bell, donated by one Paṇḍita Vidyādhara, that hangs in the porch of the temple is Vikrama sāṇivat 1819 i.e. 1762 A.D. B. Ch. Chhabra who examined the temple and the bell way back in 1930 has not remarked on the date of the temple. O.C. Handa has suggested a date around 1762 A.D. during the reign of Raja Umed Singh as the date of this temple. His conclusions are based on the date of the inscription mentioned above. However, he has noticed the inspiration of Lakṣaṇā Devī temple in the

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ceilings of this temple. S.L. Nagar refers to the temple and its wood carvings but does not refer to its date. We visited the temple during our field-work trip of the Chamba region and examined its art and architecture. The temple appears to be much earlier than the date we have on the bell i.e. A.D. 1762 and may fall within the later phase of our study, though only tentatively. No other wooden temple falls within the scope of this work despite the existence of several of them in the post 15th century period.

The wooden temples of Chamba i.e. Bharmaur, Chatrarhi and Udaipur have been noted by several scholars for almost last two centuries. Sir Alexander Cunningham appears to be the first to have visited Bharmaur temples in 1839. J. Ph. Vogel took note of them in many of his works. Hermann Goetz made a detailed study of these temples, followed by a very recent work by Cinzia Pieruccini that contains some interesting details of the Lakshaṇā Devī temple. Many other recent scholars like L.S. Thakur, Mian Govardhan Singh, Shanti Lal Nagar, M. Postel et al have also provided their views but these later writers except Goetz and Pieruccini have not given a detailed account of the door frames, the focal point of the present study. Krishna Deva and Michael W. Meister have taken note of these in their works.

LAKSHAṆĀ DEVĪ TEMPLE, BHARMAUR:

Nestled in the high mountains at the height of about 7500’ on the left bank of the river Budhal, the main tributary of the Ravi, is the picturesque village of Bharmaur, the ancient capital of the Chamba state which was originally known as Brahmapura. The capital was probably
shifted to the present town of Chamba sometime in the beginning of the 10th century A.D. by Sahilavarman. The small township of Bharmaur still has the vestige of its imperial splendour in the form of numerous wooden and stone temples, some of which enshrine the most beautiful inscribed brass images of various deities, Mahishāsuramardini called Lakṣaṇā, Ganeśa, Nandi and Narasimha. Except for the Narasimha image, all others belong to the late 7th century A.D. to the time of Meruvarman and were executed by his artisan Gugga, who has become immortal because of these images.

All the temples enshrining these images are located in a vast plain ground as a group of temples with the Maṇimahēśa stone temple of Śiva occupying the central place. The ground is famous as Chaurāśi Siddha. The tradition has it that there were eighty four temples in all, though the number of the existing temples today is far less, including some small non-descript shrines. Another story says that it is known after the eighty four saints who had obtained immortality and were known as the Siddhas.

Just near the entrance to Chaurāśi Siddha through a winding street stands the oldest temple of the group, called the Lakhaṇā (Skt. Lakṣaṇā) Devī temple that enshrines the beautiful brass image of Mahishāsuramardini, in the south-west corner of the sacred area, slightly lower than the rest of the ground. The architecture of the temple has been described by several scholars, who have written on the subject, as already referred to above. The rectangular structure with thick stone and wood walls coated with mud-plaster has a gabled roof. It has clearly undergone several repairs and possible modifications but has retained its
original appearance which looks like a common mountain dwelling. The sloping roof is covered with slates (Pl. 6.1). The entrance is on the northern side through three steps which given access to mandapa with six wooden pillars and intricate wooden carving all over on the ceiling as well as the pillars. The temple is sandhāra with a parikramāpatha round the sanctum with in the mandapa. The Garbhagriha is also rectangular with a very fine carved wooden-doorframe. It has simple windows on the sides and the back of the mandapa. Besides the fine carvings on the ceiling and the pillars, what catches the immediate attention of the visitor is an elaborately carved wooden portal for entrance on the northern side. The entire façade has a huge six-sākha door-frame with a rectangular element, equally rich in carvings, atop the doorway and a triangular pediment above it, clearly in Kashmir style.

THE DOORFRAME OF THE FAÇADE:

The majestic doorframe measures 9'3" in height and 10' in width excluding the rectangular element and the triangular pediment at the top of the façade. Both Goetz and Pieruccini have rightly pointed out that despite the resistant character of the deodar wood, which has withstood the thirteen centuries of snow and rain on this doorway, the carving look distinct from a distance but become more and more indistinct from the close quarter. Yet the T-shaped doorway is an exquisite example of fine carvings of the late Gupta style (Pl. 6.2).

The inner-most band, 9" wide and better preserved than the outer bands, has an embracing couple in seated posture on each side, their arms entwined behind each other, at bottom. A rich foliage forming patralatā
design emanates from the navels of the males on each side, who are shown holding their stems. The design forming big oval medallions end in the form of the tails of the two swans shown facing each other with their beaks joined, as if in posture of making love. The door jambs are joined to the lintel in Z shape in order to provide solidity to the structure (Pl. 6.3). M. Postel has observed that “This particular design of a crooked lintel is a typical Himachali feature that later on evolved into a concave design. The purpose must have been architectonic (earthquakes).”

The second band, three inches in width, along with its corresponding lintel is a fine work of vegetal scroll throughout.

The third sākhā from the inner side is a rūpaśākhā, 8" in width. It has five figures on each side including that of the seated ganas on either side, with their hands raised as if to support the entire jamb above. On the left side, facing the observer, above the figure of the ganā is standing Gaṅgā in dvibhaṅga posture, with hair falling on shoulders and wearing a triple crown, popular in the sculptures of Himachal Pradesh. She is shown standing on her mount, crocodile and is wearing jewellery and sari, the graceful folds of which are shown hanging behind her. She carries a lotus flower with stalk in one hand while the other is broken, but was probably in katihasta. There is a small attendant figure behind Gaṅgā on her right. Above Gaṅgā is a three headed male figure in samabhanga posture. All of his four hands are broken. Postel has rightly identified it as the image of Brahmā chaturāṇana. Both Goetz and Pierucinni are inclined to identify it as Sūrya. The latter goes to the extent of saying that the deity has typical tunic of Sūrya and faint traces
of horses can be seen below his feet. However, the learned scholar is mistaken in the identity. The figure stands on a double petalled lotus and there is no trace of horses. Unlike Śūrya images, he does not wear any shoes in his feet. He is shown wearing a *pahārī* style flat turban on all of his three visible heads. The figure, without any doubt should be identified as that of Brahmā. The next figure is again that of a three headed male standing on a lotus. His central face is human, the left that of a lion and the right is boar. On his central face, he wears a long *kiriṇamukuta* on the head. Of his four hands the only surviving upper right hand has a mace in it. There is a *chhatra* type umbrella on his head. The figure beyond doubt is that of Vishṇu-Vaikuṇṭha. The top-most figure on this side is that of three headed Śiva standing in front of Nandi, the bull. The figure is badly worn out and nothing can be made of his three faces. He probably had a tall *Jatāmukuta* on his central head. Of his four hands, he carries a *śīla* in the upper right hand, the other three being broken. On the right side of this *śākha*, above the figure of the seated *gaṇa* is shown Yamunā standing on tortoise. She carries a lotus in her right hand while the left is shown hanging down. She wears a triple crown like that of Gaṅgā, long ear-rings and jewellery. The folds of her scarf are wrapped behind her arms. A small female attendant figure is shown on the right side. The next figure is that of a female goddess standing *samabhanga* in frontal posture. She is four-handed and stands in front of her mount, which in all probability is a lion. Two of her hands are hanging down but the objects in any of the four cannot be made out. She wears a curious cloak type head dress, the folds of which hang from her head to shoulders on either side. She may be identified as Durgā. The third figure on this side is problematic. It is that of a four-
handed male, standing samabhanga, wearing a triple crown and vanamālā in front of an animal, that looks like an elephant. Pierucini has identified it as Śiva in front of Nandi. But the animal figure does not look like that of a bull. The attributes in the upper hands are also not Śaiva and the triple crown is not jatāmukūṭa. L.S. Thakur has suggested Sūrya, because the image has flower like object in his back hands. But Sūrya has neither Nandi nor elephant for his mount. May we suggest the tentative identification with Indra, whose mount elephant is well-known. What appears like flower may be vajra in his hand. Both Vaijayanti and crown go well with Indra’s iconography. The figure on the top is beyond doubt that of a six-headed Kārtikeya standing on his mount, the peacock. His right hand is broken and the left is hanging down in varada mudrā. The corresponding lintel has eight figures of flying vidyādharaś, the central two being facing each other. There is an object in between each of the figures which they appear to be carrying in their hands. This object has been variously identified as a garland of flowers or śrīvatsa or a wreath. A close look at the object makes us suggest that it may be a decorated divine throne, as the object has an oval central piece and a base like that of a throne as depicted on the Kushāṇa and Gupta coins, on which goddess is shown as seated. In that case it may signify the seat or throne of the goddess Lakṣaṇa to whom the temple is dedicated.

The fourth frame is again patralatā śākhā having vegetal scroll throughout including on the lintel. Kṛtimukha is shown in the centre of the lintel. This frame is a rounded moulding 6” across. Postel has suggested the scroll as having champaka flowers.
The fifth frame is again a ṛūpa-śākhā with five figures on each side of the two jambs. The band is 8" in width. At the bottom on each side is a figure of seated yakṣa with curly hair and a long crown. The latter has been missed by the earlier writers. The yakṣas seem to be supporting the respective door-jambs, on which they carved, with tier hands. On the left side above yakṣa, we have four figures, one above the other, each wearing a crown and in dvibhāṅga. The head of the top figure is damaged and at its place we have plain lintel. It is difficult to say if the lintel was replaced at a later date, causing this damage to the figure. There is no other possible explanation. Though Pieruccini has called the figures as muscular with vigorous postures, we find some of them as pot-bellied. They may be Śaiva in character. There is a tree or canopy above the head of each figure. It has been also called a consol by some scholars. Of the four figures on the right side, the top two are females and the lower two are males. The top figure is that of the goddess Mahishāsuramardini. The second figure may be identified as Durgā. The two male figures below these appear to be śaiva in character. The upper one appears to have jatājīta with the hair falling at the back of the head, touching the shoulders. The fourth figure wears a jatāmukūṭa and a sash around the upper portion of his legs, just below the waist. The corresponding lintel has ten flying vidyādhāras, each with his consort. There are six couples on the right side and four on the left. All of them are carrying musical instruments. Some of the males appear to be carrying long staffs in their hands. In the centre the two males are shown carrying (or worshipping?) the similar object as we have noticed on the third lintel. Here, its identification as a throne appears even more plausible.
The outermost šākhā is again semi-circular in cross-section and has a foliage or patralatā design throughout, including that of the corresponding lintel. Pieruccini thinks that scroll is emanating from a pot but we have not been able to see any traces of pūrṇaṅghaṭa to support her contention. The most impressive part of this band is the T-shaped characteristic on the top as seen of the doors of the Gupta period. On the insides in a long rectangle on each śākhā are depicted a heraldic lion in majestic posture on its hind legs facing inwards. Each lion has a small rider’s figure on its back. The figure on the lalāta-bimba of the corresponding lintel is badly damaged beyond recognition.

Though not forming a part of the door-frame in strict sense, the rectangular element above the doorway with three tier decorative figures and a triangular pediment depicting the image of Viṣṇu at the top deserve brief mention, as the description of the façade would remain incomplete without these two. There is a plain wooden beam above the topmost lintel of the doorway, above which is the rectangular element. In its lower most register we have ten amorous couples in various postures of mithuna, each shown within an arched niche separated from each other by pillars with pūrṇaṅghaṭa motifs. The central panel has eleven figures of dancing apsarās in various postures. The portion is somewhat damaged. In between these were figures of pot-bellied seated dwarfish gānas or yaksās within gavākṣha windows. All of them except one have now disappeared. They remind one with the Mathura railings of the Kushāṇa and Gupta period and also those found at Sanghol in Punjab, where sāla-bhaṅgikās or apsarās in various postures with dwarfish figures below are shown. The top panel has ten figures of
ganas with animal faces seated in arches. The lattice work above these shown intricate workmanship.

On the top of the façade, we have a triangular pediment in trefoil design. On its base is a panel with seven seated figures with two additional figures, one on each side. They have been identified as the Navagrahas. Within the trefoil is an exquisite image of Vishnu seated on his mount Garuda. Garuda is shown with human face wearing a crown, his two arms below the feet of Vishnu. The twelve armed Vishnu in Vaikuṇṭha form with three faces – human in the centre, lion on the left and boar on the right is shown seated in lalitāsana astride his mount. He is carved in typical Kashmiri style of the late Gupta images, which are found in large numbers. In his right hands he carries a mace, an umbrella or chhatra, an arrow and a conch. One hand rests in the attendant figure, the sixth being broken. Of his left hands he carries a lotus, chakra and dhanusha one hand rests on the head of an attendant. The rest are broken. Two attendants on each side are shown. The whole image gives a majestic look and is comparable with fine examples of Kashmirian art style.

THE DOOR-FRAME OF THE SANCTUM-SANCTORUM:

The sanctum also has a wooden-door frame (Pl. 6.4). Though much simpler as compared to the outer door-frame of the façade and having only three sākhās, it is much better preserved and has an elegance of its own. The total height of the doorframe including the door-lintels is seven feet and the width including the door-jambs is 5’6” at the base and 6’5” at the top.
The innermost band, which is 8" wide, has a *patralatā* design beautifully carved in deep relief. At the bottom of each of the jambs is a full-bloomed lotus plant having a lotus flower in the centre at the top and branches with lotus buds, two on either side of the stem, and leaves, foliage and roots at the bottom are shown (Pl. 6.5). Two swans facing each other seated on the lotus leaves on either side of the plant add to the beauty of the motif. The lintel has a corresponding design. It has two *kinnaras* with human faces and bodies, wearing tall crowns and bird like tails, that mingle with the vegetal scroll, in the centre. The *kinnaras* are couple with auspicious sign. Between the *kinnaras* is a trident, the insignia of the goddess Mahishāsura-mardini. The joints of the jambs with the lintel has the same technique as used in the outer doorway to provide extra strength to it.

The middle band which is 4.5" wide with a corresponding 5" wide lintel has a *patralatā* pattern throughout without any central motif on the lintel or any special designs at the base of the door jambs.

The outermost *sākha*, semicircular in the cross section, is 6" wide. The base of the jambs has a *pūrṇaghaṭa* motif with half-lotus above the vase and a triple beaded border on the top. Above the *pūrṇaghaṭas* is an intricately carved lozenge pattern with each lozenge having a pine-cone design inserted in it. Almost half way up on the jambs is square scroll rosette pattern with beaded borders below and above. The top of the jambs which is 11.5" wide and provides a T shape to it has an exquisitely carved seated lions on the either side facing towards the centre, in the same fashion as on the outer door of the *mandapa*. The lions are shown seated on their hind-legs with fore-legs resting on the
ground and their tails raised upwards to the top on their backs (Pl. 6.6). The jaws are shown half-open with teeth clearly visible and the hair of manes falling on their back. No riders are shown here. The lions again signify the temple of the goddess, being the mount of Devī the top corners of the lintel have square designs with full-blown lotus carved within. In the centre of the lintel a square with a rosette and vegetal design is shown (Pl. 6.7). A panel with a square lattice pattern is given above the lintel below ceiling.

Over all the temple with its fine carvings on the interior and the façade with a marked simplicity of the of the exterior and amazingly beautiful inscribed image of the goddess form a rich tribute to the art and taste of the king Meruvarman and his craftsman Gugga and several other artisans who must have put in their labour in these fine examples of art.

ŚAKTIDEVĪ TEMPLE, CHATRARHI:

Almost halfway between Chamba and Bharmaur, 25 kms. from the latter, 8 kms. off the main road is the picturesque tiny village of Chatrarhi inhabited primarily by the Brāhmaṇas and the musicians. The metalled link-road to the village takes off near the junction of Budhal with Ravi. Nestled in the heart of the village in the vicinity of some other ancient monuments, of which a water source deserves special mention, the temple of Śakti Devī stands as the hub of life of this small village. A contemporary of the Lakṣaṇa Devī temple of Bharmaur, it enshrines an awe inspiring beautiful inscribed image of the Goddess Śakti installed by the king Meruvarman and executed by the same artisan, namely Gugga, who fashioned the icons of Lakṣaṇā, Gaṇeśa
and Nandi at Bharmaur. The tradition has it that the image of Śakti Devī was the last one created by Gugga.

The *sandhāra* temple that enshrines the image of Śakti Devī is contemporary to that of Lakshaṇā but differs in its architecture and has evidently undergone several changes and renovations over the years. Goetz has rightly observed that the sanctum of the temple has retained its original form. It is square in plan (Pl. 6.8). Around it is a covered circumambulation path that stands on twelve stout wooden pillars with fine carvings. This *pradaksināpatha* serves as *maṇḍapa* also. At one time the pillared gallery of the *pradaksināpatha* was open on all sides, but at some later stage it was covered with rubble and whitewashed. Many changes seem to have taken place between the 16th and the 18th centuries. It was around this time that bright murals of high quality were painted on the outer walls of the temple. Like many other monuments of Himachal Pradesh, the earthquake that rocked the region in 1905 wreaked havoc on this temple also. It was restored there after with some modifications. Thus its original gabled roof with flat plain slates was replaced with a pyramidal roof that the present temple has on it. Probably the rubble walls of the circumambulation were also changed or repaired and so were some other parts of the complex. But the *garbhagriha* seems to have retained its original structure.

**THE DOOR-FRAME OF THE OUTER GALLERY:**

The entrance to the gallery that leads to the shrine has generally been compared to that of the door-frame of the façade of the Lakshaṇā Devī temple with the note that the pediment and the gable carving are missing
and the designs are less elaborate. However, we feel that the two have remarkable difference and the door-frame of the Lakshaṇa Devī temple is far superior as compared to the one under discussion. The present doorway has only one rūpāśākhā as compared to the two of the Lakshaṇa Devī temple (Pl. 6.9). The majestic lions at the top of the outermost jambs have been replaced by figures of Gaṅgā and Yamunā at Chatarāhī and medallions take place of the beautiful scroll work of the temple at Bhārmūr, at least on two of the jambs.

Goetz further thinks that the present door-way was brought from some other shrine of ancient period and fixed here when the gallery was covered at a later date. However, it has been rightly pointed out by Laxman Thakur that such a move would have been technically not possible. It appears that the doorway belongs to this temple itself but was added at the time when the circumambulatory was covered with rubble mason. This too probably was done in two stages. The first, when the original doorway was put up and the second when it was repaired and strengthened. It is indicated by the fact that there are carved figures in deep relief at the top hidden behind the lintel of the door-frame. Only the figures on the sides, that of a four handed goddess seated on a lion in lalitāsana on the left and that of Gāneśa seated on the right side are accessible to the visitor from the front.

The doorway has six śākhās, like the number of jambs on the outer doorway of Lakshaṇa Devī temple. The innermost jamb and its corresponding lintel is plain wood studded with metallic floral caps of iron. Such a design is a very late development and if the floral caps are original, the doorway may have to be assigned to a very late date.
However, it is possible that the caps were studded at a later date but in that case the plain shaft of the jamb would again be intriguing. The second band again is plain wood covered with a strip of iron sheet, again a very late style. This śākhā is a very narrow band in width.

The third band is rūpaśākhā with four figures on each side of the jambs. The much worn out figures are difficult to identify. They are of crude workmanship and of little artistic merit. On the left-side jamb, the figure at the top is standing on a double petalled lotus in samabhanga wearing a three pronged crown of the fashion of hill areas. A vaijayanti is shown in the front. In his four hands he carries a disc, conch, lotus and mace. The mace, the rests on the ground on the left side of the image is shown as long ribbed in a peculiar style. The image is that of Vishnu. The second figure from the top is two handed, standing on lotus wearing a round crown. He carries a long ribbed vajra in his right hand, across his legs, resting on the ground on the right side. The object in his left hand is indistinct and the figure unidentifiable. The third image is again four-handed, wearing a vaijayanti and a crown. The objects in his hands cannot be made out. There is no other attribute that may help identification. The figure at the bottom is also two handed wearing a crown. The expression of the face is meditative with the eyes closed. His left hand is katihasta that also carries a long stalk of lotus flower. The right hand is indistinct. The figure may represent a door-keeper. The figures on the right side likewise show standing deities. The one on the top in dvibhaṅga posture carries a long-ribbed mace in his right hand and a round ball-like object in the left. He wears a crown and vaijayanti. The second image standing on a double petelled lotus has a long ribbed
sword. There are hanging branches of tree on both sides of his head. He too cannot be identified. The third figure may be Śaiva in character as he is shown with matted hair, two handed carrying a ribbed vajra in the right hand. Leaves of a tree hang on both the sides of his head. The figure on the bottom is tribhanga in posture, carries a similar sword in his left hand and wears a crown. It is too worn out for any details. There are seven crude figures on the corresponding lintel within arches but beyond identification. The fourth and the fifth bands are completely plain, except that some metallic caps and crescents are studded on the fifth band, without any order or proper spacing. The lintel of the fourth sākhā has vegetal scrolls carved on it with a bhadramukha in the centre. The fifth band’s lintel also have figures on it. It could not be examined properly because of its position. The outermost band i.e. the sixth also has plain shafts of both the jambs. On the top on either side are carved standing images of Gaṅgā and Yamunā, which are usually shown at the bottom on either side of the door-way.

Overall the doorway shows a strange combination of the old and new. It is possible that the original doorway that stood open to the vagaries of the climate was too worn out at places and some of its elements were replaced from time to time.

THE DOOR-FRAME OF THE SANCTUM:

The frame of the doorway leading to the sanctum sanctorum is far superior to the one on the outside, discussed above. It is anytime comparable to the door-frame of the façade at Lakṣanā Devī temple at Bharmaur but is better persevered of the six sākhās of the frame.
The innermost jambs along with the corresponding lintel have fine scroll work throughout. The scroll designs are made in such a way that they take the form of big rectangles, rounded at corners but not entirely joining with each other. A closer look indicates that the straight lines with bands at the ends may have been the depiction of snake couples with heads facing each other. At the bottom of the jambs on this band are depicted the seated dvārapālas in lalitāsana on each side. The carving is beautiful and the plasticity has the suppleness which is seen in the late Gupta images. The muscular bodies, curly hair falling on shoulders, one hand raised to the head and the other resting on thigh, simple ekāvalī, wrist and ankle bands make the figures very attractive.

On the lalātabimba of this band is the figure of Gajalakṣmī. She is seated on a lotus throne in lalitāsana holding two lotus flowers in her raised hands. She wears a crown with hair falling on the back, earrings and other jewellery. A beaded halo is shown behind her head. Two elephants on the top are shown in gajābhīsheka posture. Her mount is shown under her left leg. Two lions on each side indicate sinhāsana. In her upper hands she carries lotus flowers and in the lower left hand she is holding a pot. The right lower hand is in abhaya mudrā. A copperplate with a five-line inscription is Devāśesha script is nailed on this band to the right of the goddess. The second band, about three
inches in width is a patralatā sākhā with a beautiful scroll work throughout.

The third band has five figures on each side of the jambs, four standing and one of the seated gana at the bottom. The gana figures are seated with their hands raised in the posture of supporting the column above. Above the gana on the left side is the image of Gangā standing on crocodile in tribhanga posture wearing a three pronged crown, sāri, jewellery etc. (Pl. 6.11) She carries a pot in her left hand and the left hand hanging down holds the hem of her uttarīya. The third figure, above Gangā, is that of a two handed male in tribhanga posture, with a well defined body and wearing a head-dress with a floral design in the centre. He also wears round earrings and carries a ribbed mace in his left hand. The right hand is akimbo. The fourth figure is Mahishaśuramardini. The four handed goddess is holding the demon by his mouth with her front hands in the posture to kill him. With her back right hand, now broken, she is piercing the back of the demon with her triśūla and holds a bell in the back left hand. The fifth figure on the top is again a male. The four handed image is that of Vishnū Vaikuṇṭha with the lion and boar faces on his right and left. He holds a lotus in the upper right hand on his chest and a long ribbed mace in the lower right hand. The upper left hand that had a conch is now broken and a chakra is shown below his lower left hand. He wears the usual crown of pahāri style and jewellery. On the right side sākhā above the figure of gana is shown the river goddess Yamunā in tribhanga posture standing on her mount tortoise (Pl. 6.12). The figure is similar to that of the Gangā on the left (Pl. 6.13) but here right had carrying a pot is broken. The
branches of a flowered tree hanging on both sides of her head look graceful. The third figure is a two handed male wearing a headdress akin to his counterpart on the left jamb and holds a similar ribbed mace in his right hand. These figures on the either side of the doorway may be that of the attendants, though their position between the deities is unusual. The next figure of a four-handed male in *tribhanga* posture has a ribbed mace in the lower right hand while the other three hands are broken. *Vaijayanti* in the front besides jewellery, crown and *dhoti* indicates its identity with an image of Vishṇu. The topmost figure is also of a male in *tribhanga* posture. He has a mace in the lower right hand the others being broken. The upper right hand seems to have held a lotus flower. This is also to be identified as an image of Vishṇu. The lintel has thirteen four-handed seated figures of males. They have been rightly identified as those of the *navagrahas* and the four *dikpālas*. Both Goetz⁴⁴ and Krishna Deva⁴⁵ think that the first nine are the *navagrahas* and the next four are those of the *dikpālas*. However, this does not appear to be the case. As pointed out by Ashvini Agrawal to us, the tenth figure is that of Rāhu causing the eclipse of the moon and is shown in demonic posture. Rāhu occupies the eighth position in the order of the *navagrahas* followed by Ketu. But if we take the 10th figure as that of the Rāhu the whole order is broken. That way Rāhu has to be the eighth figure. As such the first two and the last two figures may be identified as those of the *kapālas* and the central nine as the *navagrahas*. Further a careful examination shows that the third image from the left holds two lotuses and the fourth has a crescent standard in his left hand. They are the sun and moon respectively.
The fourth sākhā is also a patralatā sākhā with beautiful scroll work. At the bottom on both sides we have the figures of the seated gaṇas with bent legs stretched in the front and sitting in a relaxed reclining posture. The lintel has a kīrtimukha in the centre and rosette pattern in square on either side. The fifth band has seven figures on each jamb, three deities alternating between the four figures on the animal faced gaṇas. On the left side jamb we have a figure of the seated gaṇa at the bottom with hands raised as if to support the column above. The second figure is that of a standing male wearing a triple crown as jaṭāmukuta. The jaṭā falling behind the head are also seen. He is slightly pot-bellied wearing a dhoti and jewellery. Of his two hands, he carries a śīla in the right which is akimbo and a bowl in the left. He may be identified as Bhairava form of Śiva. The third figure is that of a dancing gaṇa with the face of a lion. The next figure is that of a four-handed standing Śiva in front of Nandi, the bull. He wears a dhoti, jewellery, jaṭāmukuta and vaijayanti. He carries a śīla in the upper right hand and akshamāla in the lower right which is also in abhaya mudrā. In his lower right hand he carries a mātulīṅga, the upper right hand has something wrapped around it, may be a snake. But it is not identifiable. A beaded halo is shown behind his head. Above Śiva’s image is again a gaṇa figure in dancing posture. The next figure is that of four-handed Brhumā standing on a lotus pedestal with two swans, one on each side of the god. He is shown samabhaṅga and carries a daṇḍa in the lower right hand while the upper right hand carries an akshamālā and is in abhaya posture. A pot is shown in his lower left hand. The upper left hand is broken. On the top is the image of Nandi as a gaṇa in dancing posture. On the right side jamb we have the figure of a gaṇa with raised hands, similar to the
one on the other side. A standing male deity is shown above the gana figure. He wears a crown and his left hand is kaṭihasta. It also holds some indistinct object. The right hand is raised and probably carries a lotus with winding long stalk. He wears a crown and jewellery. Flowers and foliage above his head are shown. An interesting feature is the depiction of a dagger with hilt being worn by him on the waist on his right side. The third figure is again that of a gana with animal face and raised hands. His right leg is bent backwards as he sits on his knee and the left is bent outwards, thus shown as half-seated on one knee. A curious depiction is a human face on his stomach. Is it depiction of Rudra as a gana? the next figure is that of four handed Indra standing in front of an elephant, his mount Airāvata. He carries vajra in his upper right hand, the lower right being in posture of varada. The objects in his left hands are not clear. He also wears a three pronged tall crown and jewellery. The next figure again of dancing Nandi. The sixth figure is that of six-headed Kārtikeya. His five heads are shown around the central head. He carries a śakti in his right hand. A peacock is shown in his left hand. Another peacock is shown behind him. A gana figure is shown on the top. The corresponding lintel of this sākṣhā has eight figures of flying vidyadhāiras, four on each side of the centre. The central figures are shown carrying a ratnamukuta or divine crown in their hands. Some of the vidyadhāiras are shown carrying various objects in their hands. Seated on their backs are shown the female figures of their consorts.

The outermost sākṣhā has patralatā motif with ghāṭapallava at the base on each side. On the top of these jambs are carved two lions standing on
their hind legs, the front paws held on chest. Half open jaws and manes give a fierce look to their features. They are shown standing on square brackets with gana figures depicted in them. An interesting feature is that both the lions are shown ithyphallus. The lintel of this band has patralatā motif with a female gana figure wearing bangles in her raised hands and holding two flowers in the centre.

Overall the doorframe is a very fine example of wooden art of the Himalayas and shows some Kashmir influence on its style and iconography. It can be easily assigned to the late seventh or early eighth century A.D. and bracketed with the workmanship of the Lakshana Devī temple at Bharmaur.

**MARKULĀ DEVĪ TEMPLE, MARKULA – UDAIPUR:**

Some 62 km from Keylong, the district headquarters of Lahul-Spiti in the tribal belt of Himachal Pradesh, is the village Udaipur, the ancient Markula or Margul, known for its temple of the goddess Kāli who is worshipped as Markulā Devī by the Hindus and as rDo-rje Phag-mo (Vajravarahl) by the Tibetan Lahulis who are followers of Lamaist Buddhism. The village located at the junction of the rivers Maiyar Nala and the Chandrabhaga was a part of the erstwhile Chamba state. Rājā Udai singh who ruled from 1690 to 1720 renamed the place after his own name in c. 1695 probably when he renovated the temple of Markulādevī.

The temple has a long history and has undergone several changes in its existence of about thirteen centuries. Some scholars believe that it was originally dedicated to Sūrya but was converted as a goddess temple at a
The present silver idol of the eight armed goddess Mahishāsuramardini was installed by Thākura Himapāla in 1569-70 A.D. and was cast by the artist Pañjamānaka Jinaka. This was probably the time when the temple underwent massive renovations and restoration. Recently the temple has seen large scale conservation work by the Archaeological Survey of India without any change to its original architectural character. It comprises of a rectangular mandapa made of wooden rafters and rubble filled in between them. It has a large balcony window on the south. The sanctum measuring 10’4” by 10’6” with a circumambulation path located on its western half, whose pyramidal roof rises to the total height of 45’ above the ground level (Pl. 6.14). The mandapa has a gable roof. The temple like that of Lakshaṇā Devī and Śakti Devī has a very simple exterior and gives the look of an ordinary hill dwelling. In contrast is its interior that immediately attracts the visitor by the richness of its wooden carvings, the pillars, ceiling and of course the door-frame. Even a casual observer does not fail to notice that all the carvings do not belong to any single period of time but were renovated more than once. Hermann Goetz has simply divided it into two parts earlier and the later without going into the question of their dating. C. Dorje has also followed Goetz. The task of dating every individual panel may be too laborious and probably also not perfect but when we come to its door-way that has exquisitely carved jambs and lintels, it does not appear to be earlier than 8th-9th century, may be a little later. But the plasticity of the images and their iconography does not go beyond Pratihāra period. The nine śākhās of the frame, simply by their number as compared to the six each at
Bharmaur and Chatrarhi also indicate a later date for this doorway (Pl. 6.15).

The beautifully carved façade of the doorway with figures and scrollwork is perhaps the most attractive feature leading to the sanctum from the mandapa. The doorway measures 65 cm X 115 cm. The arrangement of the doorjambs and the lintels is not in the conventional style of the wooden temples, as many jambs overlap the corresponding lintels at joints and are designed after Kashmiri style. The technique of joints found at Lakshaṇā Devī temple and Śakti Devī temple is also missing here.

The innermost jambs depict a very fine scroll-work within beaded borders on either side through-out including the corresponding lintel. On the lalātābimba of this lintel as well as those of the two upper bands is a figure of Sūrya seated on the chariot drawn by seven horses (Pl. 6.16). The second sākhā is divided into four frames by scroll-work, on each side, of creeper-motif. Within each frame is shown the figure of a dancing apsara i.e. four on each side. Each sākhā ends in a Kashmiri style capitals with a seated figure carved in the centre of each capital and two more figures, one on each side of the Sūrya figure on lalātābimba. They also cover the next small frieze of creeper scroll-work. There are four gandharva figures playing on various musical instruments such as cymbals, bow-harp, staff-cinthara, etc. that goes well with the images of the dancing apsarās on the door-jambs of this sākhā. The fourth band is a semi-circular moulding in section carved with beautiful winding beaded motif and topped with a capital and triangular bracket design. In the centre of the capital half-lotus design with foliage base is shown.
The fifth band which is a rūpa-sākhā has five figures on each side. They represent ten incarnations of Viṣṇu. On the left side from below are depicted Matsya, Narasimha, Vāmana with a staff a parasol, seated four-handed figure of Viṣṇu-Vaikunṭha and the seated Buddha in bhāmisparśamudrā. Here the third figure has been described as Kṛishṇa as Viṣṇu by Goetz. Goetz is right only in place as there should be a figure of either Balarāma or Kṛishṇa at this place. However, Kṛishṇa is never shown with the side faces of lion and boar, nor there is any such iconographic reference to our knowledge. Therefore, the identification of this image as Kṛishṇa is not justified. It is clearly Viṣṇu-Vaikunṭha, which was so popular in this region and the adjoining Kashmir in sculptural art. The reason for this deviation by the artist from the established iconographic traits cannot be explained. On the right side from below we have the figures of Kūrma and four-armed boar-headed with the usual attributes of Viṣṇu. The third figure is that of Parśurāma wearing yajnopavīta and carrying a battle-axe. The fourth image is that of Rāma with a bow and arrow. On the top is Kalki riding to left on a horse and carrying a sword in his hand. He is shown wearing a frock-like dress in Pahāri style. Each of the figures is shown in niches, four on each side having beautiful scroll-work forming an arch and the top ones having horizontal lintels with a small pyramidal triangle in the centre. On the top on each side a broad Kashmiri style capital is shown. The sixth and seventh are small friezes with scroll work and lotus-petal design respectively. The next moulding is composed of "flowers strung up in an Indian wreath." It is actually full-blown lotus flowers and diamonds alternated with beads and leaves pattern. The outermost set of jambs is widest and has three niches on each side with standing figures.
of deities in them. Below these niches on each side are figures of yakshas with raised hands as if supporting the entire column. They are very much like the figures of yakshas found at the base of doorjambis in the Śakti Devī temple at Chatrarhi. Figures of two lions, one on each side of the yaksha, are shown. The lowermost niches have a trefoil arch surmounted by a triangular pediment. Within the pediment is a pinnacle with an āmalaka base like the ones atop Hindu temples55 and two peacocks, one on each side. Kinnaras above the gable ends are shown. Within these niches at the bottom are shown standing figures of four handed river-goddesses Gaṅgā and Yamunā standing on their respective mounts makara and kachchhapa carrying a pot and a lotus in two of their hands. The other two are in abhaya with rosary and downward with a book. They wear crowns, jewellery, vaijayanti and sari in usual manner and are in dvibhaṅga pose. Each niche measures 3’6”. The niches above these are smaller and have kirtimukha masks on the top. Each of the niches has a four handed standing male deity in it. The one above Gaṅgā holds a lance, lotus, water vessel with the fourth hand in akimbo posture (Pl. 6.17). He wears a kiritamukuta, Vanamālā, hāra and ekāvalī. The top niche is still smaller measuring only 1’8”. The deity enclosed in it is four-handed and carries a trident and akshamālā in right hands and a fruit (śrīphalā?) and a mirror in the left hands. The figures on the right side are identical with minor-differences. The one in the centre is similar to the one on the left. The top figure carries a makaradanda and skull-bowl in the right hands and a skull-staff and an unidentified object56 in the left hands. The central figures appear to be Vaishnava in character whereas the top figures are definitely Śaiva (Pl. 6.18).
The lintels of the door-frame require some detailed attention, though most of them correspond in design with their respective dvāra-śākhās. However, due to the depiction of capitals above the door-jambs they appear to be separated from the śākhās. What attracts the attention of the observer is the figures carved in the niches, five on the top and three below. The image of Sūrya flanked by gandharvas on the lower most lintel have already been discussed. The figures in the niches above are shown seated in highly carved arched niches, resting on pillars and having a temple-like śikhara with a pinnacle and peacocks within them. They are alternately triangular and arched in shape with embellishments. In between the niches are shown wide and short pillars with designs of entwined snakes in pairs. Enclosed in the five niches in the top panel are figures of five deities. Starting from the left, the first figure is shown seated on a lion, four handed holding a staff, akṣamālā, pot and the fourth hand in abhaya mudrā. The second figure is similar but the attributes are inverted. The third figure is seated on Garuḍa, wears a crown and has an arrow, trident, pot and battle-axe in his hands. The fourth figure is without crown, big head with protruding eyes and demonic looks. He is also seated on a lion and holds a staff, trident, sword and shield. The last figure in this panel is seated on a yaksha, wears a crown and is two handed. In one hand he has a staff and the other is in the tarjani-mudrā. The frieze at this level shows a row hamsas carrying pearl-strings in their beaks. The panel below, has only three niches with figures seated in them. The central figure is that of Sūrya riding in a chariot drawn by seven horses. He holds a sceptre and a pot in his hands. He wears big lotus shaped ear-rings. On his right in the niche is a four armed figure seated on a ram. He holds a sceptre, a
water-vessel and two tridents and wears a crown. The figure on the left of Sūrya is also four armed, seated on a lion, wears a crown and carries a khadga, Khetaka, sceptre and water-vessel. Both Hermann Goetz\textsuperscript{57} and Laxman S. Thakur\textsuperscript{58} on the authority of J. Ph. Vogel\textsuperscript{59} have identified these figures as that of eight of the navagrahas i.e. Bṛihaspati, Śukra, Budha, Rāhu and Ketu in the penal above and Maṅgala, Sūrya and Śani in the penal below. The attributes and to some extent iconography justifies the identification, especially for Rāhu, Ketu and Sūrya. But in all the known penals the navagrahas are always depicted in a row and in an order mostly starting with Sūrya, followed by Soma, Maṅgala, Budha, Bṛihaspati, Śukra, Śani, Rāhu and Ketu.\textsuperscript{60} Here the entire order is broken and Soma is missing for which there is no explanation given by any of the above mentioned scholars. We are not in a position to offer a better identification, but feel that the entire question should be reconsidered.

Overall the façade of the Markulā Devī temple’s sanctum provides an excellent glimpse of the high degree of workmanship of the wooden craft practiced in Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh.

**DAKSHINEŚVARA TEMPLE, NIRMAND:**

One of the oldest and the largest village of Himachal Pradesh, located on a picturesque high slope on the left bank of a rivulet Kurpan Khad, a tributary of the Satluj, at a distance of 17 km. from Rampur Bushair, across the river Satluj in Kullu District is named Nirmand. The village, largely inhabited by Brahmanas of Kashyapa gotra has a long history spanning more than two millennia. There are numerous temples in the
village, belonging to various periods of history and a large number of sculptures are enshrined in them or are lying within their premises. The earliest epigraphic record from the place is the famous Nirmand Copper-Plate grant of Samudrasena datable to the 7th century A.D. on palaeographical grounds. It refers to a grant to the Śiva temple that was called Kapāleśvara, where an image or Śivalinga under the name of Mihireśvara was installed by Mihira Lakshmī, the queen of Samudrasena. A broken doorjamb, placed inside Parshuram Kothi at Nirmand was brought to our notice by Prof. Ashvini Agrawal. It depicts the image of a male in sakachchha dhoti, jewellery and hair don in the typical Gupta style, as can also be seen on the Gupta coins. There is an attendant figure in the same style along with the male figure. Prof. Agrawal has dated this image to the mature Gupta style of the 5th-6th century A.D. As such the place has a history from the Gupta period onwards. Agrawal in his survey of the site picked up some pot-shards near Ambikā Devī temple, that are assignable to the Kushāṇa period, further pushing it back to the beginning of the Christian era.

Of the temples at Nirmand, there are Ambikā Devī temple, Chaṇḍī temple, Hanuman temple, Thakurdwara, Laṭṭā Baoli temple, Viśeśvara Mahādeva (Sarkoti), Viṣṇu temple to the north of Parshuram Kothi and another on the southern side, some small shrines and the Dakshineśvara temple, sometimes called Dakhanī Mahādeva temple. Of these, Ambika Devī is modern structure. Hanuman temple is a small shrine with some sati stones in it. Chaṇḍī Devī temple is also a recent one but it contains images and other ancient remains. The Thakurdwara houses a medieval image of Lakshmī-Nārāyaṇa in a modern structure.
but has an old door-frame in the *garbhagriha* also belonging to the medieval period. The Viśeśvara Mahādeva is an open shrine with nothing to indicate its antiquity. The other temples are likewise not very old in their present form.

The most significant temple that has attracted the attention of several scholars and art-historians is the Dakshineśvara Mahādeva temple, located down-hill on the southern outskirts of the village. The question as to why it is called Dakhani or Dakshineśvara has been dealt by O.C. Handa in some detail without reaching any conclusive evidence. Though it is difficult to decide for lack of any positive evidence, it may be suggested that the name became popular at some point of time because the temple is located to the south of the village.

The temple stands on a raised platform of roughly cut stones and faces north-west. It is square in plan with an open *pradakṣīṇāpatha* resting of twelve wooden pillars. The front of the circumambulatory is at present overlapping with *maṇḍapa*, that seems to have been added at a later date and is rectangular in plan. As a result of this addition the portion between sanctum and *maṇḍapa* has taken the form somewhat similar to *antrāla* though technically it is not so. The *garbhagriha* is square that enshrines a huge Śivalinga in the centre. The walls are made of alternate courses of wood and stone called *kāṭha-kunī* style. The superstructure has three square storeys in pagoda style of temples. The roofs are covered with slates in *Pahari* style, except for the topmost storey which has now the roof of corrugated iron sheets. The first two storeys have back windows which are also square.
The most impressive part of the temple is, of course, the beautifully carved seven-sākhā wooden doorframe of the sanctum sanctorum. The total height of the doorway including lintels is 79” and the width is 101” whereas the doorway measure only 24” X 48”. The innermost band is 4½” wide which has an additional sākhā 5” in width (Pl. 6.19). Both the bands are patralatā sākhās throughout. At their base on each side are depicted Gaṅgā and Yamunā on proper right and left. The river goddesses are shown standing in niches with Kashmiri style triangular pediment with foliated designs on the top. The two armed Gaṅgā carries a pot in her left hand and holds are uttarīya with hanging right hand in a very graceful manner. She wears dress and jewellery in the usual manner. Her hair is done in a beautiful manner and there is no crown on her head. Her right leg is slightly bent in the posture of walking and her mount, the crocodile, is shown behind her feet (Pl. 6.20). There is a decorated chhatra over her head but no umbrella bearer attendant is shown. On the other side of the jamb Yamunā is shown standing with similar attributes in samabhāṅga posture and her mount tortoise is behind her feet. The graceful fashioning of the to images is done in the post-Gupta idiom though it may belong to the Pratihāra period of the 9th – 10th century A.D. On the lalāṭabimba is the figure of dancing Gaṇeśa, who carries danta and paraśu in his right hands and modaka in the lower left hand. The object in his upper left hand is not clear. The next two bands which are 6” and 3” wide respectively are also patravāli and patralatā sākhās joined together. On the base of these bands are figures of sārdālas with riders on their backs (Pl. 6.21). Similar triangular pediments as in the case of the river goddesses on previous bands, are shown atop these figures (Pl. 6.22). On the lalāṭabimba on the lintel of
these bands is shown a Śivalinga with yoni-pīṭha enshrined within a temple designed frame standing on either side of this frame are shown two worshippers. The pillars of the shrine are shown on extreme ends that frame the worshippers within. The fifth band is rūpa-śākhā. On the base within the pillared niches are shown standing female door-keepers in graceful manner on either side. Their one hand comes to their front holding either the stem of a lotus branch or the lower hem of their uttartāya. But it is not clear. There are five more figures above them on each side. These figures are alternately male and female figures in dancing posture. From below on the leftside the first figure is that of a male standing cross-legged holding a long musical instrument in front (Pl. 6.23). The second figure is a dancing female, the third is a male with a shield in the left hand, the right hand being raised to the head. It is followed by a female in tribhanga posture holding long lotus-stalk with both hands. The figure on the top is that of a male with a mace in the right hand and holding an indistinct object in the raised left hand. The depiction of vanamālā indicates that he may be some divinity. On the right side the bottom figure is again a dancing male carrying cymbals in both hands followed by the next figure of a dancing female. The next figure is that of a male standing behind a pillar with right by raised and bent. The posture is like that of a śālabhañjīkā but it is a male figure. The fourth figure is again that of a dancing female with right hand in pralamba mudrā and the left raised above shoulders. The top figure again is that of a male with vanamālā having an ace resting on ground under left hand and the right hand raised. The figures may not be very fine examples of carving but clearly show the Pratihāra idiom of the 9th – 10th century. Despite of their being worn out there is suppleness in the
plasticity. The corresponding lintel has eleven figures of *ganas* playing on various musical instruments. They are shown seated in niches which separated by diamond shaped designs between each niche. Frome the left, the *ganas* are shown playing on conch, flute, cymbals, the next three playing on drums, the seventh has a dong and a stick, the eighth is broken, the next two have *dudambhi* and the last *gana* again has a conch. The sixth band, which is 10.5" wide, has figures of standing *dvārapālas* in *samabhanga* posture on both sides. Both of them are shown wearing *jaṭā-mukūṭa*. The one on the right side has a flower with stalk in his raised left hand while his raised right hand is bent inwards on the chest. The figure on the left side carries a trident in his right hand and a cock on in the raised left hand. The latter is an attributes like ākṣi, six—heads or peacock the identification with Kārtikeya is not possible.

Above the figures are triangular pediments as in the case of preceding figure on the doorframe. The jambs are fashioned like pillars with decorative *pūrṇaghaṭa* motifs for the base as well as capitals. The shaft has *patralāṭā* designs on it. The corresponding lintel of this band has a *navagraha* panel depicting each *graha*, Sūrya, Soma, Bhauma, Budha, Bṛhaspati, Śukra, Śani, Rāhu and Ketu seated within separated niches in *lalitāsana* with their respective attributes (Pl. 6.24). On either side of the *navagrahas* are shown seated female figures, one on each side. The one on the left carries a pot and an *akshamālā* while the female on the right side carries a pot in the left hand and a flower in the right hand. Their attributes indicate that they are divine figures though it is not possible to call them *mātṛikās* either by their number or by iconography. The outermost band is 5½" wide at base. On the right side at base of this *šākhā* are images of Śiva-Pārvatī seated on Nandi. Śiva wears *jaṭājūṭa*.
and carries a *trisāla* in his upper right hand. The lower right hand is broken. In his left hands he carries a snake and a pot. Pārvatī is shown two handed carrying unidentifiable objects. She is seated on Śiva’s lap in *āliṅgana* posture. Śiva’s right leg is hanging down. Nandi is standing to right. On the left side are figures of Vishnu-Lakshmi seated on Garuḍa. the lower portion of the image is badly damaged. Vishnu carries a mace in one of his right hands and a *chakra* in the left hand. The other right hand is raised to chest in *abhaya* and the left hand goes behind Lakshmi’s shoulders. The two handed Lakshmi seated on Vishnu’s lap is damaged but probably carries a lotus in one of her hands. Above the triangular pediments above these images in *patravali sūkhās* with the figures of standing females on each side on the top. The one on the right carries a mirror in her right hand and holds the hem of her *uttariyā* with the left. The figure on the left carries a fly-whisk in her right hand hanging down and the raised left hand had a flower in it. Both the figures are shown standing in niches with ornamental pillars on either side and wear the usual jewellery and hair style. The heavy ornamentation of the figures indicate a date around the tenth century A.D. Here the frame is projected in T shape to accommodate these figures within the *patravali* design that go around these figures. The corresponding lintel has the same foliage design throughout.

Overall the doorframe presents a very impressive view of the wooden art of this place during the early medieval period and its carving, iconography and style leaves no doubt about its date in the late 9th or early 10th century. The only other wooden door frames of temples at Nirmand belong to Thakurdwara (Pl. 6.25). The structure is of very
recent times and so is its wooden doorframe of the mandapa. The doorframe of the sanctum is also wooden with three sākhās, which has saptamātrikā panel on the top (Pl. 6.26), Mahishāsuramadāni on the left and Śiva-Parvatī on right besides several other crude carvings. The doorframe does not carry any artistic semblance nor can it be placed with older pieces of the place. It is late medieval in date and much beyond the time-frame of this study. Some scholars have tried to give an early date to some temples on the basis of the evidence that requires much rethinking, when linking the sculptural art with the architecture. The Behani Mahādeva temple at Behna village, on the banks of the river Ani, a tributary of the Satluj on the Sainj-Ani road is one such example. There are a large number of beautiful mohras in the sanctum of the temple that were first noted by M. Postel and K. Mankodi. Postel rightly remarked that some of them are in the classical style and have very interesting features. He dated some of them to the 10th – 11th centuries A.D. and another to the 7th – 8th century. This fact of course is supported by some of the stone sculptures kept in the circumambulatory of the temple. Recently O.C. Handa has dated this temple between the 10th and 12th century with some remodelling after the 14th century A.D. We surveyed the temple recently during our field-work trip. In the present structure, there is nothing to take its date back to the 10th or even the 14th century, though the sculptural evidence does indicate the existence of an earlier structure at the place.

Coming to the door frame of the temple, Handa remarks, “The doorframe of Behna Mahadev temple is thematically classical and bears the iconographic characteristics of 10th – 12th century, yet the folk
influence is evident in its execution. That peculiarity may be explained as the folk rendering of the later post-Gupta sculptural art in wood.\textsuperscript{469} He further calls it “outer Saraj Mannerism” and compares it with Dakshinēśvara Mahādeva temple at Nirmand. Not only Handa is far from the truth but his comparison is also wrong. The wooden doorframe of the Dakshinēśvara Mahādeva temple, as discussed above, is far superior both iconographically and in execution. There is hardly any folk tradition in it. On the other hand we find the similarity of execution of Behni with the doorframe of the Thakurdwara temple, Chaṇḍī Mata temple at Nirmand (Pl. 6.27), which is a very late structure, but Chamunḍā Devī temple ceiling is old (Pl. 6.28).

The doorframe of the Behani Mahādeva temple has three inner \textit{patralatā sākhās} followed by a \textit{gaṇaśākhā}. Then again a \textit{patralatā sākhā} (Pl. 6.29). The fifth is a pillar design with \textit{pūrṇaghaṭa} motif followed by a \textit{mitluna sākhā}. The lintel has the figures of navagrahas in niches separated by diamonds in between. The figures of the \textit{navagrahas} as also those on the door-\textit{sākhās} are very crude. But it is the figures at the bottom of each \textit{sākhā}, where dvārapālas and the river goddesses are depicted, that betray the age of the work. All of them are very crude and executed in the style of local temples of the 18\textsuperscript{th} – 19\textsuperscript{th} century. The plasticity is rigid and disproportionate. The postures too are very artificial. A fish is shown behind Gaṅgā instead of a crocodile and the creature behind Yamunā has no resemblance with a tortoise. Likewise seated Śiva-Pārvatī on Nandi below \textit{gaṇaśākhā} are not only unusual but very crude also. There is nothing classical in the iconography as seen by Handa. Not withstanding the date of the \textit{Moharās} enshrined in the
temple and some sculptures in the mandapa and parikramāpatha, we would date this doorframe to the 19th – 20th century A.D. that falls way beyond the scope of the present work.

The above survey, done after in situ study of all the known temples of Himachal Pradesh in various parts, during our field work trips, indicates that very little of the early wooden temples, like those of Bharmaur and Chatrarhi remain that belong to the early phase of our study and may be termed as examples of classical style. Not much is extent even of the later phase except Markulā Devī at Udaipur and Dakshinēśvara at Nirmand. All of them evince a close relationship and influence of Kashmiri art on them both stylistically and in iconography. Most of the extent wooden temples in Himachal Pradesh, though good examples of art and having interesting features for a detailed study are beyond the scope of the present work. But they show a continuity of tradition in the wooden art in this mountainous region almost to the present day.
Notes & References:

1 Handa, Devendra, *Tribal Coins of Ancient India*, pp. 25 ff., 149 ff., etc.

2 Some of the well-known examples are Hidimba Devī temple, Manali, Bhimakali temple, Sarahan. The most recent ones at Batreri and Chitkul in the Sanlga region and a renovated temple at Naggar almost half-way between Kullu and Manali on the left bank of the river Beas, show excellent workmanship and continuance of the tradition.


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15 Nagar, S.L., *The Temples of Himachal Pradesh*.

16 Postel, N. et.al., *Antiquities of Himachal*.

17 Krishna Deva, *Temples of India*, Vol. I,


19 L.S. Thakur has mentioned seven शक्खास. Apparently he has taken the outermost jamb as two separate शक्खास, *op.cit.*, p. 90. However, Hermann Goetz, *op.cit.*, p. 76; Krishna Deva, *op.cit.*, p. 211 and C. Pieruccini, *op.cit.*, p. 189 have correctly taken the number of jambs to be six. See also Postel, N., *op.cit.* p. 42.

20 Goetz, H., *op.cit.*, p. 75.

Postel, N., *op.cit.*, pp. 94-95.


Postel, N., *op.cit.*, p. 42.

This suggestion has been due to our supervisor Prof. Ashvini Agrawal, who accompanied on the fieldwork tour to Chamba and Bharmaur.

Postel, N., *op.cit.*, p. 42.

Pieruccini has called the posture as *tribhanga*, *op.cit.*, p. 189.


Pieruccini has identified it as a trident, *ibid.*, p. 194. Hermann Goetz has doubtfully called it trident or lotus, *op.cit.*, p. 77. Trident is not one of the attributes of Vishṇu. The object in question is clearly a lotus.
36 The central prong of the trident has a mace like shape at the top that makes it a fine combination of the two. Such depiction is very uncommon.

37 This identification is due to Cinzia Pieruccini, *op.cit.*, p. 200. The pattern at first site looks like a bunch of grapes or a geometrical design.


42 Laxman Thakur has mentioned seven śākhās here also. However, the plain shafts of pillars on either side of the doorway on outsie, beyond the ones bearing Gaṅgā and Yamunā cannot be taken into this account. Cf. Thakur, *op.cit.*, p. 93.

43 The inscription is also referred to by M. Postel, *op.cit.*, p. 48 but has not been published either by Chhabra or Govel. M. Postel has also not given its reading or content and we are not aware if it has been published elsewhere.

45 *Op.cit.*, p. 213. He seems to have borrowed the identification from Hermann Goetz.

46 In the images in Himachal Pradesh, Śiva is often shown with *vaijayanti*, otherwise a Vaishnava attribute.

47 Another famous temple at Udaipur is that of Triloknath.

48 Cf. L.S. Thakur, *op.cit.*, p. 102. Also see Vogel, J. Ph., *op.cit.*, pp. 15 and 249; Handa, O.C., *op.cit.*, pp. 42-50, does not refer to the original deity in the temple but has brought to light a wooden image of Mahishāsuramardini, which he dates to c. 8th century A.D.

49 C. Dorje has given an interesting account of the temple in his very recent article published in *Kaladarpana: The Mirror of Indian Art (Essays in Memory of Shri Krishna Deva)* New Delhi, 2009, pp. 8-11.


55 Goetz, ibid, p. 99.

56 Goetz compares it with the pinnacle of a *stūpa*. But the umbrella on the top of *stūpas* is quite different.

57 L.S. Thakur has doubtfully identified it as *nāga-Pāśa*. Ibid., p. 96.


59 *Op.cit.*, pp. 96-98. Also see O.C. Handa, *op.cit.*, p. 46. Handa calls the central figure in the lower panel as Chandra in order to complete nine *grahas*. But his identification is wrong, as the image is clearly that of Sūrya and not Chandra.

60 None has quoted the reference to Vogel’s identification. It is not contained in the *Antiquities of Chamba State*, Vol. I or the Chamba Gazetteer.

61 In some exceptional cases the order is found broken. E.g. at Hīḍimbā Devī temple, Manali, the *navagraha* penal starts with Ketu and ends with Rāhu. Cf. T.A. Gopinath Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, vol. I, pt. II, pp. 299 ff.


63 The image has also been published by M. Postel et.al. in Antiquities of Himachal Pradesh, Bombay, 19 , p.

64 Some writers have called it Parshuram Temple. O.C. Handa, (op.cit.) has rightly pointed out that it is not a temple but a bandāra. However, there is a Yajñāśāla in its compound and the bhanḍāra is on one side. It houses a huge image of four handed Vishṇu in its lounge (deori).


66 Laxman S. Thakur has called it five-Sākhā doorframe with “additional enclosing frames carved with patralatā and padmapatri”. op.cit., p. 114. We, however, prefer to call is seven-Sākhā frame.

67 Laxman S. Thakur has suggested slightly later date in the 10th-11th century A.D. ibid.

68 Antiquities of Himachal, pp. 6, 8, 188, 195.