CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

GEOGRAPHY:

The reorganization of states in the post-independence India saw the emergence of Himachal Pradesh as a full-fledged state in its present form in several stages. The first step was the merger of several princely states known as the Simla Hill states, some erstwhile British territory and some Punjab Hill States to create four districts of Chamba, Mandi, Mahasu and Sirmaur in 1948. At that time it was made a Chief Commissioner Province. Some more areas were added to it in 1950 and under the Indian constitution it became “C” class state. In 1954 the state of Bilaspur was added to it as the fifth district. In 1956 it was again made a union territory. Though the Vidhan Sabha was revived in Himachal Pradesh in 1963, the hill areas of Punjab were added to it in 1966 at the time of the re-organization of Punjab and Haryana. However, it was only on 25th January 1971 that the present Himachal Pradesh came into existence through an Act of the Parliament.

At present Himachal Pradesh is located between the longitude 75° 47’ 55” and 79° 04’ 22” East and between Latitude 30° 12’ 40” North and comprises an area of 55,673 km. It has the state of Jammu and Kashmir in its north and north-west, Punjab in the west and south, Haryana in the south, Tibet and China in the east and Uttarakhand in the south east. U.P. touches just a small point of Himachal Pradesh near Paonta. For the
administrative purpose it is divided into twelve districts with Shimla as
the state capital. As per the last census report (2001) Himachal Pradesh
had the population of 60,77,900. The twelve districts comprise Shimla,
Solan, Sirmaur, Kangra, Mandi, Bilaspur, Kullu, Una, Hamirpur,
Chamba, Kinnaur and Lahul and Spiti, with each further sub-divided
into Tehsils and Sub-Tehsils.

The present day Himachal Pradesh has several high peaks, as it forms
the part of Western Himalayan range in the north-west part of India. Of
its main rivers Chandra and Bhaga taking rise in Lahul-Spiti go to
Jammu & Kashmir to form Chandrabhaga i.e. Chenab. The Ravi coming
from Chamba enters the plains of Punjab before it flows to Pakistan.
The Beas rising from Rohtang Pass joins the Satluj in Punjab. The latter
taking rise from the Mansarovar lake in Tibet flows through Himachal
Pradesh. Besides these main rivers of the Indus system, there are several
tributary rivers. For example, Baspa that rises in Kinnaur joins the Satluj
whereas Giri, Pabbar and Tons are the tributaries of the Yamuna.
Numerous other rivulets and streams dot the entire state of Himachal
Pradesh so do several beautiful lakes.

HISTORY:

As a historico-geographical entity Himachal as a part of the lofty
Himalayas finds mention in several texts and inscriptions from a very
early date, many a time under various names. But as a well-defined state
with definite geographical boundaries reference to Himachal Pradesh is
lacking before the present times.
Various terms such as Trigarta, Jālandhara, Kulūta, Champā, etc. denote various regions of Himachal Pradesh and are used from the time of the Epics. Some find mention in Pāṇini’s Ashtādhyāyī also. The later works of the early centuries of the Christian era including the Purāṇas, Brīhatsamhitā of Varāhamihira and later on some Jain works also refer to certain areas of the land. Amongst the archaeological finds the coins of Audumbaras, Kunindas, Kulūtas, etc. are important for the early history though they are too few for any details. Inscriptions especially those from Chamba, form a mine of information but except for the latter state they too provided mere glimpses in the remote past forming wide gaps in between. None the less they are quite reliable. Another important source is the genealogical rolls of various ruling houses in Himachal Pradesh called Vamsāvalīs. They are generally in Sanskrit verse written by court poets or priests to please their patrons and none goes prior to the 17th century. Whereas most of them contain only names of the rulers with some vague legends attributed to them, their historical value for the history of early times is hardly useful because of the doubtful nature of their authenticity. In most of the cases it is based on mythical or imaginary stories coined by the grateful beneficiaries. In most of the cases the history of these ruling families cannot be traced beyond the pre-Mohammedan period in India, and many of them, we can say confidently, did not even exist in the remote past.

The geological and archaeological discoveries in various parts of the state take back the history of human existence in Himachal Pradesh to the upper palaeolithic period.
PRE-HISTORIC PERIOD:

The study of early man in Himachal is based on human evolution and study of fossils found particularly in the Shiwalik ranges of the state. In 1930, while digging in Shiwalik hills, G.E. Lewis of Yell University, found an upper Jaw of a hominid (manlike creature). Presently over twenty such specimens of hominid remains have been reported from the river terraces in the Shiwalik region.

The archaeological surveys so far carried out, clearly point out the human existence in the area traversed by the Bangana-Beas valley of Kangra, the Sirsa-Satluj valleys of Nalagarh-Bilaspur and the Markanda valley of Sirmaur.

The geological explorations prove that as early as two million years ago, at least one form of man lived on the Himachal foothills, the Nalagarh-Saketi region and the Kalpa valley of Kinnaur. Fossils of the various animals discovered from same regions of Himachal Pradesh testify to the growth of marshy land, takes and human life.

The field-work done by individual archaeologists like B.B. Lal, R.V. Joshi and Mahapatra and institutions like M.S. University, Baroda, Deccan College, Pune and Geological Survey of India etc. take back the history of Himachal Pradesh to the late stage of Paleolithic age. The explorations done in the Sukety-Nalagarh and guler region of the Kangra valley have yielded a large number of stone implements. The discoveries from the Markanda and Sirsa-Satluj valleys etc. seem to be at least forty thousand years old.
The trace of settled life in Himachal Pradesh have also been found from a place called Ror in Kangra district.5 A number of stone tools have been found from this area. These include axes, chisels, picks, axe-hammers and ring-stones, which date back to the post-Pleistocene period and indicate the existence of settled community life.

PROTO & EARLY HISTORIC PERIODS:

No significant Harappan settlements of the proto-historic period have come to light from the state, though some late Harappan remains were sighted by Lalman6 and some others. They are so few that it is not possible to construct any detailed picture on their basis. Sometimes, it is projected that the aborigin tribes like those of Mundas, Kols, etc. inhabited Himachal Pradesh but their exact affinities and history is not known by any degree of perfection. The early and later Vedic periods of Himachal’s history therefore remain dark. The main-stream culture seems to have penetrated to this land at an early age and there are numerous references to Kinnaras and Kirātas as tribes as well as semi-mythical inhabitants of the Himalayas both in early literature and art. Their inter-action with people of the plains of Saptasindhu can be presupposed. Even during the Maurayan period no edicts of Aśoka, either on rocks or pillars, have come to light from Himachal Pradesh. But it may be pointed out that on the borders of the state in U.P. and Haryana two inscriptions of the Mauryan ruler are well-known. At Topara near Yamunanagar in Haryana the famous Aśokan pillar once stood which was later on shifted to Delhi by Feroz Shah Tughlaq. In U.P. on the banks of the river Yamuna at Kalsi not far from Paonta Sahib is the
famous rock edict of Aśoka. But they do not throw any direct light on the history of Himachal Pradesh during the Mauryan times.

The numismatic evidence from the second century B.C. onwards is more rewarding in this case. The coins of Kunindas, Audumbaras, Trigarlas and Kulūtas as also some coins of the Yaudheyas are well-known from several parts of the state.

AUDUMBARAS:

Silver and copper coins of Audumbaras have been discovered from various places in Kangra district and also in the area of Pathankot. They belong to 2nd century B.C. – 2nd century AD and refer to rulers Śivadāsa, Rudradāsa and Dharaghosha all of whom had the title Mahādevasa Raña. This indicates their rule in the Kangra region in the centuries preceding the Christian era. However, literary reference to Audumbaras start coming from the time of Pāṇini who refers to them in his Gaṇapāṭha. A late lexical work Vaijayanti associates them with Śālvas, who are mentioned in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. If it is true, their origin goes back to the Vedic period. They occupied strategic position on the trade route that linked the Gangetic plains with the North-West and Kashmir and must have become an emporium for the rich valleys of Kangra and Chamba. The thriving trade must have added to their prosperity. Their rule seems to have come to an end with the Śaka-Parthian invasions. It is interesting to note that picture of a temple with a pillared hall and tiered roof is depicted on their coins besides a trident with battled axe. It traces the antiquity of temples in Himachal Pradesh.
KUNINDAS:

The next in the list are Kunindas, who by far surpass the Audumbaras by their coinage, references in literature as also the territory occupied by them. Almost contemporary of the Audumbaras, their earliest coins were found from U.P. in the Saharanpur area. Subsequently their coins were discovered from districts. Kangra, Solan, Hamirpur, Shimla, Mandi and Sirmaur, besides several places in Uttarakhand. They issued most beautiful currency in silver on the hemi-drachma standard of the Greeks and Indo-Greeks besides their copper coins. On the obverse of their silver coins we have the image of a deer standing in front of goddess identified as Śrī or Lakshmī and various other symbols. A chaitya type temple is depicted on the reverse. These coins bear the name of king Amoghabhūti, though the tribe is considered to be republican in character. Another type of their coins with the legend Chitreśvara Mahādeva are also known. But their attribution is controversial. Kunindas and various variants of their name have found mention in the Rāmāyana, Mahābhārata, the Purāṇas, Mahāmayurī, the Geography of Ptolemy, Brihatamsāhitā of Varāhamihira and several other works and they have been placed between the Yamuna and the upper reaches of the Beas and Satluj. Though various views about their origin have been put forward, M.C. Joshi’s opinion that they belonged to Indo-Aryan stock appears convincing. They probably occupied the territory in Kumaun, Garhwal and Himachal Pradesh along the hill trade routes and controlled the flourishing trade from the Gangetic plains to Kashmir and the North-West along with the Audumbaras. Their hold seems to have declined with the coming of the Scythians and other foreigners in the early centuries of the Christian era.
TRIGARTAS:

Trigarta, literally ‘three pits’, is a well known name for the region watered by the rivers Ravi, Beas and Satluj. It covers the area of Kangra and adjacent plains of Punjab. Trigarta finds mention in the Ashfādhyāyī of Pāṇini18 who classes them amongst āyudha-jīvisamghas.19 Patañjali also refers to them in the Mahābhāshya20 so does Varāhamihira in his Bṛhatsamhitā21 and several of the Purāṇas.22 The Mahābhārata contains several references to these people. They were wonderful charioteers,23 knew the science of archery,24 invincible and eminent fighters.25 The Chinese pilgrim Hsiuen Tsang who visited India between 629 and 645 AD refers to Trigarta in his Si-yu-ki with its capital at Jālandhara. The two i.e. Jālandhara and Trigarta have been treated as synonyms many a time.26 Hemachandrāchārya clearly mentions it in his Abhidhānachintāmanī.27 Coins of Trigartas are rare. One copper coin was published by John Allan.28 Others are of doubtful nature.29 The legend Trakata Janapadasa (Trigarta Janapadasya) on these coins indicates their republican character as also some references in the Mahābhārata.30 An interesting feature is the portraiture of a multi-storeyed temple on their coins, which have been assigned to the early second century B.C.31 They also find mention in several Chamba and Kangra inscriptions, such as those of Āśatāvarman and Baijnath inscription.32 Like the other tribes of the region they too seems to have been overpowered by the foreign invaders who came from Central Asia.33
KULUTAS:

Kulutas as a tribe find mention in several literary works with variants of their names such as Ulūtas, Ulūkas, Kolūkas, Kaumlūtas, etc. As early as the sixth century B.C. they find mention in the Rāmāyana. Bharata is said to have met the lord of Kulutas between the Vipāsa and the Irāvatī while going to Kekeya from Ayodhya. They find mention in the Mahābhārata along with the tribes of the north-west. Several of the Purāṇas like Vishnū, Mārkandeya, etc. refer to them as also the Bṛihatsamhitā of Varāhamihira. The account of the last work is ambiguous as it places them in the Northwestern division at one place and in the north-eastern division at the other. Sometimes they are associated with the Chīnas, Khashas, Taṅgana and Kāśmīras and sometimes with Kekayas and Madras. References to them keep coming from the late works such as Kāśikā, Bālabhārata of Rājaśekhara, Kādambarī of Bāṇabhata and the Sarasvatikanṭhabharaṇa of Bhoja. But these people as a political entity are known from their copper coins, only about a dozen of which are known and they bear the names of rulers like Satyamitra, Vijayamitra, Vīraṣāsa, etc. We shall talk about them shortly in the history of the district. These coins are datable to c. 1st century A.D. The Chinese traveler Hsiuen Tsang gives an interesting account of his visit to this region, which also speaks of its political continuity, though their coins come to an end long before that.

Since the coinage of these people of Himachal Pradesh ceases soon after the advent of the Kushāṇas, it may be surmised that they all were eclipsed under the rising power of the latter at least for the time being, though literary references continue to refer to these tribes or their habitat.
in various parts of Himachal Pradesh. It is interesting to note that the Allahabad Pillar inscription of Samudragupta also does not refer to any of these tribes though others like the Mālavas, Ārjunāyas, Yaudheyas, Madrakas etc. are mentioned.\(^3\) It appears that after a long gap from the Kushāṇa period onwards these people came to power again in the post-Gupta period, but under the new names and changed forms.

For the ancient history of Himachal Pradesh any attempt to deal according to the present administrative units of districts shall be a futile attempt for the simple reason that these divisions did not exist prior to 1947 nor there are enough sources at our disposal to reconstruct their history at a micro level. At the best a broad outline can be attempted by grouping two or more districts together. As such we would like to make a brief survey of Kangra, Una and Hamirpur as one Unit, Kullu, Mandi and Bilaspur, Shimla, Solan and Sirmaur, Lahul-Spiti and Kinnaur may be clubbed together in small units. Chamba alone may be treated separately, as there is sufficient epigraphic sources and a long unbroken history of more than thirteen hundred years for this state.

**CHAMBA:**

The present district of Chamba primarily comprises the territory of the erstwhile princely state of the same name. Completely mountainous in nature and with three main rivers, the Ravi, Beas and Chenab passing through it, the district touches Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh in the north and west Lahul and Bara Bangahal on the north-east and east, Kangra in south-east and Punjab’s Gurdaspur district in the south. The sparsely populated area of the district maintains a typical culture of its own with majority of the populace following Hinduism and speaking
Chambyali language, that now is gradually replacing with modern Hindi.

Talking of the past of this pristine state J. Ph. Vogel once very aptly remarked, “The ruling family of Chamba has indeed held sway in the Rāvi valley for more than twelve centuries and may boast of an antiquity equaled by few reigning houses in India and none in Europe”. The earliest inscriptions in Chamba from places like Brahmaur and Chatrari belong to the time of Meruvarman who has generally been assigned a date c. 700 A.D. Three of his ancestors, his great grandfather Ādityavarmadeva, grandfather Balavarmadeva and father Divākaravarmadeva have been mentioned in his inscriptions that means the dynasty started its rule sometime in the first half of the seventh century A.D. The vanśāvalī of the Chamba kings traces their origin to a hoary past but it being a very late document without any corroborative evidence cannot be relied upon entirely. Five kings who ruled after Meruvarman are known only from the Vanśāvalī as there is no inscription available for their period. The next king was Sāhilavarman who is said to have defeated the Kīras, Saumaṭikas, the lord of Durgara (Jammu region) and Kulūta. The Trigarta is said to be his ally. Sahilavarman is said to have founded the city of Chamba (Champā) and shifted his capital to this place from Brahmaur. He is also credited with a victory over Turushkas who have been identified with Ghaznavid invaders by Vogel and Hutchiston. Sāhilavarman has been generally placed in the tenth century A.D. Sāhilavarman was followed by Yugasūravarman (A.D. 940), Vidagdhavarman (c. 960 AD), Dodaka (c. A.D. 980) and Sālavarmān (c. A.D. 1040). The last mentioned king faced hard times and some of his territory was probably snatched away
by Trailokyadeva of Balor whose fountain inscriptions have been discovered from the Chamba state.\textsuperscript{44} Kalhana tells us that a king named Sāla of Chamba was uprooted by king Anantadeva of Kashmir (AD. 1028-63) who placed a new ruler on the throne of Chamba.\textsuperscript{45} This ruler seems to be Somavarman son of Sālavarmāν who along with his younger brother Āṣaṭa continued to be under the dominance of Kashmir.\textsuperscript{46} Āṣaṭa’s sister Bappikā was given in marriage to Kalaśa son of Anantadeva of Kashmir. The next king Harsha of Kashmir was the offspring of this marriage. Thus Kashmir and Chamba became related to each other through this alliance. Āṣaṭavarman was succeeded by his son Jāṣaṭavarman in c. A.D. 1100 who is referred to in the \textit{Rājatarangini} and also in his inscriptions.\textsuperscript{47} Next came his brother Dhalavarman in c. A.D. 1118. Next came Udayavarman (c. AD 1122) followed by Ajitavarman, Daityārivarman and Pṛthvīvarman. No inscriptions of these kings are known. But Chamba’s relations with Kashmir continued to be cordial and we find two Chamba princesses Devalekha and Taralalekha being married to the Kashmir king Sussala.\textsuperscript{48} These matrimonial alliances must have brought the Kashmir influence on the hill state of Chamba in art and architecture as well as socio-religious beliefs, as is evident from the art and archaeological remains. The next king in the line was Lalitavarman who ruled c. 1143 to 1175 AD. From two records of his time we get to know that he installed subordinate Rājānakaś like Nāgapāla and Ludarpāla. After the time of Lalitavarman we cease to get any inscriptions up to A.D. 1330, though the names of Vijayavarman, Rājavarman, Šaravarman, Kirtivarman, Ajitavarman, etc. are known from the Chamba Vanśāvalī upto the time of Vairasīvarman whose copper-plate inscription of A.D. 1330 is available.\textsuperscript{49} Of these rulers Vijayavarman is said to have invaded Kashmir and Ladakh and brought
much spoils from there. Though the lineage of the Chamba rulers continued for another six hundred years or more, it falls beyond the purview of this work, which is limited to A.D. 1250.

Besides the long continuity of its political history and exceptionally rich repertoire of epigraphical wealth, Chamba has an exquisite heritage of art and architecture in the form temples, both stone and wooden, metal icons and stone sculptures. Whereas the earliest of these perhaps go back to the sixth century AD the latest come to present time thus spanning a period of about fifteen centuries. To start with, the masterpieces in brass belonging to the time of king Meruvaram (c. AD 700) and executed by his master craftsman named Gugga speak for a highly developed technique of metallurgy in this remote area of the Western Himalayan kingdom. The inscribed icons of Lakṣaṇādevī at Brahmāur and Śaktidevī at Chatrari, the Gāṇeśa and Nandi at Brahmāur, all specimens created by the same artists, speak volumes by themselves. An uninscribed brass image of Narasimha also at Brahmāur may also belong to the same period. Their workmanship, beauty and plasticity leave nothing to be desired and they may be classed amongst the best pieces of the kind known throughout the country. Mention must be made of two more images of brass, smaller in size and of lesser workmanship, somewhat later in time, presently enshrined in the Śaktidevī temple at Chatrari. The Yoginī icon here is made shorter and robust and is a beautiful example of the metal art. Beside these brass icons, numerous stone sculptures especially the carved fountain stones throughout the region of Chamba speak for the advanced stage of art in the area. The examples of wooden and stone temples in the region are equally numerous in number and beautiful in workmanship. They too
start from about AD 700 and continue through the ages. Though a
detailed notice of these temples has been taken in the next chapters,
mention may be made of the Lakshana-devi temple located at Chaurasi in
Brahmaur and the Saktidevi temple in the village of Chattrahi. The Śiva
temple called Chandraśekhara at Saho and Chāmuṇḍā temple at Chamba
are good examples of the wooden temples. The façade of the
Lakshana-devi temple itself is so exquisitely carved, that it presents a
breathtaking view of the entire monument. It has an equally beautiful
mandapa of carved wood. The stone temples at Chaurasi in Brahmaur,
Chamba town and other places have been dealt with in the 4th and 6th
chapters. In short, Chamba as a repository of art and architecture by
itself is sufficient for a detailed study, and has attracted the attention of
several scholars from J. Ph. Vogel onwards to the present times both
from within India and abroad.

KULLU, MANDI AND BILASPUR

All the three districts lying in the picturesque valleys of Satluj and Beas
forming almost an axis in the middle of Himachal Pradesh have been
erstwhile states in pre-independence India and are known for a large
number to temples that dot them and several socio-cultural and socio-
religious traits very peculiar to them. Of the three districts, the history of
Kullu known as Kulūta, as already referred to above, goes back to a
hoary past. The coins datable to the 1st century B.C./A.D. provide the
names of rulers like Āryamitra, Satyamitra, Vijayamitra and Vīrayaśasa.
The bi-lingual coins bearing legends in Brāhmi and Kharoshṭhī scripts
call these kings as “Raño-Kulūtasya” i.e. the ‘king of Kulūta’. They
were evidently the local tribal rulers, about whom no details have been
persevered either in literary texts or epigraphic records. What happened to them during the Kushāṇa period is not known from any source. The next glimpse of the region we get from a stone inscription written in Brāhmi characters of the 4th - 5th century AD discovered from Salanu in the mandi-Kullu region. It refers to one Mahārāja Śri Chandrēśvāra Hastin son of Mahārāja Śri Īśvara Hastin belonging to the family of Vatsa. The former is said to have defeated certain Rājīlābala, who again is not known from any source. They were probably the local rulers of the region. The well-known Nirmand Copper-plate inscription of Samudrasena provides our next clue to the history of Kullu. The inscription discovered from the ancient town of Nirmand, in the Satluj valley on the borders of Kullu and Shimla districts and datable to early 7th century AD was edited by J.F. Fleet in 1888. It refers to four rulers viz. Varuṇasena, Saṃjayasena, Ravisheṇa and Samudrasena all of whom have been given the titles Mahāsāṁanta and Mahārāja. They are said to have a number of sāmantas under them but are not known to have owed allegiance to any superior king. As such they appear to be independent kings of the region. Any attempts to associate them either with the Maukharis of Kanauj or the Pālas of Eastern India are mere speculation. The Chinese traveler Hsiun Tsang refers to Kullu as Kiu-lo-to and Viśākhadatta in his Mudrārākshasa refers to on Chitravarmman as king of Kulūta but nothing tangible can be made of these references. The same can be said of the references contained in the Kādambarī of Bāṇabhaṭṭa and the Rājatarangini of Kalhaṇa. the references contained in the Kulantpiṭha Mahāmaya and the Vamsāvalī of Kulūta are not reliable for any sober conclusions. Hutchison and Vogel seem to be right that the entire region was parcelled out between the Rāṇās and Ṭhākurs.
who ruled over small areas from early medieval period onwards and that applies to the states of Suket and Mandi also.\textsuperscript{56}

The Mandi district, sharing its northern and eastern boundaries with Kullu has no reliable source for its history except the \textit{Vamśāvalī} whose authenticity is doubtful. As such, it is not possible to peep into the ancient history of the state.\textsuperscript{57} The word \textit{Mandi} in Hindi means ‘Market place’ which was known to Tibetans as Zahor. The Buddhist preacher Padma Sambhava is said to have visited Zahor at the instance of the king of Tibet sometime between AD 750 and 800 and adopted the dress of the region. The name of the district indicates that it was a flourishing business centre at one time, which is natural as it lay on the trade route in mid-Himalayas.

Bilaspur in the lower Satluj valley lies to the south of Mandi. The kings of this erstwhile princely state traced their descent from the Chandravartaññī rājās of Chanderi, in the Bundelkhand area of Madhya Pradesh\textsuperscript{58} like the rulers of Nalagarh and Chanehni (Jammu). If it is true, though there is no means to ascertain it, their history starts from the medieval period much after the time within the purview of this work. In the \textit{Tawarikh-i-Rajputana Mulk-i-Panjab} a late work by Thakur Kahn Singh Balaurea the founder of the state was Rājā Birchand who has been placed in c. AD 900. The \textit{Shashi Bansa Binod} compiled in 1892\textsuperscript{59} tries to push back its origin to V.S. 754 i.e. AD 697 but its authenticity is doubtful. The story of Birchand’s accession to power in the region is rather fanciful as given in the \textit{Binod}.\textsuperscript{60} He was followed by a number of Rājās like Udhran Chand, Jaskarn Chand, Madanbrahm Chand, Ahl Chand, Kāhil Chand, etc., except for whose names nothing is known.
All that can be surmised for the region up to AD 1250 is that it was under the rule of some local chiefs, who remained engaged in the local affairs.

If the political history of these three districts is not so well known, the cultural contours of Kullu, Mandi and Bilaspur are on solid footing. A large number of temples and sculptures are matched by an equally large number of fairs, festivals and beliefs. The Kullu Dussehra, the Naina Devi fair of Bilaspur, Sainj, Shamshi Virshu and Lavi fairs of Kullu, and Shivratri, Mahunag and Rewalsar fairs of Mandi are some of the famous fairs of the region. The temples of Mandi and Bilaspur, though mostly belonging to the medieval period and outside the purview of the present discussion occupy a place of pride in entire Himachal Pradesh and most of them are treated as heritage monuments. Kullu has several ancient temples such as those of Bajaura, Dakshinēśvara and Paraśurāma at Nirmand, Śiva temple Dashal, Jagatsukh’s Sandhya Gayatri, Hidimba at Mandi, temples of Naggar and so on. Due notice of these temples shall be taken in the next chapters. Along with the temples, comes a rich repertoire of sculptural wealth. If we leave aside the door-frames that shall form part of detailed discussion in the fourth and sixth chapters, the sculptural pieces lying in the Paraśurāma temple at Nirmand especially a dvārapāla in the Gupta idiom and other images, the Viṣṇu Viśvarūpa at Bajaura, as also those of Mahishāsuramardini and Chāmunda and various other images have already been noted by scholars from time to time.
SHIMLA, SOLAN AND SIRMAUR:

Shimla, the summer capital of the British India was dotted with a large number of princely states, generally called Simla Hill States. It was known by the name of Mahasu District for long, after the name of one of the most popular and worshipped devatā of the region. Solan was included in it but Sirmaur formed a separate entity. The three districts are bounded by Uttarakhand in the east, Haryana in the south, Kinnaur in the north and Kullu, Mandi and Bilaspur in the west. Of the prominent states of the region Bushahr, Balsan, Bhajji, Darkoti, Tharoch, Kumarsain, Delath, Dhami, Jubbal, Keonthal, Kotkhai, etc. may be mentioned. All of them attempt to trace their genealogies from the heroes of hoary past, but no trustworthy account for any of them is available. It is highly doubtful if any of them existed prior to AD 1250, and even if they did their history is lost in oblivion. The same may be said of the Solan district which had states like Baghat, Arki (Baghal), Kunihar, Kuthar, Mehlog, Beja and Nalagarh. Sirmaur has comparatively older history but not well persevered. An unpublished thesis on the archaeology of Sirmaur district traces the civilized habitation to the late Harappan period. It is believed that the state was founded in early medieval period by migrants from Jaisalmer in Rajasthan. Subhans Prakash, Mahe Prakash, Salavahan Prakash, Balaka Chand Prakash, Udit Prakash and Kol Prakash were the early rulers. Nothing of note is known about them and the past may remain in dark till some fresh evidence comes to light.

Some early wooden and stone temples of the region as also a number of sculptures throw welcome light of the cultural past of the area. The
Hāteśvarī and Śiva temples in a complex at Hatkoti go back to about 7th century A.D. and the nearby temple complex at Parahat is not much later. The Sun temple at Nirath near Rampur is equally interesting. Śiva temple at Mangarh in Sirmaur belongs to the late Gupta period of c. 7th century A.D. The Sun temple at Nirath near Rampur is equally interesting. Śiva temple at Mangarh in Sirmaur belongs to the late Gupta period of c. 7th century A.D. The beautiful ashtadhatu image of Mahishāsuramardini known as Hāteśvarī is an excellent example of the metal art of Himachal Pradesh of the 9th-10th century A.D. The stone image of Mahishāsuramardanī datable to 4th-5th century A.D. from Hatkoti, now in Shimla Museum, stone images said to be of the Pāṇḍava brothers from Masli (Rohru), Vaikunthā and images from Nirath all form rich heritage of the area.

KINNAUR AND LAHUL-SPITI:

The tribal districts that cover almost half of the entire state of Himachal Pradesh in the north, border with Jammu & Kashmir in north, Tibet (China) in the east and the districts of Shimla, Kullu and Chamba in the south and west. Dotted with high mountain passes and peaks, having extreme cold climate for most of the year, the sparsely populated districts with strong Tibetan influence they contain some of the most scenic spots in Himachal Pradesh. People here mostly follow Buddhism, that has resulted in the famous monasteries like Tabo and Nako existing for more than one thousand years. Hinduism and a mixture of local religious beliefs also prevail. All combined, it gets a religious culture of its own which is a fine blend of several religions.

Lahul and Spiti formed part of either Kullu or Chamba at various periods of history, but in effect remained independent under various petty chiefs called Jo equivalent to the Rāṇās and Ṭhākurs. It is said that
as early as two thousand B.C. it was inhabited by people like Munda-speaking tribes. At a later date so-called Aryans also reached there and mixed with them. Most of the people spoke Bunan, Tinan and Manchat languages, none of which are related to mainland Indian languages. It must have been due to the strong contact and influence of Tibet and Ladakh with the people of this region. Hsiuen Tsang (A.D. 629-645) as made a reference to Lahul and Lo-u-lo that lay north of Kiu-lu-to (Kullu). But his account appears to be a mere hearsay and quite inaccurate. During an invasion of Kullu by Chamba, the armies are said to have passed through Lahul in c. AD 600 but no details are known. The local people followed their own life and customs worshipping trees, smoke and lingam (Śiva) till Padma Sambhava introduced Buddhism in the eighth century AD. It was at this time, it is said, that Triloknath temple was converted to Buddhism from Śaivism. There is another tradition of an invasion by Yarkand in c. 500 AD but the story is quite hazy for any details. It was in the early 10th century that the Tibetan kingdom of Ladakh was founded by Skyid Lde nyima gon, who was driven out of central Tibet by Buddhist insurgents. Nyima gon had three sons of whom the eldest was given Ladakh, the second son Trashi gon received the upper Satluj valley of Purang and Guge that included Kinnaur and the youngest son Lde Long gon got Zangskar, Spiti and Spi-lchogs (Lahul). The Tibetan rule continued till the 12th century when the Guge empire started crumbling. The local chiefs become independent and it is said that every valley or groups of villages became an independent chiefdom. During the period under discussion, it appears, that the areas remained closer to Ladakh and Tibet in culture than the rest of Himachal Pradesh and that influence can be seen even now. We have already referred to Triloknath temple, beside this
Markula Devi temple, Koṭhī Devī temple, Kinnaur, Kamru temple, Kinnaur, etc. deserve mention.

KANGRA, UNA AND HAMIRPUR:

The districts of Kangra, Una and Hamirpur formed part of ancient Trigarta or Jālandhara Pīṭha as discussed above. Like the ancient state of Chamba, this land watered by the three rivers Ravi, Beas and Satluj along with their tributaries, boasts of history going back to remote past. The Vamsavali of Kangra rulers, that was first mentioned by Moorcroft in 1820,\textsuperscript{66} contains a genealogical roll of nearly 500 kings. If we believe into it the beginning of their history shall go back to about 7782 years BC.\textsuperscript{67} However, a king of Trigarta, namely Suśarman Chandra appears to be a historical figure. In the Mahabharata he is said to have fought on the side of the Kauravas and was also sent to defeat Virāṭa, the king of Matsya.\textsuperscript{68} He is further credited with the foundation of the fort of Nagarkot and according to the Vamsavali, he was 234\textsuperscript{th} ruler of the family. The next glimpse of the history of the region comes from the numismatic evidence, discussed earlier. The second century BC coins bearing the legend Trakata Janapadasa do not have the names of any kings, and may indicate that it was a tribal republic at that time. Since the Vamsavali is not a reliable source of history, we have to look elsewhere. There are some scanty references in the Chamba inscriptions, that again talk in vague manner of its alliance with Trigarta. Kalhana also refers to some kings of Trigarta in his Rājatarangini.\textsuperscript{69} It talks of the conquest of Trigarta by the king of Kashmir Śrīśēṣṭhasena (c. AD 470) and Pravarasena II (c. AD 520). Towards the end of the 9\textsuperscript{th} century Śaṅkaravarman of Kashmir, when on an expedition against the Gurjaras,
forced the submission of King Prithvichandra of Trigarta. Next we find king Indu Chandra of Trigarta marrying his two daughters to king Ananta (AD 1028-1063) of Kashmir.

The region of Nagarkot became the target of the Muslim wrath of Mahmud of Ghazni who is said to have stormed the fort of Nagarkot in 1009. A graphic account of the invasion is given by Mahmud's chronicler Utbi in Tarikh-i-Yamini and also by Ferishta at a later date. Al-Beruni also refers to it. The fort was also known as Bhimnagar at that time. General A. Cunningham has recounted the entire account of the Muslim historians in his Reports. Accordingly we are told that Mahmud laid siege to the fort, that was situated at the ford of two rivers. After great difficulty the Raja capitulated and Mahmud received immense wealth that was hard to describe. He is said to have received 7,00,000 royal dirhams, 400 mans of gold, 2000 mans of silver ingots, 20 mans of precious gems, a 30 X 15 yard house made of silver, a silken canopy with gold and silver poles and many other things which were carried away to Ghazni on the backs of as many animals as he could get. He is also said to have stormed Bhawan i.e. the Vajresvandevī temple at Kangra. He left a garrison in the fort, which probably held its possession till AD 1043. After this it was reconquered by the local rulers.

Towards the close of our period under discussion, the Baijnath inscriptions of AD 1204 refer to Jālandhara and also to Nagarkot as Susarmapura. The epigraph tells us that a king Jayachandra of Jālandhara was the ruling emperor. Before him Hṛidaya Chandra ruled over the kingdom and he had married his daughter to Rājānaka Vigraha ruling over Kīragrāma (Baijnath). The region saw the invasions of
several Muslim rulers including Feroze Tughlaq, Akbar, Jahangir and Aurangzeb but that is beyond the scope of this work.

The region of Kangra has its own cultural heritage and art remains. At present the temples of Jwalamukhi, Chintapurni, Vajreshwaridevi (Kangra) and Chamunda attract tens of thousands of pilgrims from all over India every year. Two inscriptions of the Kushāṇa period from Kanihara and Pathiyar refer to the existence of some vihāras or ārāmas generally taken to be Buddhist establishments. The rock-cut temples at Masrur occupy a unique position in its own way. The art and iconography of the images from Masrur have their own significance. Brass images of Vishṇu and Buddha from Fatehpur, assignable to the 6th-7th century AD are very significant for the metal-craft of the area. Numerous remains from the fort and its vicinity like the Indreśvara temple speak of the heritage of Kangra. Then the Vaidyanātha temple at Baijnath constructed in AD 1204 is a superb example of the nāgara style of architecture. Its numerous sculptures speak of the skill of the local artists through the ages. The Sidhnath temple at the same place, though badly damaged and renovated, is also a fine example of the nāgara style.

Overall we see that a glance at various regions of Himachal Pradesh brings to fore, a rich cultural heritage, that deserves to be taken up for micro studies of its various aspects.

23
Notes & References:


2 Many of the inscriptions have been edited in various volumes of the *Epigraphia Indica*. J.Ph. Vogel published Pre-Muhammadan inscriptions of Chamba in his famous *Antiquities of Chamba State*, Vol. I in 1911. His work was completed by his worthy pupil B. Ch. Chhabra who published the remaining inscriptions of Chamba in the Vol. II of the same i.e. *Antiquities of Chamba*, Vol. II, 1957. Jagannath Agrawal who worked laboriously for several years on the epigraphs of this region in his life time, edited the inscriptions from c. 600 to 1400 AD in his work for ICHR entitled *Inscriptions of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh*, 24.
Punjab, Kashmir and Adjoining hill* Tracts (* the word has been misprinted as ‘Hilly’. Information from Prof. Ashvini Agrawal).
It was published in 1999 after his death.


5 Ibid.


8 IV.2,53.

9 Bhūmikāṇḍa, Verse 39.


11 Ibid., pp. 55-57.

12 Ibid., p. 69 etc.


14 VII.1, 42.

15 XIV.30.

The references to Trigarta and its people in the *Rājataranginī* of Kalhaṇa shall be dealt with the history of Kangra in this chapter.
34 Kishkindhā-Kāṇḍa, XLIII.8.
35 Bhīshmaparvan, 9.54; 9.66.
36 14.29; 24.22; 10.11-12 etc.
37 Dasgupta, K.K., op.cit., pp. 73 ff.
40 Ibid., pp. 141-145; Agrawal, Jagannath, op.cit., pp. 158 ff.
41 Agrawa, Jagannath, op.cit., p.12.
42 Kulait copper-plate Grant of Somavarman and Chamba Copper-plate Grant of Somavarman and Āsaṭā. Ibid., pp. 200-216.
44 Ibid., p. 291.
45 Rājatarāṅgiṇī, VII. 218.
47 Vogel & Hutchison, op.cit., pp. 292-93.
48 Rājatarāṅgiṇī, VIII.1443.

27

J. Ph. Vogel has edited 50 records and B.Ch. Chhabra has edited another 104 inscriptions in their respective volumes in the *Antiquities of Chamba State*, vols. I & II.

See infra.


*CLI*, III, pp. 286 ff.


This was brought to our notice by Prof. Ashvini Agrawal.

63  *Archaeology and History of Sirmaur District*, Lalman, Panjab University.

64  Hutchison & Vogel, *op.cit.*, p. 474.


68  *Mbh.*, Virāṭaparvan, 30.26; *Bhishmaparvan*, 80 etc.

69  III.100 and 285; IV.177.

70  *Rājatarangini*, V.143-147. For detailed discussion see Prof. Ashvini Agrawal’s paper, The Kashmir-Kāṇyakubja Struggle, presented at Leicester, U.K. during the conference on ‘the Legacy of Sir M. Aurel Stein’ in 2004.

71  *Rājatarangini*, VII. 150,152.


73  Hutchison & Vogel, *op.cit.*, p.120.

74  According to another version it was the Tomara king of Delhi who reconquered Nagarkot from the Ghazhavids. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

75  Agrawal, Jagannath, *op.cit.*, pp. 298 ff.

76  For details see Chapter 5.