

J. PH. VOGEL:
PORTRAIT PAINTING IN KĀNGRĀ AND CHAMBĀ

FROM A VERY REMOTE TIME THE MOUNTAIN AREA WATERED BY THE FIVE GREAT rivers of the Panjāb was divided up among numerous principalities, each ruled by its own hereditary chief. This political condition must have existed as far back as the 12th century when Kalhaṇa composed his Rājatarāṅgiṇī. In this famous chronicle of the kings of Kashmīr several of these hill-states are mentioned. The political aspect presented by the Panjāb Hills and preserved until the beginning of the 19th century was practically the same as that which prevailed in the plains of Āryāvarta in epic times and which we find pictured in the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa. Most of the hill-states were of a diminutive size, comprising only one town, which was the seat of the Raja, and the surrounding country. But a few among them, owing to their larger size, favourable position and more ample resources, were able to exercise a supremacy over their less powerful neighbours, which at times relapsed and again was re-asserted according to the temper of the ruling chief and the circumstances of the moment.

In ancient times Kashmīr, situated in the upper valley of the Vitastā, was by far the most powerful state in the west of the Alpine Panjāb and under the rule of Lalitāditya (733-'69) it appears to have extended its suzerainty as far east as Trigarta. But from 1339 it was ruled by Muslim kings and in 1587 it was conquered by Akbar and became an integral part of the Moghal Empire.

The lower valley of the Chīnāb, the ancient Chandrabhāgā, was known by the name of Durgara. This name does not occur in the Rājatarāṅgiṇī, but is found in an early copper-plate inscription from Chambā. From the modern form Ḍugar¹ the word 'Ḍōgrā' is derived designating the ruling Rājput clan of this region and often inaccurately applied to all Rājput of the Panjāb hills. During the Muhammadan period the seat of the Ḍōgrā rajas was Jammū, situated in the lower hills on the right bank of the Tāwī, a tributary of the Chīnāb.

¹ The derivation of Ḍugar from an imaginary name Dvigarta is erroneous.

It is first mentioned in connexion with the invasion of Timur (“Tamerlane”), who conquered the place in 1398 and compelled the Raja to adopt Islām. In the 18th century Jammū, ruled again by a Hindu dynasty, rose to prominence owing to favourable political conditions, and in 1846 after the first Sikh war it was united with Kashmīr under the rule of the Dōgrā Mahārāja Gulāb Singh. The dual principality of Jammū-Kashmīr still exists as one of the most important autonomous states of India.

In the eastern portion of the Panjāb hills the principal state was Kāngrā, occupying the fertile lower valley of the Biās and its tributaries, a country of great archæological interest². The ancient name of this hill-tract is Trigarta which figures in the Mahābhārata as the country of Suśarman, an ally of the Kauravas. The clan-name of the rajas of Kāngrā was Kaṭōch. They derived their origin from the moon-god and claimed the epic hero Suśarman as their ancestor. The hill-fort Kāngrā or Nagar-kōṭ, their main stronghold, was supposed to be impregnable. In 1620 however in the reign of Jahāngīr the Moghal army captured the fort after a prolonged siege and from that time on the ancient castle of the Kaṭōches was garrisoned by imperial troops. In all probability the whole state was annexed along with the fort, only the district of Rājgir being assigned as a jāgīr for the maintenance of the Raja.

The Kāngrā State remained in the hands of the Moghals till the middle of the 18th century when a great change took place in the political condition of the Panjāb. The Empire of the Great Moghals was then in the throes of dissolution. In A.D. 1752 the Panjāb along with the hill-states was ceded to Aḥmad Shāh Durānī, the king of Afghānistān. The hour had come at last and the Kaṭōch raja Ghamaṇḍ Chand was not slow to strike a blow for the freedom of his country. Taking advantage of the anarchy that prevailed, he recovered the territory which had been wrested from his ancestors by the Moghals with the exception of the Kāngrā Fort, which held out under the last of the Muslim governors, Saif ‘Alī Khān.

Ghamaṇḍ Chand died in 1774. It was his grandson Sansār Chand who in 1787 succeeded in recovering the famous stronghold, with the assistance of the Sikhs. Sansār Chand was a man of great ability but animated by an unscrupulous ambition. With the recovery of the fort and the withdrawal of the Sikhs from the hills, Sansār Chand was left at liberty to prosecute

² J. Hutchison and J. Ph. Vogel, “History of the Panjāb Hill States”, Lahore 1933, vol. I contains an account of Kāngrā and Chambā from which we have borrowed the historical information here reproduced.

his ambitious designs. He revived the ancient claim of Kāngrā to the headship of the eleven states of the eastern group, which had been in abeyance in Moghal times, and arrogated to himself supreme authority over the chiefs. He compelled them to pay tribute and encroached upon their territories.

The first victim of the Kaṭōch raja's aggression was the neighbouring state of Chambā occupying the upper valley of the Rāvī. It is separated from Kāngrā by a high mountain range, bearing the significant name of Dhavala Dhār, the "White Range". The ancient principality of Chambā, which is mentioned in the Rājatarāṅgiṇī, was ruled by a dynasty of the Sūrya-vaṃśa or Solar Race which had been settled in the Rāvī valley for more than ten centuries, as is borne out by epigraphical records. Rāj Singh, who had succeeded his father in 1764, was a warlike chief, as aggressive and proud as Sansār Chand and likewise bent on extending his dominions. With this object in view he had waged war with his neighbour, the Raja of Basōhlī, seated in the lower Rāvī valley. Sansār Chand now demanded of Rāj Singh the surrender of the Rihlu ilāka, a district situated on the southern or Kāngrā side of the Dhavala Dhār but included in Chambā territory. This demand was met by a prompt refusal, and seeing a conflict inevitable, Rāj Singh prepared for war. He went in person to Rihlu and repaired and strengthened the fort, which was garrisoned by his own troops. He obtained, moreover, help from the neighbouring state of Nūrpur. The Chambā army was disposed in various directions along the frontiers, keeping watch and ward, while Rāj Singh himself was at the village of Nērti near Shāhpur, with the Nūrpur levies and a small force of his own troops. Sansār Chand getting intelligence of this, advanced secretly, and fell suddenly upon the Chambā force, which was taken completely by surprise. The Nūrpur levies fell into a panic and fled, leaving with the Raja only forty-five of his own men. His officers urged him to make a retreat, pointing out to him the hopelessness of effecting a stand against such superior numbers; but he refused to do so, saying it would be a disgrace to retire when confronted by the enemy. His personal attendants and servants first fell around him, and then the Raja himself was wounded in the thigh by a bullet. Still he bravely fought on, killing many of his opponents and performing prodigies of valour. At last a man came from behind, and struck him on the head with a sword. Rāj Singh wiped away the blood, and then, resting his hand on a large stone near which he was standing, fell dead.

The impress of his blood-stained hand is believed to be still visible on the stone. A temple was erected on the spot by his son, at which a mēlā is held on the anniversary of his death. Rāj Singh's bravery is commemorated in a ballad which is still sung by the local bards throughout these mountains. He is said to have paid special veneration to the goddess Chāmuṇḍā, whose temple stands on a spur above the town of Chambā. She promised him an addition of twelve years to his life, and the honour of dying in battle as he desired. Rāj Singh died in 1794 in the fortieth year of his age and the thirtieth of his reign.

The petty hill-state of Maṇḍī situated in the Biās valley to the east of Kāngrā became also a victim of Sansār Chand's high-handed policy. The capital was sacked and the young Raja retained as a prisoner at Nādaun for twelve years. Other neighbouring states were treated in a similar manner.

For twenty years Sansār Chand ruled as undisputed monarch of the hills. His fame spread far and wide and his court became the resort of all classes of people, in search of pleasure or personal advantage. An Indian writer³ thus describes this golden age in Kāngrā history: "For many years Sansār Chand passed his days in great felicity. He was generous in conduct, kind to his subjects, just as Naushirvān, and a second Akbar in the recognition of men's good qualities. Crowds of people of skill and talent, professional soldiers and others, resorted to Kāngrā and gained happiness from his gifts and favours. Those addicted to pleasure flocked from all quarters and profited exceedingly by his liberality. Performers and story-tellers collected in such numbers, and received such gifts and favours at his hands, that he was regarded as the Hātim of that age and, in generosity, the Rustam of the time."

Supported by his large army of mercenaries he completely overawed the hill chiefs, made them tributary and compelled them to attend his court, and send contingents for his military expeditions. Had he been content with the possessions acquired by himself and his ancestors, he might have passed on his kingdom unimpaired to his posterity. But his overweening ambition carried him too far, and, as the Indian writer remarks, "His fortune turned to misfortune and ruin fell upon his life." His dream was to establish a Kaṭōch kingdom in the Panjāb. In 1803-'04 Sansār Chand twice invaded the plains, but was defeated and driven back by Raṅjīt Singh, the formidable leader of the Sikhs, who had acquired possession of

³ Ghulam Muhai-ud-din, "Tārīkh-i-Panjāb".

Lahore and Amritsar. Disappointed in his designs he turned his arms against Bilāspur, the principal state of the Satluj valley, and annexed the territory on the right bank of the river. This act was his undoing, and led to his downfall and the extinction of his kingdom.

Owing to the dissolution of the Moghal Empire, the Gurkhas of Nepāl too had been seized with an ambition for conquest and before the end of the 18th century they had extended their dominions from the Gōgrā to the Satluj. Sansār Chand's action against Bilāspur aroused keen resentment among the other hill-states, and smarting under the many wrongs they had endured at his hands, the chiefs formed a coalition against him, and sent a united invitation to the Gurkha commander to invade Kāngrā. This invitation was readily accepted. In 1805 Amar Singh Thāpā, the Gurkha commander, with an army estimated at 40,000 men crossed the Satluj and was joined by the various contingents from the hill-states of the Kāngrā group and from Bilāspur and Basōhli.

Sansār Chand made a brave stand, but was defeated and had to seek refuge in the Kāngrā Fort. The Gurkhas then advanced into the heart of the state and laid siege to the fort; but all their efforts to capture it were fruitless. For four years they plundered and laid waste the country, and so dreadful were the ravages they committed that the inhabitants deserted their homes and fled into the neighbouring states. In the fertile valleys of Kāngrā not a blade of cultivation was to be seen, grass grew up in the towns and tigresses whelped in the streets of Nādaun.

At last Sansār Chand, rendered desperate by the ruin of his country and seeing no hope of relief, applied to Raṅjit Singh for help, the Kāngrā Fort being offered as the price of his assistance. In August 1809 the Sikh army advanced towards Kāngrā and attacked the Gurkhas who were reduced in numbers and decimated by disease. They began a retreat ending in flight and their retirement across the Satluj. With the cession of the Kāngrā Fort to Raṅjit Singh, the principality of Kaṭōch, as well as the adjoining minor hill-states, became subject and tributary to the Sikhs. From that time Sansār Chand retired to Tīrā Sujānpur on the left bank of the Biās. He died in December 1823 after a reign of forty-seven years. With him the glory of the Kaṭōches passed away, and what remained to his son Anirudh Chand was little more than a name.

A few years after his succession the ancient state of Kāngrā ceased to exist and the manner

in which this tragic end was brought about is typical of Kaṭōch mentality. In 1827 Raṇjīt Singh asked from the Raja one of his two sisters in marriage for his favourite Hīrā Singh, who was a Dōgrā nobleman from Jammū. By immemorial custom among the ruling families of the hills, a raja's daughter may not marry any of lower rank than her father. Anirudh Chand, therefore, regarded the proposed alliance as an insult to the honour of his house. Rather than acquiesce in such an indignity, he chose to cross the Satluj into British territory, taking his sisters with him and abandoning his state to the Sikhs. This happened in 1827. When in 1849 the Panjāb was annexed to British India, Kāngrā became a district of that province.

The traveller William Moorcroft has left us an interesting account of Sansār Chand whom he met in 1820 in the course of his ill-fated journey to Bukhāra. He had crossed the Satluj with his caravan at Bilāspur on his way to Ladākh, and on reaching Maṇḍī was informed that he could not proceed further without the special permission of Raṇjīt Singh. He, therefore, left everything at Maṇḍī in charge of Mr. Trebeck, his travelling companion, and proceeded to Lahore. Having obtained the necessary authority, he returned by way of Nādaun and Tīrā Sujānpur, and after paying a long visit to Sansār Chand's court at Alampur, rejoined his camp in Kulu. The English traveller was entertained by the Kaṭōch Raja with the utmost courtesy and earned the gratitude of his host by his medical skill which saved the Raja's younger brother, Fateh Chand, from imminent death. His narrative shows us the fallen monarch of the Mountains in the days of his humiliation and is of interest for the history of pictorial art in the Western Himalaya.

“Raja Sansār Chand”, Moorcroft writes⁴, “spends the early part of the day in the ceremonies of his religion; and from ten till noon in communication with his officers and courtiers. For several days prior to my departure, he passed this period at a small bangala, which he had given up for my accommodation, on the outside of the garden. At noon the Raja retires for two or three hours, after which he ordinarily plays at chess for some time, and the evening is devoted to singing and naching, in which the performers recite most commonly Brijbhākhā songs relating to Krishna. Sansār Chand is fond of drawing, and has many artists in his employ;

⁴ W. Moorcroft and G. Trebeck, “Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab”, etc. from 1819 to 1825. Edited by H.H. Wilson, London, 1841. Vol. I, p. 145.

he has a large collection of pictures, but the greater part represent the feats of Krishna and Balarām, the adventures of Arjuna, and subjects from the Mahābhārata; it also includes portraits of many of the neighbouring Rajas, and of their predecessors. Amongst these latter were two portraits of Alexander the Great, of which Rai Anirudha gave me one. It represents him with prominent features, and auburn hair flowing over his shoulders; he wears a helmet on his head begirt with a string of pearls; but the rest of his costume is Asiatic. The Raja could not tell me whence the portrait came; he has become possessed of it by inheritance.”

It is not known what became of Sansār Chand’s collection of pictures, when his son and successor had abandoned his state to the Sikhs. But part of it is probably preserved as a precious heirloom by the jāgīrdār of Lambagraon, the present head of the Kaṭōch clan. In 1905 when I was making a tour in the Kāngrā district after the earthquake of the 4th April, Pandit Hirananda Sastri, who was then my assistant, had the good fortune to fall in with a man who proved to be a descendant of one of Sansār Chand’s court-painters. The poor man, whom his native hills offered no scope for the exercise of his ancestral art, hoped to find employment at the court of one of the petty Rajas in Jammū-Kashmīr. He was still in possession of a number of drawings which were damaged by insects and bore the evident marks of prolonged neglect. He was quite ready to part with them and I am sure that by purchasing them we have saved the collection from destruction.

The collection included a number of miniature portraits of hill rajas of the 18th century, not only Kāngrā but also Basōhli, Jammū and Maṇḍī being represented. These, on account of their historical interest, I presented to the Lahore Museum. It was not a little curious to recognise a sketch showing a European seated in a chair which an inscription in Nāgarī enabled me to identify with the traveller Moorcroft. In all probability this portrait was made by one of Sansār Chand’s artists.

A few pictures of the Kāngrā school were published by Dr. Hermann Goetz⁵. They had been acquired by me from a dealer at Amritsar whom I imprudently gave to understand my preference for portraits of hill-chiefs. The result was that I promptly received a good number of pictures marked on the back with the name of some well-known raja in the shop-

⁵ “Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art”, vol. 1, no. 2. Calcutta 1933.



Plate 1
Raja Rāmsaraṇ of Hindūr(?)
Author's collection



Plate 2
Raja Raṅjit Singh Sabihyā(?)
Author's collection

keeper's handwriting! Dr. Goetz, when publishing them, rightly remarked that "these attributions are rather problematic". In fact, they may be considered to be absolutely valueless, as they are nothing but the dealer's invention. In one instance — the picture of a prince preparing for a hawking excursion which Dr. Goetz ascribes to the Sikh period — there is good reason to assume that the main personage is a hill raja, as the two servants in charge of the chief's dog are marked with inscriptions in Ṭākari, the modern form of the ancient Śāradā. This slovenly writing however does not appear to be due to the maker of the picture. The two portraits from my collection reproduced above must belong to the Kāngrā school. They are line-drawings in which only the heads have been worked out in colour, the complexion of the faces being remarkably fair. Both portraits are inscribed on the back with what must be the name of the person represented. In the case of the person with the hooka

the name is written in Nāgarī and reads: Śrī Rājā Rāmsaraṇ Haḍūrīyā. If we are allowed to correct the concluding word into Himḍūrīyā, it would mean “belonging to Hindūr”. Hindūr is one of the Simla Hill States; it is also called Nālāgarh. It has an area of 256 square miles.

The inscription on the back of the other drawing is in Śāradā script, which is peculiar to Kashmīr and the Panjāb Hills. The reading is not quite certain but seems to be: Sabihā Rā[jā] Raṇjit Singh.

Mr. J. C. French in his book on Himalayan Art has reproduced an interesting miniature belonging to the Raja of Gulēr who is the head of a lateral branch of the Kaṭōch clan. It represents the Raja’s ancestor, Gōbardhan Singh listening to music and is dated 1743. The valuable collection of paintings in the possession of the Gulēria Raja has also been noted by Dr. Hirananda Sastri but is still very imperfectly known⁶.

The Hungarian ethnologist, K. E. von Ujfalvy⁷, was the first to draw attention to the valuable collection of miniature paintings in the possession of the Raja of Chambā. In the course of his travel in the Western Himālaya in 1881 he made a stay in the capital of that hill-state where he was received with great courtesy.

Raja Shām Singh⁸, who had succeeded his father in 1873 at the age of seven years, was still a minor and the administration of the state was conducted by the able superintendent, Major C. H. T. Marshall. The young Raja showed his visitor his collection of family portraits which excited the latter’s admiration. They included a number of pictures relating to the life of the Raja’s great-grandfather (more precisely great-great-grandfather) Rāj Singh, the contemporary of Sansār Chand of Kāngrā. Out of these Shām Singh presented some to Ujfalvy who has described them in the account of his travels. The plates accompanying his description have been reproduced from line-drawings which appear to be fairly accurate but fail to do justice to the pictorial merits of the miniatures.

One of Ujfalvy’s pictures (reproduced in Plate 3) I discovered many years ago in the Persian section of the Musée du Louvre. It shows the warlike Raja of Chambā, attired in a gorgeous

⁶ “Himalayan Art”, Oxford-London 1931, p. 52, pl. IX. “B.C. Law Volume”, Part I, Calcutta 1945, pp. 642-4.

⁷ “Aus dem Westlichen Himalaja”, Leipzig 1884, pp. 87-95.

⁸ The first member of this name is probably Śyām, which is used to designate Kṛishṇa. Sanskrit śyāma is usually rendered by ‘black’, ‘dark blue’; but it is used to indicate a beautiful complexion, in which case it cannot have that meaning.

dress, with one of his Rāñīs walking on a terrace of his palace. They are attended by four ladies-in-waiting, two of whom carry the hookas⁹ which both the Raja and his consort are smoking, while the others hold his sword and a peacock-fan (mōrchal). The princely couple are sheltered against the heat of the sun by an embroidered(?) canopy attached to an open pavilion. In the foreground there are two ducks walking along the edge of a square cistern enlivened by a fountain. The background is formed by a palace-garden laid out in



Plate 3
Raja Rāj Singh of Chambā
Musée du Louvre

rectangular flower-beds according to the fashion of the time. The stone pathways are bordered

⁹ In the days of old when Europeans in India were in the habit of smoking hookas, the hooka-burdar (Persian huḳḳa-bardār) or 'hooka-bearer' was one of the indispensable servants.

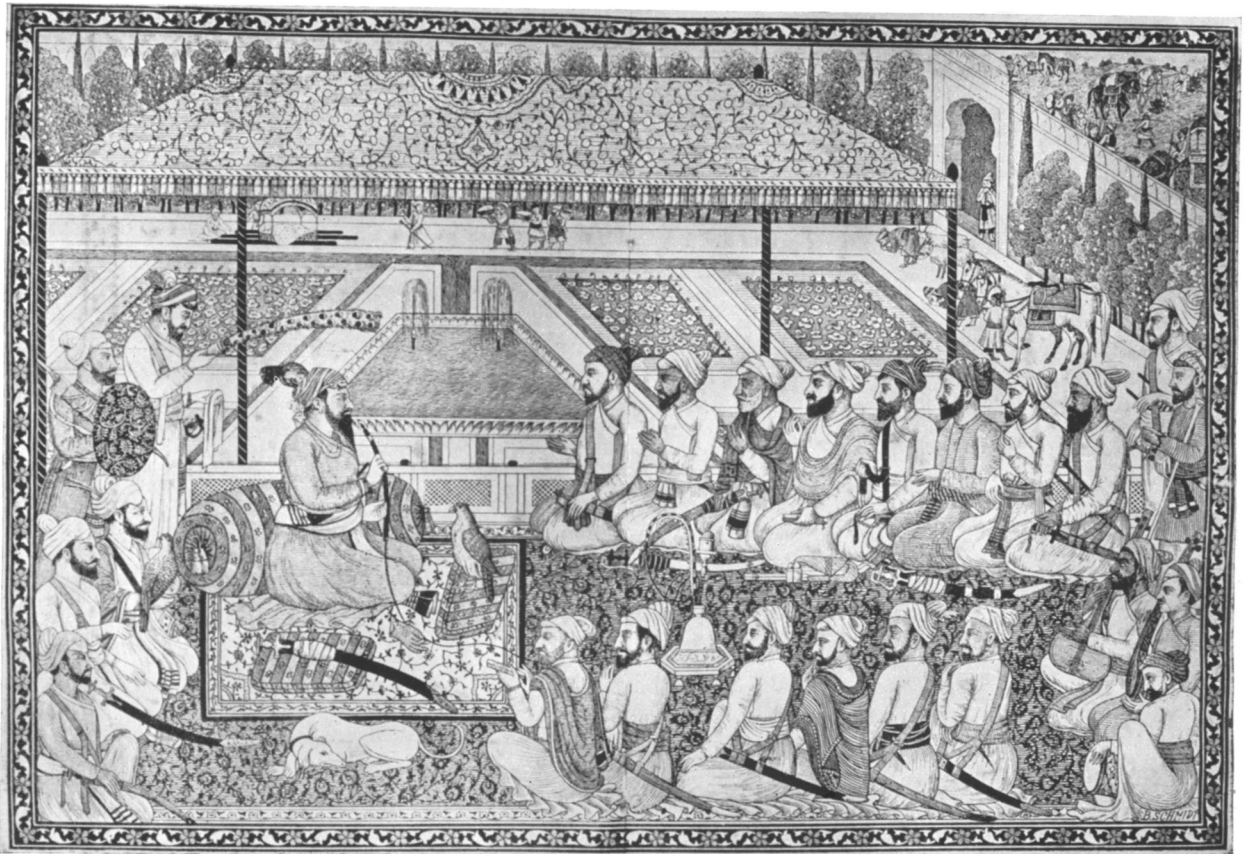


Plate 4
Darbār of Raja Rāj Singh of Chambā

by cypress-trees and provided with water-reservoirs. The centre of the garden is occupied by an open gardenhouse provided with curtains which a female servant is arranging, while another is engaged in feeding the pea-fowls. The scene is shut in by a mass of plantain and flowering trees. Both the architecture and the style of the garden exhibit a close imitation of the imperial palaces of Delhi and Agra. An account of this picture with an indication of the colours employed in it is given by Dr. Ivan Stchoukine in his catalogue of the Indian miniatures of the Moghal period preserved in the Musée du Louvre¹⁰. He describes the

¹⁰ "Les miniatures indiennes de l'époque des Grands Moghols au Musée du Louvre". Paris 1929; p. 75, no. 119, pl. XX. The size of the painting within the frame is stated to be 10¹/₂ by 8 inches. It was presented to the museum by M. Emile Soldi Colbert in 1905.

process of painting employed as “gouache and water colour” relieved with gold. Evidently the colouring is exceedingly varied and rich. Ujfalvy declared it to be one of the most charming Indian miniatures he had ever seen.

One would like to know what has become of the other pictures which Ujfalvy owed to the youthful generosity of Raja Shām Singh¹¹. Among the reproductions in his book there is one showing a painting of great historical interest (Plate 4); it is indeed to be deplored that it ever left Chambā territory. It must be a picture of considerably larger size than the one just described as it comprises no less than twenty-five persons, apart from the numerous smaller figures visible in the background. It shows Raja Rāj Singh seated in full darbār and surrounded by his courtiers and servants. The Raja, dressed in an orange-coloured robe and smoking his hooka, is seated on a gold-embroidered alcatif which is spread out over a large purple carpet. The hunting-bird seated in front of the Raja and the Persian greyhound lying at his side bear evidence to their master’s taste for field sport. Among the group of five servants on the left two are standing behind the Raja; one is holding a peacock-fan and handkerchief, the other a magnificent shield, a bow and a quiver. The man seated to his right holds a falcon on his gloved hand.

The fourteen persons sitting in two rows in front of the Raja are no doubt the leading officers of the state. Most of them are armed with swords from which it would appear that they are military commanders. The elderly man seated at the Raja’s right hand at the head of the front-row is possibly the Wazīr. The object which he holds in both hands has the appearance of a manuscript enclosed between two wooden tablets. The stout, black-bearded personage, who is fourth in the back-row, has a similar object in his left hand, and at his side we notice a kalamdān, i. e. a pen-case combined with an ink-stand, and what seems to be a bundle of manuscripts tied together. From these requisites we may perhaps conclude that he is a kāyasth or writer of official documents. The three men in the right hand corner are musicians, one holding a hand-drum and the two others each a guitar.

The background is formed by a spacious garden laid out in rectangular parterres and intersected by water-channels. A water-reservoir with two fountains is shown in the centre.

¹¹ Ujfalvy (p. XIV) states that the objects collected by him in the course of his journey were partly presented to the Ethnographical Museum at Paris.

The various figures of men and animals pictured inside the garden and outside the entrance gateway need not be described in detail, as they are sufficiently clear on the plate which we reproduce from Ujfalvy's book. Although the line-drawing does not allow us to estimate the pictorial qualities of this remarkable product of Himalayan art, it brings out at least one point which Ujfalvy did not fail to notice, viz. the remarkable characterisation of the individual members of the Chambā court. In this respect it reminds one of the famous darbār scenes of the Moghal emperors. It is true that it does not reach the degree of excellence, which we admire in the portraiture of the grandees of Jahāngīr and Shāhjahān represented in those famous paintings. But we must take into account that a petty ruler of the Panjāb Hills cannot be expected to have such eminent artists at his disposal as the Bādshāh of Delhi. Anyhow, it is evident that Rāj Singh, the martial ruler of Chambā, was as great a patron of pictorial art as his rival, Sansār Chand of Kāngrā. Ujfalvy has reproduced three more miniatures presented to him, which are supposed to refer to Rāj Singh, but the attribution is open to doubt.

The subject of the first picture is a young prince hawking. He is seated on a prancing white horse and is accompanied by a bearded person of dark complexion likewise on horseback. Four men march in front, two of whom, armed with sword and shield, are evidently soldiers. The other two wear the pointed woolen cap which is peculiar to the Gaddis, a tribe of shepherds inhabiting the valley of the Budhil, a tributary of the Rāvī. We may therefore assume that the young prince belongs to the ruling house of Chambā, but it is impossible to decide whether he has been correctly identified with Rāj Singh. In any case this picture does not exhibit the artistic skill of the two described above; it is a rather clumsy production.

The second picture shows a raja engaged in his daily worship with the assistance of Brahmins and musicians. But the physiognomy of the principal personage differs from Rāj Singh's cast of features.

The black-bearded Raja of the third miniature probably represents Rāj Singh. He is shown seated with one of his Rāṇīs in front of an open pavilion on the top of his palace and smoking his hooka. Both are watching a thunder-storm, which is pictured in the traditional manner. The dark clouds are relieved by serpent-like golden streaks of lightning and by a

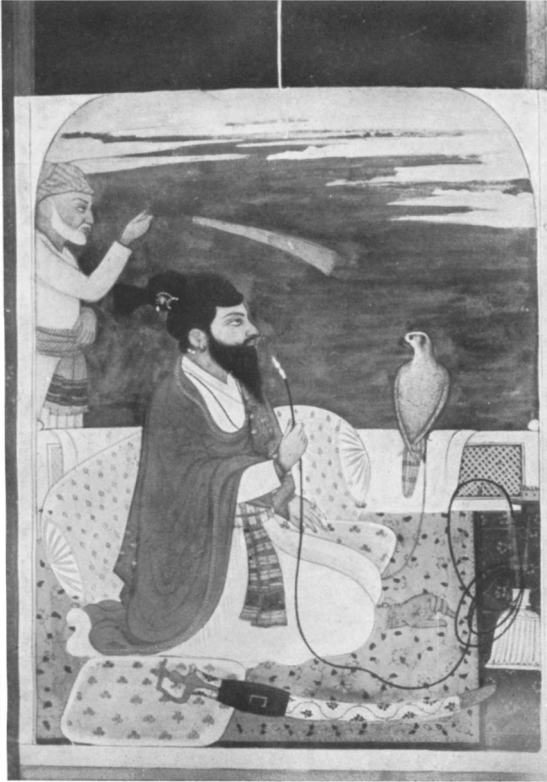


Plate 5
Raja Rāj Singh of Chambā
Bhuri Singh Museum



Plate 6
Raja Jit Singh of Chambā
Bhuri Singh Museum

long string of white cranes. The meeting of two lovers in a thunder-storm is a traditional subject familiar from Sanskrit poetry, and it is curious to find it here associated with a historical personage. Ujfalvy remarks that this miniature is inferior to the others from a pictorial point of view.

On the 14th September 1908 the Chambā State Museum was opened by Mr. R. E. Younghusband, C. S. I., Commissioner of Lahore, in the presence of a large assembly of State officials and European visitors. On his proposal it was decided that the Museum should be named after Raja Bhūri Singh, the enlightened and able ruler of Chambā, who had succeeded his brother Shām Singh in 1904. The Raja had both initiated the project and lent his support to carry it into effect. The most attractive section of the Museum consists of a large collection of miniature paintings which His Highness contributed to the exhibits. Up to that time they

had been kept in the palace. Most of these pictures refer to well-known epic and religious subjects and comprise different series, partly numbered, evidently intended to illustrate certain chapters from celebrated books — the Rāmāyaṇa, Prēm Sāgar and Durgā-Saptaśatī¹².

Of special interest for our present subject are the fifteen portraits of hill-chiefs, eight of which represent rajas of Chambā. Earliest among the number is the effigy of Raja Pṛithvī Singh (A.D. 1641-'64) who assisted the troops of Shāh Jahān in reducing Jagat Singh, the turbulent ruler of Nūrpur. The best examples are two portraits of Rāj Singh (1764-'94) and one of his son and successor Jīt Singh (1794-1808), which excell by their graceful design and delicate colouring (Plate 6). These three miniatures must have been made by a very able artist, although the rendering of the features appears to be more conventional than in the picture of Rāj Singh's darbār, discussed above. The portrait of Raja Jīt Singh which shows him and one of his Rāṇīs seated in an open pavilion is a real master-piece of composition. The fore-ground with the water-reservoir and the two ducks is the same as in the picture of Rāj Singh and his Rāṇī, but the dignified posture of the two central personages, the harmonious arrangement of the four female attendants, standing in a subordinate position on both sides of the central figures, impart to this picture a decorative beauty and a delightful repose which are typically Indian. The distant view of the lake, forest and far-off mountains, seen through the window of the pavilion is infinitely more pleasing than the palace-garden which forms the back-ground in the older pictures. It recalls medieval Flemish miniatures.

In the court art of Chambā it was customary to portray the ruler together with his Rāṇī and this homely feature adds to the great charm of these pictures. In the other portrait of Rāj Singh in the Chambā Museum we even find the Raja with his Rāṇī from Bhadarvāh and the infant heir-apparent Jīt Singh. The latter's son and successor Charhat Singh (1808-'44) is represented by two portraits in the Museum, in both of which the Raja is accompanied by his Rāṇī who was a Kaṭōch princess. One shows the princely couple in their pleasure-garden at Rājnagar; in the other the two consorts are watching a thunder-storm.

The other portraits in the Chambā Museum it is unnecessary here to describe. They are historic-

¹² A full list of the paintings will be found in my "Catalogue of the Bhuri Singh Museum at Chamba", Calcutta 1909, pp. 13-31.

ally important as they include several rajas of neighbouring states who have made themselves prominent in the history of the Panjāb Hills — Raṅjīt Dēv, the able ruler of Jammū, Amṛit Pāl, the contemporary chief of Basōhlī, Ghamaṇḍ Chand, Sansār Chand and Anirudh Chand, the Kaṭōch rajas of Kāngṛā and Bīr Singh Paṭhāniā¹⁸, the last ruling raja of Nūrpur. It is not a little remarkable to find pictorial art in Chambā and Kāngṛā still flourishing and able to produce master-pieces in the beginning of the 19th century only a short time before it ceased to exist. Its sudden disappearance is not difficult to explain. Himalayan art was essentially a court art dependant on the patronage of the ruling chiefs. Ambitious rajas like Sansār Chand and Rāj Singh profited by the dissolution of the Moghal Empire to rise in power and acquire a position which enabled them to become liberal patrons of art. But their mutual quarrels and short-sighted policy brought them into conflict with a new power which had arisen in the plains of the Panjāb — the Sikh kingdom ruled by Raṅjīt Singh. The ancient state of the Kaṭōches was swept away and likewise Nūrpur and Kulu, two smaller principalities of the Biās valley. Jammū and Basōhlī were absorbed by the new kingdom of Gulāb Singh. Chambā, less accessible to invasion from the plains, escaped the fate of its neighbours. It was left undisturbed by the Sikhs, but here too court patronage ceased to favour indigenous art. Chaṛhat Singh is the last raja of whom miniature portraits are known to exist. The reign of his grandsons Shām Singh and Bhūri Singh was a period when the capital was enriched with many useful institutions and public buildings. Chambā became one of the most prosperous and progressive principalities in the Province. It was European influence and the one-sided admiration of British culture which left no room for the appreciation of ancient Indian art. Raja Shām Singh had his portrait — an oil painting of considerable size — made by an English artist. It is true that, thanks to the writings of Havell and Coomaraswamy, the great value of indigenous art was again recognized. But at that time the court artists in possession of the ancient traditions and methods had vanished and with them their art died out beyond the possibility of ever being revived.

¹⁸ The ruling Rājput clans of the Panjāb hill-states were usually named after their capital and in case they had to shift it to some other place the ancient dynastic name was retained. Thus the rajas of Nūrpur were called Paṭhāniā after Paṭhān-kōṭ, their original seat, and in the same way the rajas of Basōhlī were still known by the family-name Balauriā, after they had abandoned Balaur which was their original capital.