

Himalayan Towers

**temples and palaces of
Himachal Pradesh**



RONALD M. BERNIER

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All the world over, high mountain ranges have served as refuges to remnants of ancient peoples and civilizations, in which, comparatively unmolested, they could preserve their identity and traditions, some to the present day.

Hermann Goetz

In memory of Penelope Chetwode

I was never able to meet that lady, wife of England's poet laureate, but her enthusiastic writing about Himachal temple art was great inspiration to me as I kept returning to the northwestern mountains.

Preface — A Note of Urgency

THIS STUDY OF Himachal Pradesh architecture in wood appears at a time that is crucial for the future of India's traditional arts in perishable materials. As changing values and needs transform Asian society in the twentieth century, monuments are transformed as well. New materials are used and styles change, both as new buildings are erected and as early structures are repaired. The northwestern Himalaya still preserves perfectly balanced buildings that are local in their design and substance. Its remoteness has allowed the area to survive as a remarkable indigenous whole in terms of art and architecture. But that separation is coming to an end. The following pages present a survey of sacred and domestic towers throughout the region, comparing works of art to their counterparts in other parts of the mountain land, especially Nepal. And there is an effort to judge the value of Himachal Pradesh wooden art in context of its crucial relationship to international exchanges like those that followed the ancient Silk Road. At the same time, the special contribution of this recently defined state to the broad picture of Himalayan pagoda art is sought. The questions have some urgency in these times that threaten even the Taj Mahal with industrial pollution and, as Mary C. Combs warns us, "unprotected ruins slowly crumble under erosion or end up as stone quarries."¹ Government protection of individual buildings is costly and necessarily limited to the most historically significant monuments, rarely applied to houses or even palaces, despite the ravages that thievery, weather, and earthquake can suddenly bring. Economic concerns are paramount as a temple city like Bilaspur disappears under the waters of an impressive new dam. The ravages of changing tastes are just as destructive to time-honored styles, as in Kerala where intricately carved wooden houses have given way to more "modern" cement structures that are put up by wealthy Indians returning to southern India after lucrative work in the Gulf states. Change may be inevitable, but it is clear that it is important, even urgent, to record and appreciate the wooden towers of Himachal Pradesh today, not only because they are old but because they are beautiful.

1 Mary C. Combs, "Protecting Jewels in the Crown — India's architects look to old solutions." *Preservation News*, September, 1985, p. 12.

Introduction — Why Himachal Pradesh?

EVEN THE PRODUCTION of a slim volume like this one involves making a difficult choice. The goal is to explore the art of a limited region, to define it as being important, to explain why it should have drawn this foreign investigator back again and again. Is it enough to say that the place itself is beautiful, and that its combination of mountains, raging rivers, and sometimes impassable roads constitute a worthy challenge as obscure approaches lead to hidden riches? Is there enough to intrigue a reader in the simple fact that early directions of Hindu belief are still followed in these hills, but that orthodoxy is changed by invention? Or that the best measure of a “peripheral” culture, might be found in works of art? A reader who is new to the subject of Asian art might yearn for explanation of more “classic” works of art and architecture: the wonders of Ajanta, Ellora, Elephanta, Mahabalipuram, Khajuraho. Why, he or she might ask, would an architectural survey focus on the remote northwestern mountains? Why spend so much time with wooden arts that don’t even approach the antiquity of monuments on the plains? Isn’t it enough to dismiss arts of the hill states as rural versions of great styles and great meanings? If they are “peripheral,” aren’t they also minor? Isn’t the final and most important question a simple one: Why Himachal Pradesh?

The author has directed the above queries to himself, even when they have not been raised by others. And the answers are not always easy. Perhaps his attraction to mountain arts is due to the way the exercise of research began for this art historian: with another little known kind of art in another little known place. The subject twenty-five years ago was body art—painting, scarification, jewelry, coiffeur, costume—and the place was Tanganyika, today’s Tanzania. There were no rules, no measures of quality or function that carried across international boundaries to a receptive audience. For the Maasai tribe there was, of course, no such discipline as art, history and the thought that there should be was laughable. Yet, for them, in their time frame and according to their tastes and in terms of their social and religious values, body adornment was and is a major art form. To this writer, it became clear in Tanganyika that the worth of a people’s art must be determined in harmony with their own scale of values and not merely by a system of measures that is totally imposed from outside. It also became clear that an art historian has much to gain by working like an anthropologist, looking at a culture from the inside.

And so, after a stimulating cross-cultural experience of graduate work while living with 400 Asians and 200 Americans at the East-West Center and University of Hawaii, the investigator continued to explore and to analyze, again, an unpublished subject. The place was Kathmandu Valley and the subject was temple architecture. Nepal had not been open to foreigners for very long in the early 1960’s and, once more, the subject lacked a predetermined standard of art histori-

cal excellence imposed from outside. The cultural values were not those of the west. But it was true that many Nepalese values were based in part on borrowings from a larger and perhaps more complex civilization nearby—India. In Nepal, the borrowing proved to be careful and selective, the reinterpretation and re-making of models to be valuable, and the finished artistic product to be unique.

Now the considerations noted above again apply. Himachal Pradesh with its many ethnic groupings, its special interpretations of pan-Indian themes, its unique festivals that are based upon local values, its highly developed artistic skills, and its semi-remote setting that was spared most of the major invasions that interrupted the course of civilization in other parts of the sub-continent, is another and equally valid focus of study. And this time the survey is not by necessity pioneering. Study of the history and art of this mountain state rests on a much firmer foundation than the author originally found in either Tanganyika or Nepal. The studies of Goetz, Randhawa, Ohri, Vogel, Harcourt, Chetwode, and others are indispensable. But at the same time, there is still the excitement of discovery. Major monuments are often found far from the beaten path and no investigator has seen them all. Bhīma Kālī temple in Sarahan, for example, is a refined medieval survival that still lives. A foreign visitor who goes there today is likely to find pause in the rumour that others who attempted to take forbidden photographs had their legs broken for their trouble. And Brahmor is a post-Gupta capital that is as breath-taking for its bronzes as for its wooden architecture that has survived for more than 1200 years.

The mountain state is a time capsule that is duplicated nowhere else in India. A glittering metal Durgā in Hatkoti still receives fervent devotion from believers who want to share their joy with strangers. The bronze is a masterwork that is duplicated in no museum. She, too, is living presence. And nothing is more remarkable, more unique, or more important to art history than the palace and temple towers that still invite exploration and interpretation in their Himalayan fastness. All of these elements are part of the answer to the question, "Why Himachal Pradesh?"

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An International Art

THE STATE OF Himachal Pradesh as a remote and rugged land in northwestern India presents physical and historical problems to the investigator, but these problems are worth facing. One of the intriguing and puzzling subjects is that of international themes that combine with indigenous preferences to produce the very special visionary style that the wooden art is known for. Despite its remoteness, the narrative and magical tradition of visual art in the Himachal hills results from the interweaving of many influences, including those that travelled along the Silk Road from Xian to Rome. Central Asia is only one of the regions that are tied to the northwestern mountains by the net of exchange that the trade route created. And wooden buildings are more representative of this internationalism than are early monuments made of stone, like Śiva Mahādeva temple at Baijnath that was completed in the 14th century, or the 8th century *śikhara* temple of Viśveśvara Mahādeva at Bajaura. Faithful copying of architectural models from the heartland of India does not, in fact, persist from formative times in art through accomplishments of the late medieval period in Himachal Pradesh. It does not dominate even today.

As the full history of Himachal building art is examined, it becomes clear that mountain temples, if not palaces, are less than totally transformed by contact with the latest stylistic imports, meaning the art and architecture of the colonial period. Only in some royal dwellings and ordinary houses do we find imitation of Classical, Renaissance, and later European styles. The Akhaṇḍ-Chaṇḍī Palace in Chamba is a late building of almost Mediterranean grandeur, but its basically European form is combined with Mughal/Rajput/Indo-Saracenic borrowings. It is covered with a roof of corrugated metal and this element, also found on many mountain temples, is the most common 20th century addition to buildings in the Himalaya. Electric lights are added to many if not most temples, and some reveal late paintings in naturalistic and illusionistic styles that are not Asian, but none of these is obtrusive and, in total, the wooden buildings remain regional creations.

Mughal and Rajput traditions as influences that precede colonial political control are basic to the limited scope of a kind of international art that develops in Himachal Pradesh during the late medieval period of the 16th through 19th centuries. Nepalese contributions are surprisingly rare, in view of the Gurkha conquest that overran the hill states in the late 18th century, and it appears that the artistic presence of Nepal was rejected along with its political domination. Wall paintings in temples like Śakti Devī Maṇḍir in Chatrarhi show Kṛṣṇa dancing in pan-Indian

style but within a floral and scallop border that is taken from Mughal art. The 18th century Chamuṇḍa Devī temple in Chamba combines Mughal borders with Mughal/Rajput figures and mounted horsemen in Rajput pattern. Winged celestials in this same temple recall Islamic *peri* figures as represented in portable manuscript paintings and elsewhere, while comparison to such paintings is also useful when examining the figures of crowned nobles that occur inside of its octagonal lantern roof. Much earlier connections are recalled by carved animals and humans of the temple that suggest *protome* elements in Achaemenid Persia. Comparison continues, leading to recollection of figural supports for structural beams in the art of Gandhara. And it will be seen that there is, above all, continuous inspiration from the major Hindu/Buddhist dynasties of the rest of India. Only in lower, more accessible parts of Himachal Pradesh state will typically North Indian design be found in its entirety, however, as in the palace fortress at Arki with its Rajput façade and 19th century hall of public audience, the Diwankhana.

Indian influences that are truly transforming come to the mountains early rather than late. They survive mainly in artworks that are made of stone. It is fruitful to look at Pratihara and Pāla-Sena comparisons, and to delve back further to Gupta, Kushan, and even earlier times. Himachal Pradesh is like Kashmir or Nepal in its link to the great Indian dynasties and its acceptance of Indian religions. In terms of structure, the temples of the northwest share such essential Hindu elements as the *mandāpa* (porch), *garbha gṛha* ("womb house" as *sanctum sanctorum*), and *śikhara* tower as developed at sites like Aihole from the early centuries A.D. onward. A temple such as the house of Devī at Jagatsukh has a circumambulatory passage inside for *pradakṣinā* movement around the inner sacred room, and thereby recalls temples in Nepal, Khajuraho, even Kerala. The mountain buildings are, at least in some respects, surprisingly familiar.

The possible relationship of Hindu or Buddhist temple interiors and plans to Mediterranean architecture as it was imported to Gandhara and elsewhere in Asia will not be treated here, but it must be noted that the most sacred space in mountain temples is typically small and dark, just as on the plains. Entrance to such a space is generally restricted to priests, with worshippers coming only to the door. The main focus is usually a representational figure made of stone or bronze, but some shrines contain simple rocks, as noted elsewhere in this study. Special attention should be given both to highly developed images in metal that survive from times equivalent to the Gupta period in Chamba and to later "folk art" sculptures that are as evocative as they are beautiful. Danger of their loss is constant, as seen in the almost successful theft from Chamba town of a 9th century image of Viṣṇu Chaturmukhi that was recovered just as it was about to be smuggled out of India in 1971.¹ There is a special poignancy about a temple that has lost its primary, sanctified sculpture and thus stands empty and bereft of the once living presence within its walls. It is hoped that serious studies like this one will underline the historical value of the arts and help lead to both their protection and survival.

All of India's northern dynasties were known to the princely states in the foothills and upper reaches of the Himalaya. Structural elements like the lantern ceiling of the Chamunda Devī temple relate to stone buildings in Kashmir, including the

towers of Payar and Pandrenthan, that date from the 10th and 11th centuries. The ultimate source of the lantern roof is found not only in Afghanistan and Central Asia, but in Parthian Nisa from at least as early as the 2nd century B.C. Some comparisons as difficult to construct, but it may be noted that lantern roofs were part of the structure of buildings recorded in Kafirstan, now Nuristan, where the native god Imra was worshipped in the form of wooden images as much as seven feet all before the Afghan invasion of 1898. Excavated cave ceilings at Bamiyan in Afghanistan show the continuing lantern pattern in the early centuries A.D. And the building method continues to function in the hills.

Representational as well as structural comparisons continue to be valuable as sources of particular Himachal designs are sought. Inhabited vine scrolls with florid loops, for example, are ultimately Classical in origin even though they were well established in Indian art as early as during the Śunga Dynasty of 185-72 B.C. Well-known examples of the vine motif are seen on an ivory throne recovered from Begram in Afghanistan that was presumably made before the Sassanian invasion of that trading center in 241 A.D. Animals within such Indian or Afghan vine scrolls, especially lions and compound creatures, recall relief sculptures from Parthian Hatra in the 1st century A.D. as well as stucco "brocade" patterns made by the Sassanians around 590 A.D. Arches that are seen to combine lobate, pyramidal, and truncated pyramidal elements may be compared to Gandharan prototypes and, more immediately, to stone monuments in Kashmir. And when such patterns rest on the heads of animals or humans, normally in the form of projecting beam ends in the Himalaya, they suggest sculptures of the Roman world, including those found at Aphrodisias in Anatolia from the 2nd century A.D. The most striking similarity is probably found in projecting cornice heads below roof-supporting struts of temples in Nepal, but these are rare in the northwest.

Less frequent than the structural or representational designs that have been mentioned so far are spiral fluted columns that may be part of the decorative reliefs in Himalayan wood carving. The spiral design relates directly to fluted columns at the Temple of the Sun in Martand, Kashmir, but also to the art of Side in ancient Anatolia. Freestanding columns beneath elaborate entablatures, also found at Martand, are reflective of structure at Hadrian's Library in Athens. Again passed through Kashmir are various Byzantine details, possibly related to the times of Theodosius I (390-415) and Theodosius II (415-450), although John D. Hoag of the University of Colorado in Boulder cautions against accepting the suggestion of Hermann Goetz that architectural connections are continuous as late as the time of Justinian (527-565).² It is clear that east-west dialogue must be kept in mind as representative buildings are considered in Himachal Pradesh. Buildings that are one thousand years old and even more, abandoned or still in use, reveal their heritage by visual signs. Each holds keys to a rich past and each is worthy of some detective work. The elements presented here, mere hints of cornice and column, are only the beginning.

1 V.C. Ohri (Ed.), *Arts of Himachal*, p. 1.

2 Hermann Goetz, *Studies in the History and Art of Kashmir and the Himalaya*, p. 56.

CHAPTER TWO

Art and Rock

ANALYSIS OF A culture's beginnings often includes reference to some kind of primordial, primitive state of existence that is at the root of developed ideas and sophisticated inventions that come later. "Animism" is sought out as part of the belief systems of developing societies. Such a theme may be far from primitive, and it may be so deeply ingrained in the fabric of a culture that its ideals continue and thrive beneath cultural overlays throughout the growth and development of a civilization. In South Asia the belief may be said to continue that all creation is produced by spiritual forces and that these forces are separate from physical matter, yet present like an electric current in all things. This mystical ideal is part of the fully developed and modern culture of Himachal Pradesh just as it is throughout the Himalaya. Even in the sequestered halls of museums, this life blood continues to flow, animating art. It pumps beneath the surface of wooden arts that retain their physical and spiritual viability to the present day.

The Mother

The earliest art of South Asia is broadly recognized as being imbued with invisible natural forces. Life breath or prana makes sculptures appear to breathe and swell from within. Often, the presence of animating forces is expressed by symbols or images of the "mother goddess". India and the Himalaya are tied to world-wide expressions of sacred fertility and well-being that are represented by exaggerated female forms or by other signs of female abundance. Seemingly earth-born images of women dating from as early as 3000 B.C. are made of clay in the Indus Valley and beyond as earliest evidence of such concerns in South Asia. The images are small, even smaller than the miniature metal faces that represent gods and goddesses in Himachal Pradesh, but they have a quality of monumentality in their simplified style. The early goddesses have straightforward strength and inarguable authority that links them to both elegant bronzes and huge rocks in Himachal Pradesh. The female ideal of the mountain state is Hindu, but in essence she is universal. The words of Chinese art specialist Gustave Ecke remind the reader that, "Monumentality does not depend on size." And whether she is represented by a stone, a clay figure, or a mask in bronze, the goddess is the perfect essential female, talisman and protectress, woman as Woman. She is basic to life and, despite the varying prominence of male deities throughout the development of South Asian arts, she may be regarded as the dominant power over life. She is never to die. Devī, Yakṣi, Raginī, Śakti—all are Asian granddaughters of Europe's famous Venus of Willendorf (c. 15,000 B.C.). The goddess is the One in charge. It

is little wonder that an aura of mysterious sanctity and power is said to fill the shrine space inside of Manali's temple of Hiḍimba Devī in Himachal Pradesh. The rock inside is a manifestation or a local goddess born of the land.

Sacred forces are called animistic partly because they animate the world. Powers are sensed in the skies and in the winds; they are in the ground and in all waters; they become mythical *nāga* snakes; they are carved upon temple walls. Such forces recall G.B. Sansom's description of the Shinto world of early Japan wherein "trees and rocks speak"¹ Such a world still exists for South Asian devotees who find themselves in a vast universe maintained by supernatural powers that explode and implode with cyclical regularity and tremendous might, even as they allow for faithful human contributions to their potency. These forces are not the inventions of humans but they can be captured, or at least hinted at, in works of art. And so, in the Buddhist monastery at Bhaja, carved from living rock in the 2nd century B.C., stone walls push outward towards the viewer with the expansive body of Sūrya, Vedic god of the sun, as he rides in his chariot pulled by divine horses across the swelling clouds of heaven.

Sūrya is found represented with iconographical detail in the art of Himachal Pradesh less often than is the goddess, but the most frequent sign of any sacred presence is that of plain, ordinary rocks. Rocks may be painted, carved, smothered under gifts of flowers, given money, even dressed in clothing, but they remain rocks. Their premordial origins are recalled even within the most elaborate temple settings; their age is part of their pedigree. They are found on the road and in the field. At Chobar in Kathmandu Valley a boulder is given robes and a crown as a representation of Gaṇeśa, the elephant-headed son of Śiva. In the waters of Nepal's Bagmati River, before the great temple of Paśupatinātha, an uncut stone is painted with Śiva's face. Erect stones have shrines built around them as they stand for Śiva's potent *liṅga*. But female markers are still more frequent. Receding into the dark, often subterranean space inside of a temple—the *garbha grha* or "womb house"—a rock that stands for the Mother is said to have always been there. The value of time and history is always relative. And so the investigator of art in Himachal Pradesh will be told again and again that almost any temple has been there "for thousands of years."

In Himachal Pradesh the goddess whose spirit occupies a temple is likely to be Devī, Durgā, Bhagavatī. She is local but she is universal as well. She is loving, protective, and often fierce. Her temples are dwellings that are meant to be entered only with utmost respect. They are dignified, secret, and beautiful. The lively and meaningful designs that are carved into the wodden surface of those temples, and sometimes into palaces as well, are a special concern of this study. But arts in wood must be considered as part of the broader picture of temple and palace architecture and it is essential to study the interrelationship of monuments and the people who make and use them. Unique directions taken by mountain folk arts are absolutely joined to themes of belief that are found throughout the Indian subcontinent. Like the goddess, the arts are both local and universal. The Himalayan towers of the northwest are both geographical and art historical landmarks.

The Material

Himachal Pradesh is like every Himalayan region in its abundance of essential building materials: wood and stone. Rivers cut deep gorges that reveal granitic and other types of rock in abundance. Cutting of the stone, like the breaking of large rocks into small pebbles for road building that any traveller in the mountains observes, is accomplished by hand. Pieces of rock are set into a framework made of wood, especially the long-lasting coniferous Deodar or Sāl that is used all through the hill regions. The wood is cut by hand into long beams and boards and these are the structural parts that create the outline of any building. The wall frame is built first, then filled with rock, giving stability and solidity to the finished structure. The rock is essentially a curtain wall in spite of its massive volume, while the wood is the supportive matrix that defines the form of and holds up any structure. Because both materials are essential, the construction method is termed timber-bonded.

Any student of architecture is likely to be surprised by the absolute melding of stone and wood that is found in the Himalaya. Their differing tensile strengths, weights, and colors seem almost to be disregarded as the two materials are laid down in sequence to form walls. And, as meaningful ornament is carved into the wall surface, the two materials are treated in the same or at least very similar ways. One result is that the shallow design on the carved surface of a structure like the Devī temple of Jagatsukh in the Kulu Valley is continuous through all courses of its trabeated walls. The walls are topped by wooden beams and boards that support a heavy roof covering of slate shingles in Himachal Pradesh, but the general approach to building is the same as in Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, even Tibet. In all of these places important buildings made of alternating courses of wood and fill, without excavated foundations, ride the earth rather than nest in it. And they are made of finest materials, as befits structures for royal or religious use. The light, sometimes soaring impact of their verticality belies the fact that these monuments are very heavy indeed. The material and the belief are both essentially local even as they are widespread in the Himalaya.

Environment, Methods, Styles

IT IS POSSIBLE that the way by which buildings are erected, and the materials that are employed to do so make up the simplest subject in this analysis of art in Himachal Pradesh. Inspired, some suggest, by the mountainous environment that surrounds such structures, Himalayan artists sought to produce vertical towers having dramatic forms of their own. Artists had to cooperate completely with priests, at least before sacred buildings could be put up, and *rājas* were always influential patrons. Villages developed like organisms, with every part relative to the whole. Roads and paths may be seen as lifelines. Building methods that occur in Himachal Pradesh continue as far west as Pakistan, where a house in Shikanande Pain, Bambooret Valley (Chitral) has a typically horizontal design with prominent layering of wood beams combined with fill, and as far east as Bhutan and Sikkim, where any trabeated house is structurally as strong as any monastery or palace. Temples and palaces are the vital organs, the animated centers, around which all elements of daily life revolve. One has only to attend a yearly festival, like Dassehra in Kulu town or the harvest festival in Rampur, to see how citizens still come together to mingle and celebrate around a symbolic *rāja* as a kind of center of earthly existence, and to bring their local gods with them for a spiritual "family reunion," to see that this is true. At such times physical and cultural geography are defined, at least briefly, as sacred geography. And the main landmarks are the towers for which Himachal Pradesh is becoming known at last. Above all, the temples are art in wood, including deodar, ordinary pine, and walnut. The structures have impressive vertical drama as they capture poise of balance, especially in the picturesque settings that are so frequent in these mountains. Pārāshar Rishi is a perfect example, standing beside its lake in the mountains above Mandi. The three-roof tower was erected by Rāja Bar Sen of the Mandi Dynasty and it is dated to 1346 A.D. Very difficult to reach, this monument remains untouched by modern tastes and modern methods. Its proportions seem rather odd, in that all three of its roofs seem to be too wide for the slender body that supports them, but its central axis is undisguised. Its carvings are definitely "provincial" as they present folk versions of classical themes and in this they have, perhaps, extra strength. An architectural equivalent might be the temple of Manu Rishi in Shainsher, Inner Saraj, that carries its vertical thrust through five storeys.

Structures like Bhima Kālī temple in Sarahan or Markulā Devi temple in Udaipur are visually complex, partly because of multiple towers and balconies at the former and partly because of lacy carving at the latter, but their construction method is simple. The buildings are trabeated, meaning that they are made of

post-and-lintel assembly of horizontal and vertical parts that are supported by the weight and mass of their materials. Angled elements are few, usually being found only in sloping roof coverings. Lintels are straight; there are no arches. Corbel construction of ancient origin is the norm. Thrust and counterthrust are simple, for weight clearly presses down with gravity. The tensile strength of wood is considered, of course, but only for purposes of post and beam and without use of lamination, buttressing, or other means to stretch its potential. The wooden frame is filled with stone in the western hills, as it is in Tibet, Bhutan, and Sikkim, and large buildings usually have very thick walls. Windows are "inserted" into the walls, often having been assembled and even decorated away from the building site.

Beams that form floors and ceilings in structures of two or more floors often extend out through the walls to be decorated, or to support balconies on the outside. Doors may be doubled and windows may be shuttered or screened, but the structural process as a whole remains simple and clear. Pent roofs have a main ridge beam along their length and this, too, may project at either end and even be carved with a protective face, as at Manan or Jenog. Those buildings that have square or circular floors at the top, like the towers in Naggar, Manali, and Khokhan, have fanning beam supports that brace roof coverings like the spokes of an umbrella. The roofing material, itself may be metal (Manali), wood (Naggar), or slate (almost everywhere).

Slate is the most common roofing material in Himachal Pradesh, as it is in other areas of heavy rain and/or snowfall in the mountains. Comparison may be made to Sikkim, Bhutan, Ladakh, and Tibet, where this heavy but practical stone is also used. It is cut into fairly thin sheets—less than one-quarter inch thickness is typical—and it is shaped into rectangles that may be as large as 18 by 24 inches or more. These can rest on a roof of shallow pitch with only their own weight to maintain them in place, or they may be nailed onto the roof through drilled holes at their upper edge. In either case, the framework under the shingles is made of wood.

Only one who has travelled in the hills can appreciate the special beauty of slate roofs as they reflect sunlight, turning silvery as they shimmer. Since all of the buildings of a town may have almost the same angle or roof slope, an entire village can become a faceted mirror to the viewer. Slate is locally abundant, still being used by school children who carry their sheets of stone back and forth to school each day. It occurs in the schistose strata of the Dhauladhar range at elevations of 5000-7000 feet and it is an admired material because, according to state *Gazetteers*, "These are more siliceous and harder than Welsh slates, but are all that could be desired in point of feasibility. Being highly crystalline in structure, they are almost too coarse for many of the purposes to which slate is usually applied; but in point of durability they are superior to Welsh slates."¹ These comments were written at a time when the Kangra Valley Slate Company, founded in 1867, was being managed by a Mr. Fitzgerald, perhaps explaining the comparisons to Wales. Corrugated metal roofing has not yet attained the popularity here that it has in other parts of the Himalaya. Only very poor houses or outbuildings are roofed with thatch.

Granitic stone is the usual material for cut blocks that make walls, although

limestone and other rock is sometimes used. Simple structures may have walls filled with uncut stones mixed with earth. Only very crude and temporary structures are made with mud walls in a kind of wattle-and-daub method. Rock is, again, abundant in this geologically varied region. The stone is used for paving as well as building, from rough cobblestone on village roads to smooth and polished flooring in temple or palace compounds. In this, once more, Himachal Pradesh is like most of the rest of the Himalaya.

The most significant material that is used in Himachal Pradesh, and the one that ties the area to the best Himalayan art elsewhere, is wood. The wood is *Deodar*, which takes its name from *Devidar*, meaning "the tree of divinities." Its botanical name is *Cedrus deodara* and it is memorable almost as much for its sweet scent as for its physical characteristics that include resistance to moisture. In 1885, in a paper read before the Simla Natural History Society, Sir Edward Buck stated that,

Cedrus Deodara is, as you know, closely allied to the cedar of Lebanon and would look much more like the tree which we know in Europe under that name, if our predecessors in Simla had given it more room to grow...The trunk of one which we measured the other day...was 20 feet in girth, a size which would, judging from the data given by Brandis and Stewart, make it not less than 500 years old.²

The folk tradition is that deodar will last at least 1000 years in water and five or ten times that long in air. The tall, straight trees are ritually felled in time-honored context, and they are transported by being floated down rivers. Workers cut the huge trunks into beams and boards by slicing them lengthwise with a two-man saw. Today, saw mills are more often used, but it should be noted that roads were first built into some districts, and heavy transport made possible, as recently as 1947. Where Deodar is not available, as in districts of lower elevation such as Kangra, pine is used instead, especially *Chil* or *Pinus longifolia*. Other important timbers are listed in the *Punjab District Gazetteers, Kangra District, 1924-25* as *Tun* (*Cedrela tuna*), *Tali* or *Sisoo* (*Dalbargia sisoo*), *Jamun* (*Engenia jambulana*), *Urjan* (*Terminalia glabra*), *Kukar* or *Kukrein* (*Rhus kukur singhi*), a fine yellow grained wood called *Kurumbh* (*Nauclea cadamba*), along with *Kymul*, *Budrol*, and *Chamba*, a species of *Michelia*. The last wood is especially prized for making doorposts, lintels, and rafters because of its close-grained compactness, but it is too heavy to be used for large beams. Because it tends to warp it cannot be used to make boards either, but it is still cultivated like mango in the upper valleys.

Mango is a tree that is often a subject of Indian miniature painting, including the Pahārī schools of the hills, but Deodar is not. This should not suggest, however, that story and symbolism regarding building methods and materials are lacking. Ridgepoles may be made of *tun*, *sisu*, *ohi*, or fir, while woods to be avoided are *harar*, *bahera*, and *pipal*. Only the dwellings of *rājas* or gods should be made with *siris* (*Acacia sirissa*). At the auspicious time of marriage, a bridegroom's house will be replastered and brightly painted, but it is unlucky if a neighbor constructs a house with a ridgepole that "crosses" another house at a right angle, for this is a menace. Any house will normally open to the east or south. Caste concerns lead to the highest and most secluded parts of a village being occupied by Brahmans or

Rajputs, and there are restrictions on lower caste people overlooking the houses of upper caste neighbors.³

Construction of a house is often a group effort in Himachal Pradesh. The post-and lintel method is such that almost the entire frame can be put together before stone filling is added to the walls. More often, the courses of stone are laid down from the bottom upward with wooden string courses, doorframes, and windowframes inserted into the mass as they are needed. Floor beams are put into place when a wall is complete enough to receive them. The method is found in parts of Tibet also, but it would be too simple to agree with the published statement that any such structure "obviously owes something to the western Tibetan influence in its structure."⁴ The piling up of thick and heavy walls is not a detriment to producing tall structures—the great tower of the palace at Gondhla in Lahaul is as impressive as the 12-storey palace in Kathmandu, and both are simple trabeated buildings. And there is no effort to "disguise" the straightforward technique, like the efforts employed by Indian builders during Mughal times to cut the stones of their usual corbel arches and vaults to make them look like the true arches and vaults of Islamic tradition.

Decoration is a luxury that may or may not be added to a house, but it is quite essential for a temple or palace. Artists who specialize in woodcarving are not always a highly respected group in terms of caste status, but they are always talented. That woodcarving is still very much a living art in Himachal Pradesh is attested to by such recently carved monuments as the temple at Vashist just beyond Manali and the recently repaired temple tower in Naggar, where Nicholas Roerich was inspired to paint his mystical views of the Himalaya. Metal tools are used to cut precise floral, geometric, and narrative designs in closely grained and long lasting woods, especially Deodar, and the technique is often akin to that of woodchipping in Central Asia, as used by people like the Uygurs.

A village may have one or many resident woodcarvers, but like painters, some carvers traditionally travelled from place to place. Unusually talented artists must have been sought out, just as the well-known Kumjung artist (Kumjung Kapa Kalden sherpa) in the Everest region of Nepal was until old age overtook him, and as he was called to paint in monasteries far from his home they must also have been bidden to visit remote temples and palaces. Of the many methods and materials that concern artists and craftsmen in the hills, those that are used for decoration are most important to this study. It must be emphasized that ornament in this context is meaningful and exalting, not merely beautifying. And, as noted above, there are international sources for many motifs. As Hermann Goetz points out. "Northwestern India has always formed part of the frontier zone between Hindu civilization and the various people of Persia, Afghanistan, and Central Asia, alternately owing allegiance to one or the other of these."⁵

Finally, and in preparation for analysis of the large number of buildings that are presented in the following pages, it is useful to review the categories of temple architecture in Himachal Pradesh as they were first outlined by A.F.P. Harcourt.⁶ Several alternate classifications have been proposed in recent years, but none is more useful than the 19th century original. And because of Harcourt's astute

observations and enthusiastic exploration, he is quoted several times in this survey. The categories, with some additional comments by Penelope Chetwode and by the author, are :

1. Classical stone *sikhara*, with or without porch or entry roof.
2. Timber-bonded style with pent-roof and optional verandah, as found in *bhandars*, the towers of Thakur's castles, and better class farmhouses.
3. Chalet style, looking as though a number 2 tower, normally centered, had been placed on a low stone plinth (also called Alpine style).
4. Freestanding pagoda style having 2 to 5 superimposed roofs directly over the *garbha grha*.
5. Sutlej Valley style of *mandapa* with one or more pagoda roofs above the *garbha grha* that correspond to the *sikhara* of a classical temple, usually at one end of the building but sometimes in the center (also called compound style).

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- 1 *Gazetteer of Kangra District*, Vol. II (1883-1884) provides an overview of geological features in what is now Himachal Pradesh. The preceding architectural comparison to monuments in Pakistan is taken from "The Wooden Architecture of Swat and the Northern Areas of Pakistan: A Report on Research Carried Out in 1984," *East and West*, New Series, Vol. 34, No. 4, pp. 501-515.
 - 2 Edward J. Buck, *Simla Past and Present*, p. 198.
 - 3 *Punjab District Gazetteers—Gazetteer of Kangra District, 1924-25*.
 - 4 The statement in *Marg* is better suited to summarize pan-Himalayan building methods rather than to draw special attention to Tibet as source.
 - 5 Hermann Goetz, *Studies in the History and Art of Kashmir and the Indian Himalaya*, p.23.
 - 6 A.F.P. Harcourt, *The Himalayan Districts of Kooloo, Lahoul, and Spiti*, p. 60. It should be noted that even with this classification, some buildings simply do not fit. For example, the wooden temple of Devi at Kao village in Karsoḡ Tehsil in Mandi District is described as having two squared towers of equal size and equal prominence that rise above a single passage for *pradakṣina* movement. Each of the towers has two roofs and a gilded *āmalaka* or sun disc. The temple is illustrated in Ohri, *Arts of Himachal*, fig. 27.

Monolithic Masrur and the Fame of Kangra/Nurpur

A REMARKABLE AND appropriate place to begin study of the architecture and sculpture of Kangra District as one of the early Punjab hill states and best known centres of Himachal arts is Masrur. Masrur, of the former Trigarta or Jalandhara state, is difficult site to reach but the journey is worthwhile. It offers one of the earliest and most unusual monuments in the foothills, a mystery that still has not been fully solved. The grouping of towers and shrine rooms measures approximately 160 feet long by 105 feet wide, a spectacular visual statement and the only rock-cut monument of large scale in North India. From an altitude of 2500 feet Masrur provides views of the Dhauladhar Range to the northeast and the Beas river valley to the west. Its remote location has saved it from attack, at least in the later medieval period. Today it is reached by a rugged path eight miles long that leads through inhospitable terrain from the small village of Haripur. Or it may be reached by means of the recently completed Gaggal-Nagrota-Surian Road from Lanj or Pir Bindi just two kilometers away. The approaching visitor sees grey rock outcrops roughly shaped to form towers with carvings, all rising dramatically from the rolling hills, yet the temple complex escaped notice by the famed Archaeological Survey of India until the early twentieth century, being published for the first time in its *Annual Reports* of 1912-13 and 1915-16. No dated inscription has been found and the origin of the complex is generally estimated to belong to the 8th century.

Masrur takes its name from a very small village nearby. The monument is unfinished, with only one completely excavated shrine room at its center. It shows signs of having been seriously damaged by the great earthquake of April 4, 1905, a major disaster that took 10,257 lives in Kangra sub-district alone. Still, it is a thought-provoking remnant of Gupta-influenced "classical" art that once thrived in the hills but is represented today mainly by a few surviving sculptures and some architectural fragments in stone and wood. Islamic invasions of the hill states began as early as 1000 A.D., but efforts of Mahmud of Ghazni to destroy this place, undoubtedly with iconoclastic zeal, in the early 11th century were not completely successful. The site was abandoned, probably for the comparative safety of Kangra Fort. There is no comparable monument in living rock anywhere on the sub-continent, although the temple of Dhamnar in Rajasthan is said to show some similarities. Masrur recalls the height of early post-Gupta civilization when "the mountain areas between the Sutlej and Indus retained a political condition which, in its main features, recalls days of the epic period."¹ It has been called the earliest

specimen of *sikhara* design in the Himalaya, and a small figure of Śiva that is carved on the lintel of what appears to be the main shrine room may indicate that the complex was dedicated to that deity.² The main three images that are honored at Masrur today represent Rāma, Sita, and Lakṣmana. The temple is sometimes referred to as a Thakurdvāra, the typical term for a temple of Viṣṇu.

Many sculptural parts of the stone mass have been removed to museums. They include images of Śurya, Varuṇa, an unknown carved deity, a three-faced Śiva, and a dwarf-like deity holding a pot of lotus flowers among a total of eight fragments (Acc. Nos. 74.192, 74.193, 74.191, 74.197 illustrated in V.C. Ohri, Ed., *Arts of Himachal*, Figs. 9-13). A damaged but still powerfully volumetric image of Kubera as god of wealth also survives (illustrated in G. Singh, *Art and Architecture of Himachal Pradesh*, Plate LXXXIXa). The nine monolithic temple towers and connected flat-roofed shrines remain in dark sandstone at Masrur as timeless dedications to Viṣṇu and, to a lesser extent, Śiva. A variation of the classical *bhadramukha* pattern that is represented on Viśveśvara Mahādeva temple in Bajaura is found at Masrur with three faces carved one above the other, rather than combined into a single image as is typical. Full figurative images are evocative on the doorframes, especially a voluptuous *mithuna* couple with joyous expressions, but the lively floral patterns that curl beyond them are memorable as foundation for later and more "baroque" floral arts in wood that are found in places like Nurpur Fort, Paraśurāma Temple in Nirmand, and the great Bhima Kāli complex in Sarahan, Outer Saraj.

The total number of shrines may have been planned to total 15, but it is difficult to count them in the unfinished state of the partially cut rock. The stone mass appears to push itself upward from the sandstone hills with a life of its own. Its sculptures have been judged to show "suavity, grace, and smooth plasticity"³ even as they present lively informality and good humor. The unified grouping is "living architecture" in the best sense, for it appears to be imbued with life force. Essentially, the temple mass of this place is sculptural art. The best preserved and most finished parts of the mass are generally the doorframes with their abundant iconography, even when the intended cells have not themselves been cut.

Even though historical detail is scarce for Masrur, there is a suggestion that the monument may have resulted from patronage by rulers of the kingdom of Jalandhara on the Punjab plain near the foothills. This would have occurred during expansion of the kingdom of Kashmir while it was led by Lalitaditya, especially between 725 and 756 A.D., a happening that is thought to have forced the rulers of Jalandhara to withdraw into the hills. And it is interesting to note that the name Jalandhara, or Jandhara, was still being applied to the region of lower Kangra and Masrur by nomadic Gaddi people in the early 20th century.⁴ Both eastern Chamba and Kangra were grouped into the Jalandhara circle of hill states located east of the Ravi River in late medieval times.

The Masrur remains are far more significant to the history of art than is the more famous, gold-domed temple of Kangra Bhavan that had to be completely rebuilt after the 1905 quake.⁵ Col. Burrend and H.H. Hayden reported upon their visit to the town soon after the disaster that "at present all is desolation."⁶

The rebuilt temple still enjoys great fame, and it is known for the unusual custom of offering tongues to its deity. Its physical stability, like that of the Kangra Fort above it, was in fact undermined by its solid, stone construction. Both stone structures yielded to stress caused by the "wrenching and twisting motion." of earth and broke into pieces because, "the very solidity of the buildings and their resisting powers only made the wreck more complete."⁷ One important lesson that was taught by the great seismic event is that the kind of massive stone construction put up in order to court eternity on the Indian plain is less suitable to the mountain earthquake zone than is indigenous frame and fill.

The name Kangra means "fortress" but has referred to both the fort and the temple since at least as early as Mughal times. Even before the earthquake, Kangra's temple of Vajreśvarī or Mātā Devī in the suburb of Bhawan had been demolished by Mahmud of Ghazni in an effort to destroy the memory of the place where Hindus believed the torso of Satī, consort of Śiva, miraculously fell to earth. The year was 1009. Further attack by Muslims, possibly Sultan Firoze Tughlaq (1351-1388 A.D.) himself, when he conquered Kangra in 1365, was extended to the nearby temple of Jwalamukhī, "She of the Flaming Mouth" in the hills of Kali Dhar, with its jets of natural gas that are believed to mark the place where Satī's tongue descended. Tradition demands that crowds of sheep and goats be sacrificed here. The temple interior is described as containing a square pit about 3 feet deep with a walkway around it. There is no image, but a flaming fissure in the ground is said to be the fiery mouth of the goddess Devī. Pilgrims offer *ghi* or clarified butter to the flames, as well as animal sacrifices. Another interpretation is that the temple is built around the mouth of the demon Jalandhara who was conquered by Śiva.⁸ The temple is quite plain but contains a silver plated door that was given by the Sikh ruler Kharak Singh and a gilded dome in generally Islamic style that was a gift from Mahārāja Ranjit Singh of Punjab in 1851. Inscriptions here include a eulogy to the goddess that dates from the 15th century reign of Rāja Sansar Chand I of Kangra, who was responsible to the Emperor of Delhi, Muhammad Sayyid (1433-46).⁹

Practices that took place here at the beginning of the 20th century are outlined by the *Punjab District Gazetteers* of 1904 as consisting of six kinds. Goats and sheep were given to all Hindu gods except Kṛṣṇa and Rāma, goats were killed in the name of Devī or to Kālī, sheep were sacrificed in the names of Bhairava, Lonkra (Lankara), and Nar Singh (Narasimha). Buffalos were also appropriate for sacrifice to the younger Lonkra or to Devī, while fowls, pigs, fish, and lizards were offered to a "lesser Kālī." Floral offerings were given almost daily, including grass (*dubh*) and young barley. The head of a sacrificial victim is described as being placed before the image of a deity so that it could drink the blood. Humans no longer offered parts of their own bodies when the report was written, but there was memory of ancient sacrifices in which the lives of men, women, and children were given to Devī or Kālī and men were sacrificed to Lonkra. Ancient records also state that men had their heads cut off to be offered into the sacrificial fires of Jwalamukhī, Kālī, Bhima Kālī, and other gods, while some cut out their own tongues for the goddess. In addition, 13 places are prescribed in Bashahr State, one in Jubbal, and

one in Kulu as setting for the Bhunda sacrifice of "rope sliding" that is termed an "undoubted survival of human sacrifice."¹⁰

Neither this temple of fire nor Kangra Bhavan, as they currently exist, is relevant to the study of native style in Himachal Pradesh for they are too close in essential ways to broad themes of North Indian art, especially later Rajput art. The same may be even said of the delicate and refined miniature painting tradition that is named for Kangra in the 18th and 19th centuries. Mughal impact on art was very strong during the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan, even without actual political hegemony. On the other hand, Afghan suzerainty and the rule of Ahmad Shah Durani beginning in 1752 had little effect on the hill states to the east. Sikh dominance and the reign of Ranjit Singh and others did have strong influence on the arts beginning in 1809, although Chamba, Mandi, and Sukhet escaped actual political control. For localized accomplishments, there are Masrur and the Kangra Fort.

The rocky ridge that is the matrix of Masrur temple rises with its main axis extending from the northwest to the southeast. Its highest portion is marked by deep cuts into the sandstone that vary from 11 to 18 feet wide as they demarcate the mass of the temple. In front of the temple there is an excavated tank for religious ablution that measures 155 feet long by 85 feet wide. The center shrine with its excavated room or *garbha gṛha* faces slightly north of east but it is still bathed in early morning light. It has two main subsidiary shrines on either side, but it should be noted that the largest tower actually stood at the centre of eight smaller towers, all with their thresholds at the same ground level. The total plan is difficult to determine because of heavy damage to the back side of the complex, but enough remains to show that the main shrine had a *mandapa* porch in front of it and that it was entered by way of a portico that was partly made of wood, suggesting the plans of other surviving Hindu works in Himachal Pradesh. On either side of the main *mandapa* there were two *sikhara*s that masked staircases that led to a flat roof. The two rock-cut shrines that flank the portico were carved with false doors that appeared to "open" into it. In all, there were probably 13 shrines and two staircases here, as noted by H. Hargreaves in 1913, with the listing of 15 *sikhara* towers in the early *Kangra District Gazetteer* being excessive. As indicated above, it is puzzling to try to determine the complete plan from what remains.

It is clear that the columns of the portico were large, measuring more than five feet in circumference and likely to have been 11-1/2 feet tall. In spite of the general acceptance of 8th century excavation date at Masrur, or even a slightly later date, that was proposed by Hargreaves in the *Archaeological Survey Report* for 1915-16, some clearly Gupta elements are seen to survive in the art of Masrur, especially in the body types of doorway attendants and in the general composition of the doorframe designs. Lintels are filled with flying *apsaras* figures, some of which hold canopies above the heads of major gods seated below them, and peacocks make up lower borders with long tails that merge with lush foliage. The stone carving is deep in such reliefs, so that they have shadows that are very black against the color of the light sandstone. If comparison is sought to wooden art of Himachal Pradesh, the best example might be the inner doorframe of the temple of Śakti Devi in Chattrarhi. Unfortunately, the *sikhara* towers themselves are too damaged to be

compared to structural stone towers that are found in Himachal Pradesh. Seeing it as a kind of transitional art, Hargreaves observed that, "Lacking the naturalistic treatment of the Gupta age, it is yet far removed from the flat conventional treatment of the later medieval period (c. 11th century)."¹¹ Masrur begins to lead towards a fully expressed Himachal idiom. The same may be said of Kangra Fort, a monument of intricate beauty despite its own considerable damage, again inflicted by the 1905 earthquake that left the entire structure "a mass of ruins."¹²

A key to Himachal architecture that has already been emphasized in the absolute integration of carved stone and carved wood, a feature that will be referred to again and again in these pages. It is exhibited nowhere more clearly than in Himachal Pradesh. Tools and methods are, of course, different as the two materials are used, yet the resulting patterns and meanings are the same. Kangra Fort with its *śikhara* temples of Ambika Devī and Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa is a good place to note their interrelationship. No wooden parts remain, but the carving of stone recalls later wooden arts because of the emphasis upon multiplicity, geometry in combination with floral and vegetal patterns, and extreme precision of cutting. The monument has a violent past, having been taken by the armies of the Mughal Emperor Jahangir, much to his delight, in 1619,¹³ recaptured by the Kangra Rāja Sansar Chand in 1786, then attacked by invading Gurkhas from Nepal in for four years beginning in 1805 as part of their efforts to establish a great Gurkha kingdom that would stretch from Nepal to Kashmir and perhaps even beyond to the Punjab, and then annexed, along with considerable Kangra territory, by Mahārāja Ranjit Singh. The last happening took place after Sansar Chand had called upon Ranjit Singh for aid in driving out the Gurkhas. Sansar Chand was allowed possession of the state but not of the fort itself, or of its 66 attached villages in the district of Sandheta.¹⁴

Sansar Chand reigned from 1794 to 1808 and he, like his capital at Sujampur Tira but not his palaces at Amtar and Alampur, is closely associated with the development of the refined Kangra school of painting. This art does not relate to the current study except as it influences mural painting, but it is the most prominent reason for the fame of Kangra. Stone-carved designs on the Kangra Fort, on the other hand, are one more basic part of the foundation of architectural expression in the Himachal region. They are both sharper and bolder than designs found at Masrur. Wall surfaces here are textile-like in their overall patterning, even with the prominent repetition of architectural elements such as miniature *śikhara* spires. It must be remembered that this cohesive tradition in art leads, like Kangra's Beas River, all through the Himalayan state beyond Kulu Valley and Manali to the snows of the Rohtang Pass. The fort was originally known as Bhimkot or Bhimanagar, meaning "tower." Another of its early names was Nagarkot, meaning both the fort and the town. It is a symbol of Kangra and its long, fruitful history. As an early example of precise textural carving, it relates to the fort and temple of Nurpur, where there is still a temple base that measures 117 feet long by 50 feet wide. The temple of "Brij Raj Bihari" contains a black granite image of Kṛṣṇa, but more impressive for its art may be the surviving temple base that is covered with relief carvings. The heads of nearly all figures that appear on it were systematically defaced by the invaders, but geometric and floral patterns remain intact and beautiful. The carving is shallower and less organic in style than at Masrur, but then the

monument is much later and part of Mughal/Rajput traditions of decoration. The reliefs correspond to painted designs that are found in abundance inside of the Thakurdvara of Viṣṇu temple that still stands in Nurpur town. In spite of the aging and fading of their “fugitive” pigments, the murals of that place are still evocative memories of royal ideals and earthly pleasures. The ceilings of the Thakurdvara are made of intersecting wooden panels that are painted opaque green and white. The wall compositions on plaster are segmented and clear as they cover almost every surface inside the two-storeyed building. There are palace scenes and representations of *rājas* giving audience to visitors along with many scenes from the life of Kṛṣṇa. Landscapes are full of action while painted door panels hold stately and dignified women in profile as lovely attendants. The figure of Kṛṣṇa that is mentioned above is life-size in black stone with silver eyes, and shown in a graceful standing posture as he plays his flute before a smaller figure of adoring Rādhā, his favorite.

Probably built, and destroyed, in the 17th or 18th century, the Nurpur temple that is now in ruins as part of the fort is typical of late medieval, art in the lower mountains as it shows the combined influences of Mughal and Hindu arts. It is more Rajput than it is Himalayan. Yet it is allied with Kangra Fort in showing multiplicity, centripetal design, expansive volume, centering and *maṇḍala*-derivation—all characteristic of developed temple and palace architecture in Himachal Pradesh. The fort was excavated in 1886 by the Archaeological Survey of India and published in its *Annual Reports* of 1904-05. Figures of cows, milkmaids, and the handsome, seductive god Kṛṣṇa wind all around the massive basement of this ruined structure that was built by Rāja Basu (1580-1613) of Nurpur.¹⁵ The damage that it shows may be the result of attack by the armies of Jehangir when they defeated Śuraj Mall, the son of Rāja Basu, in 1618. Whatever the reason for its demise as a functioning fortress and worship center, the stone complex of Nurpur is an appropriate monument to close this first brief look at the combined history, religious history, and art history that are help to define the special culture of Himachal Pradesh.

- 1 *Punjab District Gazetteers*, Vol. VIIA, *Gazetteer of Kangra District*, p. 45.
- 2 Main Goverdhan Singh, *Art and Architecture of Himachal Pradesh*, p. 38
- 3 V.C. Ohri, *Arts of Himachal*, pp. 135-136
- 4 Kashmir comparisons are useful as some of the sculptural details at Masrur are examined, but most elements are closer to Gupta patterns.
- 5 This was not the first rebuilding. An inscription in the gateway reveals that the temple was erected during the reign of Muhammad Saiyyed who ruled in Delhi from 1433 to 1446 A.D.
- 6 *Punjab District Gazetteers*, Vol. XXXA, *Gazetteer of Kangra District*.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 *Punjab District Gazetteers*, Vol. XXXA, *Gazetteer of Kangra District*, p. 492.
- 9 J. Ph. Vogel, *Antiquities of Chamba State*, p. 44.
- 10 *Punjab District Gazetteers*, Vol. VIIIA, *Gazetteer of Simla District*, pp. 40-41.
- 11 Archaeological Survey of India, *Annual Report*, 1915-16.
- 12 *Punjab District Gazetteers*, Vol. XXXA, *Gazetteer of Kangra District*.
- 13 Jahangir visited Kangra in 1622, accompanied by his wife, Nur Jahan Begum, and ordered that a palace be built for them there. Only the foundation was ever completed.
- 14 It may be said that Sansar Chand is as famous as a patron of architecture in Himachal Pradesh as Jahangir is in the Mughal Empire.
- 15 Singh, p. 190.

CHAPTER FIVE

Heritage in Stone

OTHER MONUMENTS MADE of stone add to the evidence of Masrur, Kangra, and Nurpur to provide signs of the beginnings of medieval architecture in the mountains. They still exist while wooden constructions of their time, with a few notable exceptions, have long ago perished. Their Brahmanical dedication is hardly surprising in view of records like that of the *Kangra District Gazetteer* of 1917 which states that "The whole population is returned as Hindu" with the exception of 908 Muslims, 11 Christians, and 55 Sikhs. The temple of Viśveśvara Mahādeva at Bajaura in the lower Kulu Valley, near the Beas River and eight miles from Kulu town, is likened to the Masrur complex in having "monolithic impact,"¹ even though it is actually built of stone blocks. This masonry structure of modest size is well studied, especially for its refined carving. Gupta, Pratihara, and Pala styles are among those that Bajaura preserves, and the sculptor's hand has displayed such dexterity and sensitivity here that the architectural integrity of the structure as a whole is almost overwhelmed.

The *sikhara* tower is massive in its orientation to the four cardinal directions, but the visitor is drawn at once to its beautiful details. Its four extending arms are covered with minute indentations so that the tower appears to ripple from within, as if the axial stone had created a splash in a cosmic pool. So crisp and so delicate are the lines of body contours and applied ornament at Bajaura, especially as major images appear in three large side chapels, that comparison to the best of medieval metal sculpture is called for, especially to the wondrous images made in Chamba. Even the violent action of Durgā Mahiṣāsuramardinī as she attacks the evil buffalo-headed king, Mahiṣa, with her spear and other weapons is softened and made somehow gentle by the sophisticated finish of Bajaura stone carving. Portrayal of this dramatic moment has a long history in Himachal Pradesh, with the earliest such image having been found at Naggar and dated to the 1st century A.D. before being placed in the Amber Museum near Jaipur. It has been suggested that at Bajaura "the carvings are more skilful than the body of the shrine itself," because "Bajaura temple extends itself into the late phases of the early mediaeval buildings, when sculpture overwhelmed architecture and later possessed it almost completely."² Whether or not this is a fair judgement, the temple is the finest combination of architectonic and organic designs that is to be found in the western mountains. Of his first impression in 1869 A.F.P. Harcourt writes that, "The whole of the exterior is richly carved, and the summit is crowned with an enormous circular stone with ribbed radiating protuberances, presenting something of the appearance

of a compressed melon or pumpkin. Over each front is an oval hollow, containing one full-face and a half-face on either flank; the faces in the oval to the west side having a most Grecian aspect, and not being at all in the Hindoo style of art, the eyes of the central figure being large and full, and the other features in good keeping."³

The interior space of the temple measures 8 feet 6 inches by 7 feet 2 inches, with a large stone *linga* as potent sign of Śiva in its centre. The outer measurements of the walls are 13 feet square. The temple door, facing east, is 9 feet 6 inches high by 2 feet 10 inches wide. After 1905, the monument was repaired by the Archaeological Survey of India, but it was not as extensively damaged as some of the buildings mentioned above. There is no inscription to provide firm evidence, so dating of the temple remains somewhat controversial, with estimates ranging from the 7th through 10th centuries. V.C. Ohri of the Himachal Pradesh State Museum in Simla agrees with Hermann Goetz, the most thorough foreign investigator of the region's history and temple art, in assigning it to the mid-8th century. Thus it is another key transitional monument between the classical past and developed regional art of medieval times.

Ohri bases his conclusion on stylistic analysis of the triple-faced medallions called *bhadramukha* or "great face" that appear in triangular tympana on all four sides of the tower—the compound visage that impressed Harcourt 100 years earlier—rather than on study of the temple's elaborate figural sculptures that are more often published. Goetz studies patronage for clues, and suggests that the art dates from the reign of Yasovarman of Kanauj in post-Gupta times. The large sculptures in directional niches are generally accepted by most scholars as being later than the building as a whole, with even the figures of the river goddesses Gaṅgā on the left and Yamunā on the right probably added to the entryway at a later time. This would help to explain their reflection of Pala-Sena dynastic style that is typical of the 10th-11th centuries. The triple faces of the high medallions are identified by Ohri as representing Śiva in composite form, with his *ghora* (terrific) and *saumya* ("human") aspects combined with his female *śakti* or Umā. He also points out that the *bhadramukha* on the north side and above the well-known sculpture of Durgā has the female face of Umā at the center while the southern medallion over a lively and asymmetrical image of Gaṇeśa, Śiva's elephant-headed son, is occupied at the center by the terrific face of Śiva with bared teeth. Over the rather stiff but elaborately detailed standing figure of Viṣṇu that occupies the niche on the back of the temple is found a medallion that centers upon the calm, and more human, *saumya* face of Śiva. The Viṣṇu image itself is praised by Mian Goverdhan Singh as "perhaps one of the most extraordinary and important sculptures in the valley" because of its qualities "of great strength and dignity and yet of great simplicity." It faces west while the niche containing Durgā faces north and Gaṇeśa in his niche faces south.

Reference to pan-Indian Hindu philosophy is apparent as the *bhadramukha*, quite common in early stone architecture of the western Himalaya, is analyzed further. According to the ideal of Sadāśiva, the four faces on the four sides of the tower can be interpreted as representing Dadyojata, Vāmadeva, Aghora, and Tat-

puruṣa, with the top of the temple standing for Isana and representing *ākāśa*, the sky. Elements (*mahābhutas*) are indicated by the directional carvings as *pṛthvi* (earth), *jala* (water), *tejas* (light), and *vāyu* (air). According to Ohri, they are represented at Salooni in Chamba district on a five-faced *Śivalinga* that has its top face looking towards the sky. The *bhadramukha* is also part of the important compound of sculpture and architecture at Hatkoti in Simla District.⁴ At Bajaura they reinforce the radiating design of the *āmalaka* sun-disc at the top of the tapering tower—Harcourt's "melon or pumpkin."

When Hsüsan Tsang visited Kulu Valley in the early 7th century as part of his travels from China to other parts of the Buddhist world, the capital of the Kulu kingdom was described as being somewhere near Bajaura.⁵ The fertile valley was always strategically important. The art of its Śiva temple is important too, for it is an early medieval creation that maintains its connection to the refined arts of India's heartland. And it illustrates the struggle that seems to occur between architecture and sculpture when each lays claim to dominance over the other. Perhaps the tension between them in Himachal building art, as in India from Bhubaneshvara to Khajuraho to Halebid, is never entirely resolved.

The Śiva temple at Baijnath near Mandi where it dominates the Beas River valley in central Himachal Pradesh is another matter entirely. The temple was originally called Vaidyanatha and the village beside it Kiragrama. The stone *śikhara* found here, 23 miles from Kangra town, has hard, aggressive volumes and bold, sharp-edged proportions that come on strong. Built up in classical pattern by duplications of itself, the building appears so heavy as to sink into earth, even when the extra vertical thrusts of its small corner towers are considered. Some of this apparent weightiness, it must be noted, is due to the monument's repair with plain, undecorated blocks of stone. Yet no structure could be more different in visual effect from the poised and balanced "pagodas" of the Himalaya. Even the figures that appear on the walls of the Baijnath building are squat, looking uncomfortable in their fat. The *maṇḍapa* porch appears to be both too large and too tall to properly anticipate the *śikhara* tower, and its combination of slate shingles with stone slab construction is visually awkward. Figures are integrated into the formidable mass of this building on the Beas River, a temple that was largely spared damage by the 1905 earthquake, but not set delicately apart in shadowed niches as at Bajaura. Their shallow frames are not softened by interior shadow. The Vaiṣṇava revival that is often referred to as a turning point in the medieval religious history of the northwest is not anticipated by the confident strength of this monument to Śiva. One writer, perhaps unconsciously but effectively, refers to the "hulk" of this stone building with its heavy tower that "would talk arrogantly to the sky."⁶ And while the battling Durgā at Bajaura is poised gracefully amid the curves of her activity, an image of Śiva as dancing Naṭarāja on the walls of Baijnath explodes from its center in multiple angles. River goddesses attend the door, but they are flattened, clarified, and somehow made more earthy in the art of Baijnath. The centre of the temple is occupied by a *liṅga* of Śiva, but the outer walls are activated by Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī.

The temple honors Śiva Vaidyanātha, Lord of Physicians, and in fact a Sanskrit

inscription on its walls, with a date corresponding to 804 A.D., credits the foundation of the temple to two physicians.⁷ Singh credits its construction to Rāja Jaya Chandra of Jalandhara-Trigarta in 1204 A.D. while two Sanskrit inscriptions at the site from that year, published in the *Kangra District Gazetteer* (p. 487), provide the pedigree of the princes of Kiragana. The temple is unusual in several respects, including its western orientation. As noted above, the *śikhara* tower is fronted by a sizeable *maṇḍapa* with low pyramidal roof that is supported by four massive pillars.⁸ The porch leads to the door to the *garbha grha* as sanctum sanctorum containing a large *liṅga* that is locally known as Vaidyanātha. The spacious interior is dark and covered by a corbel ceiling with stone carved symbols. It produces a rather repelling impression, somewhat forbidding, that is unlike that of the approachable inner room at Bajaura. A large stone Nandi, bull vehicle and support of Śiva, stands before the temple tower in its courtyard as a likely later addition. It, too, is hard, heavy, and aggressive.

The bulk of the temple on the Beas is covered with sharply cut linear texture, somewhat like that on the lion statue that stands in front of the temple of Chamuṇḍa Devī above Chamba town published in Hermann Goetz, *Studies in the History and Art of Kashmir and the Himalaya*, Plate XXXIV. The squat pyramid of the *maṇḍapa* accentuates the soaring tower beside it by contrast rather than by repetition of its form. The two are not joined to each other visually, as they would be in eastern or central India at this time in history, but their very opposition somehow forces them together. Deeply cut lines do not break up and "lighten" the volumes but, rather, emphasize their heaviness. The drama of solid form in space is undiminished by details. Folk art directness is conveyed by geometry and stark action, resulting in the kind of excitement that some authors find to be "symptomatic of the essential mobility of Pahārī carvings."⁹ Pahārī or hill art is indeed different from what had gone before. The stone temples mentioned here have boldness and verve that results from Himalayan invention and re-interpretation of imported, established ideals.

1 Mulk Raj Anand (Ed.), *Himachal Heritage, Marg*, Vol. XXIII, No. 2 (March, 1972), p. 9.

2 *Ibid.*

3 A.F.P. Harcourt, *The Himalayan District of Kooloo, Lahoul, and Spiti*, p. 105

4 Mian Goverdhan Singh, *Art and Architecture of Himachal Pradesh*, p. 55.

5 Mulk Raj Anand (Ed.), p. 10.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

7 *Punjab District Gazetteers*, Vol. XXXA, *Gazetteer of Kangra District*, p. 503.

8 *Ibid.*

9 Mulk Raj Anand (Ed.), p. 9.

Towers and Temples in the Simla Hills

THE PRECEDING MATERIAL from the Kangra, Nurpur, Kulu, and Mandi areas in the western Himalaya provides an introduction to Himachal Pradesh and its art in stone, but it offers little to illuminate the subject of art in wood. Late buildings that reveal a heavy debt to Rajput and Mughal origins are impressive, and their "family" is widespread on the sub-continent, but this study has other concerns. The Simla hills present a strong contrast to Kangra with its mere hints of style and material that are prominent in other parts of Himachal region for they are rich in timber-bonded architecture made of wood and stone, artistic products that are both local and important. The Simla area is known as "the hill of deodars." Even Kipling remarked upon its conifer forests. The most common of the trees that he saw were blue pine, white oak, and especially the famous cedar or deodar. An overlay of British tradition in Simla town itself, dating from the transfer of the Raj to these temperate climes as the summer capital of foreign rule, did not smother the regional tradition or beliefs of the surrounding areas. Local custom remains remarkably whole. Choices are made. And those choices are made according to local preferences even though the region was not isolated from political and cultural contacts with the outside, whether they belonged to the nearby plains and foothills below or to England and Europe far away.

Arki

Arki, capital of the early Beghal state and found at a substantially lower elevation some 20 miles from Simla, is a suitable starting point for a survey of hill architecture, partly because it preserves the kind of stylistic borrowings that have already been discussed in Kangra. At Arki they are perhaps even more striking, and certainly they are later. With its history of continual contact with Kangra, Garhwal, Guler, and Nurpur, it is not surprising that Arki is also a center of refined mural painting. This is especially clear inside the Diwankhana or hall of public audience in the *rāja's* palace and fortress. Yet Arki is not well known for its art. A small connecting hall with double wooden doors opens into a spacious verandah with sculpted floral pillars and many wall paintings, a room that is both curious and impressive.

Along with nearly all of the Pahārī or mountain painting schools of the northwest, Arki was stimulated by the enthusiastic and generous patronage of Rāja Sansār Chand (1775-1823) who ruled the Simla hills from Sujampur Tira. It is well known that the ruler's main temple of Gaurī Śankara (Sansār Chandēśvara).

was erected there in 1793, is as famous for its paintings as for its life-size silver images of Śiva and Pārvatī. And the nearby temple of Murli-Manohar is said to also have such arts. The 18th and 19th centuries were still times of growth and development in all of the northern arts, especially in states that had enlightened rulers. The memory of such leaders is very much alive in Himachal Pradesh, and many of their descendants still receive respect and loyalty, even in the changed political setting of the late 20th century.

Arki's miniature paintings are classified by M.S. Randhawa, one of their few champions, as being inspired by precedents that belong to the Basohli, Kangra, and Sikh schools, a conclusion that is based in part upon his study of works in the collection of the *rāja* of Arki. Among various borrowings in Arki, the "decadent Kangra style" is said to be represented by the dry frescoes in the Diwankhana.¹ Such terminology is hardly complimentary, but the paintings there strike this visitor as being remarkably fresh and candid as well as suitably glamorous and formal, considering the function of the room that they occupy. They have the lively charm of the hills, and if a kind of folk art directness links them to late Kangra "decadence," so be it. The palace that contains them is as theatrical and as Rajput/Mughal as any setting for the romantic conquests of Kangra miniatures.

The colourful ceiling of the audience hall presents a field of floral interlace in red against white that recalls art of the best Mughal palaces, or the finest textiles, paintings, and *papier-maché* arts of Kashmir. They may be compared to the flamboyant patterns in the Thakurdvara of Nurpur. The wall paintings were produced in 1850, during the reign of Kishan Chand and after the prosperous time of Sansār Chand, but their quality remains high. The subjects are varied, blending Purānic literary themes with candid observations of current life. The mixing of fantastic animals and half-humans with visual accounts of historical events and portrayals of stories from classical Hindu literature is surprising, if not challenging. Mian Goverdhan Singh points out, for example, the co-existence of battle scenes from the *Mahābhārata* and 19th century battles between the Mughals and the Sikhs. There are illustrations of the *Ramāyaṇa* and the *Kumārasambhava* of Kālidāsa, but these are no more evocative than are the exotic and highly imaginative treatments of landscape and cityscape scenes in China, Venice, and Varanasi that also enliven the walls. European scenes include a version of Trojan's column as they are placed in bay window niches that project out from the main hall to offer splendid views of the surrounding countryside. The city and landscape pictures often show curious attempts to render depth through western, vanishing point perspective that was transferred from post-Renaissance Europe to late medieval India during colonial times and before. Local Gaddi shepherds move across the walls, just as they still move across the mountains, and there is good-humored depiction of uniformed British soldiers marching in rigid, impractical formation. The internationalism of Arki's paintings is preparation for the hybrid style of buildings that were constructed there, hardly the best examples of mountain uniqueness.

The keen observation of Simla hills artists is evident throughout the wall paintings of Arki. And inclusion of British subjects serves to remind visitors that the British relieved Arki of Gurkha occupation that local citizens still remember bit-

terly as having been particularly oppressive, J.C. French reports in his pioneer study *Himalayan Art* that, "Under the Gurkhas the Western Himalaya, from Nepal to the Sutlej, became a desert. Gurkha reputation for revenge was such that if he cut his foot on a stone, he would not go on until he smashed it to powder."² One can only wonder if such memories kept the artists of Himachal Pradesh from adopting Nepalese conventions in temple art, for few if any traditions of Nepal are echoed. The essentially Rajput/Mughal plan and decoration of the palace fortress at Arki are impressive and the paintings are truly delightful but, once again, they deflect this analysis from its main subject: architecture in native style.

Jenog

From Simla a short drive of a few kilometers by paved road leads to Theog, capital of a subdivision or *thesil* of the same name, and to the nearby village of Jenog. Jenog is a perfect example of a compact farming village in which houses, cattle pens, chicken houses, storage areas, threshing floors, and small gardens co-exist in a limited area that centers upon a village temple and temple storehouse or *bhandar*. The term *bhandar* originally referred to a granary, and indeed rents due or gifts given to a temple were traditionally rendered in the form of grain. Outsiders who arrive here by road have to search for the main path that leads through the settlement. It is easily missed, as it winds downhill among living quarters and yards that belong to curious and friendly people who build no walls higher than those that are necessary to keep domestic animals in place. Greetings are easily exchanged with villagers who belong to many generations as they live together in large two-storeyed houses. These substantial shelters have storage areas and room for some animals on the ground floor while overhanging balconies offer pleasant sitting and working areas as they extend out from the upstairs living areas. All of the domestic buildings are covered with large and heavy shingles made of slate.

As the lowest public area of the little town is reached the path widens somewhat and becomes a rock-paved lane in front of a large tower. Due to its height and its steeply pitched roof this is the most noticeable building in the town, even from some distance away on the motorway. It is a *bhandar*, both ceremonial building and storehouse for sacred paraphernalia, and it is opened only by a *pūjri* or priest. It stands in the center of a paved and sunken courtyard with lower buildings all around it, with two roofs at the front side of the court enclosure repeating the extreme pitch of the tower roof.

The door that leads into the courtyard is marked as special, with a large and finely worked brass boss and a circular handle plus a three-dimensional leopard head.³ Most of the buildings around the tower are like nearly all of the houses in the village in being roofed over with large flat slabs of slate, carefully shaped and usually nailed into place over a wooden frame. The tall tower, however, is covered with wood. It also has a prominent ridge beam across the spine of the pitched roof and extending out at either end for about three feet. The beam is covered over with silver-grey sheets of thin metal and it is marked at the top by six metal pots, the largest of which is in the center. They are the equivalent of a pinnacle on top of a temple. It is obvious to anyone that the tower is important, but it is less clear that it

does not stand alone. The gable under the tower roof and facing towards a small wooden building that may be seen on a rise at the edge of the village is filled with two shuttered windows, perhaps to offer better "communication" with the more humble and less noticeable structure.

Fine views in all directions are available from the two balconied floors that top the tower, and similarities to watchtower and palace designs must be noted. The key to unlock the trap door and entrance to the superstructure is held by the local *pūjāri* or priest. Even the steep ladder-stair that reaches the upper level is carved with auspicious signs and attendant figures in panels. There are extended crossbeams at the corners of the two top floors, resembling cornice beam projections on Nepalese pagoda. Temple towers in Kathmandu Valley—to which the term "pagoda" is often applied—are more clearly part of an established and cohesive collection of structures that reflect a certain time and a certain place, however. They comprise a more specifically defined chapter in world art history. In Himachal Pradesh, on the other hand, the iconography and the range of styles are somehow untamed. There is always room for the unexpected, the pre-Hindu or the pre-Buddhist element of meanings or style that somehow manages to survive sometimes even to "win."

The wooden walls that enclose the two upper floors of the *bhandar* are quite plain except for some rectangular indented panels and some pierced geometric signs that are apparently auspicious symbols. They resemble small *maṇḍalas*, visually like Pennsylvania Dutch hex signs that are painted on barns. Perhaps coincidentally, they recall Celtic patterns in metal. More concretely, they suggest patterns that were transferred along the Silk Road in the form of textiles and metalworks and came to be incorporated into the architectural design of monuments like Kashmir's Temple of the Sun at Martand. Hermann Goetz notes such connections and finds echoes of Śunga style in similar medallions that are found at Brahmor (*Studies in the History and Art of Kashmir and the Indian Himalaya*, plates V and XXIX). Mounted all along the roof edges are double border boards with space between them for the attachment of free-hanging pendants, actually wooden dowels, that move in the breeze. These attachments form a kind of fringe all around the tower and they are a hallmark of temple and *bhandar* design in the Western Himalaya.

The manufacture of roof fringes is explained by Penelope Chetwode in *Kulu—The End of the Habitable World to be a family project in which a wife turns the dowels of wood with rope as her husband applies metal tools to cut it. The finished fringe pieces are called khururu*, and Chetwode explains that it is important that a wife "set her hand" in order to apply appropriated pressure to the lathe as it is turned. As many as 100 such pieces can be manufactured in a day, and their usual length is about 18 inches. They may be painted or left plain, but they should always be moveable. And they may be compared to the wind-blown metal leaves that are often suspended at the edge of Nepalese temples, or to the *bodhi* leaf attachments of temple roof in Thailand and Cambodia. In Himachal Pradesh the pendants are made by people of the *mistri* sub-caste. It is remarkable (and unfortunate) that this group is of such low status that it is typical for a craftsman who is

employed to finish the interior of a temple or shrine to be restricted from ever returning to it once the main image inside is consecrated.⁴

The lower storey of the temple is constructed of wooden courses that alternate with cut stone in the usual timber-bonded way. The building is sometimes used today as a school, but its ritual connection to the nearby temple proper continues. A simple human face at the top of the tower's gable gazes toward the second and more important sacred building, dwelling place of the divine protector of Jenog and its people.

A short distance from the *bhandar* and reached by climbing a fairly steep path that leads beyond the village living area is the local village shrine. Called Trigareśvara or Trigaresvara Mahādeva, the building is dedicated to Śiva.⁵ Many red flags or pennants blow in the winds of its hilltop setting. It is smaller than any house in the hamlet, but its significance is great. In terms of style it is of the Alpine type that is sometimes called "chalet." Trigareśvara is essentially the major local deity, the *devatā* who is part of the village family. His shrine is his dwelling, the most important "house" in Jenog and respected by all who live there.

The sacred building rests atop a truncated base that is partstone construction and part natural hill. On the top of this stone and earth foundation, a stone wall extends around the small temple structure to enclose a stone-paved courtyard. This is consecrated ground and therefore it must not be stepped on with shoes, as any foreign visitor is sure to be told. There is a raised *maṇḍapa* porch attached to the temple building at its front side, facing away from the village at this particular site, and this porch has a floor that is about four feet higher than the courtyard below. In the center of this raised *maṇḍapa* floor that measures about eight feet by twelve feet, there is a small mound of earth that is used to receive offerings, including those that are burned. Above this, the porch is covered by a steeply pitched roof that is joined to shallower slope of the main temple roof behind it. The porch is covered by a roof with an extending ridge beam and there is, again, a protective face carved of wood at the peak of the gable under the beam. A very small double window is just below this in an elaborate wooden frame that is carved with many attendant figures. All of these carvings are special elements that, with the exception of the gable face, are not found on the village *bhandar* or any domestic buildings.

The corners of the temple roof are carved with simple figures that may be angel (*apsaras*) attendants. They hold their hands together at chest level in the respectful greeting and sign of respect that is the "namaste" gesture as they ride on *makara* carriers as elephantine and crocodile-like water monsters. A.H. Francke remarks in his historic *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, Vol. I, p. 15, that "Many of the roofs or gable beams end in dragon heads with open mouths" and that mention should also be made of "rams" heads at the end of such beams." Four squared columns are more prominent than the roof elements as they stand before the elaborate shrine door. These are carved with attendant figures in shallow, rectangular niches. The column nearest the door on the right is topped by a *pūrṇa kalāśa* as vase of plenty symbols, while the column to the immediate left displays the simple form of the trident spear of Śiva. Much more elaborate are the carvings of the lantern roof ceiling

that is part of the open porch. Its square-within-square composition is extremely rich, one of the most elaborately carved ceilings in the hills. A floral knob extends downward from the center of this porous complex of structural and decorative wood while four medallions with lotus flowers are carved in panels beside the square lantern proper. Eight telescoping borders surround the inner circle and false dome interior of the unusually complex multi-level ceiling, and these are filled with vegetal borders and other auspicious signs.

The ceiling of the *maṇḍapa* is less weathered than its other wooden parts, and it contains very refined relief sculpture. The accordion-like progression of borders mentioned above includes lush flora, while all of the squared beams are filled by crowds of figures, including Durgā, Narasiṃha, and Varāha, along with others of Viṣṇu's incarnations or *avatārs*. Lakṣmī is shown in the familiar pose of being bathed by elephants. A beheaded snake, hardly a feature to be expected in traditional Hindu context, is crowded into one corner of the ceiling while a procession of hand-holding women walks along a beam toward an oddly twisted but smiling Durgā beside the severed head of her enemy, Mahiṣa. Whole figures of snakes or *nāgas* are to be expected, and they have been carefully studied as part of trends towards "tree and serpent worship" in the Himalaya. In the Saraj area of Himachal Pradesh *nāga* spirits have even been said to dominate religious practices, according to the early *Punjab District Gazetteer*, p. 62. The lowest border of the ceiling is filled with stout atlantes as attendants. There is no continuous narrative to unite the sections of carved iconography, but the designs do have continuous movement to visually integrate the horizontal sections. In total, the ceiling composition presents intricacy and quality that makes Jenog carving the equal of any that is to be found in the Himalaya.

The carved doorway is even more impressive than the intricate ceiling of this "minor" work of art. It is one of the finest woodcarvings in Himachal Pradesh, with its expanding sunburst and four successive borders that are filled with meandering vine motifs and active, sometimes tilted representations of gods. Some of the deities are multi-headed and multi-limbed, with Śiva clearly shown at the center of the upper level holding an up-ended trident. The lowest level is carved with a strangely emaciated figure of Gaṇeśa having an elongated trunk but not seeming to convey the usual confidence of Śiva's elephant-headed son as remover of obstacles. Lakṣmī with attentive elephants is found at the left center while the right center of the lower ceiling border is occupied by Narasiṃha. A carving of Durgā as destructive female incarnation of Śiva leaps with athletic abandon to have a much stronger impact than that of her restrained counterpart at Bājaura. Jenog presents the kind of folk art inventiveness that makes Himachal Pradesh so memorable.

The inner room of the Śiva temple is very small as it shelters a simple *linga* of Śiva, this one without the quite frequent provision of a suspended container to continually supply dripping liquid from above to "cool" the intense heat of this physical symbol of the god's virile power. There is a second *linga* in a small subsidiary building outside and to the right. A bit further on is a small hill with a shady tree and platform that provides rest for pilgrims. Standing alone on the hill not far from this resting place is a small and fairly plain object that could easily be missed. It is a

wooden pillar, squared and unpainted, but carved with a very abbreviated human face. It does not fit into any category of established Hindu iconography, but it does recall ancestor boards that are carved in some tribal areas of Nepal. Perhaps it preserves animistic values that underlie all of the art and iconography in the western Himalaya.

Manan

Manan is a village located below Shilaru 17 kilometers from Thyog, near Jenog, but 1200 feet lower in elevation. As at Jenog, the town is dominated by a tall *bhandar* that relates to a small temple nearby. The tower is identified, like so many mountain temples, with Mananeśvar as a local form of Śiva. The tower of Manan repeats the function of the Jenog *bhandar* but it is a more open building that has large arched spaces all around its double balcony. The arches are separated by thin, curvilinear columns and the solid wood above and below each opening is filled with floral designs, leaves, tridents, and sharply angular geometry. The wood is not pierced, yet the patterns suggest the kind of almost playful variation upon basic modes that characterize *jhali* window screens in many parts of India as well as the open screens of Nepal. The silhouette of the tower is marked by a sharply angular roof with three golden pinnacles. The sunken courtyard of the tower is, once more, surrounded by smaller buildings, but these have the same kind of balconies and similar ornamentation when compared to the main building, without the most sacred symbols. Presumably, the other courtyard buildings function as a *math* or resthouse for visitors. The tall tower is timber-bonded throughout, with the top core covered by the wooden balconies, and it is painted white at the base. The back side of the monument is plain and bordered by ordinary houses, while its overall color scheme is restrained, as is usual in the region, with brown wood, white walls, and slate-grey roof. This tower near the popular tourist goal of Narkanda may be termed a "classic" *bhandar*.

The small temple in Manan is dedicated to the goddess Bhagavatī expression of Durgā in harmony with the presence of Śiva. The temple is a low rectangular structure with an open tower attached. The tower has a circular roof that is supported from a square base. Pendant borders of wooden fringe are especially luxuriant here, and their bright color makes them seem even lighter than if they were plain. The effect of open lightness is increased by pierced railings that enclose the base of the tower, so that the total impression is of melting laciness. To complete such a scheme the border boards of the roof are carved in relief with textile-like flounces of jewelled ornament. It is a dazzling building, especially in terms of its painted color. It is much more flamboyant than its neighbor. Chetwode points out that it was first illustrated by J.B. Fraser in his *Views of the Himalaya Mountains* (London, 1820), but that the monument was "sadly restored" in 1967 when "all the fine carvings of Durga Mahiṣāsūramardīnī and other subjects were crudely painted in strident colors."⁶ She reacts in a way that might be expected from a westerner who finds crimson with silver highlights almost splashed across detailed woodcarvings within a sacred enclosure. Yet, with the possible exception

of paint that is applied so thickly that it fills in the cut description of shapes and forms, it cannot be supposed that "strident colors" are inappropriate to mountain temples. If any single quality may be assigned to Himalayan temple arts, it is intensity, and intensity is heightened by brilliant color. The form of the Manan temple is bold and easily read even from a distance with its rectangular plan, pitched roof of slate, and circular spire. A few steps lead up to its almost humble *maṇḍapa* where a small mound awaits offerings.

The painting of the Manan temple helps to clarify the bold designs on the columns that support the porch roof. For example, it becomes apparent that their *pūrṇa Kalāśa* capitals are in fact combined with the forms of birds that open their wings at the four corners of each capital. The birds are parrot-like, with yellow heads and long curved beaks. Flat sections of the entry woodwork have geometric patterns of red and yellow, but most of the porch is covered with shallow carving in floral and geometric borders along with simple renditions of various Hindu gods. There is a quality of paper-cuts in their frontal shapes. A large representation of Durgā slaying Mahiṣa occupies, with gusto, an unusual placement at the center of the temple door. Subsidiary gods stare out from walls and columns with the discomfiting directness of certain Jain images, partly because the "whites" of their eyes are silver.⁷ But this feature is only part of a swirling composition of carousel-like drama. Mian Goverdhan Singh recalls the description of this temple in Manan by J.B. Fraser in his record of 1820:

The whole of the interior is sculptured over in wood, with infinite labour and probably forms a detail of the exploits of the deity, with these I am totally unacquainted, but she seems to have been frequently engaged with monsters of very uninviting shapes. The portion of the carving, however, which neither represents the human nor animal figure, is by far the most beautiful.⁸

The Bhagavati temple is unusually open, with a double balcony in the circular section that is its round tower above its rectangular, pent-roof structure with interior hall. The combined design can be found elsewhere, but not with more grace than this structure in Manan. The building is especially poised, partly because its slate shingles are carefully cut into curved patterns that are consistent all across the roof surface and partly because the circular roof section is stretched vertically, with gradually reduced shingle sizes leading to the point of its spire. The rhythm of repeated curves helps to lighten the superstructure as it compliments the open balconies. The silhouette of the temple is itself open in a way that is rare in Hindu art. The pinnacle of the balconied tower is a combined vase and *stūpi* that pulls the viewer's eye skyward to reinforce the general impression of weightlessness. By contrast, a small shrine beside the main temple is essentially a pile of stones, heavy and massive, as it reminds the visitor of the corbel structural method that makes all such buildings possible in the mountains. The form of the circular tower is enriched by staccato repetition of silver dots—the painted tips of rows of *khururu* pendants that hang beneath the two roofs. And, beside the usual border board design of running vines, one section is carved with red Devanāgarī script on white ground in praise of the goddess. In its entirety, the temple has fairly restrained architectural form but it is unforgettable for its color.

The long history of Manan as a sacred site is indicated by the presence of many stone fragments from earlier buildings, including *āmalaka* pieces that were once part of complete sun-discs on top of *śikhara* temples and are now piled up as seven pieces on top of each other. Many of these discs are set up in a vertical pile on top of each other as a kind of sacred axis on the temple grounds. Damaged images include *bhadramukha* triple faces that were also part of stone towers. Many fragments are placed beside a stone sculpture of Nandi, Śiva's protective bull vehicle, that faces the temple today. Chetwode refers to a *śikhara* temple dedicated to Mananeśvar in the upper town that has wooden balconies attached with carving by an artist named Mani Ram Mistri who explained that his guide was a pattern book called *Viśva Karma Darpan* (Mirror of Carpentry) by Mistri Gyan Singh that was published in 1951⁹ With such a wealth of early material and no published inscriptions to establish its chronology, Manan is a site that begs for scholarly attention.

Gajari

A nearby example to reinforce this first impression of temple design in the Simla hills is found in the village of Gajari. It is a temple known as Mahāsu Maṇḍir, taking an alternate name for Śiva. The hamlet is like Jenog or Haat, another settlement that is across the valley from Gajari, the way it is dominated by the vertical thrust of a sacred tower with steeply pitched roof and overhanging superstructure projecting from its two top floors. The temple combines the functions of storehouse and worship place as it occupies a courtyard that is formed by surrounding buildings with slate roofs, like the *bhandars* of the two villages noted above. Both of its upper levels have large painted doorways opening into the tower from the double balcony. And it has a prominent roof ridge covered with metal sheeting extending from both ends. Because the roof itself is very attenuated, this top piece seems to float. The beam is adorned by metal pots as at Jenog—eight of them that are up-ended as crowning elements for the building. In this instance, however, the surrounding buildings that play religious roles also have pots added to their roof ridges. Most important to defining style at this place is the fact that there is no painted tower that displays more color than this one.

The red-painted underroof of Mahāsu Maṇḍir leads the viewer's eye to interlocking floral carving that are painted red, yellow, and green along the border boards. These in turn lead to wooden pendants that are painted in groups of five to make a band of silver, red, and green segments all around the building. The wall surface as a whole and the double balconies are painted lime green, while the pierced railing of the top balcony and the solid lower wall of the second balcony are treated in vertical sections of yellow, green, and red. Interlocking flower buds are painted along the bottom of the upper balcony in red, green, and yellow to be enclosed by white outlines, while the lower balcony has borders of red blooms and black vines on a background of green. The entire projecting structure of two floors is supported by bracket or struts that are carved to represent fully round human figures seated in European posture, and these have been given orange skin. These vaguely "tribal" characters that do not appear to be *apsaras* celestials or *dvārapāla*

guardians rest on vaguely floral bases except for those at the corners, which ride on *makara* carriers. Small wooden windows that are set into the mass of the stone wall below are framed by rainbow borders of red, yellow, and blue. Even the ladder stairway that leads upward beside the plain lower walls is appropriately polychrome, with wood-chipped geometric designs and metal bosses on its side boards. In summary, the effect of this building from a distance is like that of a candy-stripe circus tent. It is the equal of Manan's colorful temple. Certainly the technicolor tower of Mahāsu is the most joyous visual feature in the farming village of Gajari.

Hatkoti

A large stone *bhadramukha* with three striking faces of Śiva in the Himachal State Museum in Simla (Acc. No. 74.247) introduces the art of the sacred town of Hatkoti (Brat) located 110 kilometers from Simla in Jubbal Tehsil. It was removed from the unused and neglected Temple No. 2 in a settlement that is remarkable for its concentration of early monuments and the very unusual design of some of its buildings that are mostly made of stone but with unusual additions of wooden parts that compromise their Himalayan identity to more "universal" values. On the River Pabbar, as tributary of the Jamuna, is found one of the greatest concentrations of medieval art in the mountains. Twelve *sikhara* temples are located in and around Hatkoti itself. The town is difficult to reach, and it has been sadly neglected by art historians until recent years when its true value has begun to come to light. The abandoned Temple No. 2, with its echoes of Gupta style, suggests a date in the 7th or 8th century.¹⁰ This would bring Hatkoti an importance equal to that of Brahmor and Chatrarhi in the Chamba region. Across a nearby stream, the robust style and forceful bulk of Temple No. 1 makes that tower appear to be equally early, with its facade marked by an 8-armed figure of Śiva Naṭarāja. V.C. Ohri points to two inscriptions of the 7th and 8th centuries that survive here in Sankha and Siddha-matrika scripts, suggesting that "the tradition of sculpture at Hat Koti was being refreshed by new influences."¹¹

The best of Hatkoti art surrounds its most prominent deity, Durgā. The main image of the powerful goddess is 8-armed and set within a very elaborate frame with an inscription in Siddha-matrika script that is attributed to the late 8th or early 9th century.¹² It is cast of gleaming bronze and is about two meters tall, including its pedestal and frame. Mian Goverdhan Singh gives an approximate date of the 7th century for the image, illustrating it with a photograph and a drawing (*Art and Architecture of Himachal Pradesh*, plates CIX and XCIII), and it is the importance of the sculpture rather than wood that makes Hatkoti important to this temple and palace survey. Besides Mahiṣāsūramardīnī there are metal images of Viṣṇu, Gaṇeśa, and Sūrya, all possibly dating from the 7th or 8th century. The temple of Hatkoti Durgā (Hateśvari) and the Śiva temple beside it, containing a large central *liṅga* and numerous stone sculptures including one of the most compact and aggressive images of Durgā to be found in the hills. The temple of Śiva is a *sikhara* that was evidently re-roofed in pyramidal style in the 7th or 8th century. This single storey building that is now topped by a concave pyramid of slate and rather incon-

gruous circular top piece has a different form from that of Mahiṣāsūramardini blocky and square and two storeyed, with delicate fringes at the edges of its heavy slate roofs. The early monuments are part of a courtyard complex of monuments that are as powerful in physical presence as they are in iconography and function.

Sarahan

Not to be confused with the royal town that holds the famous temple compound of Bhima Kālī in the summer capital of the Rampur *rājas* on Outer Saraj, Sarahan is small village with forceful architecture in the Simla Hills. It is reached by passage through precipitous hills, a worthwhile trip for the late medieval art in wood that Sarahan is known for. There are also many fragments of medieval to late medieval stone carving including enough *āmalaka* sun-discs to suggest that *sikhara* temples were once numerous here. Wood is still abundant in some parts of the surrounding hills, but the dense deodar forests that once covered nearly all of the landscape are no longer found. In fact, many of the slopes are now quite bare. Yet the mountain views are superb, and as one travels toward Sarahan from Narkanda, the peak that local Hindus call Mt. Kailasa can be seen in the distance.

One of the buildings that flank the Sarahan *bhandar* is remarkable for its unusual design as it presents a circular tower with metal pinnacle centered between two pent-roof projections on top of an ordinary rectangular structure. It is intriguing for this variation on standard Himachal patterns, but it is less important than the *bhandar* itself. That sacred tower is massive and rough-edged, almost like the long cabins of early America. The wood has begun to sag near the center of the building, where a separate lower balcony projects out from a doorway with compound frame, but the design remains clear. The borders of this door are carved to represent flower bud, petal, and geometric borders that progress inward toward a scallop design inner frame that encloses a single door. Scallop edges further define four arched openings on the front of this unusual balcony, and it has its own rugged gable carved with flowers under a slate roof. The balcony columns rest on vase-forms, and the railing of the balcony is pierced. Above it is a second balcony, the main one, extending out from all sides of the tower and quite closed except for the four windows on its front side. Its carving is quite minimal, and its comparative lack of openings suggests that the upper balcony is primarily a storage space. The gables on either end of this extension are as rugged as those on the lower balcony so that, in total, the *bhandar* is as raw and unfinished as the previous examples are refined and fully adorned.

Only the ground level entry to the Sarahan temple tower is welcoming, being carved with four oddly elongated figures that have large heads and spindly bodies along with pierced columns that are marked by braided bands that are either vegetal or serpentine. Plain or not, the *bhandar* still functions, as is attested to by attached horns and strings of marigold flowers that remain from earlier ceremonies. The architecture of Sarahan is almost aggressively simple. But, as the fragmentary *āmalaka* fragments and other pieces of sculpture show, the sacred site is not a new one. The pieces of the past include *bhadramukha* triple faces that are familiar from

so many places and monuments in the northwestern hills. The tower and its setting represent the amount of archaeological and art historical study that still remains to be done; even so close to Simla as a government center and international gathering place. Sarahan and its neighbor art centers offer unique research opportunities to the Himachal State Museum and the nearby university in Simla.

1 M.S. Randhawa , *Travels in the Western Himalaya*, p. 123.

2 J.C. French, *Himalayan Art*,

3 Penelope Chetwode, in *Kulu—the End of the Habitable World*, p. 217, dates an inscription on this metal door knocker with leopard head holding a ring in its “long savage teeth” to 1946, and states that it was made by the Lohar (smith) Nardass Sadhram who was primarily a scissors maker when she visited Jenog.

4 Such restrictions are not, of course, restricted to the Himalayan region.

5 Chetwode; p. 217.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 218

7 While the use of metal inlay suggests Kashmiri tradition, the effect of the extra material in Himachal Pradesh is less subtle and more aggressive than in the sculpture of Kashmir.

8 James Baille Fraser, *Journal of a Tour through Parts of the Snowy Ranges of the Himalaya Mountains and up to the Source of the Rivers Jumna and Ganges*, p.

9 Penelope Chetwode, *Kulu—The End of the Habitable World*, p.

10 V.C. Ohri, *Arts of Himachal*, P. 131.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 132.

Regional Style of Chamba and Chatrarhi

QUESTIONS OF REGIONAL styles and local meanings in art, as compared to those that are imported, are constant as the special value of architecture in Himachal Pradesh is measured. Chamba illustrated both. The town was founded in the 10th century but its art of palaces and temples remains viable to the present day. Chamba district, or at least its eastern part, was one of eleven hill states that comprised the Jalandhar circle as a political sub-division during late medieval times. All eleven states were located to the east of the Ravi River. With Chamba, the group included Nurpur, Guler, Datapur, Siba, Jaswan, Kangra, Kutlehr, Mandi, Suket, and Kulu. All were ruled by families oriented toward the Rajputs. J.C. French enthusiastically explains that Chamba “has been preserved completely inviolate from Moslem invasion...It owes its immunity to its natural ramparts. It is surrounded, in wave after wave, and not a few of them white-capped.”¹ Jagdish Mittal notes that after flourishing during the 10th through 12th centuries and then entering a period of decline, the cultural life of Chamba was restored by Rāja Prithvi Singh beginning in 1641, and again in the 18th century by Rāja Umed Singh (1748-1764).²

The 19th century Akhaṇḍ-Chaṇḍī Palace in Chamba is a major structure that was long the center of political power in its state and that preserves Victorian/Mughal/Rajput style along with intensely colored interior paintings that are very special. The palace has many rooms that were once filled with public and private splendors. Visitors approach the palace, now serving as a government college, from its garden level. Inside, a sitting room offers a sweeping view of the town from its projecting balcony, with windows opening in three directions. A doorway that enters this room from a large and much darker space has guardian soldiers painted on each side. The audience room itself is unforgettable, dazzling its visitors with paintings of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in riding costume on horseback in a picture that is framed by flowers. These paintings recall the refined and elegant grace of Kangra art. Other pictures are violent, with severed heads flying through the air. All of them are dry fresco works, their technique combining pan-Indian and local methods and pigments.³

In a large but darker adjoining room and private audience hall, Śiva is shown seated on an animal skin with his family around him as Durgā is presented amid adoring devotees. Monkeys, Himalayan bears, and other animals are painted in panels that are closest to the floor of the chamber, while Gaṇeśa blesses its entrance from above. Major scenes of large size are especially dramatic. Painting in Akhaṇḍ-Chaṇḍī Palace is a suitable art to introduce Chamba even if it is not a

major focus of this survey. It is cosmopolitan, royal, refined, and Hindu, like the town and kingdom.

The private hall on the main floor almost vibrates with the polychrome brilliance that covers its walls. The dramatic, large-scale composition that covers the main wall of this room is anticipated by a drawing in the Bhuri Singh Museum of Chamba that shows the great battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa in the *Rāmāyana*. Dry fresco painting brings its own light to this dark room. The stories that are painted here are ornamental, historical, and devotional. Many are segmented into reduced compositions that are set within floral frames that recall Islamic miniature paintings, but others are sweeping pictures that are, in every sense, big. The small paintings—about 14 by 24 inches in sizes—relate to “framed” scenes of Śiva, Pārvatī and other deities that are found on the temple of Chamuṇḍa Devī above Chamba town, to the riverside temple of Śivalaya, and to the well-known wall paintings of Chamba’s earlier palace, the Rang Mahal. The earlier fortress is generally thought to have been founded by Rāja Umed Singh after he lost his earlier palaces while warring with the Basohli kingdom in 1772-1775. J.C. French originally dated it to the 18th century or earlier.⁴ Patronage of the wall paintings is credited by M.S. Randhawa, at least in part, to Rāja Charaṭ Singh.⁵ The major wall paintings of Rang Mahal, panel murals in two horizontal rows, have been carefully removed to the National Museum in New Delhi where they are much more available to public view than before, but where they have lost the “wholeness” of their original setting. These paintings, that are essentially enlarged versions of miniature works having the same style and subjects, were finished before the end of the reign of Charaṭ Singh in 1808. Their subjects include scenes from the *Mahābhārata*, *Rāmāyana*, *Kṛṣṇa Līla*, and dalliances of Śiva and Pārvatī. They are intricate and expressive, but they lack the excitement that is found in the Akhaṇḍ-Chaṇḍī murals. That excitement is due in part to sweeping composition and intense, saturated colors.⁶

The “new palace” in Chamba was built around 1860, according to J.C. French, and he states that “Its most striking feature is the frescoes in its Picture Room. They were painted by Kangra and are varnished and difficult to photograph.” He goes on to link the practice of varnishing paintings to European influence dating from the 19th century. His comments on the works remain useful as he describes:

1. A scene of two opposing armies from the Mahabharata. This occupies the whole of one wall.
2. Some curious old sporting scenes, showing Englishmen in top-hats pig-sticking, shooting wild buffaloes with pistols from horseback, and hunting bears with hounds. All three are famous old Indian sports, but only the first survives nowadays. The frescoes were painted when the palace was built (1860).⁷

He adds that the later frescoes in the new palace were painted about 1880. Randhawa credits the revival of Chamba style to the rule of Śrī Singh (1844-1870) when the Rang Mahal was completed and the Akhaṇḍ-Chaṇḍī palace paintings retouched in oil. He, too, is drawn to the *Mahābhārata* battle scene and discusses the execution of a criminal by an elephant and a fight between two rhinoceroses that is watched by a *rāja* sitting in a gallery with his attendants.

The smaller pictures in the Akhaṇḍ-Chaṇḍī palace have the freshness of a set of first-day cover postage stamps. The large compositions are almost expressionistic as they present historical battle scenes against an absolutely flat background of

crimson red. Color is mood. Rajput influence is very important in such work, as may be clearly seen in figures of warriors and horses but the color sensitivity is at least partly local and not only due to broad traditions of the Punjab Hills.⁸ Segmented wall paintings that present images of the gods in photo album clarity and individuality are also found in the hilltop temple of Chamuṇḍā Devī overlooking Chamba. The pent-roof structure is small, with its porch hung with the horns of many animal offerings. It belongs to the state's own *devī*, a form of Durgā and the plastered outer walls of its sanctum are covered with rectangular compositions that are framed by flowers and smaller 8-pointed stars, all of which are filled by individual images of Umā-Maheśvara, Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, Kārttikeya, Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī, and many representations of Durgā herself. An especially well-preserved painting shows Śiva and Viṣṇu combined as Hari-Hara. Above these the ceiling of the circumambulatory porch is filled by multiple lantern roof panels made of wood so that a lantern cavity is formed. This is filled with figurative attendants in carved relief, showing the same Rajput/Mughal style as the museum panels from the state *kothi* in Brahmor.

The effect of the temple carvings of Chamuṇḍā Devī is like that of distant but related cultures while the effect of the bold murals in the Akhaṇḍ-Chaṇḍī Palace is similar to that of Tāntric paintings in Nepal with blood-red drama. If the inventions of Chamba travelled and were travelled to, it is not surprising. Religious devotion requires travel after all, not only for the personal rewards of pilgrimage but to take local gods on trips to visit one another. And so the carved, cusped frame that encloses a pair of Rajput lovers in *rāga* musical mode from the 17th century *kothi* or administrative centre in Brahmor is repeated in a mid-18th century stone carving as *barsela* or sepulchral slab from Bīlaspur.⁹

Sculpture that is portable, like narrative art on cloth, takes special directions in Chamba. The style and technology of making unique *mohras*, or sacred metal masks, is remarkably cohesive in Himachal Pradesh, resulting, at least in part, from traditions of travelling with the masks from one place to another. The masks are simplified, direct, and precious—perhaps the best of Himachal folk arts. Chamba *rumal* art consisting of scenes from Hindu mythology embroidered on cotton is also portable, and therefore it became fairly widespread, although less so than the masks. *Rumal* art is colourful and bold, less meticulous in execution than most other narrative textiles in India. The works are simplified, not simplistic. Perhaps the masks and embroideries should be judged like the temples and palaces, combining basic structural integrity and directness with devotional intent.

Chamba is a place of romantic memories, described by Randhawa as having been “named after a fair princess, and reminiscent of a tree with fragrant flowers.”¹⁰ The woman was Champavati, a daughter of the powerful 10th century ruler Sahilavarman. In 1947 this seat of medieval Hindu rule was absorbed into the union territory, along with other once-feudal states in the Punjab hills. Its impressive grassy *maidan* is a needed open space, a lung for the fairly congested town, with the cliffs over the Ravi River on one side and the town's major temple towers along its edges. The most prominent building in Chamba is the new palace, its major temple is the stone tower dedicated to Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, and its back border

is defined by the older palace or Rang Mahal.

Many of the Hindu temples around Chamba town and above the rivers Ravi and Sala, including that of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, date from the early 10th century reign of Sahilavarman. The group of stone temples that are lined up in the courtyard beside the newer palace is unique in the Himalaya. Their founding is recorded in part of the richest corpus of inscriptions anywhere in the Indian Himalaya. The records were first classified and translated by J.Ph. Vogel in his monumental *Antiquities of Chamba State*, still the most authoritative foundation for any research in this part of Himachal Pradesh. The group of four stone towers with wooden umbrella roofs is very impressive in the center of town, while their design is repeated by other structures in other neighborhoods.

Most prominent among the gods to which the stone temples are dedicated are Viṣṇu and his lovely female counterpart Lakṣmī. These gods are represented with surprising candor, especially inside of the famous Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa temple in the heart of the town. The erection of this monument by Sahilavarman is a mark of the establishment of Vaiṣṇaviśm as the "state religion" of Chamba. Placed on a high pedestal inside of their stone *śikhara* with wooden roof, in the midst of a group of three more of such compound towers, the two figures that represent the gods are nearly life-size. The images are made of marble that was reportedly brought from faraway Mt. Abu, where Jain sculptures have similar open-eyed expression that is rather disarming to first-time viewers. Goetz points out that it is more likely that the marble was obtained from Markuta on the road to the Baleni Pass and the town of Kangra,¹¹ leaving the question of expression unanswered.

The fanning roof pattern of the additive wooden top is the most localized feature of this temple; it is called a *chatra* (umbrella). Such coverings are found in several parts of the northwestern Himalaya as perhaps a somewhat strained accommodation to mountain customs, for the stone *śikhara* forms that they cover are pan-Indian in every other way. An especially impressive example of such a stone monument is the main tower of Jageśvara Temple in the town of the same name, which was found during the reign of Atma Chand at the end of the 9th century A.D.¹² They are first recorded as having attached wooden roofs in the 17th century. The compound design will be discussed further with reference to Brahmor. And since that town is within sight of the great peak of Manimāheśa mountain that local believers associate with Mt. Kailāsa at the centre of the universe, it may be mentioned here that some writers suggest that the form of any pagoda tower is inspired by the mountains themselves. It is a poetic but unconvincing proposal.

Chamba is less noteworthy than Brahmor for its images in metal, with two important exceptions. One is a large-scale but highly refined sculpture of Viṣṇu Caturmukhi in the Hari Rai temple at Chowgan Maidan, an image that is assigned to about the 10th century by Mian Goverdhan Singh and to about 800 A.D. by Moti Chandra.¹³ S. Gorakshkar attributes it to the reign of Avantivarman (855-883).¹⁴ It was very nearly stolen on the night of May 6-7, 1971 but was recovered from a storehouse where it had been hidden in Bombay. It was briefly exhibited in the Old Police Lines in Delhi, where thousands of people came to view it, and then sent home to a joyous welcome in Chamba on July 8, 1971. The town's

other major metal sculpture is the compound image, also large in size, that shows Gaurī-Śankara-Śiva with four arms, Pārvatī, and Nandi—inside of the temple of the same name in the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa court in the center of town. The sculpture is attributed to times of strong Pratihara influence during the 10th century by Hermann Goetz.¹⁵ The work of Goetz remains a unique resource for studies of Chamba regional arts, and it can only be regretted that the third volume of Vogel's *Antiquities of Chamba State*, which would have treated medieval temples, was never written. According to Vogel, the temple of Gaurī-Śankara was founded by Sāhilavarman's son Yugakaravarman.¹⁶ Mian Goverdhan Singh provides a date of c. 940 for the work, also placing it within the reign of Yogakarvarman.¹⁷ These two works may be grouped together with the remarkable metal images that are found in Brahmor to represent the very best of Himachal sculptural arts. And there is one more image that is equally important as it represents Śakti Devī in Chatrarhi.

Chatrarhi is a small village in "Upper Chamba" that is reached by jeepable road bridge from Chamba town. The main temple of the village, Chaṇḍeśvari Maṇḍir, dates from the late 7th or early 8th century and is, like its sister temple in Brahmor, a very rare survival of wooden art from the age of the Gupta Dynasty. It is made by the usual timber-bonding method that combines layers of stone with a framework of wood. Deodar is the material for both structure and carved sculpture. There are images inside of Gaṇeśa and Nandi, but the most impressive is that of the goddess herself, Śakti Devī. The wonder that Hermann Goetz felt upon encountering these "finest examples of late classic Hindu art of the age of Harshavardhana of Thanesar" is still infectious.¹⁸ For Goetz, the sharply chipped carvings of flowers and animals that are found here echo styles that were in vogue as early as Śuṅga Dynasty times (185-72 B.C.). Dated inscriptions that were recorded and translated by J.Ph. Vogel from comparable images in Brahmor were also found in Chatrarhi, and it is certain that these works are from the hand of an artist named Gugga and that their existence is due to patronage by the late 7th/early 8th century king Meruvarman.¹⁹

The statue of Śakti Devī stands 4 feet 6 inches high, including its base in the form of an open lotus. Its "bronze" material is actually the alloy known as *aṣṭhadhatu*. The petals of the flower are rivetted on, in a fashion that is typical of Nepalese and Tibetan art.²⁰ This sacred female is so lovely and gentle that it is difficult to convey the strength of the design that conveys her allure. Her body is elongated, almost too thin, but it sways with weightless grace as the goddess looks slightly down with a private smile on her face. She wears much adornment—necklaces, armlets, bracelets, earrings, strings of pearls, a crown, and robes of real cloth. She has four arms and in her right hands she holds a lance and a lotus while in her left hands she holds a snake and a bell. These stand for power, life, space, and death/time. She is universal symbol of strength, goodness, truth, fertility and every other virtue and positive ability. She is a life form that almost seems to breathe.

The dedication of the statue of the goddess may have been made to fulfil a pious vow, according to Vogel, for it is recorded that King Meruvarman conquered his enemies in their fortress castles with the help of the goddess.²¹ Śakti Devī

occupies a temple of low height and domestic plan. The "extra" features of the building include double-walled construction that provides a circumambulatory space within, a passage that continues around the *garhba grha*. There is a low threshold beneath both the inner and the outer doors and the carving of door-frames is elaborate for each, although the interior wooden door is much better preserved. The wood relief is deeply cut and very florid as it contains swelling figures that sway upon the enclosure. As a frame for the entry and a prelude to the beauty of the goddess herself, the doorframe sculpture is very lush as well as symbolic of the booms that are granted to the faithful. They are a fitting prelude to the unearthly appeal of the perfect female form inside.

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- 1 J.C. French, *Himalayan Art*.
 - 2 Jagdish Mittal, "The Wall Paintings of Chamba," *Marg*, Vol. VIII, No. 3, p. 38.
 - 3 *Ibid.*, p. 42.
 - 4 J.C. French, *Himalayan Art*.
 - 5 M.S. Randhawa, *Travels in the Western Himalayas*, p. 132.
 - 6 K.C. Aryan and T.R. Gairola, "Technical Notes," *Marg*, Vol. XVII, No. 3 (June, 1964), pp. 15-16
 - 7 J.C. French, "Art in Chamba," *Art and Letters*, Vol. XXV, No. 2, p. 47.
 - 8 Mughal and Jammu connections are analyzed by Hermann Goetz in "History of Chamba State in Mughal and Sikh Times," *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. XXXI (1953), pp. 135-156.
 - 9 V.C. Ohri, *Arts of Himachal*, figures 34,35.
 - 10 M.S. Randhawa, *Chamba Painting*, p. 1.
 - 11 The full historical context of this important monument is given by Hermann Goetz in "The Antiquities of Chamba State," *Studies in the Art and History of Kashmir and the Indian Himalaya*.
 - 12 *Ibid.*, p. 178.
 - 13 The image is illustrated in Mian Goverdhan Singh, *Art and Architecture of Himachal Pradesh*, plate CVIa.
 - 14 S. Gorakshkar, "Three Metal Sculptures from Kashmir," *Bulletin of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India*, No. 11, p. 45.
 - 15 Hermann Goetz, *Studies in the History and Art of Kashmir and the Himalaya*, p. 141.
 - 16 J.Ph. Vogel, *Antiquities of Chamba State*, p. 100.
 - 17 Singh, p. 187.
 - 18 Hermann Goetz refers to the wooden temples of Brahmor and Chatrarhi in Chamba as the only genuine early remnants of the late "Rococo" Gupta style and as vestiges of Gupta traditions that were introduced by this leader (*Studies in the Art and History of Kashmir and the Himalaya*, p. 131).
 - 19 The inscription on the image of Śakti is translated in full as follows:
There was an imminent chief of the pure race, the illustrious Deva-varman of celebrated fame. His son, charming by every virtue, (is) the illustrious Meru-varman, renowned on the earth. First, for the sake of the spiritual merit of his parents, he, out of devotion, caused the image of Śakti to be made, after having conquered (his) foes in their invincible strongholds, he who has prolonged his life by glory, fame and religious merit.
J.Ph. Vogel, *Antiquities of Chamba State*, p. 145.
 - 20 Mian Goverdhan Singh, *Art and Architecture of Himachal Pradesh*, p. 65.
 - 21 J.Ph. Vogel, *Antiquities of Chamba State*, p. 40. The dates of Meruvarman's reign are problematic even as such associations are definite, for paleographical evidence alone is not enough. Douglas Barrett agrees with Vogel that the bronzes date, with Meruvarman, to the middle of the 8th century. This is based in part on Vogel making Meruvarman a contemporary of Lalitaditya Muktapida (c. 724-760). Goetz places him in the middle of the 7th century. See Douglas Barrett, "Bronzes from Northwest India and Western Pakistan" *Lalit Kala*, No. 11, pp. 35-44.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Brahmor

DESPITE THE VARIED riches that make the entire region of Chamba important to the history of northwest Indian art, Brahmor stands apart for its art as the most remarkable site of all. It, too, was spared from destruction at the hands of Muslim invaders and it has early wooden buildings and bronze images that are unmatched in terms of antiquity and quality. The difference between this place and others is that Brahmor survives as a whole, largely unchanged, a town with many structures and many images that add up to microcosm of the early medieval world of Hinduism in the hills. It is as if time stopped in the early post-Gupta period, at least in terms of what may be seen in art and architecture. Brahmor is still a unified world of Hindu art and Hindu belief. Visitors from abroad are few and they feel privileged to enter that world, and especially gratified to find that there are few restrictions on their movement and their investigations of this remarkable place that preserves remarkable times. Brahmor is truly a treasure, and it remains surprisingly whole after thirteen centuries. Visitors entering the town on foot see a *chatra*-crowned *śikhara* rising high above slate-roofed houses against a background of mountain peaks covered with snow.

Images made of metal have particular prominence in any study of Brahmor's art, and once more they are a valuable resource to be combined with architecture in this survey. The concentration in this place of superb metal castings of early date and consistent quality is unmatched. The sculptures reflect the early heritage of the hills with roots in the visual traditions of Gandhara and Gupta times, even before contact with the Pratihara Dynasty of c. 750-1030 A.D. introduced new refinements to art of the Chamba region. The oldest Gupta period remains are found in a 6th century platform made of brick that is kept in the Bhuri Singh Museum in Chamba as remnant of a temple that once stood in the town, and in a squatting figure that represents Sūrya in Sassanian dress found in Gum and now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. Other early influences on style came from the Ayudhya kingdom of Kanauj, Pāla-Sena art, and art of the Pratihara Dynasty beginning in the 9th century.¹ Art of Brahmor suggests the kind of accommodation of both foreign and broadly Indian ideal that would continue in later times. Artistic influence was supported by political links to the dynasties of the rest of India, associations that were strong and often long-lasting. For example, the historical relationship between Himachal Pradesh and the Pratiharas is traced by Hermann Goetz as he outlines the political career of Sāhilavarman (c. 920-940), the founder of Chamba who came to rule as king. He is shown to have risen from the rank of being a Pratihara

general to become military governor with responsibility to protect the mountains from a Kashmiri invasion that was being led by Śamkaravarman (c. 883-902). Succeeding in that role, Sāhilavarman went on to resist attack by the Hindu Sahis from Kabul, saving both Kangra and Kulu from invasion. His protection became increasingly necessary as the Pratihara empire broke up, with the sack of Kanauj by the forces of Indra III Rāshtrakūta, and as Sahi and Kashmiri armies were further encouraged to invade Kangra valley. Pratihara art might be said to continue its development in the shelter of Sahilavarman's capital at Chamba. Brahmor profited from stability in that nearby stronghold.

Until the time of Sāhilavarman, and the establishment of a center of government in Chamba town, Brahmor served as capital of the entire Chamba region. Located high above the Iravati River in the hills around Budhal Valley, Brahmor was always relatively isolated and secure. Even today the small settlement is difficult to reach, requiring hours of driving on a narrow, unpaved road that is accessible only to jeeps, a road that is used by herders with their flocks of sheep and goats much more frequently than vehicles. But the trip is worth it. The kinds of monuments and sculptures that must once have been widespread in the mountains still stand in Brahmor, and the human attention that makes them viable has never ceased. Motor vehicles may not be driven within the town proper, so that the only way to approach the site today is the way by which it was always visited: on foot.

The temples and associated buildings of Brahmor are clustered in an open square at the edge of a steep escarpment that descends toward the river valley below. Shade is provided by a few towering deodar trees and there are places to rest and to bathe. Several structures are very open and accessible, including one that contains an image that may be as much as 1200 years old. The most imposing building and the one that is first seen by visitors coming from the road is the great *sikhara* tower that is dedicated to Manimaheṣa Śiva, the most visible but not the oldest temple in Brahmor. It is a simple stone form without *mandapa* porch, and therefore quite unlike the compound structures in Mandi that have pillared halls before them. It is structurally plain but strongly vertical, with expected *bhadramukha* faces raised high above its doorway. Deep indentations repeated for the full height of the building from base to top catch dark shadows against the light color of the stone. The center of its inner room is occupied by a *liṅga* carved of stone in a style that suggests the middle Pratihara period and the temple is dated to the 10th century reign of Sahilavarman, during which an earlier structure was replaced. Both the *liṅga* and the tower that contains it are signs of cosmic axiality, centering, and constancy. The structure relates in some ways to other *sikhara* temples, like that of Śiva Vaidyanātha at Baijnath, except that it has the local addition of a wooden pagoda roof on top of the stone edifice. Just as it does for the many *sikhara* temples in Chamba town, this extra element helps to preserve the building by protecting its top from rain. More importantly, it "honors" the building just as a king is honored by an umbrella that is held over his head. Any compound building that results from combining a pent-roof porch with a vertical stone tower, usually with its own wooden roof, is sometimes said to follow the "Sutlej Valley style," largely because the design occurs there more often than in other parts of Himachal Pradesh. As noted, there is no addition of a separate porch to this tower.

A roof covering similar to that on the Śiva tower is found on top of the nearby *sikhara* temple that is dedicated to Narasimha, the combined lion/man incarnation of Viṣṇu that ruthlessly destroys evil as it is represented by the demon king Hiranyakaṣipu. As recorded in a copper-plate inscription published by J.Ph. Vogel, this *sikhara* was also dedicated in the 10th century. It was built by Queen Tribhuvanarekha and endowed by Yugakaravarman, who is identified as her husband or possibly her son by Vogel.² The large metal image inside of the Narasimha *sikhara* is actually made of *aṣṭadhātu* multiple metals once again, rather than true bronze as alloy of copper and tin. It is undated, but it appears to be both younger than the other cast images of Brahmor and older than the temple itself. The figure is about 3 feet tall as it sits European-fashion on a rectangular throne. No specific symbols are held in its four paws, but the arms are raised in a menacing gesture of attack. The image of Narasimha is frontal, symmetrical, highly reflective, and luxuriously finished. Its expression is ferocious. The iconography is complex but this confrontational sculpture is as memorable as it is powerful.

The building is now lost that originally housed the square's sculpture of Gaṇeśa as Śiva's elephant-headed son and defeater of obstacles, a work that combines impressive volume with refined detail. The sculpture remains imposing in spite of the loss of both its legs. A snake is wrapped around the rotund figure of the god and a lion or tiger skin is knotted over his belly as Gaṇeśa wears a sacred thread while holding a rosary, one of his tusks, a hatchet, and a bowl of sweets in his four hands. The image rests inside of a small and simple hut that must now function as its shrine. Standing 3 feet high without its 14-inch pedestal, Gaṇeśa is inscribed with the name of a key figure in the early history of art in Brahmor: King Meruvarman. This important patron may have reigned during the second or third quarter of the 7th century A.D. or slightly later. A second and less expected name that is also recorded here is that of Gugga, a person who is an exception to the usual rule of anonymity for South Asian artists. Although Vogel praises this individual more for his technical polish than for his style, he does allow that "we cannot but admire the skill with which he has succeeded in imparting majesty to the grotesque features of the elephant-faced god."³ Inscriptional records also exist in Brahmor for its free-standing statue of Nandi and the highly revered image of the goddess Lakṣana Devī, and these four datable sculptures are the most significant in Brahmor. Vogel places the inscriptions from Meruvarman's time in about 700 A.D. at Brahmor and Chatrarhi and judges them to be the most important in the Chamba region.⁴ He also notes that, of the eighteen *rājas* who reigned in Brahmor according to the *Chamba Vamśāvalī*, only Meruvarman is proven by his inscriptions to have been a historical person. Vogel introduces the king by stating:

After A.D. 700, at the very time when political influence of Kashmir had reached its zenith, we find in the upper Ravi valley a Rajput chief of the Solar race, Meru-varman by name, who not only assumed the proud title of "king of kings" (rajadhiraja, inscr. No. 6), but actually must have been a liege-lord...His capital was Brahmor, where the temples and inscribed brass images erected by him still testify both to his piety and power.⁵

The golden statues of Brahmor were probably made on the site according to Hermann Goetz, who terms them to be "good copies of late Gupta statuary such as

it had flourished under the great Harshavardhana of Thanesar.”⁶ Each of the sculptures is impressive for its gravity and its material appeal that was achieved by lost-wax bronze casting, but the statue of Nandi, the sacred bull standing 5 feet tall adds something else. The new element that it provides cannot be attributed to some kind of “barbarian” inspiration but must be judged in terms of folk art directness. The image of Nandi has a kind of gaiety that speaks more clearly of the mountains than of Gupta or any other precedents, for it smiles broadly at visitors from its sheltered porch before the temple of Manimaheṣa Śiva. The protector vehicle of Śiva seems very happy to do his work; the mood of the piece is informal. Neither Vogel nor Cunningham were inspired by its jolly stiffness, however, and they cite no evidence to support the legend that Meruvarman wrote his royal decrees upon it. The sculpture is damaged, as is the statue of Gaṇeśa, perhaps as result of some unrecorded invasion that did manage to reach far into the hills.

The most complete early building in Brahmor and the finest metal image to be found there are both named for Lakṣanā Devī. The temple of this goddess who blesses the people and the land is a rectangular enclosure with integrated porch, hipped roof covered by large slate tiles, and steeply pitched gable over its small front door. The walls are made of stone blocks that have been plastered over and whitewashed. There is a metal pot attached as a kind of pinnacle in the center of the long ridgepole on the roof. The size of the building is humble, not much larger than many houses, and its overall design is, in fact, close to that of most domestic architecture except that it has only one floor. In this it relates to any number of temples in Himachal, including the well-known rectangular temple in Jagatsukh, Kulu Valley and the closely related temple in Chatrarhi. The most notable exterior feature of the Brahmor monument is its exquisitely carved entry facade and this study must pause to concentrate upon this remarkable work of art. The facade is made of wood and it is currently unpainted, although some flecks of pigment remain. It is one of the finest examples of woodcarving in all of Asia.

The temple of Lakṣanā Devī stands just to the side of the town square of Brahmor. Its facade is the most richly carved in the village, with multiple door jambs and lintels that, like the plan of the temple, may be interpreted in part by comparison to Gupta monuments, including the entry facades of the Ajanta caves, the early structural temples in stone at Aihole, and the temple of Viṣṇu at Deogarh. The overall porousness of textural carving is relieved by points of special focus upon figures that include the river goddesses Gaṅgā and Yamunā standing atop their symbolic vehicles of crocodile and tortoise on either side of the door frame base, just as they do at Nurpur, Baijnath, and Bajaura. There is a three-faced image of Viṣṇu atop Garuḍa as his vehicle, fly-whisk bearers, a set of damaged figures that probably represent the nine planets or *navagraha*, and flying celestials on extended capital. Lithe females in *tribhaṅga* hipsway posture, with wooden pendants above them, occur below protective attendants in arched niches. And below these, very near the lintel of the door, are repeated images of *mithuna* lovers embracing one another in blissful harmony.

Many of the carvings call for comparison to Gupta art, but the trefoil arch that is set within a triangular gable at the top of the facade relates to the architecture of

Gandhara in the early centuries A.D. and to its later echoes in Kashmir, including at the Temple of the Sun in Martand. Goetz is careful not to over-emphasize reference to Gandhara prototypes in order to stress that King Lalitāditya of Kashmir controlled an empire that extended from Bengal to the border of the Arab Caliphate and from Central Asia to the borders of China, so that the art of Kashmir presents "the most heterogeneous style elements side by side of Gandhara, Gupta, Chinese, and even Syrian-Byzantine."⁷ A comparison that is closer to home may be made to the mid-8th century temple of Masrur in Kangra district, at least in terms of its carvings. Kashmiri connections for the trefoil arch in triangular pediment are evident in the temple of the sun at Martand. At the same time, the unusual proportion of the façade in Brahmor, with its tall and narrow gable that is steeper in its pitch than the roof that now covers it, suggests that the temple has had considerable reconstruction, possibly with additions. The building may once have looked much more like its surviving "sister" temple of Markulā Devī at Udaipur in Lahaul, beyond the Rohtang Pass—a key monument that will be discussed in a later chapter.

As the small entry door is opened, the interior of the temple proves to be quite dark. The rectangular plan begins with an antechamber with four carved pillars that are topped by extended crossing capitals finely carved with foliage, *pūrṇa kalāśa* vases overflowing with greenery, and exuberantly flying celestials. It is clear at once that this is an important space. The rhythmic grace of the angelic attendants is a far cry from the kind of movement that is sometimes shown by much later figures, like those that appear carved, or "chopped," on the porch of Kajjiar temple in another part of these hills. The latter characters are spread-legged and awkward. The antechamber functions as a *namaskāra maṇḍapa* so it is used for the presenting of offerings that are accepted by an officiating priest and as a place of preparation that anticipates the inner room, the *garbha gr̥ha*. The *garbha gr̥ha* is a small but impressive space. It is located within a double-walled interior that allows for respectful circumambulation all around the sanctum and, therefore, all around the goddess. It is covered over by a richly carved lantern ceiling that appears to be original. The ceiling is as intricately carved as the entry wall, but it is much more difficult to photograph in the darkness. At the center of the womb space and below the auspicious lotus bloom of the ceiling *maṇḍala* stands the revered image of the goddess herself.

The bronze image of Lakṣanā Devī stands only 3 feet 4 inches tall, but her presence is great as she is glimpsed in the semi-darkness of her dwelling temple. First noticed is the glitter of the jeweled accoutrements that have been showered upon the goddess by her devotees. Her costume and jewelry are lavish, a color burst of gold and red that embraces the highly polished figure. She is Lakṣanā known as Bhadrakālī or, more precisely, Bhagavatī. Once again, Bhagavatī is Durgā as fierce but beautiful female expression of Śiva. She destroys Mahiṣa, evil buffalo-headed king, but with less drama than in most Himachal representations of the act, even less energetically than seen in the large but subdued stone relief at Bajaura. The

Devī of Brahmor is remarkably calm and peaceful as she kills her enemy. She stands with a traditional shift of weight at the hips in *tribhāṅga* posture, gracefully plunging her spear into the twisting form of Mahiṣa at her feet. Her body is elongated, especially her legs, and the proportions of attenuated poise might be termed "mannered." Her face, wide-eyed and smiling, is peaceful. Her features are aquiline, sharply cut, and clear. Her countenance is both composed and approving. She smiles like the mother that she is. And she is part of large family, with sisters not only in Udaipur but also in nearby Chatrarhi and all through the Himalaya.

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- 1 Hermann Goetz, *Studies in the History and Art of Kashmir and the Himalaya*, p. 135.
 - 2 J.Ph. Vogel, *Antiquities of Chamba State*, p. 101.
 - 3 *Ibid.*, p. 140.
 - 4 *Ibid.*, Nos. 5-8—Image Inscriptions of Meru-varman, pp. 138-144.
 - 5 *Ibid.*, p. 97.
 - 6 Hermann Goetz, *Studies in the History and Art of Kashmir and the Himalaya*, p. 139.
 - 7 *Ibid.*, p. 46. (formerly footnote 6)

Art in the Parbatti Valley

Manikarn and Sacred Masks

THE PARBATTI RIVER as the largest affluent of the Beas River rises at the foot of peaks that rise 20,500 feet high and joins another stream from the northeast as it turns to the west, passing Manikarn on its way. The Parbatti joins the Beas just outside of Kulu Valley, and its dry brown landscape is a marked change from the green lushness that is left behind. Wild pomegranate trees, low shrubs, and deciduous trees of many kinds take the place of thick coniferous forests and wild iris plants that are found in wetter, higher locales. The roaring river is crossed by new metal bridges but also by a few remaining bridges that were constructed in the ancient way as cantilevered structures. They are made of whole logs covered by long planks, sometimes with low railings at the sides and sometimes open. The bridges are used by shepherds with their flocks of sheep and goats but also by pilgrims, especially those on their way to Manikarn. Tourists, on the other hand, come to Parbatti Valley to fish for trout.

Settlements are few in this dramatically picturesque valley. As the river is followed in the direction of its headwaters, that is from west to east, the villages of Bhuin, Sultanpur, Jari, and Kashol prove to lack significant temples. Manikarn, however, is rich in monuments. The town is also famous for its hot springs, and tourists arrive in large numbers, especially during the summer months. Tourists and pilgrims visit Hindu temples that have a long history here. They also flock to a fairly recently developed Sikh center, a bustling *gurudvāra* as center of worship and study that is built directly alongside the rushing water. It is a large compound with open court surrounded by four-storey buildings, some of which make up a *math* or resthouse for pilgrims and officials. The Sikh complex is reached from the road that passes through the town, or by its own substantial bridge that crosses the river. It is not far from a recently constructed tourist bungalow that was built over some of the springs with its own bathing facilities that are divided into cubicles for privacy. In his early account of Manikarn, A.F.P. Harcourt notes that.

The particular specialty of Manikarn are the hot springs, which have long been noted places for devotees, who come to this shrine even from Madras. The jet that used to be most important has within the last few years been gradually dying out, the ground all round being curiously marked as if by the action of fire and water, streaks of vivid chrome and burnt sienna alternating with what appears to be formations of a decidedly volcanic nature...The third spring, however, bubbles up several jets in a species of natural basin in the rocky soil, and may be twelve feet in circumference by a foot and a half deep...being in temperature above the boiling point; so that the rice which it is *de rigueur* for all pilgrims to have cooked in the pool is prepared for consumption without further trouble than placing the grain in a bag, tying this at the mouth with a string and throwing the same into the water.¹

Manikarn is stretched out along the river in a narrow gorge, an almost claustrophobic setting with just two bridges over the river to join the town to the main road. It is a place associated with miracles and it is named for the earrings (*man-*

ikarn from *mani* or jewel plus *karn* or ear) of Śiva's beautiful wife Pārvatī (Parbatti). One traditional explanation for this association is that Pārvatī removed her earrings to bathe in the river at Manikarn with her husband and emerged from the water to find that her jewelry had been stolen. Śiva flew into a rage and the lost earrings were traced to the underground realm of the powerful serpent Śeṣa. When accused of the theft, the great snake became furious, snorting and dislodging the jewelry from his nostrils so that Pārvatī retrieved them. After this, she and Śiva continued their 11,000 years of meditation at Manikarn. The springs that people flock to for bathing are said to bubble up through the tunnels in the earth from which the earrings themselves emerged.²

Any visitor is likely to notice that Sikh and Hindu worshippers and priests mix together in Manikarn to a remarkable degree. This sharing of the place and time may explain why Hindu temples in the town are more "open" than usual, especially to foreigners. It is as if the Sikh presence has encouraged less restricted admission policies to sacred Hindu places, like those of the Sikhs themselves. Visits to the temples go on all day, and there is an almost festive atmosphere as entire families move together from place to place, pausing for refreshment among the monuments. The three most important temples in the town are Raghunāthji Maṇḍir, Hardaṣa Maṇḍir (also called Nena Mātā Maṇḍir), and Rāmchandra Maṇḍir. The first and third are made largely of stone in *śikhara* pattern, while the second is a low, pent-roof structure of local type.³

Śrī Raghunāthji Maṇḍir has no porch but there is a small pitched roof of corrugated metal over its shallow entrance. The sanctum itself is inside the tall stone tower, as is usual. The tower is capped by a wooden *chatra* roof with a fringe of dowels and this is supported on wooden struts that are braced against the exterior. There is a metal umbrella with its own fringe border mounted over the pinnacle of the *śikhara*, and above this an electrical bulb and metal shade has been mounted. The attendant *pūjāri* attributes a history of 5000 years to the temple; he proudly displays a small bronze image of Rāma and Sītā that occupies the inner room. This sculpture rests on a platform that is draped in red cloth, and there are many colorful offerings around the godly figures. They, too, are heavily draped in cloth. The *garbha grha* is actually lower than ground level, with a large Viṣṇu image and a small figure of Śiva standing alongside of the sacred lovers. Describing the lower level of the shrine, Harcourt noted local explanations that the building sank when the river was flooded hundreds of years before, but states that "it has been doubted on good authority whether any sudden sinking of the soil on which the buildings rest ever took place," so that "the differences of level are attributed to artificial causes, and the irregularities of the wood-work to the effect of an earthquake."⁴

Because there is no separate porch and because the shrine room is small and shallow, it is very easy to feel close to the gods inside of this stone tower roofed with wood. Without a porch and having a large opening into the temple, this is a more approachable and more intimate space than one normally finds in the mountains. Three of the temple's four doors are now sealed, and a relief sculpture of Gaṇeśa appears at the center of the lintel over the entry. The three-faced images in the tympana relate to any number of early Hindu monuments, from Hatkoti to Bajaura to Nirmand and beyond. The actual date of the temple remains a mystery, but certainly Manikarn itself is an early settlement that must always have had a sacred role. It is, after all, a *tīrtha* or sacred place beside water, like the more famous

pilgrimage cities of Varanasi and Hardwar. There is little or no Tibetan presence in the town today, and no antique Buddhist elements are found.

The temple of Rāmchandraji is, again, a stone *śikhara* with attached wooden roof that is supported by struts, but these wooden braces are unusually long. It is smaller than Raghunāth Maṇḍir, and it is less central as it occupies a raised courtyard on a hillside where it can be reached by stone stairs. It is another important sacred focus of the town, and it has a large *ratha* or festival cart in the street below. The cart is marked by a high steeple-like tower, and one can imagine it being pulled or carried along as the gods of the place enter the streets at festival time. Major support for the temple was given by Rāja Jagat Singh in the 16th century and important renovations were made in 1905, but the actual date of its founding is given as 1650 by Mian Goverdhan Singh.⁵ The main *śikhara* tower shows signs of having been heavily repaired, and a smaller shrine within the court that has three Himachal-style roofs, the uppermost of which is round, has been roughly painted with bright images that include Hanuman, the monkey deity of the *Rāmāyāna*, in red, yellow, and green.

The main tower is recorded as having a *mohra* mask that dates from the 15th century⁶ and, in front of its altar pedestal, there is a bell with Garuḍa on its handle that may also be quite early. The entry porch is large enough to accommodate an assembly of fair size, but there is still a feeling of intimacy as one approaches the precious figures of the gods. Rāma is shown in the center of a low altar, with his wife Sītā on one side and his brother Lakṣmaṇa on the other. The three figures stand about 12 inches tall and there is a large silver umbrella above them, as well as two silver lotus buds on either side. Small figures of Śiva, Viṣṇu, and Hanuman are also grouped at the altar, and there are three wooden carts in the room for sacred procession. This writer is grateful for friendly and informative aid given by the local priest of Rāmchandraji, a service that shows once more the open welcome that is provided to strangers in this small and quite congested town on the Parbatti River.

While there is little that is particularly unique about the borrowed styles of the two temples discussed above, the temple of Hardaṣa or Nena Mātā Maṇḍir, found in the town center just beside Sri Raghunāthji Maṇḍir, is as local in its design as in the mother goddess who is worshipped within. In this smaller and less prominent building, true Himachal identity comes through. The rectangular temple has three low roofs of "domestic" style, like the *devī* temples in Chatrarhi, Brahmor, and Jagatsukh. All three roofs have hanging fringe borders, and all covered with slate shingles. The roof is round and it is crowned by a large brass pinnacle, fringed umbrella, metal top piece, and small brass umbrella. Nothing, of course, is merely decorative.

The goddess Nena Mātā is indigenous but she is also closely related to Durgā, as shown by a color lithograph of that major deity riding on her tiger vehicle and surrounded by four other mother goddesses that has been pasted onto the temple's outside wall.⁷ Other arts at this little-known place are much more noteworthy than the late print. There is a collection of *mohra* masks that can be seen inside of the shrine, on its lefthand side, through one of its barred windows. They shine and even beguile as smiling faces, about half life-size, that are mounted one over the other and nestled in colored clothes on a base framework of wood that is ready to be carried. They make up a pyramid of power, a concentration of totem-like protection. And they seem to be at home in the temple that they occupy. There is an

open veranda on two sides of the building, with wooden pillars and floral struts to support the overhanging roofs. Unusual and puzzling is the arrangement of three irregularly placed doors that open into the veranda without clear relation to the inner space. Although this investigator was not able to enter the *garbha gr̥ha*, it is assumed that it is a central space with its own walls and circumambulatory space around it.

The metal masks are the most impressive artworks to be seen. Even better than the Rāma and Sita image mentioned above, the masks stand for the lively directness of both gods and arts in the western mountains. The journey of divinity into the quiet paths of Nirmand town in the form of a familiar mask from Paraṣurāma temple may be recalled and compared to the Nena Mātā masks. It is easy to imagine these ten masks that are mounted together in Manikarn being carried through the settlement on the shoulders of proud, local men. They would be taken to neighboring towns throughout the hills, they would be brought together to celebrate with other local gods, they might even be taken down to the river for a bath. Their faces are silver, while the "frames" around them are brass. There are six silver umbrellas with silver fringes mounted above the assembled masks, the largest of which occupies the top center. And there are many pieces of metal-woven cloth draped around the masks and over their cart, mostly in red and orange. The biggest mask of all is at the front bottom of the arrangement, where it has a special abundance of ornaments just above the silver-mounted carrying poles. Perhaps it represents the mother goddess herself. With its many attachments—fringes, tinsel, silver chains, brass jewelry, cloth, and silver tassels—this conglomerate assemblage of materials should be treated as kinetic art, art in motion. That motion may be informal and quite free, as shown by the sacred stroll through Nirmand, or it may be formal and regular, as in the complex paths of many gods that are brought together in Kulu for the annual Dasserah festival. Families of gods are reunited for such sacred celebrations. And whether they seem informal or not, the outings are very real opportunities for communication between the worshipper and the worshipped. In Nirmand, the priest carrying the local mask may even be seen to carefully "feed" offerings of food or cash into its mouth.

If Manikarn in its remarkable setting on the Parbatti River is not particularly important for native-style architecture, it is, nonetheless, useful to consider the place as a remarkable integrated sacred site that belongs to two major faiths. In some ways it is microcosm of co-existing ideals and patterns of worship in India as a whole. It is also a place where a family of sacred images may be approached closely, and where local gods in the form of portable masks are regularly carried into the real world. For living faiths and developing traditions, the place is special.

1 A.F.P. Harcourt, *The Himalayan Districts of Kooloo, Lahoul, and Spiti*, p. 103.

2 Penelope Chetwode, *Kulu—The End of the Habitable World*, p. 70.

3 The co-existence of these monuments of different types is a common occurrence in Himachal Pradesh, as illustrated in Naggar, Jagatsukh, Nirmand, Vashist, and many other towns.

4 Harcourt, p. 103.

5 Mian Goverdhan Singh, *Art and Architecture of Himachal Pradesh*, p. 194.

6 The mask is shown in a photograph taken of the interior of the temple *ratha* in M. Postel, A. Neven, and K. Mankodi, *Antiquities of Himachal* p.219. The volume includes the best analysis of metal masks that has been published.

7 The other goddesses shown are identified as Toshimata, Balucharaji, Lakṣmī, and Sarasvatī.

Towers of the Sutlej River Valley

THE SAINJ OR Larji River Valley that joins the Beas River below Bajaura and Dyar in the Kulu Valley is not noted for temples or palaces. The same cannot be said of the Sutlej Valley, however, for this region that continues west from Behena as far as Spiti and the border of Tibet and reaches east as far as Bilaspur, with its enormous dam project, is remarkably rich in art. A survival of the refined perfection of Bilaspur art is found in two 8th or 9th century *dikapāla* figures of stone from Raganātha temple that are preserved in the Himachal State Museum.¹ Bashleo Pass divides this little-known region into Inner and Outer Saraj, and the Jalori Pass, with its early castle located 4 kilometers from the top, is another dividing point. The Bamhara River descends from Jalori while the Tirthan River has its source in Bashleo. Travel by foreigners is restricted in the western reaches of the Sutlej where such Tibet-influenced settlements as Tashigong are a hint of what lies further east. But it is possible to go beyond Bashleo Pass as far as Sarahan, one of the most impressive sights in the entire Himalaya. The order that is followed in the present exploration leads from Gushaini to Behena to Nirath to Dattnagar to Nirmand to Rampur and finally to Sarahan. In a sense, this progression summarizes Himachal Pradesh accomplishments in terms of its great variety and high quality combined with local invention and regional beauty.

Gushaini

The temple in this small village that is reached by way of Banjar on the road to the Bashleo Pass is devoted to a very local and very important force. And so the body of the *nāga* snake as ideal serpent is carved on one of its pillars, recalling James Fergusson's attention to Himachal Pradesh in his *Tree and Serpent Worship* of 1868. The carvings on the porch of the small building are described by Penelope Chetwode as "some of the best *pahari* folk-art carving I have yet seen in the hills."² Their style is staccato, abrupt, and very clear. The building is of alpine type, and it is directly related to domestic design with little or no content derived from beyond Himachal borders. The inner room is very small, but the structure opens out by means of the pillared veranda wrapped around it beneath two roofs. The front of the temple has an especially prominent, truncated gable.

Each of the four pillars at the front of the temple is carved with the form of a bold attendant, including Hanuman with an especially long tail that makes a spiral

to the immediate right of the doorway. To the immediate left is a curious seated figure with open legs and this has two confronting peacocks above it. The style of these carvings is linear and clear like patterns made by appliqué, coincidentally suggesting the designs of Hmong needlework from Southeast Asia, textile art of the San Blas islands in the Carribean, or, for Chetwode, "Celtic needlework."³ Inside of the temple there is a simple statue of the local *devī* to whom the temple is dedicated, made of black stone. She is powerful in her identification as Gara-Durgā, whose story is recounted by both the *Kangra District Gazetteer* and by Chetwode. The goddess is described as having originally been a lovely young woman and the daughter of a *thakur* or feudal lord of Dethua located in Kothi Kot. A mason of nearby Bandal so pleased the *thakur* that the craftsman was told that he could have any reward that he desired. When he asked for the lord's daughter, Gara, and succeeded in taking her home with him, the beautiful young girl was so distraught that she sat down beside the River Bandal to weep. The river drew her into its cool depths so that she could become a goddess or *devī*. Today she is part of a family of Durgā expressions that are worshipped in temples throughout Himachal Pradesh. She is as deserving as any to be honored by the cry of "Devī Durgā Ki Jai" or "Victory to the Goddess Durgā."

Behena

Behena is a small village that is located about 150 meters above the Sutlej River at its confluence with the Ani River. It is found midway between the villages of Ani and Luhri on the main bus route out of Simla. The art of this place is important and its solid temple is striking for several reasons, but the inhabitants of the town must have been "burned" by contact with visitors to its temple in the past. One wonders whether it is fear of thieves or of people who might act disrespectfully at the temple, but for whatever reason the local villagers are very inhospitable. It was not possible for this investigator to take any detailed photographs of the Behena temple. The monument is named for Śiva Mahādeva, Śiva as Great Lord, and its porch is marked by nails that have been pounded into the veranda threshold.⁴ They suggest the kind of fetish function of driven nails among the people of Zaire in Central Africa or, much closer to home, the well-known "toothache tree" in Kathmandu. There are also rings of iron that have been nailed onto the veranda pillars as offerings, joining the horns of sacrificed animals that are also on permanent view. Within the spacious veranda, the doorframe of the entry proper is elaborately carved in low relief in sharp, linear style that represents some of the region's finest folk art. They are bold, but less rugged than the carved pillar art in Gushaini. The carvings are complimented by three-dimensional wooden pendants that hang from the roofs above them. The reliefs show Gaṇeśa, Viṣṇu on Garuḍa, Lakṣmī, Śiva Natarāja (sometimes identified locally as Durgā), and "the carpenter who made the temple." The last may in fact represent Viśvakarman as deified Creative Principle. On the right side are Śiva and Pārvatī, who are also shown on the back side of the temple, where they are joined by Durgā. And there is a double window on the right side of the temple that is carved to show a procession of goats and elephants on its superimposed lintels in a style that Chetwode com-

pare to that of a Mughal Shikargah. Guardian figures occupy the upright panels of the window frame. Two wooden carts are kept on the shelter veranda between ritual expeditions into surrounding areas.

Behena offers a hill temple in open courtyard setting without disruptive additions. It is balanced and complete. The temple is a structure of compound type, the style that Chetwode calls the "Sutlej Valley Style" because it is most frequent there. It combines a two-level open tower that Chetwode judges equivalent to the stone *sikhara*, with roofs fringed with pendants that are suspended from floral border boards, and a rectangular base structure. The lower level of the compound building contains the sanctum and a deep porch with circumambulatory veranda. The base is covered by two sloping and closely set roofs, possibly reflecting compound roofs made wholly of stone as early as the 7th or 8th century, as in the Maniyar group at Dwarahat in Chamba District.⁵ The tower is just large enough to allow a person to go upstairs if there should be some need to. The railings around the two levels of the tower have panels that are covered with floral reliefs, along with some members of Śiva's family. They are alternately painted blue and white. The corners of the tower are marked by cross-beams, and the pinnacle at the top of the temple is a *stūpi* with combined forms of the *purṇa kalaśa* vase of plenty and the *āmalaka* sun disc.

The lowest level of the temple is the largest by far and it extends outward, with open railing made up of rectangular panels and lathe-turned wooden pillars that slant outward from the raised floor of the porch. Five stone steps lead up to the entry level, as the building rests upon a stone foundation. There are 20 slanting struts and 16 vertical pillars of deodar wood supporting the heavy veranda roof, and this ends in a prominent gable that has a pierced rectangular window at the front. The roof projects out about 4 feet above the gable, and above its tile shingles there is a metal-covered beam that projects out as it supports a small figure of a deer. The animal presumably refers to Śiva's miracle of Paśupati-nātha, when the Lord of Destruction took the form of a miraculous buck. Two lightning rods on the roof take the form of Śiva's miraculous trident spear. The dedication of the monument is obvious, even from a distance.

The panels of the lower railings are carved with geometric and floral designs along with four anthropomorphic characters, with fair detail and effective overall pattern. They are a subtle hint of the fully developed carving that is to be found elsewhere in the Sutlej Valley. The porch itself holds a depression in the floor that is used to present sacrifices in front of the temple entrance, and this is normally full of ashes. It draws the visitor toward the door and in a direction that is already anticipated by the courtyard sculpture of Nandi as Śiva's faithful bull attendant that kneels in homage facing the inner room. Perhaps the feature of the Behena temple design that is most memorable is its open, rational clarity. There are no shadowed recesses, seemingly no secrets in the airy design. It has all of its parts from base to porch and from sacrificial platform to shrine door concisely constructed, with a tower marker that almost seems to float above it. Questions arise, and it is unfortunate that little explanation is available from villagers who, it is hoped, treasure this monument as an inviolate home of a powerful divine force.

Nirath

With Behena and Gushaini as introduction to the art of the lower Sutlej valley, this survey proceeds to Nirath, on the left bank of the river some 18 kilometers from Rampur. The valley is wide at Nirath, and the slopes of its sides are less steep than in the Parbatti valley. As a first monument to see, it is interesting that Chetwode assigns the stone *śikhara* of Sūrya in this place to the 10th or 11th century and the Gurjara-Pratihāra period as she describes its beautiful relief sculpture of Gaṇeśa dancing that appears on the back side of the exterior.⁶ Mian Goverdhan Singh suggests that the temple dates from the 8th century, while N.K. Sharma notes that the monument could likely have been built before the cult of Sūrya in the Himalaya was absorbed by the cult of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa in about the 10th century.

Inside the tower is a stone image of Sūrya as god of the sun. The tower itself is reddish in color, having once been painted, and it does not have the typical addition of a wooden roof, although there is a small slate covering over the door itself, like that of the main temple in Manikarn. Nothing obscures its prominent capstone with deeply cut, projecting ribs surrounding an *āmalaka*. Like the Gaṇeśa sculpture, this top-piece is classical. And Nirath is marked by a rather puzzling co-existence of early patterns along with the accretions of much later times. This monument is much less “regional” than the temple in Behena, for example. Yet it is quite remote from the pathways of medieval Hinduism during the centuries of its “rebirth.” Based upon evidence of the direct and almost confrontational folk figures that appear to date from the 17th and 18th centuries on its surfaces, this monument has sometimes been attributed with much later origin. Even with the physical joining of its pent-roof *namaskāra maṇḍapa* to the stone *śikhara*, complete with two rows of wooden fringe, this monument remains a sibling of temples on India’s great plain.

There is a freestanding porch just beside the *śikhara* and slightly higher, since the walled courtyard of the temple proper is deep in the earth, and this building is, again, a place of sacrifice to Śiva. Goats are killed here (without preference for colour as in some areas), and there is a pyramid-shaped and open palanquin of wood that is presumably used to carry *mohra* masks on periodic outings. The porch is topped by two flags and a tall metal pinnacle with crescent moon attached that is crowned by four clay pots on top of its sheet metal-covered ridge beam. This building is very unlike the *śikhara* in being timber-bonded and, therefore, local. Slightly to the west there is a third building, also timber-bonded but partly plastered over. It is dedicated to the goddess Kālī. The structure is normally kept locked, but there is a striking presence on the outside of its facade—a staring, protective face that is carved out of stone to look down from its small window just beneath the entry gable.

Returning to the stone tower itself, the dancing figure of Gaṇeśa impresses the visitor as being especially sophisticated and certainly very confident in its open and joyous dancing pose. Gaṇeśa dances within a multiple frame of carved stone that is filled with petals and vines. Above him are a smaller Gaṇeśa and a second figure that is probably Śiva. The lower corners of the panel of stone are marked by figures of Gaṅgā and Yamunā, but their style is far from classical. They have dwarf-like

bodies, abbreviated volumes, and large heads with mask-like faces. A simplified image of Viṣṇu has been described as being "from the hands of a folk craftsman who can impart weight but has no feeling for grace." The figures are of a different hand and from a different time than the large Gaṇeśa, introducing the extreme of folk-art stylization and conceptualization that is a shock when it is found in more "refined" context. It is not easy to see the two artistic directions as being in any way harmonious, but they do help lead this study toward a definition of Himachal art.

Other "folk" images that are inserted into the matrix of the Nirath *sikhara* walls include a damaged Viṣṇu as Narasiṃha, the ferocious man-lion who destroys evil by tearing at it with his claws, two representations of Śiva and Pārvatī in deeply shadowed relief as they ride upon the back of Naṇḍi, Skāṇḍa (Kartikēya), the son of Śiva and Pārvatī, seated spread-legged on the back of his peacock, and two images of Viṣṇu, and Lakṣmī together. One of the latter images is so worn and rough that it looks unfinished while the other carving with this meaning is a swirl of curvilinear lines that converge upon the surprisingly frozen figures of the gods themselves. In this bull's-eye carving, Viṣṇu has four arms and holds his usual symbols of conch shell, club or mace, discus, and water pot. All of the figures have mask-like expressions and aggressive frontality; they are so simplified that they seem cold and lifeless. The simplest of all has no expression at all, since it is the stone *linga* that represents here, as anywhere, the virile might of Śiva. It rests on a *yoni* as equally strong female symbol. And some distance away from the temple, in a grassy area of approach to it, there is another meaningful mark in stone: a platform beneath which are said to be the miraculous footprints of Viṣṇu.

Dattnagar

With Behena standing for local creativity in architecture and Nirath providing arts that are both classically medieval and ruggedly local, it is possible to continue on for a few kilometers to make another discovery. On the left bank of the river further on are found related monuments that have a quiet beauty of their own. The village of Dattnagar has as its heart the kind of unified "organism" that is essential to any Himachal temple town. In the small grassy square of Dattnagar two sacred buildings face each other across a *maidan* as they honor Durgā/Kali and Dattātreya. The lower building is quite open on its upper floor since it functions as a resthouse for visiting *sadhus* or holy men who use the structure as a *maṭh* or pilgrimage center. The second building that stands across from this resthouse, on a high foundation of stone, is a *bhandar* in which religious paraphernalia is stored. This building has a hipped roof that is hung with pendant fringes at both ends, and there are two small windows set into its gable. A thick rope that is used for a rare and rather infamous ceremony known as *bhunda* is kept here, and there are two wooden palanquins kept for religious processions by the images of the gods. The *bhandar* has five wooden windows in all, and its pillars with connecting capitals form arches all across its vestibule. The main door into the *bhandar*, which does not seem to function as a full-fledged temple, has wall images of Durgā Mahiṣāsūramardīnī on either side where they are set into the wall above the open-

ing. Frontal devotees carved of stone appear on both the exterior and interior walls. Across the road and not visible from these two early buildings is a third and later structure near a school. It is an unusual, round temple covered with plaster that contains a large image of Śiva, with three faces. The god stands two-thirds life-size with Nandi beside him. The sculpture is made of marble, is highly polished and painted, and has nothing to do with Himachal style.

Nirmand

Beyond Dattnagar lies the large and important town of Nirmand in Outer Saraj. Its importance is rooted in its long history and especially in its temple history, along with its combination of political and religious authority that has had considerable effect in the mountains. Nirmand is one of the only Himalayan communities where the control of Brahmins can be said to be paramount in all things. In his 19th century report, A.F.P. Harcourt recorded that "Some of the Nirmand Brahmins have come from Cashmere, and others from Kashi or Benaras, i.e. Benashi, separation of castes."⁷ When A.H. Francke visited in 1909, the only other castes in Nirmand, were the Sonars or goldsmiths and the Kolis or peasants.⁸ Even today the proportion of the population that belongs to the highest caste is remarkably large.

Elevated about 700 meters above the Sutlej, the town is almost directly opposite Dattnagar. The spirit of the settlement is very different, more formal and much more "established". Not everything is pleasant in this place, but it stands for a certain kind of history. Nirmand has been called "the most notable large village, from the point of view of sanctity and temple architecture in the whole of Kulu District."⁹ It has a reputation of being the center of the mountain cults of Śiva, and it is near the peaks that are sacred to him. And Nirmand is also a focus for the Śakti cults of goddesses who are associated with Śiva, especially the mighty Ambika Devi. A very dynamic wooden image of Durgā from the Thakurdwara temple in Nirmand is illustrated by V.C. Ohri in *Arts of Himachal* (figure 71) as is a stone sculpture of Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī on Garuḍa in Pratihāra style with some Pāla elements (figure 23). It is an important site of the famous—or infamous—ordeals that are known as the *bhunda* or rope-sliding ceremony, an event that traditionally happens every 12 years. This is a violent observance that seems blood-thirsty and cruel whether its victim is human or a substituted animal. As recorded in 1904 by the *Punjab District Gazetteers*,

Worshippers now do not offer any part of their bodies in sacrifice. There are, however, traditions of human sacrifice and it is said that in ancient times men, women and children were offered as sacrifice to a Devi or Kali, and that men were sacrificed to Lonkra...One sacrifice is still performed that is an undoubted survival of human sacrifice. It is found both in the Simla Hill States and in Kulu.¹⁰

That sacrifice is *bhunda*.

In terms of art, Nirmand is important because it contains hill temples, *śikhara* temples, fine wood carvings, sculptures in metal and stone, and significant archaeological finds. Legend has it that each of the five main streets in the original town had a great temple before the devastation that was brought by cholera and

smallpox.¹¹ A visitor who comes to Nirmand by road sees important stone towers of early date almost immediately upon entering the town, but the first important site consists of a grouping of small *śikhara* temples that is identified as "Dasnami Akhara." Whatever the original meaning of this compound that is made up of several sacred and secular structures, it functions today as temporary lodging place for pilgrims and Hindu holy men. It is surrounded by a low wall that joins a rugged shrine that is devoted to Hanuman, but the site is most noted for its *śikhara* towers that were founded as early as the 7th and 8th centuries. They are marked by sculpted faces of the triple-Śiva type that are also seen at Bajaura and Baijnath, although the most direct comparison is probably to the 8th century temple of Śiva at Hatkoti, a monument that has been studied most thoroughly by V.C. Ohri.¹²

The faces in Nirmand are set within foliate frames, and a local explanation given by Brahmins is that they represent Lata, a legendary man without a tongue who lived in Nirmand nearly 2000 years ago. An outsider might be tempted to dismiss such a story as myth, but the living reality of the gods of Nirmand becomes apparent when they take to the streets, and this can happen even daily. Masks like the one that was observed to be carried from the Paraśurāma temple and walked through the roads and byways of Nirmand are regarded as representations of heroes from epic times, as orthodox gods, or as deceased princes and princesses like Mujani Devī (Mujuni Devī), the queen of Rāja Hemaprakaśa of Nirmand in the 9th/10th centuries. A mask representing this queen has been illustrated by A.K. Coomaraswamy in his *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, by Singh in *Art and Architecture of Himachal Pradesh*, and by Goetz in *Studies in the History and Art of Kashmir and the Indian Himalaya*. The oldest *śikharas* are in late Gupta style, including the tower of Holkar Vir to the east of Paraśurāma temple and the Lat-taka Baoli tower that is spoken of by Chetwode as being closely associated with the *bhunda*.

The central square of Nirmand is the home of the small mask god who was observed to go on a tour of the town. Here is a group of buildings that make up Paraśurāma temple, named for the "founder" of the town. The total compound is very large, being made up of a pent-roof building that is surrounded by similar but larger structures that are attached to each other. A key copper plate inscription that now seems to be lost was found in the smaller building and attributed to the 7th century on palaeographic grounds. It records a grant to the temple by a person named Samudrasena¹³ who may have been a pre-Buddhist ruler of Spiti.¹⁴ This find helps to show the antiquity of Viṣṇu worship in the hills and this is a useful reminder, since Nirmand later became famous for its dedication to Śiva and his female equivalents. Another indicator is a fine silver for the Bhunda ceremony of 1981.¹⁵ Vaiṣṇava reformers who were active in the Himalaya include Śaṅkaracharya (8th century), Ramanuja (1017-1137), Madhava (1197-1276), and Jayadev (12th century), with their cause being adopted by later Rajput princes.¹⁶ The considerable age of Nirmand was assumed by A.H. Francke in 1913 because he found all of the main temples in the town to be made of indigenous timber-bonding, including the most famous monument of all. And the oldest temple is probably the temple of Ambika Devī, a sanctuary that is reached by a long and wide stairway of stone that

descends from the town to a setting close to the fields. Impressed by the approach, A.H. Francke counted the steps and gave their number as 184.

The most prominent building in Nirmand is Paraśurāma temple, and any visitor interested in art is rewarded by its lengthy facade of integrated buildings, marked on its three floors and overhanging balconies by some of the most elaborate and "baroque" woodcarving that can be found in Himachal Pradesh. Some of these are so refined as to equal the best carvings in Sarahan. The balconies of the Nirmand temple occupy two levels as the buildings join each other, and they are quite open, lacking both shutters and wooden screens. Their entwined foliate movements and large symmetrical curves make them reminiscent of the best non-representational art of old Punjab and places like Lahore.¹⁷ The balcony of the lefthand and tallest structure has five arched openings that make this section appear lighter than the other buildings, with their balconies that are filled with wood except for a few long rectangular windows. The main door of the center building is the heaviest opening of all since it is framed with massive beams of wood as it opens into a dark, double-doored passageway. The weighty impression is reinforced by the timber courses of the entire complex, since they are especially heavy and very prominent. Some of them are carved with a running vine motif, but this element of visual movement is not enough to lessen the massive impact of the wooden frame. There is a small shrine built into the righthand section of the facade where it opens into the street. In no way could this shrine be called an ornamental or sophisticated addition to the whole.

The street shrine on the exterior of Paraśurāma temple contains an especially ugly sculpture that is, presumably, made of stone. "Presumably" so because it is so completely covered with pasty coatings of offerings that its rather anthropomorphic form is nearly lost. A muddy red layer covers the image like a heavy blanket. Perhaps it represents Hanuman, since it recalls a similarly obscured statue in the Durbār Square of Kathmandu and since Hanuman is so important to the story of Rāma and Śītā. Other information, supplied at the site, is that the statue represents Hurka, a much more local character.¹⁸ In the passageway beyond the outer door there is a more recognizable image, clearly of an early style. It is very erect and frontal, a standing male about 4 feet tall made of stone. The implements or symbols that are held in the two hands are so damaged that they cannot be properly identified, and the two attendants' figures that stand at the feet of the figure are also unclear. A crown with three points at the top is a rather general feature, but it would not be out of place on certain of Viṣṇu's incarnations. The statue is said to represent Devī, but this does not seem possible since its physique is male.

A much more fluid figure that shows the competence of the artists who made it is found within the inner courtyard of the temple, at the base of the pent-roofed building. Standing in graceful *tribhaṅga* pose, with a small and chubby attendant at its side, is a kind of guardian figure that has been set up at the base of the free-standing temple at the center of the court. The face is badly damaged but fortunately not "repaired" like the face and figure of a complimentary sculpture that forms a pair with this one on the other side of the temple façade. The patching of this second image gives it an oddly feline face that has much less to do with its meaning than with the awkward hand of the craftsman who produced it.

The inner temple that rests within the courtyard may be approached closely, and it may be circumambulated, but it is unlocked only when the *bhunda* ceremony takes place. It is rectangular with its porch and door facing toward the entrance from the street. Its pitched roof is covered by slate shingles. Because it has a tower on top of its main structure it fits the category of compound buildings in the western mountains. Its round superstructure is roofed with metal. A pot-shaped *stūpi* that tops the temple is unusually large and rather clumsy in appearance. Other buildings that open into the courtyard of Paraśurāma have fine window carvings, but the central temple does not. In fact there is no carving of note on the small building except for one panel of relief that has been nailed onto the front of one of the three pillars that support the temple roof. This panel is carved with three frontal figures in square frames that may represent Sūrya on three horses, Durgā wearing a necklace of skulls, and Brahmā with four faces. The compressed yet appealing style of the figures, each of which is densely “soft” like bread dough, makes them quite special. They are no match for the more skillful carving of *purna kalāśa* capitals on the other two pillars but they are not less interesting. They are simply different; they fit no known Himachal model.

In contrast to the scarcity of woodcarving in the temple courtyard, there are 23 carved panels on the balcony of the center building of Paraśurāma, and seven more on the balcony of the building to the left, while the righthand building has only minimal carving on its lower level window. The balcony designs deserve more attention than any other woodcarvings in Nirmand. They are extremely varied, some with overall curvilinear texture of intertwined leaves and flowers in relief and some with centralized patterns of lotus flowers, gods, and religious narrative. The panels are very exposed and they have to be replaced when they become too damaged by the elements. Even entire balconies may require reconstruction. Therefore it may be safely assumed that the carvings now present were made not earlier than the 19th century. Stylistically, they have verve and perfect finish that again anticipate the art of the Bhima Kālī temple in Sarahan.

The temple of Ambika Devī is much simpler and much smaller than the imposing complex of Paraśurāma on the hill above it, but this rectangular structure without veranda has a special beauty, a wild kind of presence that seems both alluring and dangerous. The temple is surrounded by a high wall and it is near open fields but no dwellings. When the priest locks the door and leaves it, the monument is absolutely quiet. Yet it does not sleep. The double-gabled gateway that stands at the side of the monument is plastered and whitewashed and its bolted-door is sheltered by projecting volutes and two fierce tigers. The animals are fully round as well as ferocious, and one holds a recumbent deer in its claws. Another figure of a deer, this one made of metal, stands on top of the metal-covered ridge beam of the temple as it projects from over the gable. There is also a pair of lions shown in “backward stance position” in front of the temple.¹⁹ There is no added tower and the temple is low and simple, its style “domestic” rather than compound. Chetwode describes its entrance facade as marked by fighting stone beasts, large stone heads, and panels that show Śiva and Pārvatī. She compares them to images on the *bhandar* at Nithar Chebari and to some temples of the 17th/18th century in Mandi town.²⁰ But such points are minor compared to the ritual significance of this place

as the home of one of the most beloved and feared deities in the hills of Himachal. An early 20th century account of the main image inside describes the goddess as standing erect, about 2 feet tall, with a black face and clothing covered with gold.²¹ Chetwode adds that her head is made of stone and her dress of incised gold sheets.²² Mian Goverdhan Singh describes the icon as made of brass and standing 77 cm. high.²³

Above the temple of Ambika Devī and also very near the fields, is a smaller and rather neglected temple that is dedicated to “Dakhni Mahādev.” As she accepted V.C. Ohri’s proposal of a 13th century date for this monument, Penelope Chetwode remarked upon the jambs and lintels of its sanctum doorway as being “exquisitely carved in the classical style.” Since the current writer was unable to enter the temple compound, no other judgement of the sequestered arts will be made here. But it may be stated that the temple is surrounded by brambles in its walled compound so that it seems to be a dark mark upon the agricultural landscape. It adds to the impression that, in spite of its artistic and archaeological riches, the town of Nirmand is sombre and oppressive in its atmosphere or mood. This may be due in part to its association with the *bhunda*, its emphasis upon the bloodthirsty goddess Kālī who is Ambika Devī, or its continued concern for rules of caste. Whatever the cause, it is there.

Rampur

Rampur, located 76 kilometers from Narkanda in Simla District, presents a very different picture from small towns like Nirath and Dattnagar, and it is much more lively than Nirmand. It is, after all, a busy highway town and it could not seem isolated or forbidding even if it tried. Historically, Rampur was a center for trade among Kashmir, Ladakh, Bhutan, Kashgar, Yarkand, and Tibet, with celebration of the Lavi trade fair every November. A paved road runs right through the center of Rampur, between the steep hills on one side and the Sutlej River on the other, almost on the very thresholds of some of its earliest temples. The palace has retained its large grassy *maidan*, however, and that mainly secular building is the center of the town in more ways than one. It is a viable center even today and it still thrives, as witnessed by continuing reconstruction and renovation of its oldest building. Perhaps in Rampur there may even be the survival of communal spirit and joy, as witnessed during its annual festivals.

Rampur was the capital of the former Bashahr State, with its rulers said to be descended from Kṛṣṇa himself. One way to approach it is by way of the formidable Bashleo Pass at more than 10,000 meters elevation, the dividing point between Inner and Outer Saraj. At the pass, one is aware of leaving the Kulu Valley far behind and approaching the Tibetan plateau. The town itself is punctuated by the red roofs and towers of Rampur Palace, part of which is made of wood in traditional Himachal style. With many other parts being made in imported materials, this compound is of the type that is beloved of admirers of the long-gone British Rāj as well as readers of *The Far Pavilions* and *The Jewel in the Crown*. And it shows the creative cross-fertilization of eastern and western values that marks the best of late 19th century/early 20th century architecture in much of Asia. The first

European to visit Rampur was James Bailley Fraser and the year was 1815, a time when the town as a whole showed the devastating effects of being ruled by the Gurkhas, a political fact from 1803 to 1815. The Gurkhas had come to these hills at the invitation of the Rājā of Bilaspur who wished to check the encroachments of Sansar Chand of Kangra, and for some they stayed on much too long. Still, the palace struck Fraser as being clean and impressive. He particularly admired the regularity of its slate shingle roof, describing each stone piece as being square with the joining between shingles covered over by long isosceles triangles with their tops and tips cut off square. He also described "screens of wood, finely cut into flowers and various figures, so as to partially admit light without exposing those who are within."²⁴

The newer and larger palace building of Rampur is dated 1919 on its cornerstone that was laid by Mahārāja Padam Singh (1919-27). In this structure, stained glass windows and Victorian-inspired bric-a-brac combine with deodar beams, carved doorframes, and fringed roofs of Himachal type along with Mughal and Rajput features. It reveals a more successful blend of eastern and western elements than is found in more "British" structures like the bungalow-style palaces of Sarahan, a wooden addition to the palace in Mandi that is now used as a hotel with the rulers Rolls-Royce in its garage, the palace of the *rāja* of Chamba that is located in Dalhousie, or even the former royal residence in Gangtok, Sikkim. Inside of the Rampur palace, rulers are depicted western-fashion in large oil paintings rather than in the kind of opaque watercolor miniatures that are native to the hills. Indeed, the composite towers of this place are signs of the dawning industrial age, and they are no less valid in standing for a changing society than are the more indigenous towers that came before them.

Earlier times of the hill cultures are well represented by a timber-bonded pagoda tower that can be seen in the hamlet of Kashiol across the river from Rampur, while the palace in the main town has its octagonal pavilion. This unusual structure is a confection that would be quite at home in Kew Gardens, and it introduces the 20th century. Known as the *machandi* pavilion, this *durbār* structure was put up to serve as a platform on the *maidan* from which the *rāja* could observe the dances and competitive games that went on during the local festival of Fagh Mela every year, when this version of the spring celebration of *holī* was and is celebrated. Colored rice was typically given to all who came, and the event was open to the whole town and surrounding areas, and there were prizes for winning games of tug-of-war, among others. The *rāja* shared the dais with the important images of local gods that were carried to Rampur from all over Bashahr State for the occasion.

A smaller building near the *machandi* pavilion is the Rāj Gaddi, with its lacy screens and small proportions. It was built to serve only as a coronation hall when the control of Bashahr was passed from generation to generation. It is set beneath the spreading branches of a very large *peepul* tree, a traditional place of gathering and rest. Just beyond this is a two-storeyed throne platform that projects out from the older palace building in essentially Mughal style. Here the *rāja* could give audience or enjoy performances in the way of Shah Jahan. But Rampur was not the only place of governing and enjoying the life of his state for, as pointed out by Kan-

war Rāj Pal Singh as part of his kind explanation of much of the history of the royal structures in Rampur, the summer capital of the state was located in another place, high in the hills at Sarahan. There, royal dwellings are intimately connected with the temple of Bhinia Kālī, one of the great Himalayan mother goddesses.

The old palace building that is not currently inhabited is called the Nau Nab or "Nine Building," and it also combines Mughal and Rajput elements with hill-style building conventions. It is largely made of wood and great care is being taken to duplicate its original patterns during its current restoration. Unlike so many other renovated palaces in India, it is not being repaired to serve as a hotel but will remain the dwelling place of its once-royal family. The palace is built around a series of light wells or *chowki* with sunken floors called *thali* in the center of each. It is the earliest royal building that can serve to represent Rampur's continued pride in the past; the very first palace, built closer to the river below the town, has been lost. Shallow relief carvings on panels that were once painted with bright earth colors are being carefully stored until the time comes for re-painting and re-placing them in the wooden balconies and screens of early Rampur. They are fully developed arts of a Hindu world, while the few seeds of Lamaist art that survive in the town may be said to reach full bloom in colossal arts like the Tabo monastery compound of 7000 square meters in Spiti.

In contrast to the grandeur of the palace buildings, the small Buddhist temple in Rampur is in a sorry state. In 1909 Francke noted that Rampur was "the first place on the road up the Sutlej where Lamaist buildings may be seen" and that the Lamaist temple was only 12 or 13 years old. His report illustrates a wall painting that may portray the signing of a treaty between Bashahr State and Tibet in about 1650.²⁵ It should be noted in this connection that a Bashahr ruler of Mughal times, Kehri Singh (1619-1696), was allied with the 5th Dalai Lama (1617-1682) in a treaty that was made in Rampur to help Tibet recover territory that had been forcibly annexed by the king of Ladakh. Crushed as it is to the side of the present road, a thoroughfare that is part of National Highway No. 22, the small timber-bonded temple with doubled slate roof is shabby, and the many prayer flags that are strung across it do not remedy the situation. It is a building of Himachal type, with only some details like lotus-petal doorway borders and indented checkerboard designs that stand for the thunderbolt to reveal its debt to Tibetan and Nepalese conventions. This building is no more than an echo of grand Buddhist arts of the Vajrayāna school that exist in higher and more distant parts of Himachal Pradesh, places like Spiti and Lahaul. A much more active Buddhist center is found at Rewalsar in the hills of Simla, a place that is associated with Padmasambhava, the great Buddhist reformer of the 8th century, and a goal of pilgrims from all over the Himalaya.

Much more typical of art in the northwest is Rampur's temple of Rāma, simply called Rām Maṇḍir, found on a road that descends toward the river and Rampur bazaar from the national highway. It is a stone *śikhara* and it would not merit comment here except that it has a wooden porch that contains a finely carved ceiling. The columns and entablature of the porch are finely treated with Mughal and Rajput patterns that appear to be close cousins of designs at Arki in Kangra District.

even though that fortified place is far removed from Rampur. Parts of the lantern ceiling of Ram Maṇḍir, with a bell suspended from its center, are carved with deities, lotus flowers, and processions, although all are somewhat muffled by thick coats of red, yellow, and green paints. On the outside of the building, stone fragments of uncertain provenance are stacked around the courtyard, many of fairly modern folk style. The *garbha gr̥ha* holds a grouping of small sculptures that centers around Rāma and Sita in a miniature portable pavilion, with a silken canopy suspended over the gods from the ceiling. The figures are gilded and surrounded by electric lights. It is a charming and immediate kind of art, but nothing in Rampur overshadows the impact of the palace or is more integral with the life of the place...not the small Buddhist temple, not the temple of Rāma with its fine *maṇḍapa* porch, and not two nearby stone towers of Narasiṃha or Satya Nārāyana, even though the latter temple contains life-size plaster images of Mahārāja Padam Singh and his wife, the Mahārāni.²⁶

Sarahan

With the Shirikund Range of 18,626 feet rising above its own impressive peaks, the remote town of Sarahan with its Bhima Kālī temple complex is perhaps the most thrilling as well as the most neglected site in the history of Himachal Pradesh art. It is most thrilling because of its size and its delicate beauty that is combined with the force of great volume. It is neglected simply because too few scholars have been able to make the difficult trip 40 kilometers beyond Rampur to see it. When a visitor does arrive, the first surprise is that the temple is so well cared for. It is not a forgotten place in the mountains known only to shepherds. A stone image of Śiva is believed to be on top of Shirikund peak, known as Shirikund Mahādeva, and the god is worshipped by having a cup of *charas* burned before the image until it is ashes, with any other offering being placed under a rock. The second surprise is that the temple is so large. The third surprise is that there is nothing "primitive" about it, nothing that could be disparaged as being no more than "underdeveloped" folk art. Sarahan is close to being a summary of the best of mountain design, and its temple-palace complex has been called the most interesting structure in the western Himalaya. It is like the key to a final examination on what is special about architecture in Himachal Pradesh. It is as large as the clustered towers that are found at Shainsher, 3 kilometers from Ani and far from this place; it is as dramatic in its lofty setting—over 2000 meters above the river valley on the way to Kinnaur's "tribal district—as is the palace of Gondhla beyond the Rohtang Pass in Lahaul; it is as towering as the hilltop palace at Chaini. By any measure, Bhima Kālī temple is a major monument, and pilgrims flock to it every day of the year in search of its secrets.

Sarahan, located 184 kilometers from Simla, is a market town and it is fairly busy although road traffic is very light. In the midst of winding streets and shop buildings that are two or three storeys tall, the road widens and the wooden mass of Bhima Kālī temple and buildings associated with it may be seen. For A.H. Francke, the best view was from the mountain side "where it showed all of its symmetrical beauty" and he judged the complex to be "one of the finest examples of

hill architecture" that he had ever seen.²⁷ A sketch by O.C. Hana in Victor Jacuemont's *Letters from India 1829-32* shows very similar proportions and vertical design in the five main towers of Jubbal Palace, a monument now largely in ruins.²⁸

The entry gate to the first courtyard of Bhima Kālī is reached by a few steps up from the road, and here a different world is entered. The double doors of this first entryway are covered with brass plates having fairly simple relief sculptures that show Hindu deities, including Śiva and Durgā. And there are lotus blooms and tigers. The outer doors open into a courtyard that must be considered to be a transition zone between secular and sacred space, for some of its surrounding buildings serve government purposes or are used as guest houses, and some ordinary activities take place here. For example, workers may be busy carving wood or cutting, casting, and pounding metal that is needed for repairs to the buildings of Bhima Kālī as they work under the shelter of the court's overhanging roofs. But there is a subsidiary temple here as well.

Opening into the courtyard is the special enclosure of a *śikhara* temple that is dedicated to Viṣṇu as Narasiṃha. It has many sculptural fragments of stone set up around it, some of which appear to be medieval. The building itself is sharply cut, with architectonic multiplicity of relief sculptures that repeat the overall contour of the temple as a whole. In this bold overall design the temple suggests prototypes such as the *śikhara* towers of Baijnath and Nirath. Triple faces of Śiva appear high on the *śikhara*, even though its dedication is to Viṣṇu, but they lack the kind of foliate frames that are sometimes seen, as at Nirmand. There are abbreviated forms of folk guardians on either side of the temple door, and other stone attendants are set into the walls of the low enclosure for the sacred building. Stocky, frontal, and smiling, these images are forceful protectors of this preliminary sign of Sarahan's story.

Another set of stairs from the first paved courtyard to reach an arched doorway with wooden frame, the *pūjāri* gate or gate of priests, that is guarded by two brightly painted tigers in orange and black. The double doors that are mounted here are covered over with sheets of silver. They each have a ring handle that hangs from the mouth of a tiger head as part of a projecting silver boss. The silver sheets are engraved or, more properly, impressed with the names of donors and the dates of their installation. They were made during the reign of Maharāja Sir Padam Singh (1914-1927) and they are so inscribed. Images are worked in high relief *repoussé* as they represent Śiva in meditation, Gaṇeśa, Durgā on her tiger, Hanuman with Rāma, Lakṣmī, Śiva as ascetic, Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, Kṛṣṇa dancing on the conquered serpent Kāliya, and four tigers. At the center where the two doors meet are two guardians with trident spears. One of the doors is inscribed in English to read: "These three gates were made during the peaceful reign of H.H. Raja Sahib Padam Singh, 1927" (M.G. Singh, plate XCVI). It is a very different monument than the Rampur palace, for which the same ruler laid the cornerstone, but it is not divorced from it.

A vestibule with scalloped arches extends out from the high wall that is opened by the silver-covered doors. Above it is a substantial superstructure that has three slate roofs of its own. It also has fringe clusters at the corners of its roofs as multi-

ple pendants rather than the continuous wooden fringe that marks the second roof only. The tower has two arched windows of carved wood, one rectangular window with glass, and pierced wall openings for ventilation and minimal light. It is more than an imposing gateway; it is Raghunāthji temple. At the entry shoes must be removed before one climbs a steep ladder stair up into the elevated hall above, by way of a large trap door. The upstairs shrine room holds a special treasure in the form of a miniature sculpture grouping that brings many forms of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā to life, along with their attendants. The figures are made of gold and silver and bronze. The two most important images are very small as they represent Kṛṣṇa and his favorite. They are lovingly placed on a miniature palanquin that is made of silver. To the left of these precious figures is a shelf full of small images that repeat the identity of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā along with numerous offerings of oval black stones, usually interpreted as combining the sanctity of cosmic egg and *linga*. There are other sculptures, also very small, that represent Lakṣmaṇa and the crawling infant Kṛṣṇa ("chota Kṛṣṇa") along with Kṛṣṇa as a young man playing his irresistible flute. The upstairs room, with its miniature treasures and domestic accouterments as well as its small scale, has a peaceful, precious aura that remains with the visitor long after the entry shrine has been left behind.

Descending the steep stairway of Raghunāthji, devotees proceed to a larger and still more open courtyard from which the main temple buildings can be seen. It is surrounded on two sides by tall, spacious buildings that are elaborately carved and there are fine overhanging balconies. Horizontal deodar beams are heavy on these structures, making the complex appear to be timeless. They are fit to answer the anticipation of approaching the second set of doors, which also date from the reign of Padam Singh. They are magnetic not only because they are covered with polished silver but because they afford a glimpse of the last and most important gate, the one that leads into the raised platform court of the main temple structures. The silver surfaces of the second gate are faithful in every detail to the designs of carved wood that they are applied over, but the eye is still drawn to the third gate, painted bright red and blue, that is closest to the realm of the great goddess. The lintel of the final gate is marked: "Long live Mother Śrī Bhima Kālī." The panels of both sets of doors are covered with silver, but only the outer doorway has its entire frame covered over as well. At that courtyard entry, cameras must be surrendered (rumor is that some foreign visitors who took photographs without permission had their legs broken for their transgression). Any items made of leather, including wallets and belts, must also be left at this point, for they are offensively unclean to the goddess. Men must don the local head covering here as well, the well-known "Kulu cap," in order to show respect.

The large courtyard is crossed in order to reach the stairs that rise to the level of the paved platform from which the sacred buildings rise. It is not a square courtyard, but extends toward the right where there are some subsidiary structures along with small storerooms in the back enclosure that hold refuse materials and the remains of sacrifices. The subsidiary buildings to the right include an open platform with roof that is used for giving offerings and a second structure that is painted bright blue. The first structure has a benign image of Gaṇeśa looking out from a

window in its gable, but the blue structure is repugnant, even frightful. It shelters a deep dark hole that has very steep steps leading down into it and that does not seem to have any bottom. The structure has the name "Śrī Lankara Birji" painted on it, and is said to be dedicated to a local *devatā* or god by the name of Lankara Baro. The shrine is especially mysterious because of a deep hole that disappears into black depths that may "lead to water," as one local devotee states. Or the hole may be related to customs of offering human sacrifice, rites that have long been performed in Bhima Kālī temple. A.H. Francke was not allowed to enter the premises but he reported that "an ancient Kali temple...is said to contain a deep pit. There are rumors that human sacrifices were offered here every tenth year, and that they are still continued secretly."²⁹ Still earlier, in 1821, Lloyd and Gerard wrote that "human sacrifices were offered to Bheema Kalee, but they have been discontinued since the British conquest of the hills," a record that may be tied to "a small undecorated cell in the southern aisle where human sacrifices (*naramedha*) used to take place."³⁰ Tradition explains that if such an offering is not made on time, every 10 years, then a horrible deep voice is heard to cry out a demand for blood from deep within the earth.

The lower level of the huge tower atop the main platform on the right has the most beautiful door and frame in Sarahan. The door is single, not doubled, and it is in a telescoping frame completely covered with silver. Its designs are smaller scale than those of the other doors, and its iconography is detailed in the most meticulous engraving into the metal. The subjects are similar to those of the other doors and the tiger is a prominent participant once again. The visages and symbols of Durgā, Kālī, and Śiva are combined with elephants, vines, and projecting ring handle on raised boss. The *kīrtimukha* or face of glory has its grotesque expression repeated frequently as well. Gaṇeśa is in the top center of the door, while lotus flowers and a multiple version of the flaming jewel of truth are found at the bottom. The door is less segmented into separate panels than the double doors which anticipate it, resulting in greater unity of its very tactile surface. In total, this is the finest expression of jeweler's art in architectural context that is to be found anywhere in Himachal Pradesh, with just one exception. That exception is the silver door that is found on an upper floor of the main temple tower, where it leads into the private room of Bhima Kālī herself.

The luxurious texture and pattern of the silver doors is repeated in carved wood on the two towers of Bhima Kālī. Elegant carvings are found on the single balcony that is continuous around three sides of the taller tower, and on the double balcony that encloses all four sides of the smaller tower that is now the most important structure in Sarahan. There are finely carved window frames set into the walls and gables of both buildings. And the window openings in the balconies are especially elaborate. But the panels and shutters that adorn the projecting balconies have the finest woodcarvings of all.

The carvings on the outside of Bhima Kālī's towers are well preserved and appear fresh and crisp, suggesting that they have been repaired or are even replacements. They do not appear to be earlier in date than the 19th century, both because of their physical state and their style. European as well as standard Mughal

and Rajput influences are apparent in lush patterns that may be called baroque, like those on the Paraśurāma temple in Nirmand. Ceiling paintings at Arki are recalled once more. Floral and vegetal motifs, along with cusped arches, compare to details of the two main palace buildings in Rampur as the winter capital of Bashahr state, and it is possible that the same carvers were employed in both places. The gateway building that houses Raghunāthji temple over the second courtyard is more subdued in its carvings, and they are confined to square and rectangular panels filled mainly with lotus blooms and diagonal geometric patterns. The towers of the goddess are completely covered by intertwined vines and varied flowers that appear to be drawn toward pierced openings in sliding shutters, as if to the vortex of a whirlpool. The geometric tracery does not achieve the minute perfection of Punjab carving, such as the deodar cutting of Bhera in the former Shalipur district.³¹ The carving technique in Sarahan stresses graceful curves and smooth, polished surfaces. Its results are different from those of more abrupt cutting made by wood chipping methods, like those that were used to finish the 16th century temple of Hidimba Devī in Manali. Adorsed columns, raised cornices, and window ledges are made to look porous and weightless by being completely, covered with deep cuts. With these and other special features, the wooden arts of Sarahan approach the unmatched complexity of carved doors and other arts of wood that were produced in Rajasthan and the Punjab.³² As a visiting Sikh explained to the author while standing amid the wonders of Bhima Kālī, it should not be surprising that Himachal Pradesh has such beautiful arts in wood "because this is the land of God."

Makara water monsters project from the roof ridges of Bhima Kālī, and there are extra pinnacles attached to the many roof peaks with their subsidiary gables. The vertical accents lighten the visual weight of the structures, just as subsidiary minarets lighten the Taj Mahal. Like open towers in Mughal architecture, Sarahan's circular towers made of wood, and constructed to be completely open, seem to float above the main roofs. Wooden fringes dissolve the heavy substance of these mammoth structures, just as they do on temples all over the region. And the extra pinnacles, made of brass and manufactured at the site, provide glittering accents that add to the illusion that the temple rises of its own accord to leave the profane earth behind as it lifts itself above the ordinary buildings of the town. Bhima Kālī is housed in an otherworldly structure that draws believers to the inner world of the goddess herself.

The tower to the right, with its fine silver door, is no longer used. It tilts slightly toward the second building, possibly as result of the 1905 earthquake. Both towers have gently concave roofs that reminded Francke of "those of the Chinese."³³ It was presumably due to precautions against such natural disaster that the images of the goddess were moved to the consecrated newer tower on the left. Visitors to that main part of the temple enter a surprisingly plain door that opens toward the older tower. A simply passageway is found inside. It contains a large palanquin on two long carrying poles with a red canopy. There is also a sizeable "halo" carved of black stone in the form of a coiled cobra. Both await an image to carry and protect. From the passage a substantial stairway leads upstairs

to two shrines that are located on the third and fourth floors of the tower. Each of these is surrounded by a circumambulatory passage having open or pierced windows that can be seen from the outside. These mark the projecting balconies. While there is a stairway leading to the fifth floor, the gable level of the tower, this is not open to visitors.

The shrine on the third floor is fairly small, with a richly carved doorway and a window that opens into the *garbha gr̥ha* from the side, allowing visitors in the hallway to look in. The inner room, identified as a wedding chamber of the goddess, is occupied by a silver image of Bhima Kālī that stands about 3-1/2 feet tall. It is hung with a profusion of ornaments, including a very large nose ring. The expression of the goddess is very calm and gentle. Her image rests on a carpeted dais made of silver. It has four pillars at the sides but the resident priest states that the platform is not carried in procession, a purpose that would presumably be better served by the wooden palanquin downstairs. Many smaller images are found at the feet of the main goddess, including one that represents Buddha and is so recognized by the priest. To the right side may be seen *mohra* masks that are identified by the priest as "local devatās." Worshippers who come to the shrine door are given the above explanation and then they receive *prasād* as a physical gift from the deity and a sacred remembrance of the day. Water, a sugary sweet, and forehead marking or *tika* are presented by the priest to each visitor.

On the fourth level of the tower there is a slightly larger shrine that may be entered through the most elaborate silver door of all. Here there is another magnificent image of Bhima Kālī. She is shown as Durgā, about 4 feet tall and made of polished silver. Like the smaller image of the goddess on the floor below, this sculpture is so naturalistic that it is almost portrait-like. Most of her body is covered by offerings of clothing and, like the image on the third floor, she wears many kinds of jewelry. There are *mohra* masks here as well, along with many fine images in metal. About 15 masks are said to be kept in the temple, while the other images include two Buddhas, one Śiva Maheśvara, and one Pārvatī. An unusual figure in marble, standing about 18 inches tall, appears to be either a Buddha or a Jain Tīrthankara. One figure is identified as "Mari Mukhi." A great many oil lamps stand before the image of the goddess herself. Pilgrims who come to her receive *prasād* in the form of popped corn, water, and forehead *tika*. The priest who gives these things to worshippers is, at least at times, a local man. Traditionally, however, this temple is controlled by South Indian brahmans. In this, it is like Nepal's "national shrine" of Pasupatināth. The deities of both places are beloved. The priest explains that Bhima Kālī is unmarried. It goes without saying that she is very beautiful. If there is any problem in understanding the style and mood of the silver image of the goddess, it may be in reconciling her pleasant demeanor with her lurid reputation as one who demands blood sacrifice. Could the voice in the pit be hers?

The towers of Bhima Kālī define the special townscape of Sarahan, but they should not be considered alone. They are, for example, intimately related to the palaces of the royal family in Rampur. One large wooden dwelling in Sarahan combines the structural and decorative styles of Himachal Pradesh and Britain. This

house, with a video dish television antenna beside it, is reportedly occupied by a brother of the former *rāja*. A second and larger structure with an octagonal garden pavilion and extensive landscaping is still used by the head of the once-royal family, a respected figure who is now an influential government official. Both of these large “bungalows” open toward the temple of Bhima Kālī, located just a short walk away. A.H. Francke found the Sarahan “palace” (he was actually referring to the temple compound with its attached government buildings) to be “by far superior to that at Rampur” while noting that the family of the ruler had such prestige that “other rājas are desirous of receiving their caste-mark from the Bashahr Rāja, even if the latter condescends only to put it on their foreheads with his toe.”³⁴ A modern playing field/arena is nearby but largely out of sight. Once again, the town is like a living, growing organism with the temples and palaces as its heart and its ultimate reality. Between the palaces and the temple complex, there is a minor shrine building with slate roof and golden pinnacle. It serves as a temporary storehouse for grain during harvest season. Its less obvious function is to provide a transition between the secular realm of the palace buildings and the sacred environment of the temples. In total, Sarahan is an integrated environment or refined Hindu art as living tradition.

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- 1 V.C. Ohri, *Arts of Himachal*, plates 20-21.
 - 2 Penelope Chetwode, *Kulu—The End of the Habitable World*, p. 191.
 - 3 *Ibid.*, plate facing p. 199.
 - 4 Other offerings of metal are also seen, as is common at various temples of Śiva and Durgā including the modern temple of Durgā that is found beside the river and bridge below Chamba.
 - 5 Hermann Goetz, *Studies in the History and Art of Kashmir and the Himalaya*, plate XLIII.
 - 6 Chetwode, p. 218.
 - 7 A.F.P. Harcourt discusses the importance of Brahmins and the fairs that they sponsor in *The Himalayan Districts of Kooloo, Lahoul, and Spiti*, pp. 96-98.
 - 8 A.H. Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, Vol. I, p. 4.
 - 9 Chetwode, p. 219.
 - 10 *Punjab District Gazetteers*, Vol. XXXA, *Gazetteers of Kangra District*, p. 67.
 - 11 Nirmand is included among the most important centers of Devī worship in Himachal Pradesh by Mian Goverdhan Singh, *Art and Architecture of Himachal Pradesh*, p. 4.
 - 12 V.C. Ohri, *Arts of Himachal*, p. 131-132.
 - 13 Singh, p. 116. The copper plate inscription in full has been published in *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. III, *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings and their Successors*, J.F. Fleet, Ed., reprint 1970, pp. 286-291, as referred to in Ohri, p. 147.
 - 14 The geographical extent of early Vaiṣṇava reform in the hills remains an open question, but Spiti was surely affected by it.
 - 15 In *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, Vol. I, p. 4, A.H. Francke quotes Harcourt, along with J. Ph. Vogel (*Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. LXX, Part 1, no. 1, 1902, p. 35) in his account of the ceremony: “A young man is fed at the public expense for a year, during which he has to plait a rope of considerable length. On the day of the *Mela* [fair], this rope is stretched from the top of a precipice and he has to slide down on it. This custom which is also practised at Lhasa and at Srinigar of Garhwal is, as Dr. Vogel says, probably a survival of human sacrifice, the prevalence of which in former times in these districts is indicated by popular tradition. But in this particular case

the victim, instead of being actually killed, had to undergo a risk which endangered his life. An offering was made to the deity who might decline or accept the sacrifice according to her divine pleasure. In 1856 a man was killed, and since then the practice has been prohibited." Harcourt goes on to note that in later observances a goat was substituted for a human victim. The mask that was displayed in 1981 is shown in Singh, plate XCVIb.

- 16 In addition to Nirmand, other important centers of Viṣṇu worship are the temple of Laksmī-Nārāyaṇa in Chamba, Raghunāth temple in Kulu, Madho-Rai temple in Mandi, and Paraśurāma temple at Rainka in Sirmur as listed by Singh, p. 6.
- 17 J.L. Kipling, "Punjab Wood-carving," *Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. I, Nos. 1-16 (No. 4), plate 3.
- 18 Penelope Chetwode refers to a late Gupta shrine of "Ho!kar Vir" as being located east of the great temple on the main street and dating from the 7th or 8th century, p. 222.
- 19 The figures noted by Chetwode (p. 221) are as blocky and stiff as the carved wooden *chowri* bearer that is assigned to the 13th century on the façade of the freestanding shrine within the Paraśurāma complex is fluid and graceful (Ohri, p. 146).
- 20 Chetwode, p. 221.
- 21 Francke, Vol. I, p. 5.
- 22 Chetwode, p. 221.
- 23 Singh, p. 174.
- 24 James Baille Fraser, *Journal of a tour through parts of the Snowy ranges of the Himalaya mountains and the sources of the rivers Jamuna and Ganges*, quoted in Singh, p. 23.
- 25 Francke, Vol. I, p. 7.
- 26 Chetwode, p. 212.
- 27 Francke, Vol. I, p. 8.
- 28 Victor Jacquemont, *Letters from India 1829-1832 being a selection from the correspondence of Victor Jacquemont*, p. xxxii.
- 29 Francke, Vol. I, p. 8.
- 30 N.K. Sharma, "Sarahan—A Jewel in Himachal's Crown," unpublished manuscript available from the Himachal Pradesh Tourist Information Center, Simla.
- 31 "Wood Manufactures in the Punjab," *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, Vol. III, No. 30 (1890), illustrations.
- 32 The carved woodwork equals, with vegetal curves, the more geometric patterns of the Mughals and cultures related to them.
- 33 Francke, Vol. I, p. 8. Unfortunately, such well-meant references to quite separate Far Eastern traditions in architecture have helped to keep Himalayan invention from receiving the attention that it deserves.
- 34 *Ibid.*

Gods and Temples of Kulu

THE KULU VALLEY has evoked almost as many poetic descriptions as the vale of Kashmir. It draws hoards of tourists every summer from among those who long for its charms when the heat on the plains is at its fiercest. Air connections are increasingly available to the valley itself, without tedious road transport that was formerly the rule, and the rising standard of living in Kulu proves that tourism is not the only growing industry. Beneath the colorful overlay of textile, apple, and rabbit fur jacket production, there is a long history of change that is revealed by the towers of both palaces and temples. In fact, Kulu is the area of Himachal Pradesh that best exhibits all five of the major patterns that are taken by indigenous temple architecture.

This survey will move from the lower valley, with Bajaura temple, toward the headwaters of the Beas River and the Rohtang Pass at 13,325 feet. The pass is surrounded by peaks of over 20,000 feet and the mountain snows are the source of the 350 mile-long Beas River. Bajaura is found at an appropriate place not far from the foot of the valley and near the confluence of the Beas and Parbatti rivers, for Bajaura temple is a classical monument that belongs to the broad themes and aesthetic preferences of the Indian heartland. Above the river confluence are greater heights, the Himalayan peaks, and increasingly remote valleys where native meanings and native tastes are most likely to survive. The history of Kulu is ancient as "Kiu-lu-to," one of the destinations of the Chinese pilgrim Hsüan Tsang early in the 7th century. And it was long known as one of the eleven medieval states between the Sutlej and Ravi rivers.

Kulu

Kulu is one of the areas of the northwestern hills that was affected by the presence of the Sikh leader Ranjit Singh after he was called by Sansar Chand to help oust the Gurkhas in 1809. Today remains of palaces are scarce in Kulu town, except for the heavily renovated and bright blue residence of the former ruler, the Rai of Rupri. Still, the great *maidan* of the town continues to be the setting for great celebration during the Dassehra festival each fall. To this gathering place come people from throughout the mountain districts. They wear their best, they dance their best, and they honor their gods. Just as in Rampur as capital of the former Bashahr state, Kulu is the home of numerous deities, and they come together for a kind of family reunion around the authority of the former *rāja*. Harcourt's words are evocative once more as he describes such events in the 19th century:

The *melas* or fairs may...be properly classed among national amusements. At such galas, with the exception of those at Sooltanpore, Plach and Nirmand...nothing is sold these gala days which are numerous, being merely of a festive nature. Almost any village of any size has its *mela*; and in the more important of these, normally held in honour of the local Deota, Davee, &c., the people collect in considerable numbers. The scene is a highly attractive one.¹

Despite such joyous association, Kulu Valley is also ancient Kulanthapitha, "The end of the habitable world."² It is a very dramatic landscape that has as its constant focus the snowy heights of the twin Gyephant peaks that rise above the Solung *nala*. Most settlements that are important for architecture are found at the lower elevations of Kulu and near the Beas. There are exceptions, however, like the castle town of Naggar.

Naggar

Naggar is one of the first places that became known to westerners during the 20th century, due to the intrigue of a Russian artist with this lofty town of escape and mystery. The paintings that he made so many of—poetic mountain pictures in oils that show abstracted, simplified peaks against boldly colored skies or exotic Tibetan monuments rising from melting hills—are dreamscapes of stage-set romance. Nicholas Roerich believed in the poetry of the place, as did his son Svetoslav who kept the vision alive in his own paintings. Today a small museum is the place of memory that looks back to other times and other tales of Kulu Valley. On its grounds are numerous fragments of early classical sculpture in stone, and for an intact example of the kind of *sikhara* that the pieces were parts of, one may examine a miniature temple of about the 9th century that is located in a grove of trees in the fields nearby a temple of Gaṇeśa. Also related is an early medieval temple near the monument to Gaurī-Śankara in Naggar proper.³

Naggar is important for its military history. In art it is noted for its rugged castle, its stone monuments, and its wooden towers. There are also *barsela* stones as memorials to dead rulers as well as their wives and concubines, as found at Mandi, Jagatsukh, and elsewhere. The town is difficult to approach on its high escarpment and this was, of course, a major consideration when it was established to be a stronghold. The sometimes violent nature of its history is well previewed by a story that is conveyed by J.C. French in his pioneer work, *Himalayan Art*. The ghost that French feared is still remembered at Naggar and it is still, even among the ice cream-seeking tourists of summer, feared. Guests who seek accommodation in the H.P.T.D.C. Tourist Bungalow in the castle are well advised to choose their room carefully. The castle is topped by an observation tower. With its massive walls and heavy wooden frame it stands for the stability, even impregnability that timber-bonded architecture can provide. It is constructed as a series of connected courtyards with light wells and *thali* floors, just as in the early palace that survives in Rampur. Verandas are mostly interior and oriented to courtyards rather than exposed to the potentially hostile world outside.

The most obvious feature of the three-roof temple of Durgā as Tripura Sundarī that stands a short distance from Naggar Castle, uphill on the narrow road that proceeds towards the Roerich Museum, is that this structure which suggests a construc-

tion of the 15th century was recently renovated. An entirely new roof having three levels, the top one round and the bottom two square, was put on in 1960 by a local patron. And it is made entirely of wood. Whether this unusual feature is due to the very steep pitch of the pyramidal roof or was chosen to avoid the expense of slate shingles is not known, but the structure will surely continue to weather faster than most. Its top-piece is a wooden pinnacle with attached metal umbrella that is hung with pendants. The pagoda stands in a sunken courtyard and has no substantial porch. It does have an unusually open second level, a spacious balcony of atypical design and unknown function. It is hung all around with very delicate fringes of wood. And a small relief showing Gaṇeśa is found above the barred doorway that leads to a very dark interior. Worshippers come very close to this doorway into the sanctum, ringing a typical suspended bell as they do so. The image of the goddess inside is roughly represented, as is a protective lion in bright painted colors. And there is a small metal bird mounted on the wooden roof as some kind of talisman or blessing. This wooden building raises as many questions as answers. The temple is not graceful but it is imposing; it is not refined but it is strong.

Dashal

While Naggar is a very well-known place, partly because of its notice by western artists and partly because it provides a variety of monuments and sights, Dashal is hardly known at all. When it has been published, it is for its large stone temple of Gaurī Śaṅkara, dedicated to Śiva and Parvatī but often referred to only as Śivji. Yet the domestic buildings of Dashal also deserve attention. The small agricultural town is not on the main road that carries ever-increasing traffic from Kulu to Manali, but located about half a mile back from it toward the east. Visitors to the temple cross a stream, walk in water over a small dam, and follow a footpath through rice paddies in order to reach Dashal and continue to its stone monument. And a fine work of stone architecture and sculpture awaits them.

The proportions of the *śikhara*, which stands on top of a high plinth of rough stone blocks without mortar, are tall and not very slim. This is a massive, "inflated" structure, with deep cuttings into its surface that emphasize its girth and its massive and heavy component parts. Its height is nearly 30 feet and it has sculptural reliefs on all sides to instruct and edify any circumambulating pilgrim. Like the Baijnath temple near Mandi it was treated in a very linear way by its carvers, and the deities that are carved all over it have a Pahārī or mountain directness that is much less classical than the overall form. The monument probably was built in the 9th or 10th century, and its central focus is the stone *linga* of Śiva that is inside. Like Behena, Dashal is well supplied with local citizens who have no authority but are anxious to obstruct photography so that even a distant shot meets with shouts of protest, but the open air monument is easy to capture. It is very solid and also very tactile. There are no high reliefs, but the piling up of repeated architectural details creates a modular rhythm that leads the viewer's eye through the stone compositions without dramatic highpoints or dark recesses. The most classical parts are the clearly medieval guardian goddesses, probably the river deities Gaṅgā and Yamunā that stand with flowing grace and voluptuous volume

beside the entrance. Viṣṇu is shown with Kārtikeya and, in a separate relief, with Lakṣmī on Garuḍa. He is also shown incarnate in various of his *avatārs*, including the ferocious Narasiṃha. The temple in Dashed has all of the story to be found at Bajaura but almost none of its grace. One wonders whether its slightly later date is enough to explain its different impact. Folk art images are somewhat more numerous at Dashed, and perhaps they are better suited to a kind of artwork that is, increasingly, not just *from* Himachal Pradesh but *of* Himachal Pradesh. The single floor plan is that of a basic, square *maṇḍala* and the center of that perfect plan is taken up by the large stone *liṅga*.

The Gaurī Śaṅkara temple is not of the timber-bonded type that this survey is most concerned with, but the village of Dashed has fine examples of domestic buildings two and three storeys tall that are built with materials that are traditional for purposes that are also traditional. The houses have projecting balconies on their upper floors, and there are open verandahs, porches, low storage buildings, and threshing areas, all of which may be covered with stacks of cut grain at harvest time. Telescoping doorframes of three or more rectangles are especially impressive. Animals rest at the bases of such house, and the road is one space with the yards and pens and walkways. In late summer there is a smell of harvested crops in the air and the village people appear to be relaxed and buoyant. Kulu shawls are woven here of the high quality wool that comes from local sheep, and they are sent to shops to be sold. The town is "old world" in its adherence to traditional values and early methods, but more than ready to adapt to new world patterns of commerce.

Jagatsukh and Dalas

Continuing north along the river and proceeding slightly east from the main road once more, one reaches the village of Jagatsukh, 10 kilometers from Naggur. The town is large enough to have a busy bus stand and there are shops that sell beer and snacks as well as woollen shawls. The attraction of Jagatsukh to the summer crowds consists of its temples. One of these, the *sikhara* temple of Gaurī Śaṅkara that is in the late Gupta style of the 7th or 8th century, a mode that was revived in the 17th century under Rāja Jagat Singh, preserves a very simple plan with very small *maṇḍapa* space of preparation with overhanging ledge above it supported by two pillars, and a small square *garbha gṛha* as holy of holies. It is a plan that is known in the Gandhāra region of the northwest from times as early as Greek colonization and Alexander the Great, and that appears later in Indian context at places like Sanchi. Mian Goverdhan Singh considers the temple to preserve a version of "late Gupta style" from the 9th or 10th century. It is almost a miniature and its state of preservation is remarkable. It is both bolder and simpler than its predecessor at Bajaura, more at home in the mountains and at the same time less aggressively hard than its neighbor temple in Dashed.

Just as early as the temple in Jagatsukh are the many sculptural fragments in stone that are stacked around it and found in many other parts of the village as well. With so many examples of monuments that have a "halo" around them of scattered chunks of the past, it is clear that more complete surveys of their sur-

roundings are needed to provide a total physical inventory. This stone temple is a protected monument with full government designation and, like the nearby temple of Jagannāthi Devī that was built by Rāja Raj Singh in 1728, it is well-known to authorities. So is another, larger temple nearby, one that has a different kind of importance.

Standing quite near the stone building of Gaurī Śaṅkara and slight to the north is a one-storey temple on a plinth of stone. The temple itself is made by timber-bonding. It is dedicated to Sandhya Devī as local devi, and an inscription gives a date of construction equivalent to 1428 A.D. during the reign of Rāja Udhran Pal. It has a pitched roof and a very prominent ridge beam in the style that some writers refer to as “chalet type”. Whether it is said to be in chalet, domestic, or Alpine style, this low temple with spacious veranda and open sanctum that is reached by high stairs is a remarkable example of Himalayan building that joins wood to stone without regard to the special physical qualities of either.

The temple of Jageśvara Mahādeva, also in Kulu, has a similar open design but with the addition of a two-roof tower that is squared at its lower level and circular above.⁴ The tensile strength of wood is not taken advantage of in any way, for the body of the temple and the trabeate dependability of stone is treated as interchangeable with that of wood. The two materials are piled atop each other in layers as if they were of equal weight and equal strength. They are also placed next to each other, as a tapering pillar with cascading “water ripple” surface joins a peer of blocky stone supporting blocky wood. Visiting the site in person, it is impossible to tell at first where stone begins and where wood leaves off, and in a black and white photograph it looks as if the temple walls were made very simply by stacking one material atop itself until the height of the high walls was reached. The opposite is true, however, for this is a building of frame and fill. It is just that the materials of wood and stone are made to meld with unusual success. They are carved with the same patterns after they are cut to the same size blocks and paint is put onto them equally so that they do, indeed, blend. To build without regard to the physical properties of materials is nonsensical, but Himachal Pradesh has often taken “irrational” directions in art. It is one of its regional appeals.

Manali and Vashist

Above Jagastukh on the road north is Manali, the furthestmost destination of most visitors. The surroundings of the town, and it is a fairly large town now, are full of deodar forests. There is a special peace and tranquility in Manali, especially away from the main road, that visitors expect to find in the mountains and for which they make the trip. There is no museum and no major “sights” that people come to see, other than vistas of mountain scenery but rather there is a kind of wild west atmosphere actually wild north that city-dwellers find exciting. The older parts of town still have guest houses that were once the haunts of the British, including civil servants on leave, and there are still orchards within the town boundaries, but it is doubtful that many Indians come here for nostalgia. Manali is an “up and coming” place, with new hotels, new video parlors, new restaurants, and new amusements. The single temple that remains sheltered at Dhungri in the deodar pine

forest, the same one that attracted early scholars like A.P.F. Harcourt, is still there. It is the temple of Hiḍimba Devī, as mother goddess of the Manali area. She is the Hiḍimba of the epic *Mahābhārata* and she is also called Hirma Devī. A mask of the goddess is said to be kept here which is dated to 1418 A.D., during the reign of Udhran Pal. It may be the earliest dated mask that is known. This deity was promised a temple by Rāja Bahadur Singh, conqueror of the valley for which she is the patron goddess. And the building was erected in 1553, as shown by an inscription that is dated Sastra-samvat 29, during the reign of that ruler. The power of the goddess is believed to be as strong as ever.

The pagoda tower of Hiḍimba Devī has three roofs. It is a tall building with slate covering on the lower two levels and sheet metal roofing on the top. The uppermost level is quite open, like that of the temple in Naggar, while the lower two roofs rest on solid masonry. It is a very balanced building when viewed from the front, and its façade of carved wood is intricate and clear at the same time. The temple has been taken under control of the Department of Archaeology in New Delhi and it is designated publicly as a protected monument. The authorities removed a heavy coat of red and green paints that had been put on earlier in this century, and the natural color and texture of the carved deodar wood can now be seen. A staccato dance moves across its walls with clarity like that of cloth appliqué. The temple appears to be unique at first glance, due in part to its shadowy forest location, but it is in fact typical of local directions in Himachal art just as it is very international in terms of sources for many of its designs. This is especially true for the wealth of carving that covers the façade. The center of the lintel is occupied by an image of Gaṇeśa. A row of *navagraha* figures representing the nine planets is found above that, and they are topped in turn by dancing *gan-dharva* figures. The temple façade is unusual in presenting Buddhist symbols as well. The uppermost border of the entry frame is formed by repeated signs of the *burka* or box for sacred images and the *dorji* or thunderbolt.⁵

The right side of the doorframe base shows Durgā Mahiṣasuramardīnī, a worshipper, and Śiva with Pārvatī on Nandi. On the left side is another representation of Durgā, again with a worshipper, and there is an image of Viṣṇu with Lakṣmī on Garuḍa and, possibly, Mahāmritunjaya.⁶ As Hermann Goetz interprets the power of the deities, he suggests that "the temples dedicated to Rama and Krishna are hardly frequented by the people at large. Their gods one finds in wooden shrines, on lonely mountain spurs, in clearings in forests, by the sides of mountains and lakes. Many of them are dedicated to the Great Goddess, in her terrible form as Chamunda, and memories of human sacrifices still are alive in them."⁷

To enter the *garbha gṛha*, a large interior space that is open all the way to the top through non-functional upper floors, one has to step down. One also has to wait for one's eyes to adjust to the darkness, for there is no source of natural light inside. There is also very little light that has been brought in, except for a few oil lamps or candles. The mask that is dated to 1481 is not to be seen in this place.⁸ Most of the inner space is taken up by an enormous rock, the natural boulder around which the temple was built. It is almost like a cave inside, and one perhaps feels a closeness, even an uncomfortable closeness, to subterranean forces. One feels that one is *in* the earth, absorbed by its cool darkness. Offerings are tossed

toward a ledge near the bottom left of the massive stone, and garlands are sometimes hung on its surface. A ladder rests against the stone toward the right, but this must be used only by priests. The purpose of it is unclear. There is no attempt to anthropomorphize the boulder—it is not painted or carved—even though it represents the specific goddess. Her strength is caught instead by overwhelming mass in confining space. It is as though the walls might be forced outward by the great expansive volume that is held within the temple. It almost breathes.

Most of the visual elements on the Manali temple have been seen elsewhere in Himachal Pradesh. The axial height is familiar, as is the multiple roof. It is a heavy looking structure, very broad at the base and an unmoving pyramid. Its extreme angularity is softened by delicate fringes of wooden dowels that are free to blow in the breeze. It is approached by a steep stairway that ends with a wide platform at the top. And its grounds are important to its impact. The tower is in a spacious area that has privacy because of its screen of straight, tall trees. The temple is not an integral part of Manali town, and the hubbub below its hill cannot be heard. It is just far enough away and takes just long enough to reach, especially on foot, that there are never crowds around it. It can be a personal goal, like the miniature version of the temple that is seen in a private yard below. Hiđimba Devi temple is a presence, like a shadow or a constant and distant tolling of a bell. It is always there.

As might be expected, legends about the mysterious temple above Manali town are many. One of the strangest, retold by Harcourt relates to the making of the building:

On three sides there is a verandah, and the doorway, which is to the east, is covered with rude carvings, in wood, of elephants, birds, tigers, and Buddhistical wheels,—the story being that the then reigning monarch, to prevent the artist ever making a duplicate of such a masterpiece, cut off the carver's right hand. But, not to be baffled, the man taught his left hand to take the place of the lost member, and at Triloknath, in Chumba, executed an even finer piece of carving than at Doongree. Here, again, however, adverse fortune followed him; for the Triloknath people, determined that no such workmanship should ever be exhibited elsewhere, now cut off his head !

The author goes on to criticize the design of the sacred place, stating that:

The Doongree temple is of most massive construction, but is clumsily put together, and is quite out of the perpendicular. The verandahs are twelve feet above the ground, and the roof, formed of huge deodar planks, slopes over these...The goddess Hurimba, to whom the building is dedicated, and who is said to have lived in Purus Ram's time, is represented by a small brass image three inches in height, contrasting most ludicrously in point of size with the temple that stands a good eighty feet above the ground...In the interior there are large rocks, and a rope hangs from the roof, to which, legends have it, human victims were, in olden times, suspended by the hands after death and swung to and fro over the goddess.⁹

The summary of this unusual monument that was given in the *Gazetteer of the Kangra District* in 1918 still applies:

The Dhungrı temple with three tiers of roof is more solidly constructed than most of the temples of Kulu, and the carvings are more elaborate. The situation is gloomy, set in the midst of immense deodars which must be over a thousand years old. The interior is still more savage; there are large boulders lying in the half-darkness...This room is occasionally used now for incarcerating *deotas* in times of drought, to bring them to a better mind. The inscription on the door to the east, states that the temple was founded in a year corresponding to 1553 A.D. by Raja Bahadur Singh."¹⁰

The inscription is in Takri script and may indeed reflect the ruler's gratitude for success in subduing local chiefs. He may even be shown in the carved story of the founder that appears on the building's face."¹¹

Crossing the Beas by bridge where the river plunges wildly through its gorge at Manali, and continuing north along the paved highway, one comes to Vashist hot springs resort and temple compound, just a short distance up the sloping canyon walls. A set of courtyards at various levels allows for places to rest, places to bathe and places to pray. The main shrine room is small and fairly dark but it is a romantic chamber for the appealing gods Rāma and Sītā. The main figures that represent them are tiny. They are doll-like and they are handled like dolls. Carvings on the exterior of their temple are not very old but they are very good. Their method of manufacture is wood chipping, very much like that on the façade of Hiḍimba Devī. Vashist is a condensed world and its religious purpose is clearly and concisely stated in visual terms. In spite of its resort-like quality as an escape from busy Manali, it is a place for the soul.

Vashist is located only 3 kilometers from Manali on the road that leads to the Rohtang Pass and provides access to Lahaul. The place is famous for its hot springs, like Manikarn, but in contrast to that large and busy settlement filled with pilgrims and vacationers, Vashist is intimate and uncluttered. The source of its waters is marked by carved and inscribed fountain stones. These pay homage to divine origins and honor *nāgas* as underground serpents with supernatural powers. The latter subject makes Vashist important to investigators of "tree and serpent lore" in the mountains, such as A.F.P. Harcourt himself. Some of the carved stones are said to be secret, and local residents will not discuss their meanings. Yet one obvious purpose is that they memorialize those whose names are inscribed upon them as donors, along with their fathers and grandfathers. The slab stones are dated, often with reference to local historical events, and their language is usually Sanskrit.

The early commentaries that are so useful in examining the continuity of mountain traditions are again called upon here, with Harcourt's account of Vashist first written in 1870 and republished over 100 years later. It contains both charmingly antique elements, like the spelling of the name of Hanuman, and disturbing acceptance of caste restrictions:

The little village of Basisht is situated on the left bank of the Beas, about two miles to the north of the Menalee encampment. It boasts of one of the pyramidal temples, erected, it is said, in the reign of Rajah Juggut Singh, about 1650, and is much like the one in Bajoura in size and adornments, but, as a work of art, very much the inferior of the latter. Hoonyman is here the presiding deity. The temple has its gateway to the west (while the entrance to the Bajoura one is to the east), and is covered with a rectangular wooden framework supported by slanting poles which are let into the main structure. There are three hot springs at Basisht, but the two upper ones have very little water, the lower one being the most active and the most celebrated. It gushes out of the ground into a small tank, which leads again into a regular bath, one channel for the superfluous fluid leading by the high encircling walls, and finding an exit, as does the surplus water of the bath, into a lower open apartment that is used for ablutionary purposes by the inferior castes.¹²

The Siva temple of this pilgrimage center contains a stone image of that god and his lovely consort Pārvaṭī inside of its great pent-roof structure that is inscribed

with the name of Rāja Sindhi Pal and a date equivalent to 1500 A.D. The major temple of the hamlet, however, is one dedicated to Rāmchandra and marked with the name of Rāja Jagat Singh and a date equal to 1651. It holds an image of Rāma, Sītā, and Lakṣmaṇa, as seen at Sarahan in Ouṭer Saraj, Manikarn, and elsewhere. The building, with closed porch structure as entryway and place of preparation and transition, is the “pyramidal” monument described by Harcourt. The added porch has verandahs on three sides, and wooden pillars to support its overhanging roof. As noted by the early investigator, the wooden *chatra* roof is held up by struts that are “let into” the main structure. Just beneath the roof is a large *āmalaka* as sun-disc, constant yet ever-radiating energy and truth from the axis of the temple *sikhara* below. Repairs and re-carving have recently been carried out at this site of sacred springs, yet Vashist is like the temple of Hiḍimba Devī in its air of timelessness. For those who come to Manali on holiday, it is often a place to pause and to ponder.

Goshal

Goshal is tiny, both the village and the temple. Located three miles upriver from Manali on the right bank of the Beas, it is a little-known village that is home to a very small temple built in Alpine style. The sacred structure contains *devatā* masks made of metal, along with wooden palanquins on long poles that are used to carry the masks in procession. Like so many other temples in Himachal Pradesh, this one seems to wait quietly for the kind of excitement that festival will bring. Chetwode calls it “god’s garage,”¹³ and, indeed, it is little more than a storehouse. Yet it is important to this study for its Himalayan woodcarving.

The covering over this pent-roof structure has considerable overhang and a projecting roof beam, both being features that are common to buildings of the Alpine style. The exterior walls are thickly plastered, with only one wooden course of standard timber-bonding being visible. The pieces of stone that make up the filling are quite large, suggesting a rough and perhaps even hurried building process, with a platform of massive timbers beneath its structure. The pediment holds a finely carved window with two interior pillars, rather like the wood-framed openings on the two sides of Hiḍimba Devī temple in Manali except that this example is not quite as elaborately carved. The doorframe consists of four telescoping rectangles of wood that are carved with powerfully direct folk images and vegetation-derived spirals that have dynamic movement of such energy as to recall the carved spirals of Maori art in New Zealand. It is curious, and no doubt coincidental, that the lintel of the door carries *tiki*-like figures with open mouths of figure 8 form that also compare to Polynesian art. If nothing else, they are as forceful.

Durgā is represented standing on a buffalo head as sign of her vanquished foe, Mahiṣa, at the lower left corner of the doorway, while Śiva and Pārvatī ride Nandi at the lower right. Large guardian figures on either side of the frame base are local folk types rather than the river goddesses that might be expected in a more “classical” scheme of temple design. And again, as on the façade of the Manali monument to Hiḍimba Devī, there are two deer that look back over their shoulders to disgorge vegetation. Their origin is as puzzling here as there, with comparison to

“animal style” arts, especially of nomadic peoples, once more in order. Wood chipping is utilized here as well, although perhaps less subtly than at the Manali temple where memories of Central Asian skills are called to mind. Finally, a string of flags is drawn across the front of the building rather raggedly, almost as if the cloths were laundry.

Large, curvaceous birds are “sketched” by incisions along the roof boards of this small structure, while the door itself and the angled boards above it, with their unclear supportive function, are covered by interwoven diagonals. Both of these schemes are simple, but the door itself is not. Because of its lively geometry and centralized design, the door of Goshal may be best compared to the fine, expansive patterns of the temple of the village goddess in Jenog, near Simla, or to a closer neighbor with exciting wood workmanship that is found in Khokhan. As simple as the small shrine to local gods in Goshal may be, it is still part of a large and aesthetically important family of carved structures in Himachal Pradesh.

Khokhan

As a final monument in Kulu Valley to be considered here, and one to capture some of the special accomplishments and inventions of this place within the artistic heritage of Himachal Pradesh, this survey comes to Khokhan. The village is 2-1/2 kilometers west of Bhuntar in the lower valley, and it may be approached by mule track from the main Kulu/Manali road. It is a rather meandering settlement in a hilly locale, one that promises little reward when seen from a distance. It does, however, preserve one of the very few four-roofed “pagodas” that are to be seen in the Himachal region, a structure that has finely carved patterns and balanced proportions to recommend it. The building exhibits considerable poise and grace, even though its lowest floor is unusually wide. Its dedication to Ādi Brahmā is a very rare one as well.

Ādi Brahmā temple stands about 30 meters high, and it is marked by a fourth and highest roof that is square like those below it, rather than circular, and thus typical. The three top floors of the tower are very open and they have boldly curved, even scallop-shaped brackets to support their roofs. Together, the struts create a kind of cage or basket of bracing for the heavy, slate-covered roofs and this is very unlike the brick wall-within-wall construction of Nepal, which has its own four-roof temples. Animal heads—possibly horses, although Chetwode states that the corner struts spring from the backs of birds—project from each corner of the second and third roofs, each one with a slate tile above it to provide shelter. The use of such animal additions is not common in the northwestern mountains, with the exception of the *mandapa* of Ajḍhyanāth temple in Rampur-Bashahr of the Simla area, with its carvings of antelopes and bears, that is illustrated by Mian Goverdhan Singh (plate LXXa). A more expected feature is that the temple contains a metal mask in its *garbha gr̥ha*, this one dated to a year equalling 1753 A.D., when the temple was erected with the support of Rāja Tedhi Singh.¹⁴

All four roofs of the Ādi Brahmā temple are square and each is hung all around with delicate, moving wooden fringes. Interlocking snakes may be seen on

both sides of its entry frame that consists of a vertical beam on each side enclosed by flat border boards with scallop-curves that repeat the pattern of the struts above. Barge board reliefs on the facade are adorned by pierced floral patterns. The plinth has borders of massive wooden planks that solidify the vision of lacy structure that is presented by the elements above. And there is a small window behind the struts of each storey that is cut with bold, ax-like angles to somehow anchor the rest of the carved wood.

The open design of the third level of the temple has a kind of double-balcony structure but appears to lack any function other than to increase the visual prominence of the temple. It is light, like the effect of wooden pendants and curving supports, even as it holds up the very heavy roofing of irregularly cut slate shingles that are quite large. The viewer is relieved to see three wooden pinnacles that are attached to the uppermost roof, along with metal tridents that symbolize the presence of Siva even as they act as lightning rods, for these help to lift one's eye above the building itself. The temple as a whole remains dark and rather sombre.

The overall design of the building in Khokhan is very linear, seeming to be "metallic," almost Byzantine if not Central Asian, and it is another reminder that northern India had important links to the Silk Road. The structure and its wealth of carved pattern is frustrating in that it doesn't "fit" If any single monument is chosen to prove relationships to Nepal and the rest of Himalaya during a long history of trade and conquest, Ādi Brahmā may be the one. The method of construction, the materials, and individual applied elements of decoration and meaning are not the same as are used in Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, or Tibet, but this is not meant to imply that the connection is non-existent or unimportant. The questions are not yet answered in the Kulu Valley, any more than they are in Lahaul.

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- 1 A.F.P. Harcourt, *The Himalayan Districts of Kooloo, Lahoul, and Spiti*, pp. 69-70. The gaiety of the fairs is balanced by the seriousness of assembling local deities for the celebration. The *Gazetteer of the Kangra District (Punjab District Gazetteers, Vol. XXXA)*, p. 63, records that "Raja Jagat Singh imported the Thakur Raghunathji circa 1650 A.D., and gave his kingdom to this god. The godlings of Kulu and Saraj are bidden to assemble at the Dasehra fair annually, when the Thakur goes in procession along Kulu *maidan*. This procession, however, begins only when Hirma Devi has arrived, and her presence determines the course of the subsequent ceremonies. She is a very powerful Devi of Manali and jealously punishes any trespassers at her pool of Beas Kund."
 - 2 Penelope Chetwode, *Kulu—The End of the Habitable World*, p. 182.
 - 3 V.C. Ohri, *Arts of Himachal*, pp. 127-128.
 - 4 *Journal of Indian Art*, Vol XVI, Nos. 122-128 (1914), No. 22, plate IIb.
 - 5 Ohri, p. 150
 - 6 *Ibid.*, p. 149.
 - 7 Hermann Goetz, *Studies in the History and Art of Kashmir and the Himalaya*, p. 5.
 - 8 *Punjab District Gazetteers, Vol. XXXA, Gazetteers of Kangra District*, p. 39.
 - 9 Harcourt, p. 98.
 - 10 *Punjab District Gazetteers, Vol. XXXA, Gazetteer of Kangra District*, p. 38.
 - 11 Ohri, p. 148.
 - 12 Harcourt, p. 104.
 - 13 Chetwode, p. 177.
 - 14 *Ibid.*, p. 253.

CHAPTER TWELVE

A Tower and a Temple in Lahaul

UDAIPUR ON THE Chandrabhaga River is not so far distant from the heart of Chamba state as the present-day approach to the town suggests. The paved road that leads north from Manali at the head of the Kulu Valley takes the visitor as high as 13,325 feet before descending into the valley where Udaipur is found. This is beyond what was called "the end of the habitable world," in early descriptions that are quoted by Penelope Chetwode from ages past. But this road from Kulu is not the only way of approach. Udaipur is on once-busy trading routes and pack animal trails that carried constant commerce between Tibet and India, between South Asia and the lands of the Silk Road to the east, leading both to China, and to the west, even to Rome. Today there is less far-reaching exchange, and the road from Lahaul into Ladakh and on to Kashmir is not yet open to foreign visitors. Still, Lahaul and towns like Kyelong are surprisingly cosmopolitan. Even though the pass does not open until at least June each year, young people from Europe and America manage to reach far-flung villages even if they have to leave one snow-bound bus to cross the highest part of the pass on foot in search of another bus on the opposite side. Lord Elgin crossed the Rohtang Pass in 1863 while he was Governor-General and he re-crossed it the same day, a feat that evidently aggravated the heart disease that took his life shortly thereafter. A.F.P. Harcourt optimistically stated in his report of 1870 that the pass was typically open from the end of April to the end of December. The current investigator crossed it via a path cut through as much as 20 feet of snow only by following an army convoy, and with a special Border Police permit, at the end of June.

The first village that is encountered on the northern side of the Rohtang Pass is Koksar, a colorless place with boxy, strictly functional shelters. In fact, most towns in Lahaul are nondescript and visually unwelcoming, especially if they were built for military purposes or for limited industrial use. But the history of this rugged area is very colourful. The rules of Triloknātha, now known for its temple, traditionally governed large areas of Chamba-Lahaul, requiring an even-handed approach toward Hindu and Buddhist interests. Even in the 20th century the Rānā, "officially" a Hindu, took part in blood sacrifices to Avalokitesvara as most compassionate *bodhisattva* in this transitional zone between faiths.

Gondhla

The first monument that suggests that Lahaul has a past that is not only historical but powerful is the great vertical tower at Gondhla. This "Thakur's Castle," as

it is generally known, is still in the possession of the family that once governed the strategic area around Gondhla village. The interior, which is in a state of serious disrepair, is kept locked. Boards are falling away from the balcony, the main door of access has been closed over and sealed, carved borders on the upper level are disintegrating and the entire structure made of earth, rock and wood is crumbling. Yet this tower that commands a breath-taking view, from the snow of the Rohtang Pass in the east to the western valley of the Chandrabhaga, is one of the tallest and most impressive towers in all of Himachal Pradesh and its neighboring regions. Harcourt explains that:

The Thakoor's house at Gondhla, in Lahaul, is one that is worthy of some brief notice, as it is the largest structure in Lahaul, and quite unique in its formation. It is of no mean dimensions, and very strongly built of timber and stones cemented together with wet clay, as indeed, are all the Lahaul houses. Within the building are many rooms—some very large; and one of these, supported by many uprights, would certainly comfortably accommodate 100 persons; there are others also, with open verandahs, that are hardly much smaller. The peculiar feature of this house is the high tower, which contains six or seven storeys, the staircase from one room to the other being constructed of notched logs. In one apartment is shown the cooking-place that was used by the Kooloo Rajah, Maun Singh (cir. A.D. 1720), when proceeding on pilgrimage to Triloknath; and on a beam in the roof is to be seen an order of this chief in Nagari character, but it is so defaced by age and smoke that it is now quite illegible. At the very top of the house are hung all the winter supplies of warm clothing, but the most interesting of all the chambers are the two devoted to the worship of Buddha, in the outer one of which, that was at the time of my visit most scrupulously clean, were pictures suspended on the walls, and a couple of flat drums pendant from the ceiling and furnished with carved legs that rested on the ground. In the inner apartment or oratory, which also was very neat and clean, and smelt most strongly of incense, were the array of family gods that were concealed in a recess in the wall at the back of a shutter-screen, which the Thakoor removed. This screen was painted all over somewhat tastefully, and behind were the idols, some of which had been brought all the way from Shagatze and Lhasa.¹

While it is quite clear from the above account that a shrine room exists upstairs in the Gondhla structure, the function of this building is not primarily sacred. It served as a royal residence and, especially, as a defensive watchtower. The tower has the same width from top to bottom as it stands many storeys high and it has only one roof, so that it cannot properly be called a pagoda. It resembles the impressive tower of the Yoginī temple in Chaini, Inner Saraj, Kulu that rises even higher in terms of the proportion of height to width, and it is much taller than the vertical of Bhima Kālī in Sarahan, near the Sutlej River above Rampur. Like the old palace in Kathmandu's Durbār Square, it takes the post-and-lintel construction method of the Himalaya to its limits. Trabeate structures without reinforcing metal skeletons are not supposed to attain such height, but the fact that Gondhla Castle is still standing on top of its hill attests to its ability to withstand the punishments of both climate and earthquake. It can only be hoped that official protection and professional restoration will be assigned to this structure soon, before the Himalaya loses one of its most outstanding architectural products.

Gondhla is a town that has witnessed the coming of many peoples and many philosophies, just as has the rest of Lahaul. The geography along the river is not so very different from that of other mountainous areas in India, yet in some ways it is more like Central Asia than South Asia. While the tower speaks of a Hindu past

and Udaipur speaks of Hindu present, the foremost religious presence belongs to Buddhism, especially Buddhism that is oriented to Tibet. In his recent survey of *Art and Architecture in Himachal Pradesh* (New Delhi, 1983), Mian Goverdhan Singh judges that the most significant monuments in Lahaul that are closely tied in visual terms to the temple of Lakṣanā Devī in Brahmor are all Buddhist. Triloknātha, dedicated to Avalokiteśvara as "Lord of Three Worlds," is a stone *sikhara* of essentially North Indian but not Himalayan type. Goetz suggests that it was originally a Hindu monument made during the time of King Lalitaditya of Kashmir, but that under the influence of Padmasambhava its dedication was changed to be Buddhist. It is useful to remember that the birthplace of Padmasambhava is said to be Rewalsar in Sukhet, present-day Himachal Pradesh. The checked past of Lahaul was described by Harcourt in 1870 as follows:

In Lahoul the religion is essentially Buddhism, with an admixture of Hinduism, but the former has not always existed; for before it became the popular creed there was a species of belief that went under the name *Loong pai chos* (or the religion of the valley), which appears to have consisted mainly of bloody sacrifices to evil spirits, nor has Buddhism, a faith that tolerates no blood-shedding, ever been able to entirely drive out this system of worship.²

Singh's summary lists the Buddhist monasteries of Dhanker, Gamur, Gondhla, Guru-Ganthal, Hansa, Kardung, Kye (Kee), Lha-lun, Shashur, and Tabo.³ In spite of this cultural overlay, an early Hindu temple of great artistic import remains secure in Udaipur.

The temple of Markulā Devī is typical of Himachal Pradesh in the material of which it is made and its meaning. It is timberbonded and the absence of mortar between its stones allows it to quiver rather than collapse when subjected to earthquake. It is dedicated to the goddess Durgā Mahiśāsūramardini, although to Lahauli Buddhists she is known as the horrific Vajravārāhī, a goddess who is sometimes shown drinking blood from a human scull cup. In either Hindu or Buddhist context she is a deity of Tantric association with the *vajra* (thunderbolt). At Chamba-Lahaul the great goddess becomes Kālī or Dorje phagmo (Skt. Vajravārahī) and here the name of the nearby village is given to the deity. T.S. Maxwell points out in a fine recent study of the place that the Tibetan name of Markulā is Margul, and that a new or restored monastery is recorded there in a Tibetan inscription of slate that dates from the 17th or 18th century.⁴ The sharing of Hindu and Buddhist iconography is analyzed further by Marie-Therese de Mallman in "Divinites hindous dans le Tantrisme boundhique,"⁵ and the subject remains basic to any real understanding of art and religion in Himachal Pradesh.

The rectangular body of the temple is covered by a very steep roof that is raised high at the ridge pole. The gabled end that once had an entryway terminates in a tall and narrow pediment that is much like that on the original facade of Brahmor's Laksana Devi temple. The exterior of the structure stands on a high base set into the hillside and is quite irregular. The extending porch on its "front" side appears to be a later addition, and it disfigures the approach to the holy inner space. Perhaps the original appearance was closer to that of the steeply pitched temple in Ludiara, Kulu, which is fronted by a deep porch with four massive columns. As it stands today its entrance is awkward and unimpressive. The Udaipur

temple porch has two carved panels inside that illustrate the legendary churning of the great ocean of milk and the miraculous wide-legged form of Viṣṇu as Vāmanāvatara. The added structure does provide more interior space, including some room for storage, but the original porch that must have been a more typical *nartas-kara mandapa* is still defined inside by the size and placement of a rest area with benches and fine relief carvings including the two panels just referred to. A wooden balcony on four bracket supports projects out from the eastern bench in the open rest area and this is seen on the outside of the building. It, too, is well carved. Paint has not been applied to any of these carvings, although there is a coating of some kind of varnish preservative on them.

There is a passage for walking around the *garbha gr̥ha* between its wall and the outer wall, and the inner room itself is very small. Within this sanctum that is smaller than those in Brahmor and Chatrarhi, another metal image of Devī is honored. Once again, as at Brahmor and Hatkoti, she is Durgā Mahiṣāsūramardīnī. As always, she is rooted in the story of Devīmāhātmya as she destroys the evil buffalo spirit of Mahiṣāsura with her trident or *triśūla*. And buffalo horns are sometimes hung from the trident that stands atop the ridge beam of the temple in her honor. Her image in Udaipur is smaller than those in the other two Chamba region towns, but the silver-colored metal of which she is made is highly polished. Singh states that the sculpture is made of brass. The figure almost glows in its dark setting. A dress of red cloth is like a halo around it, making it very difficult to determine the design of the full image. The goddess appears gentle and welcoming in spite of her necessarily violent role; she is like a very precious doll that is somehow fragile even in its strength. When the blanket of offerings that usually shrouds her is removed, she is found in splay-footed stance on top of the defeated animal.

In her multiple right hands the deity holds a trident, a wheel, and the tail of the buffalo-demon below as she opens one hand in the gift-bestowing gesture of *vara-mudrā*. In her left hands she holds a mace, a thunderbolt, a noose, and a conch shell. The first to publish the inscription on the base of the statue with the name of the artist, Panjamanaka Jinaka, was J.Ph. Vogel.⁶ His comments are compared to those of the later writer in the following summary. Mian Goverdhan Singh also refers to the inscription on the pedestal in late Sharada characters that records its manufacture in the year 4646 or 1569-70. He refers to the name of the metal caster and links him to a place called Bhadavah, and he gives the name of the donor, Thakur Himapals.⁷ He goes on to describe the appearance of the goddess as she stands on top of the buffalo demon who has been conquered by Durgā's lion, and he refers to a small statue of a donor on the right. Vogel refers to three lions, and adds that a row of ten heads, possibly from other defeated demons, is under Mahiṣāsura. Singh speaks more fully of style, and he is critical of the design of the figure because of the large size of its head and its too-thin arms and legs, features that he attributes to the "decadent style" in medieval mountain art. Vogel summarizes his reaction to the image as "an insignificant and ugly brass statuette with eyes of silver." He gives its height as 2 feet, on top of a 6 inch pedestal.⁸ Could the attention to and disappointment in its appearance be due to the fact that the metal sculpture is found in the midst of wooden arts that are very refined? Certainly the

eight-armed goddess does not have the refinement of *Devī* images in Brahmor and Chamba, but she is impressive.

It is not possible for foreigners to take photographs inside of Markulā Devī temple, no matter how long and difficult the trip to reach it may have been or what kind of credentials one might have. It is "protected" not just from physical damage but from somehow dangerous examination by alien eyes. And so this monument cannot receive the kind of attention that it deserves in the present study. Fortunately, those who have visited the site in the past were allowed to do so unmolested, and their records remain the most complete. Among them, Hermann Goetz is the most thorough and the most thought-provoking. His photographs are used for reference here.⁹ But T.S. Maxwell goes deeper, proving how styles can reveal historical and cultural interaction in remote Himalayan regions.

The temple at Udaipur is recorded by Singh to have been built by Trigarta princess named Suryamati who was married to Ananta Deva (1028-63) of Kashmir.¹⁰ The connection is important, and Goetz goes so far as to suggest that "Kashmir art, lost in its home country, survived in the wood carvings of Markulā Devī (originally the Sun temple of Marul-Udaipur in upper Lahaul, and finally in the Buddhist monasteries of Tibet."¹¹ He also points out that "Most sun temples in India and most of the images of Surya go back to the period of the Gurjara-Pratihāra empire (circa A.D. 800-1000)."¹² It is a monument of basically Hindu orientation that was erected in a place very far off from the stronghold of the faith that inspired it. At the center of the largest ceiling panel on the north side of the porch interior there is a formal image of Buddha with male and female attendants all around him in adoration. The question remains as to whether this represents an accommodation to pre-existing Buddhist presence in Lahaul or the image is simply there to show Buddha as one of the 10 incarnations of Viṣṇu. The prominence of the figure argues against the second suggestion. Of the many *mandapa* carvings, the one that most impressed Mian Goverdhan Singh, is a ceiling representation of Śākyamuni Buddha being tempted by Māra and his demons, along with Mara's beautiful daughters. It is more prominent than the *Rāmayāna* and *Mahabhārata* scenes that are also found.

By the 11th century, the art of Himachal Pradesh had changed in several important ways, and it is quite appropriate to look for some of those changes in this temple at the roadside in Udaipur. Gone is the overall quality of organic life that imbued 7th century carvings with *prāṇa* or life breath while Himachal artists retained inspiration from Gupta Dynasty art. Baroque lushness of vegetation and all growing things gives way to geometry and schematicized life forms. A lotus flower is treated in an almost metallic way in wood so that it becomes a kind of embossed medallion. The main lotus that projects down from the center of the lantern ceiling is more organic as it blooms amid creepers with flying *apsaras* figures around it. Borders around narrative scenes become pattern for pattern's sake. The art that results, and Markulā Devī shows it, is hard brittle but still clear and effective in communicating its message. Sūrya is easily recognized in his trilobe niche above the seven horses that pull his chariot across the heavens in the path that the sun takes from east to west. His presence suggests what the original dedi-

cation of the temple may have been. There are few deep shadows, but movement survives, as in the bristling figures of Śiva and Durgā at the center of the west ceiling panel. Everything is more compartmentalized, including the comic strip procession of lovers in dalliance that is found in the east ceiling panel.

This writer cannot agree with Singh's judgement that the richness of the wood carvings in Udaipur is greater than that of the art in Brahmor and Chatrarhi, but certainly there is more of it. The liveliest elements are intertwined serpents and vines that twist and undulate across sections that include the lintel over the *garbha gr̥ha* door. Iconography is abundant, and it takes a long time for a pūjāri or priest to explain all of the story that the woodcarvings unfold, but that does not necessarily mean that the tales come alive. Perhaps it is due to increased contact with the outside world, including the art of Central Asian or Middle Eastern metal workers and textile artists from all along the Silk Road, but Himachal talents are increasingly given over to patterned art of admirable skill and *tour de force* intricacy that suggests prototypes in Mughal and Punjab architectural carving. Add to this an increased use of wood chipping in Central Asian modes, like those of the Uygur people in today's Xinjiang Province of northwestern China, and early post-Gupta traditions are overwhelmed. A simple band of alternating circles and squares that makes a border beside representational carvings shows this: they look more like embossed metal than carved wood.

Above all, the wooden art in Udaipur is frozen. This is even true of the carving that creates the thrilling design of the *mandapa* ceiling. The ceiling is all swirling movement of meandering vines and running borders of diamonds that pull the eye to the center of the circle, to a square within repeated lantern roof design that is further activated by a row of *vajra* thunderbolts at its center. Monster faces of the *kīrtimukha*, face of glory, can be made out in the corners of the middle square, but only if one can decipher them amid symmetrical curling lines. The ceiling is a climax without preliminaries.

The doorframe of the 11th century building provides useful (and final) comparison to the art of Brahmor and Chamba. In Udaipur one marvels at exactness, one envies the control of the hand, as one sees a kind of Byzantine mosaic pattern emerging from wood. It is certainly tactile in its fine linearity, but where is the inviting earthiness of deodar? Does one really want to touch it? Does the art invite affectionate understanding or only admiration and respect? Gangā and Yamunā take their expected places on the door frame of the inner shrine with a formality that makes them look, again almost metallic. There is no melding into the background, no living breath in these forms. The tightly rendered frames that surround the shallow niches that hold these figures are just as important as the life forms themselves, perhaps more. There was growing internationalism in once-remote kingdoms during medieval times. As early monuments that have been termed "classical" are left behind, it is necessary to look for many more ingredients in Himachal art and architecture than pan-Indian themes plus local tastes. The horizons became broader in medieval times and the art shows it.

An early account tells us that "The scenery in Lahaul is almost oppressive, and it is wild and desolate, for the villages are mere specks on these vast mountain slopes." Specks indeed, but very important specks in the long history of Himalayan art.

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- 1 A.F.P. Harcourt, *The Himalayan Districts of Kooloo, Lahoul, and Spiti*, p. 100.
 - 2 *Ibid.*, p. 65.
 - 3 Mian Goverdhan Singh, *Art and Architecture of Himachal Pradesh*, p. 248.
 - 4 T. Maxwell, "Lakhamandal and Triloknath," *Arts International*,
 - 5 *Arts Asiatiques*, Vol. X, *Etude iconographique sur Manjusri*, Paris (1964), pp. 174-183.
 - 6 *Journal of Indian Art*, Vol. XVI, Nos. 122-128 (1914), No. 122 plate 2a.
 - 7 Singh, p. 66.
 - 8 (formerly 7) J.Ph. Vogel, *Antiquities of Chamba State*, p. 249.
 - 9 (formerly 8) Hermann Goetz, *The Early Wooden Temples of Chamba*, Plates X-XVI.
 - 10 (formerly 9) Singh, p. 174.
 - 11 (formerly 10) Hermann Goetz, *Studies in the History and Art of Kashmir and the Himalaya*, pp. 6-7.
 - 12 (formerly 11) Goetz, *Studies in the History and Art of Kashmir and the Himalaya*, p. 24.

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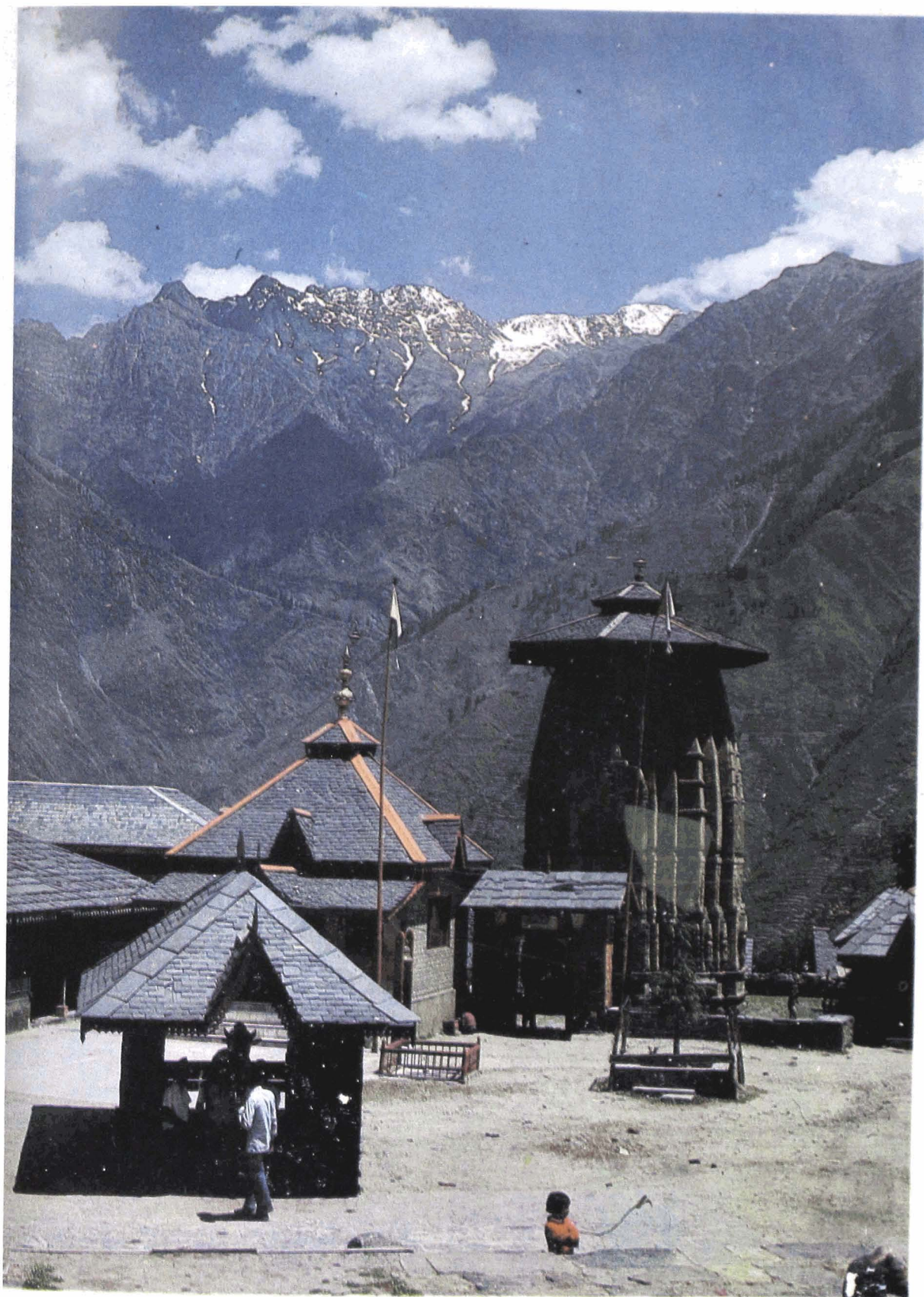


PLATE 1— Brahmor's square holds some of the earliest temple art in the Himalaya.



PLATE 2— The brightly painted *bhandar* in Manan village in the Simla hills.



PLATE 3— The temple of Bhagavati in Manan shows the taste for brilliant painting in the Simla

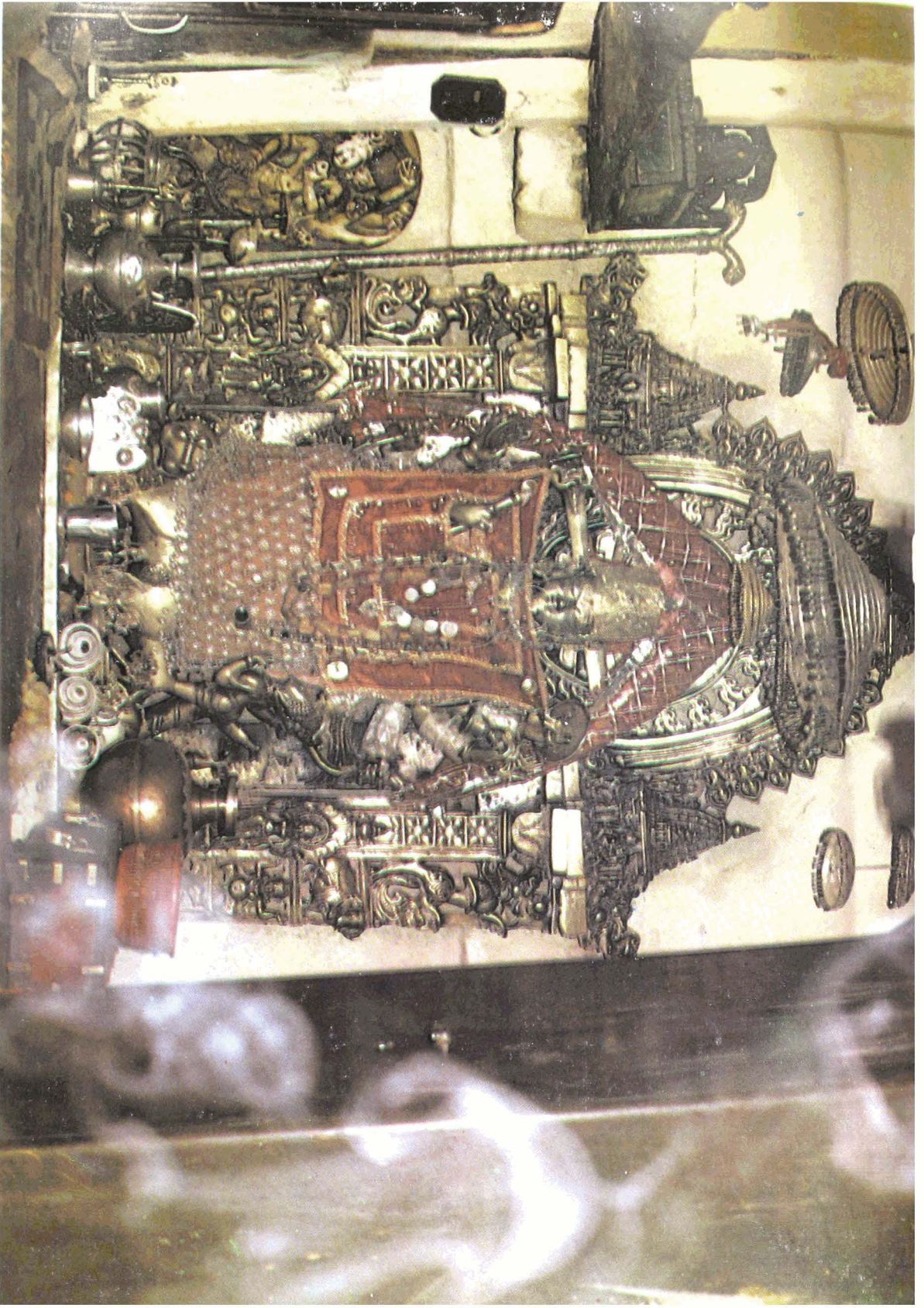


PLATE 4 – Hatkoti reveals Durgā Mahisāsūramardīnī inside of her shrine.



PLATE 5— Bhima Kāli temple detail of the newer tower shows florid carving style in Sarahan above Rampur.

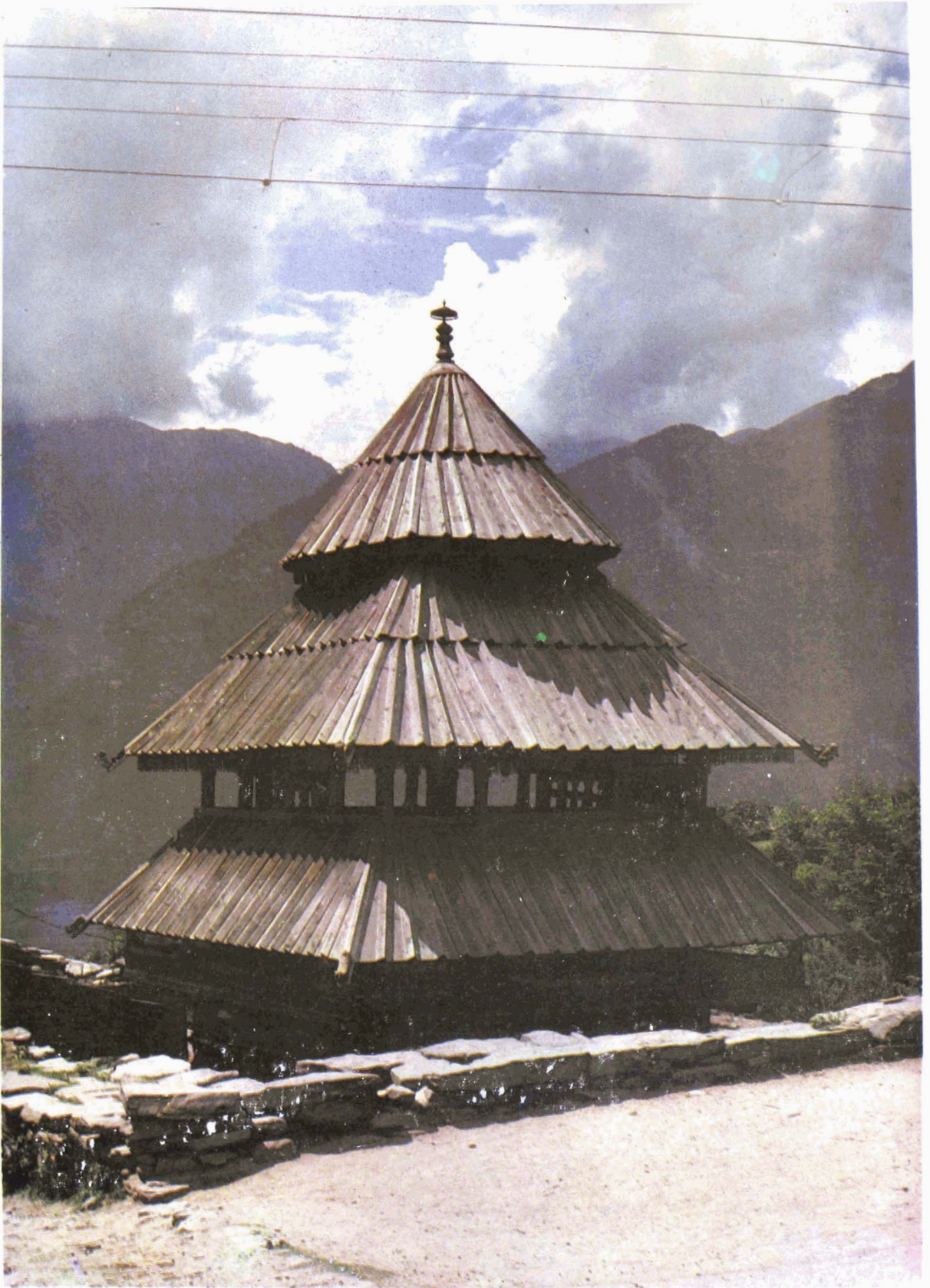


PLATE 6— Tripura Sundarī temple in Naggar, Kulu Valley.

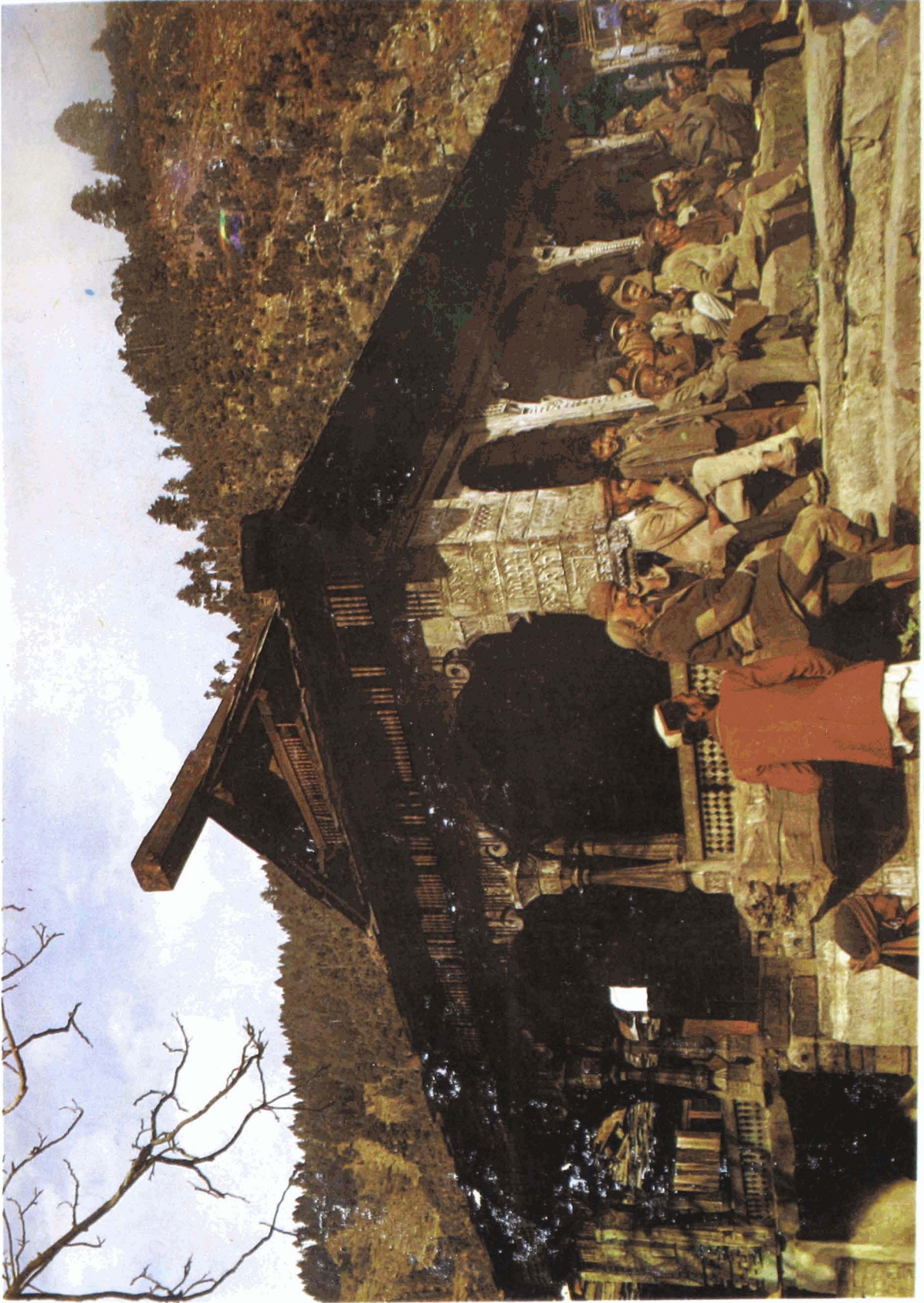


PLATE 7 - Sandhya Devi temple in Jagatsukh is made of stone and wood in absolute combination, founded 1428 A.D.

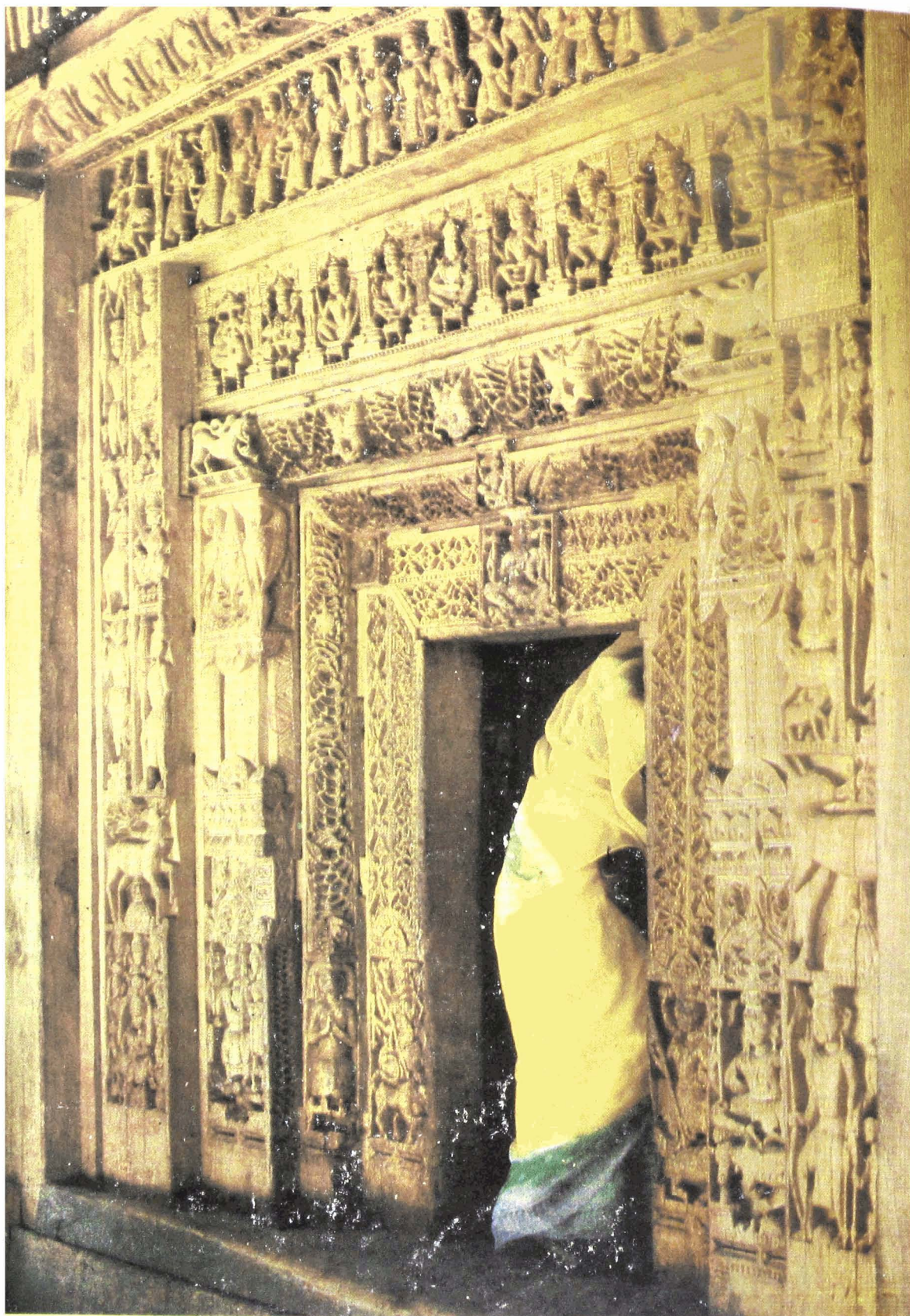


PLATE 8— A worshipper enters the carved doorway of the Hidimba Devi temple, Manali.

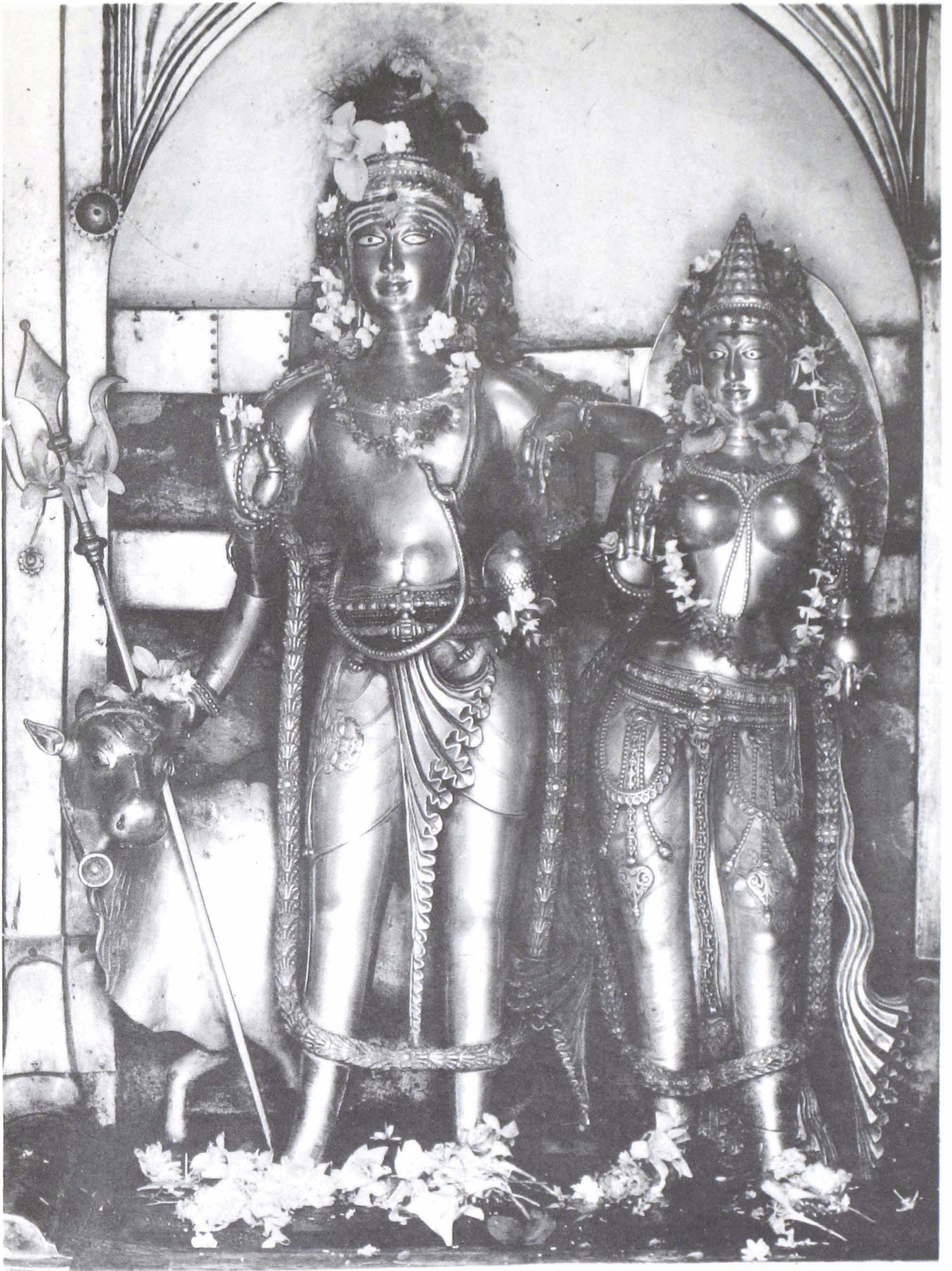


PLATE 1—Śiva and Parvatī with Nandi inside the temple of Gaurī-Śankara in Chamba.
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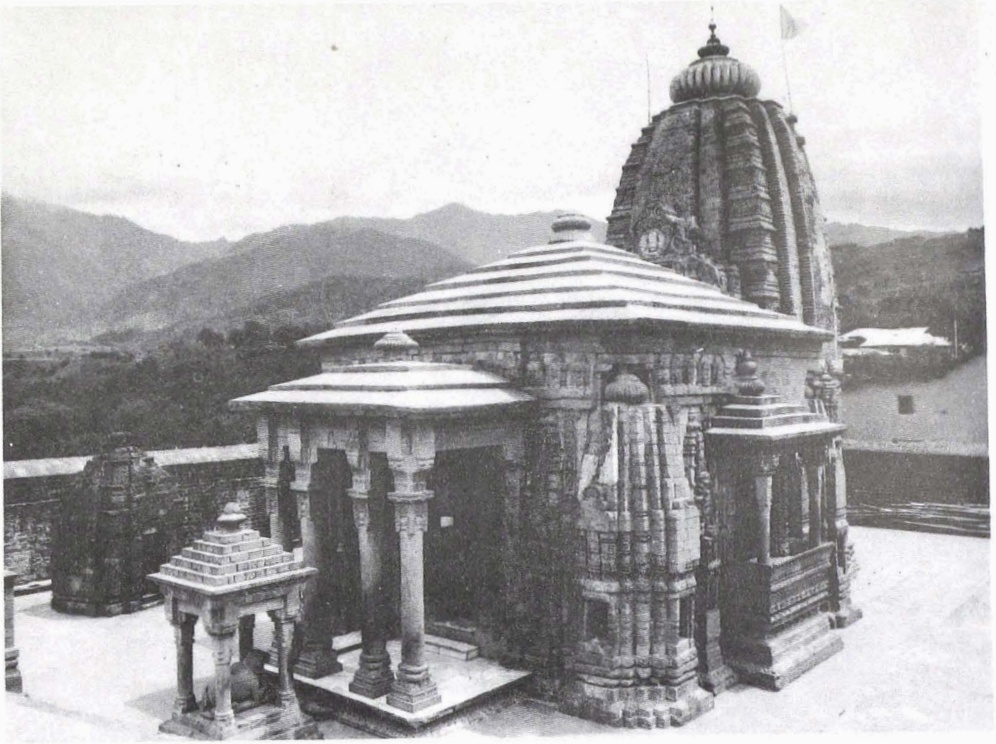


PLATE 2—The temple of Śiva Mahādeva at Baijnath near Mandi was founded in the 14th century in harmony with classical medieval models on the northern plains of India. (Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)



PLATE 3—Five Śikhara temples with *Chatra* attachments of wood and slate that were first employed in the 17th century are found in the central temple square of Chamba town. The temple of Gaurī-Saṅkara is second from the left and the temple of Lakṣmī-Narayanā is on the far right. (Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)



PLATE 4—Hiḍimba Devī is worshipped in this private miniature shrine in Manali as well as in her major temple that dates from the 16th century. The metal top pieces represent the trident weapon that the goddess shares with Śiva.



PLATE 5—The small “Alpine style” temple of Durgā at Ġushaini represents the energetic “folk” style of building and carving that is dominant in Himachal Pradesh.

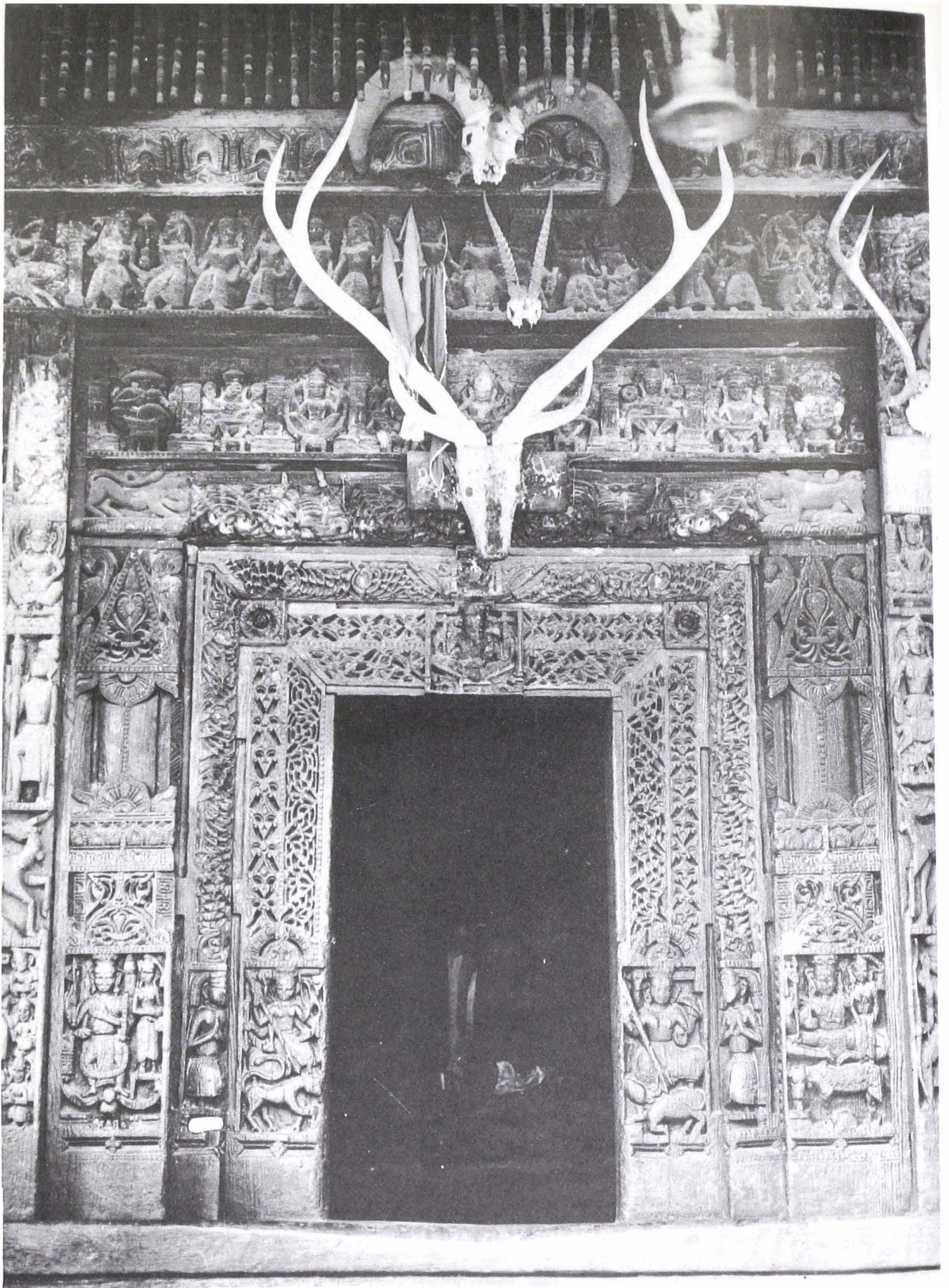


PLATE 6—Hidimba Devī façade before removal of some animal horn offerings by the Archaeological Survey of India.
(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)



PLATE 7— Timber-bonded castle at Naggar above Kulu Valley, a massive compound that J.C. French believed to be haunted.



PLATE 8— Bhima Kālī temple compound rises over the village of Sarahan high above Rampur.

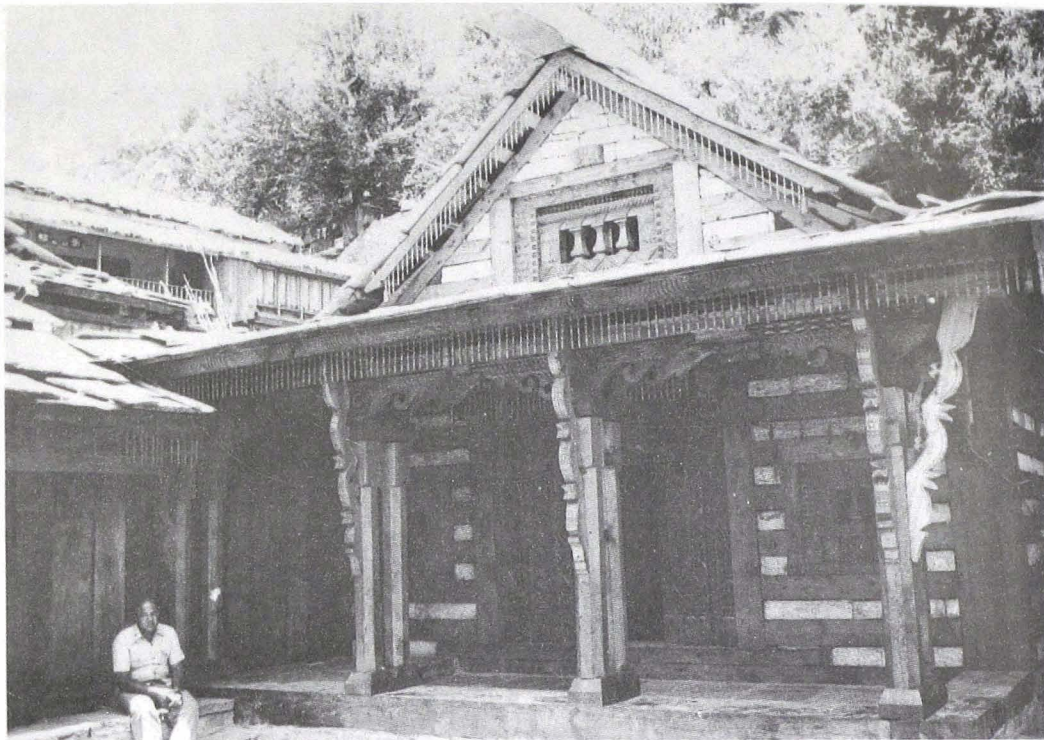


PLATE 9—A carved façade of the shrine complex near the sacred baths at Vashist, beyond Manali in Kulu Valley.



PLATE 10—Modern wooden palace of the Maharaja of Rampur that is located in Sarahan near the Bhima Kālī compound.



PLATE 11- The circumambulatory space between the inner and outer walls of Chañḍeśvari Devī temple in Chatrarhi contains important murals in dry Fresco as well as early medieval wood carvings.

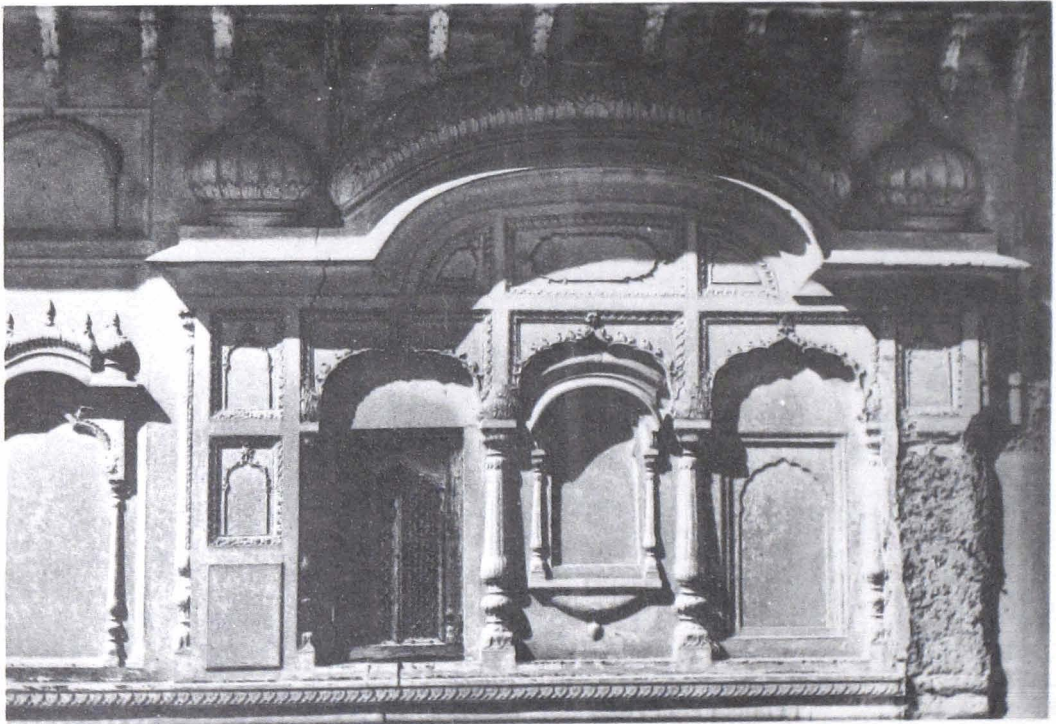


PLATE 12 The fortified palace at Arki shows 19th century borrowing of Rajput and Mughal elements in the lower foot hills 20 miles from Simla.

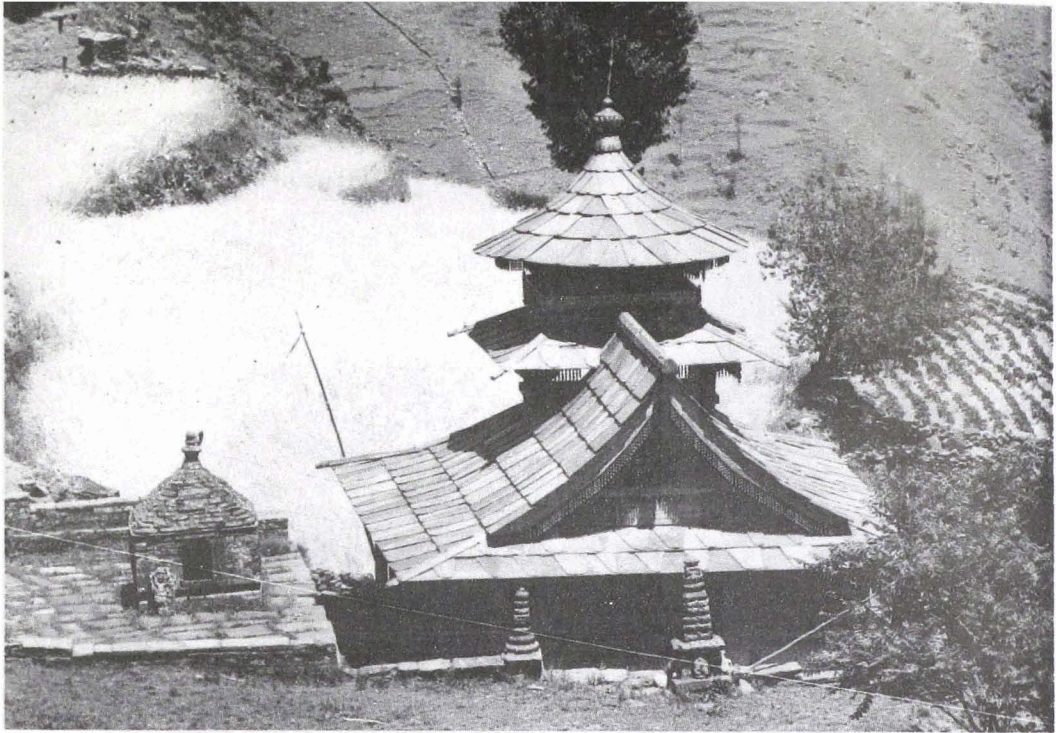


PLATE 13— Stone sculptural fragments, including *amalaka* sun discs, are found beside the triple-roof temple of Bhagavati in Manan Village of the Simla hills.

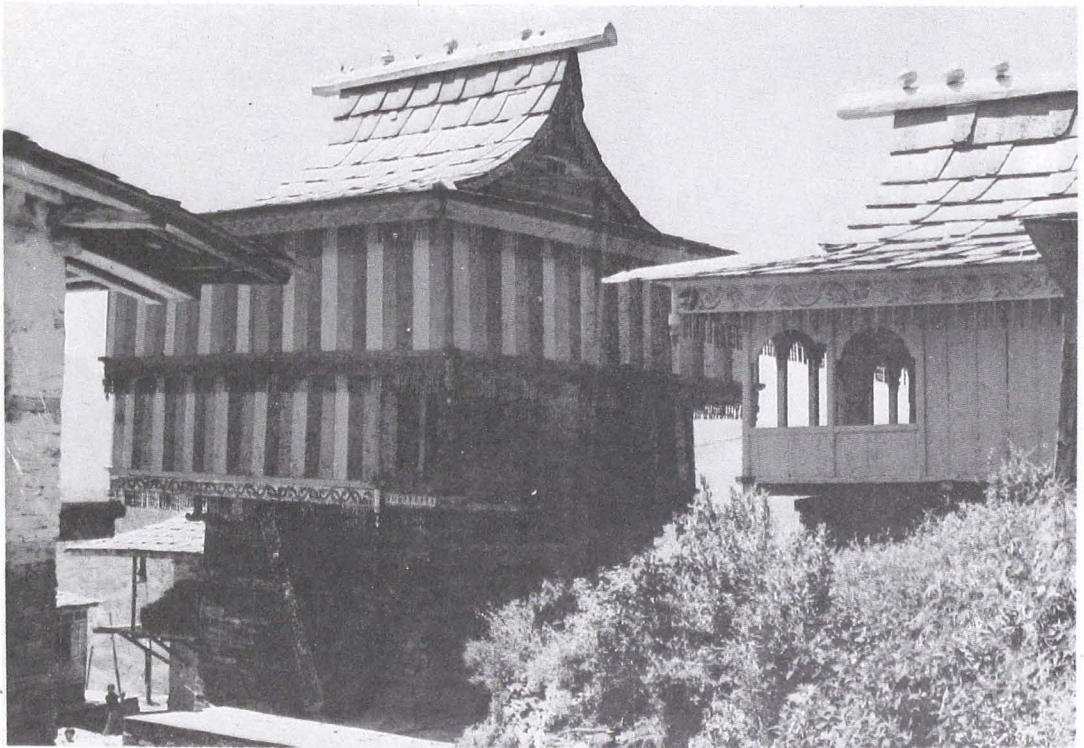


PLATE 14— The temple tower of Mahāsu Maṇḍir is an especially colorful monument of Siva in Gajari. The painted sections are lime green, yellow, and red.

PLATE 16—The open *Mandapa* and entry of Trigareśvara Siva temple at Jenog near Simla displays the dynamic repetition and clarity of native design in Himachal Pradesh. The columns show Siva (left) and Viṣṇu (right) below adorned birds.

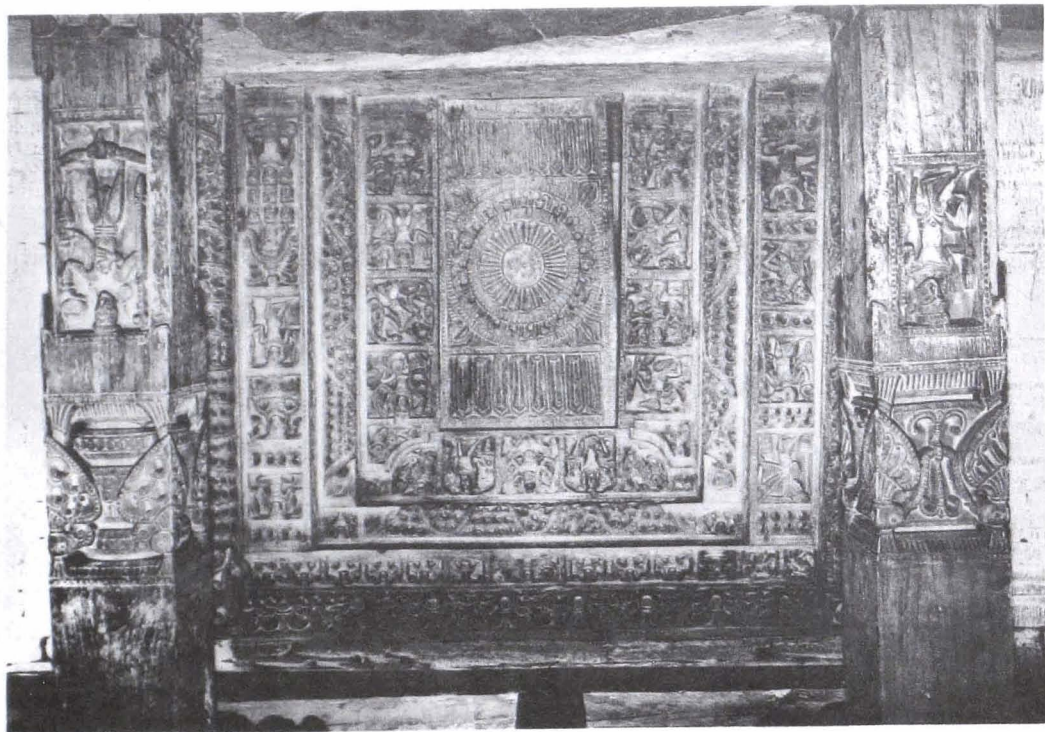


PLATE 15—*Mandapa* detail of lantern ceiling with Narasimha and Varaha, Trigareśvara Siva temple, Jenog.



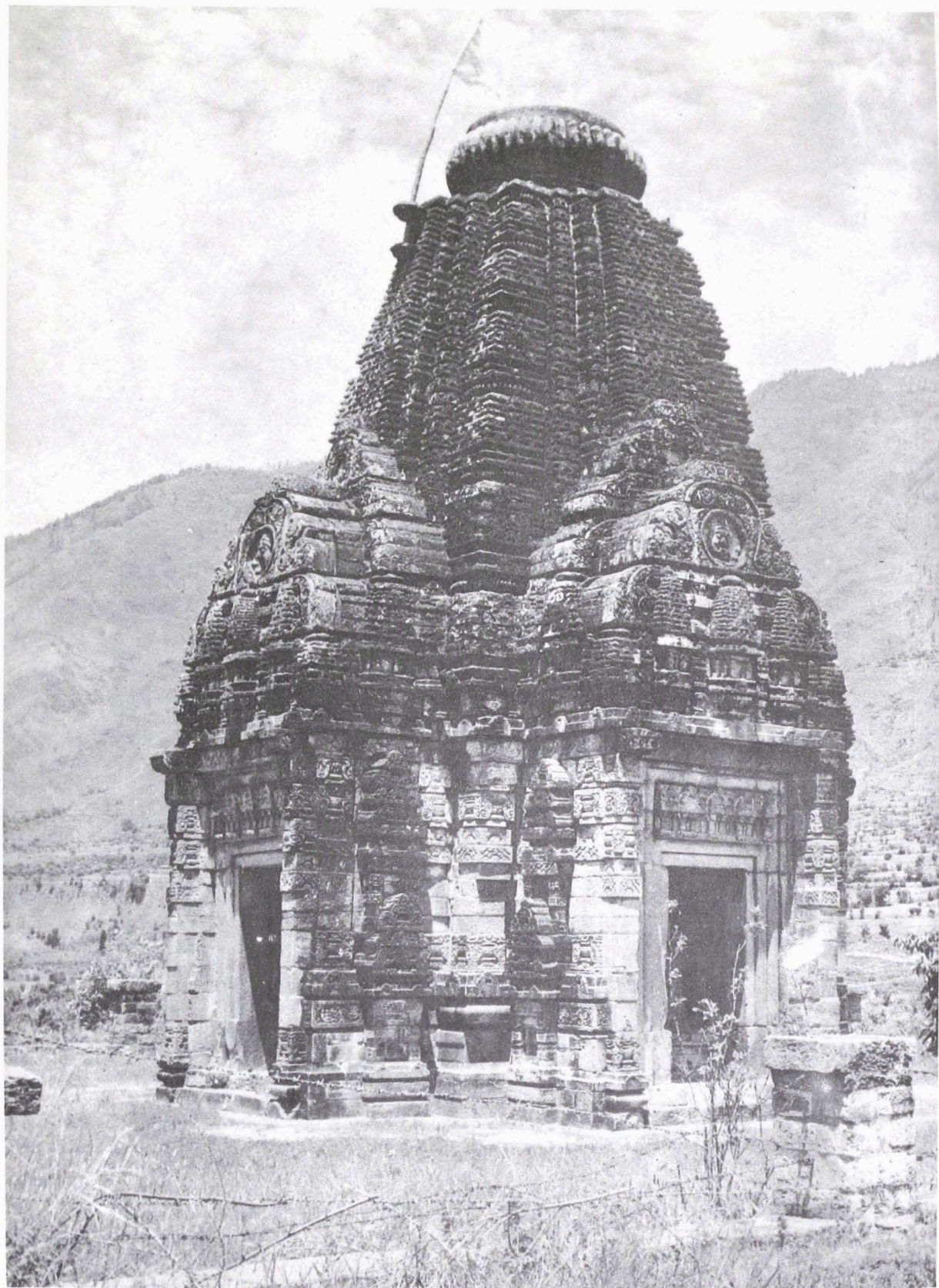


PLATE 17— The stone temple of Viśveśvara Mahādeva in Bajaura, attributed to the 8th century, stands for the best of early medieval arts that were borrowed from India's plains and ré-made in Himachal Pradesh.
(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)

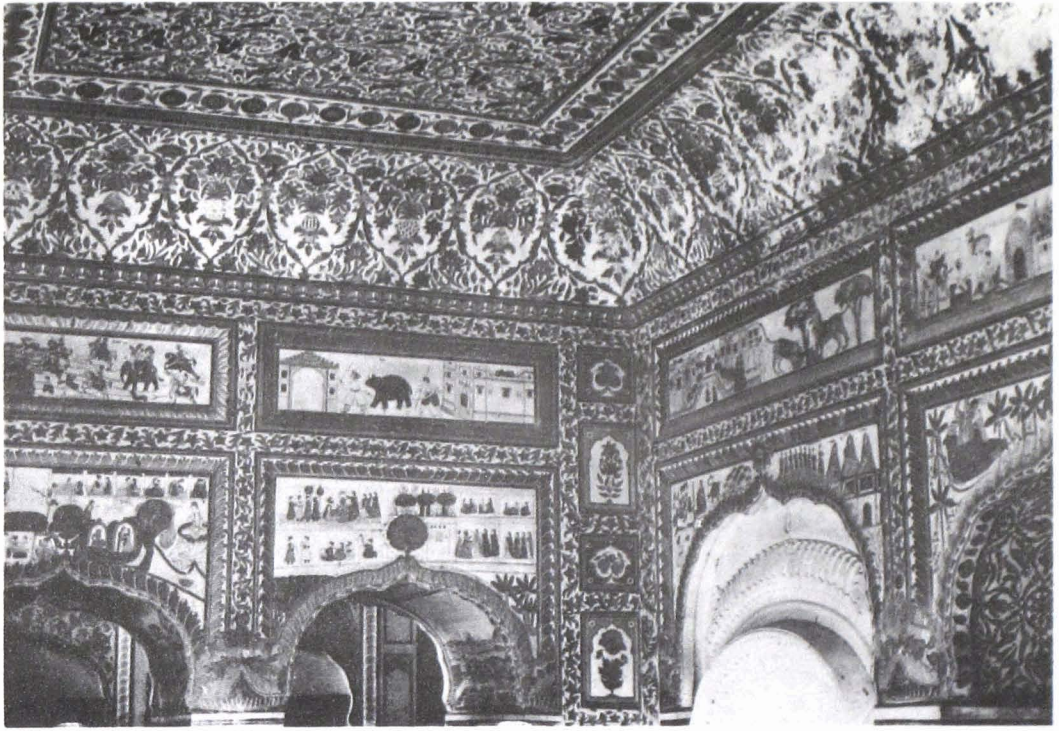


PLATE 18— The painted interior of the Diwankhana audience hall inside the fortified palace of Arki shows inspiration from Rajput, Mughal, and European cultures during the 19th century even as the narrative scenes include curiously local characters.



PLATE 19— Detail off supernatural attendants painted inside the Diwankhana audience hall of the palace at Arki, 19th century.

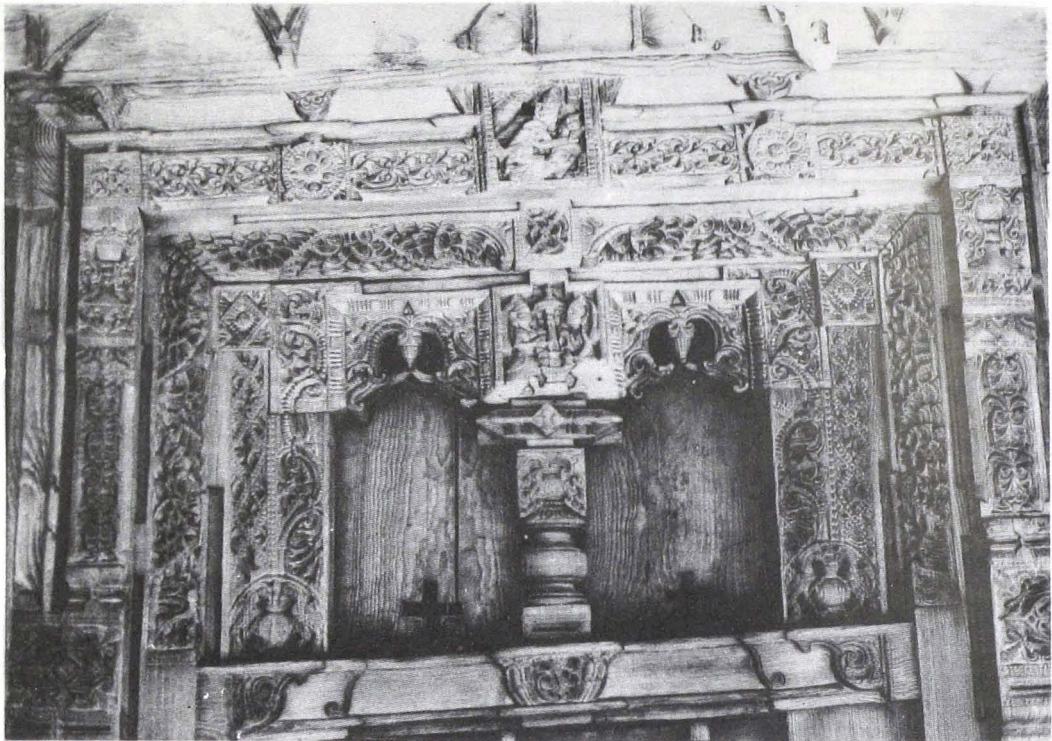


PLATE 20— Detail of a bifurcated window frame, Hidimba Devī temple, Manali, dated 1553 and recently renovated. Note unusual appearance of erotic *mithuna* couple at top center.

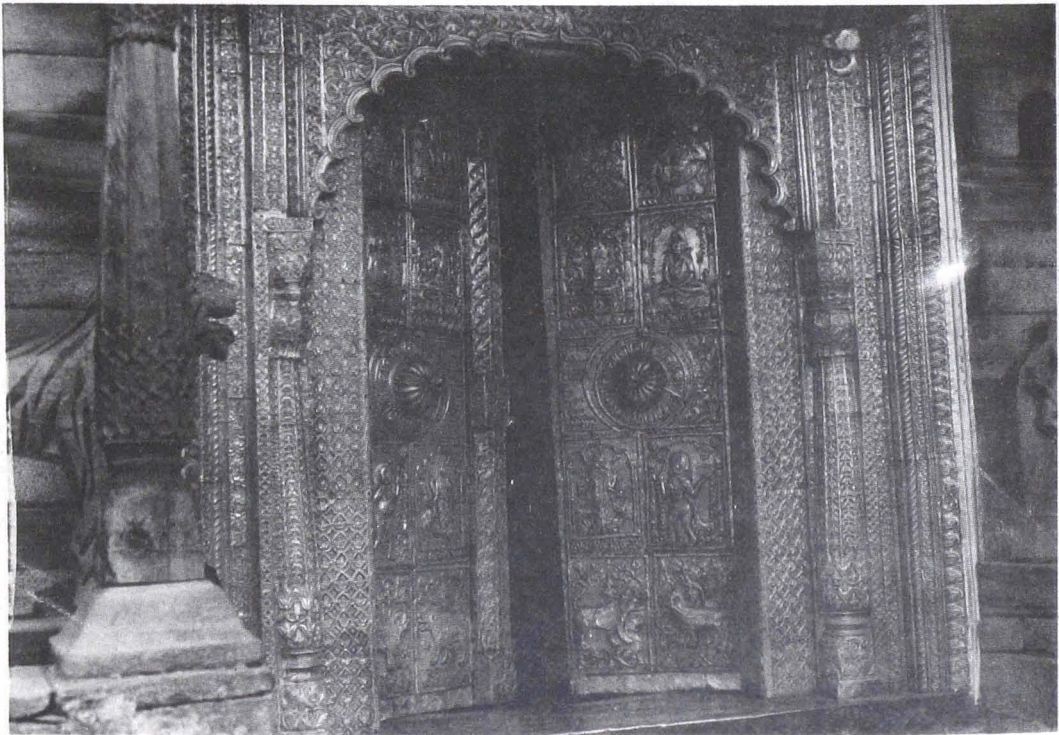


PLATE 21— Silver doors enter the second courtyard of Bhima Kālī temple with tiger vehicles of Durgā on both sides.



PLATE 22— A mounted horseman the ceiling of the temple of Chamuṇḍa Devī in Chamba stands for Rajput influence in late medieval times.
(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)



PLATE 23— The unusual temple of Hateśvari Durgā temple in Hatkoti, made of stone, granite, and slate with metal additions, is marked with large characters that read “Jai Durga” as bronze lions stand guard in front of it.

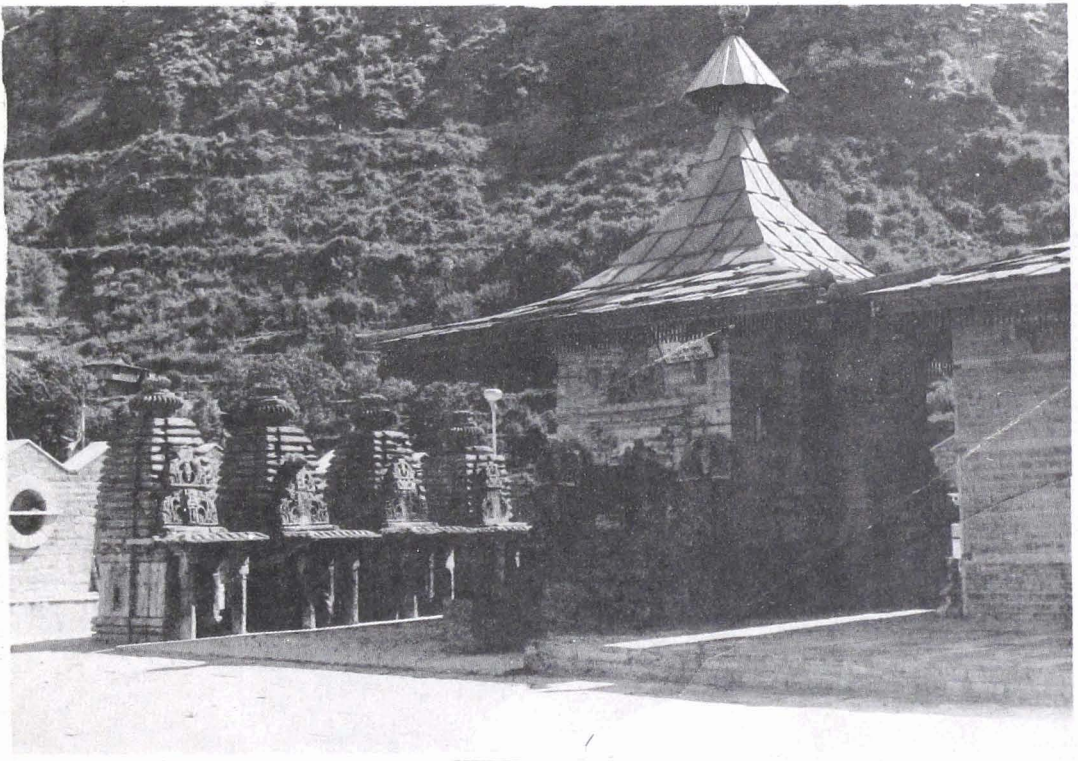


PLATE 24— Four small *Śikhara* shrines stand beside the Śiva monument of granite and state that contains a large stone *linga* at Hatkoti and is attributed to 7th or 8th century origin.

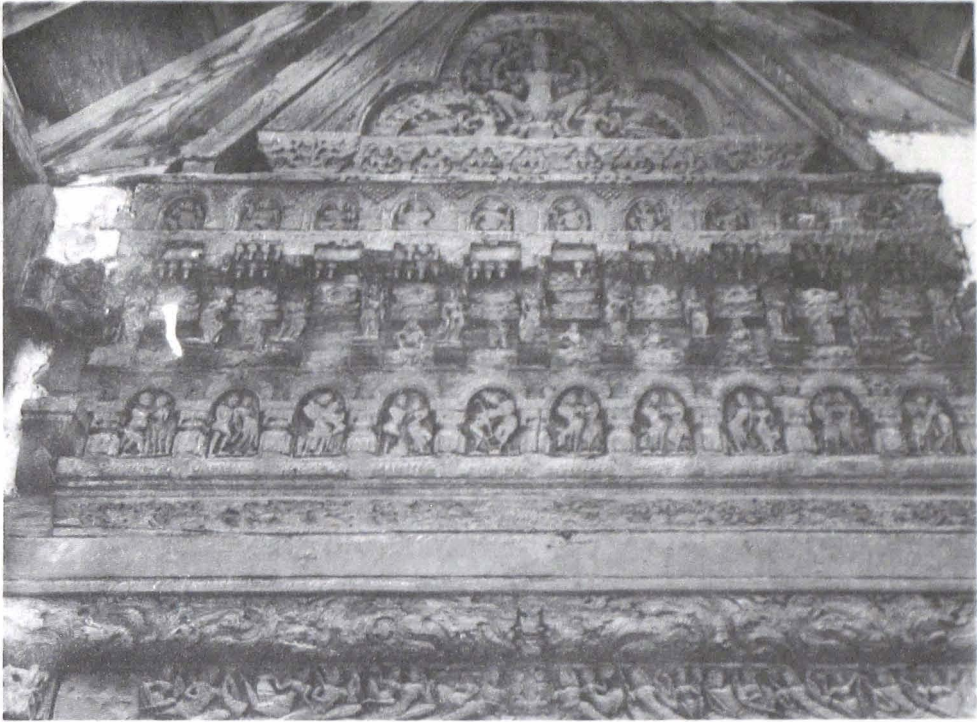


PLATE 25— The entrance pediment of Lakṣanā Devī temple, Brahmoṛ, calls for comparison to late Gupta sculpture of the Indian plains as well as to carved wood at the temple of Markula Devī in Udaipur, Lahaul.
(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)



PLATE 26— Details of the upper left panels of the doors into the inner courtyard of Bhima Kālī showing Gaṇeśa and Śiva in meditation.



PLATE 27— From the backside of Bhima Kālī temple in Sarahan, the lean of the original tower on the left can be seen.



PLATE 28— The temple of Koteśvara Mahādeva is dedicated to worship of Śiva below Kumarsain village in the Sutlej River Valley.

