

A Study of History of Medieval Pradesh Kangra Fort in Himachal

Sandeep Kumar^{1*}, Dr. Vijay Kumar²

¹ Research Scholar of Sunrise University

² Associate Professor, Sunrise University, Alwar Rajasthan

Abstract - The purpose of this study is to the view to have a full concept of the history, antiquity, geography, topography and the connected topics involving the Kangra, its fort and its kings during the ancient and mediaeval times. The major purpose of the present study is to establish the concerns and attempt an answer to the connected challenges. Before entering into details, it would be necessary here to know about the geography, terrain and history of Himachal Pradesh, where the famed Kangra fort still stands in its damaged condition. The fort of Rangra, which is now a forlorn mound of ruins, has long been regarded as inaccessible by Kangra monarchs. Up till the year 1620, Nagarkot was the seat of Kangra's government and a part of Jalandhar's empire. No archaeologist working in the Kangra region can avoid the topic of the present settlement's general antiquity. The locals are extremely proud of the area's historical significance and never weary of bragging about their most ancient palace in the entire region they call home. Seeing the fort from above and listening to the wind and water babbling in the Banganga defile below, one can't help but rue the fact that so little is known about one of the country's most remarkable structural remnants, set in an island-like mound created by Banganga and Manjhi rivers. It still stands today as an impregnable castle, preserving several episodes from its illustrious past.

Keywords - Medieval Kangra Fort, Himachal Pradesh, archaeologist working

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INTRODUCTION

Located in the southwest corner of Kangra is the Kangra fort. The southern limit of Parana Kangra or "Old Kangra" may be referred to as the land below the fort. There is a historic Kangra town located on the eastern slope of a mountain that overlooks the Banganga River to the east. This village was severely devastated during the 1905 earthquake. The outlines of subterranean constructions can be seen plainly in some low-lying locations. It's clear that some clearing work can be done at these locations, but the task is likely to be quite labor-intensive because it will require handling enormous chunks of stone. It's also possible that these buried constructions don't date back to the prehistoric period. Some traces of Kangra's general antiquity can still be found in the city's older parts.

So much so that some claim the name of the kingdom of Kangra was taken solely from the fort. Kangra, despite its ambiguous etymology, has long been associated with the fort, according to historians Hutchison and Vogel in History of Punjab Hill States. Titen's head was chopped off by Siva, according to Alexander Cunningham's interpretation of the - Jalandhar Parana and other traditional documents, in

order to keep Vishnu from seducing Vrinda, the wife of danava Jalandhar and a spotless woman. He fell north of the Beas, with his mouth near JawlaMukhi, and his body covered the entire area between the Beas and the Sutlej after his head had been severed from his body.

This section of Titan's body is also thought to be the origin of Nagarkot fort, and the name of fort or kingdom has a lot to do with this part of Titan's body. The mythology was bolstered by the word's common derivations, which seemed to lend credence to it. aax, for example, is pronounced KJJl or Kangarh in colloquial, the latter of which means: The fort of the ear. Because of this, the location and the fort that was built on it came to be connected with a titanic bodily part. In addition, the ground fort's design resembled a 'ear' in that it covered a large area.

Before delving into the specifics of the Kanga fort's architecture, it's necessary to review the many historical sources provided by various authors. So let's start with this: Alexander Cunningham's Archaeological Survey Reports make this reference to the Kanga fort:

In the fort between the Manjhi and Banganga rivers sits the Rangra fort, or Nagar-Kot, which is a long, narrow strip of land." But the cliffs overlooking the two rivers, which climb to a height of three hundred feet on the Banganga side, are what make this fortress so formidable. However, a narrow ridge of rock separates two rivers, and the only land access is towards town, which is only accessible via a deep ditch dug at the foot of a set of walls. At this end of the fort, where the high ground appears to be an offshoot from the western end of the hill dividing Kangra from the neighbourhood of Bhawan, are the long works of any significance to the fort.

According to Cunningham, the palace sits atop the hill, with the smaller stone temples of Laxami Narayan and Aabika Devi and a Jain temple including a colossal statue of Adinath beneath it. The DarsaniDarwaza, or 'Gate of Worship', is the gate that separates the temple courtyard from the palace, and the MahalonKaDarwaa, or 'Palace Gate', is the gate that connects the temple courtyard to the palace. Fortifications of the Andheri or HendeliDarwaza are located below the temple gate. Now merely a towering arch, this once-valuable gateway was given the name Anrihferi, or "Dark Gate," because of its gloom. The JahangiriDrawaza is the name of the next gate, located at the summit of the ascent. According to folklore, this was the fortress's outer entrance during the Hindu era, but the exact name is unknown. The AmiriDarwaza, also known as the Hobles Gate, and the AhaniDarwaja, also known as the "Iron Gate," which was covered in iron plates, are located beneath this one. The first Mughal administrator under Emperor Jahangir, NawabAlif Khan, is said to have built both of these gates. The guard is stationed in a tiny courtyard with two gates named Phatak or gate, at the base of the ascent and the ditch's edge. Ranjit Singh Gate is the name of the gate that opens.

In the intriguing description of the Maasir-UI-UmarH from the period of Sahjahan, we have yet another survey of Kangra fort: "The fort of Kangra sits atop a mountainous peak. There are bastions and seven entrances, making it a formidable fortress. There are 15 chains and an inner circle of one KQS. and 15 chains. SukhaTalab and RfrionriKapurSagar Tank are both enormous tanks within the fort's perimeter, which measures between 15 and 25 chains in width and 114 cubits in height. According to the ShahFateh-I-Kangra by Jalal Tabatabai (perhaps written during Shahjahah's reign), the fort was described as follows: "Kangra's fort is perched atop a very tall hill. It's a great place to visit. It was built so long ago that no one knows when it was constructed. No king ever conquered this fort, and it is absolutely agreed upon by all people familiar with the history of the ancient rajas that it has always been owned by one and the same Hindu Shahi family. In the history of Muslim monarchs in this land, from the reign of Gias-ud-din Tughluq in (1320 A.D.) until the reign of Emperor Akbar in (1556 A.D.), the facts are mixed up by historians of the Muslim kings.

Despite 52 sieges by the most powerful monarchs and kings, the fort has never been taken. It was originally besieged by Feroz Shah Tughluq, one of Delhi's greatest rulers, but he was content with an interview with the Raja and was forced to return fruitless. Emperor Akbar's greatest noble, HasanKuli, lived during this time period. Following his appointment as Punjab's governor, RhanTurkoman led a large force against this fort, claiming the title of Khan-I-Khari. However, he was unable to sustain a long siege and also failed to succeed in such a large and arduous assignment. It was intended to fall into the hands of a powerful army of kings who, guided by the stars of prosperity, overcame and erased all barriers in their path.

Atop a hill, Kangra fort sits at the confluence of the Banganga and the Manjhi or Patel Ganga rivers, which also served as the moat of the fort. Through a thin neck of rock that separates two rivers, the fort is accessible from the town at this location. A deep ditch has been dug at the base of the walls.

Amidst the Dhauladhar mountain range, the Kangra fort boldly stands atop a cliff despite facing the wrath of numerous assaults and nature itself (Figure 1 & 2). The Katoch Rajput dynasty, which is claimed to be the oldest in India, has been headquartered in this fort. The ASI has confirmed that the fort is of ancient origin. This fort is likewise thought to be from the time after the Mahabharat era. As a result of its enormous amassed wealth and its strategic protected location, this fort has been a frequent target of invasions and raids by a wide variety of ethnic groups and clans over the course of its long history. It was widely held that whoever occupied Kangra Fort was in control of the surrounding hills. Kangra's fort is also renowned for the fort's distinctive art and architecture. Trigarth, Kaangarh, Kotochgarh, Bhimkot, Nagarkot, and Susarmapura have all been referred to as this fort in historical records. An interest in Kangra Fort's ancient history, monarch lineage, unusual geographic location, and art and architecture sparked my desire to research and write about the fort. It will shed light on the fascinating history of the ruling dynasty, the fort, and other competing hypotheses as to its name and location, as well as art and architecture and other areas of information that require further study and investigation.



Figure 1 - Kāngra before 1905 earthquake



Figure 2 - Kāngra after 1905 earthquake

LOCATION

At 32.1°N and 76.27°E, Kangra fort is situated. The fort is located three kilometres from Kangra city centre. You can get to the fort using any of the following types of transportation.

1. **Air:** Nearest airport is Gaggal (17 kilometres).
2. **Rail:** Kangra town has a narrow gauge railway station so detrain at Pathankot which is connected to all towns of Himachal including Kangra.
3. **Road:** Passenger buses between Himachal Pradesh's towns are of high quality. Private tourist taxis and cabs are also easily accessible. Dharamshala is 20 kilometres away, while McLeod Ganj is 28 kilometres away.

It's up to you where you want to stay in Dharamshala or McLeod Ganj.

ETYMOLOGY

Nagarkot: "Nagar" means "town" and "kot" means "fort" in this word's composition. If you put the two together, you get Fort Town.

Katoch: The word "Katoch" has two possible origins, each with its own theory. Locals may have nicknamed them "Kotch" since they used to live inside the fort ("Kot"), and through time, the pronunciation of this word morphed into "Katoch," according to one explanation. In the second notion, "Best in Swordsmanship" comes from the Sanskrit language.

Susarmapura There are two possible explanations for the name "Susarmapura" given to the location. An alternative explanation is based on Duryodhan's close ally Susarma of Trigarth, who is listed in Mahabharat ("Viraat&DronParv") as the builder of old Kangra and its fort. It is also mentioned in "Bajjnath" Eulogies and "Rajtarangini" as "Susarmapura". The second idea holds that Arjun assassinated King Trigarth – Susarma and his brothers, as recorded in "DronParv" ("Mahabharat") (the Pandav Prince). As a result, it's clear that Susarma won't be around to see the fort built. The fort was built by Susarma, while the settlement (known as "ancient Kangra") on the hills was built by his son after they lost their domains on the plains and needed a safe haven.

Trigarth/ Trigart: "Trigarth," like many other names and concepts, has a wide range of interpretations. If you look up Trigarth in the Kangra archives, it translates to "Kingdom of three great rivers" or "Three great capitals" (Multan, Jalandhar &Kangra). The rivers Satlaj and Ravi bound this empire. Moorcraft, on the other hand, claims that "in those records the name Trigarta is usually used to the lower Beas valley i.e. Kangra proper." The people of Haripur call the confluence of Banganga, Kurali, and Nayagul – together known as "Trigadh" – and the river Beas as "Trigart," according to Hutchison and Vogel. Hutchison and Vogel assert that Jalandhara was a plains kingdom, whereas Trigart was a mountainous one; nevertheless, Cunningham cites a Sanskrit rhyme that claims that Jalandhara and Trigarta are one and the same. Hemkosha and the Puranas all utilise these two names in some form or another. According to Mahabharat, Trigart is the only name given to this character.

Kāngra/Katochgarh: There are three possible explanations for the name "Kaangarh": the first is that it comes from the "Fort of Ear." There's a legend that the fort sits on top of the defeated and submerged ear of a demon named "Jalandhara," hence its name. he had his head below the Kangra valley, his ears below the Kangra Fort, his back and his feet beneath the city of Jalandhar

(now in Pakistan). The fort may have been shaped like an ear, according to a second theory (before the earthquakes of 1905 A.D.). If this third idea is correct, in ancient times Kngra was known as "Kaankogadnewala" (in Hindi "Kaankogadnewala") because it was a popular destination for cosmetic surgery of the face, including the ears, nose, cheeks, and lips. As a term of endearment, "Katochgarh" can be taken to mean "the garh" of the Katoch people.

Bhimkot/Bhimnagar: This area was dubbed "Bhimkot" or "Bhimnagar" by certain historians after a feudal prince named Bhim Chandra, who restored and renovated the fort after it was devastated.

HISTORY

a. Mythological (Unrecorded):

The Hindu legendary event "RaktbeejVadh," which is a part of the "MarkandeyaPuran," is the source of the Katoch clan's history, which dates back to an unknown time period. Goddess Ambika is supposed to have perspiration on her forehead when fighting the demon "Raktbeej" (one whose single drop of blood acts as a seed to develop another Raktbeej). Dropping a drop of sweat on the ground while wiping it off is claimed to have formed the first Katoch, Bhumi Chandra. It has been reported that Bhumi Chandra aided Goddess Ambika in her battle against the demon. An region of 1, 25,000 square miles (the Himalayas to Gujrat's Kutch) was given to the Goddess as a reward for her pleasure (Figure 3). In addition, the Goddess bestowed upon him the titles of "Rajanaka" (Supreme King) and "Katoch" (King). The royal family still uses these titles and worships Ambika as their clan-goddess. Consequently, it is thought that the fort's temple dedicated to Goddess Ambika is the earliest of its kind in all of India. Chandra was born from "Bhumi" (Earth), and so the third Rajput race, "BhumiVanshi," was created. The other two Rajput races, "Surya Vanshi" and "Chandra Vanshi," are the descendants of the Sun and the Moon, respectively (descendents of Moon).



Figure 3 - Extent of Katoch Kingdom

As explained by Sir Denzil Charles Jelffbbetson's (KCSI) work on the KangraKatoch family and their long line of 480 kings, there is evidence to support the idea that the Katoch family has ancient roots. "The Katoch is the family of Kangra dynasty," Ibbetson writes of the KangraKatoch family in his work, "a dynasty which dates from certainly some centuries before Christ." Since 326 B.C. to 1860 A.D., the Katoch engaged in wars against both intruders and their own people because of their kingdom's vulnerability. Katoch royals have fought more invaders than any other family in India's history, according to official records. He supported Luv and Kush (sons of Lord Ram) in a battle against Laxman when they captured the horse designated for the "AshwameghYagya" belonging to the King of Trigarth. However, in the second Hindu epic Mahabharat, there are numerous references to Katoch King as (King of Trigarth). The "ViraatParv" tells us about RajanakaSusharma Chandra Katoch's (Susharma's) role in the attack on MatsyaDesh with Kuru prince Duryodhan (his son-in-law). "DronaParv" tells us about RajanakaSusharma Chandra Katoch (Susharma, 234th ruler in the lineage) challenging Arjun (the third Pandav) for a battle and taking him away from the main battle field so that Kaurav commander Dronacharya could attack and capture the Pandav crown prince Yudhisthir. Similarly

b. Recorded History:

As stated by Sir A. Cunningham, Ptolemy (one of Alexander's commanders and a Greek Geographer) made the first historical reference to Jalandhar (Kangra). In his book Early History of India, Vincent A. Smith states that according to Alexander's historian, Alexander and a mountain king from the north of Punjab engaged in a violent fight (Phageus in Greek). RajanakaParmanand Chandra Katoch, better known as Porus in Indian history, was recognised as this monarch by matching the time and location in the Katoch family tree.

Alexander spared Porus's life and returned his kingdom with additional territories because he was impressed by his response and the gesture he made. Alexander named Porus ruler of the territory between Jhelum (Hydaspus in Greek) and the Beas before he fled India in September 326 B.C. (Hyphases in Greek). One of Porus's sons is thought to be married to an Alexander's cousin, while Porus's daughter is thought to be married to Alexander. The Greek queen also built a temple in Indora, Himachal Pradesh (today known as Kthgarh Shiv temple — temple with twin lingams) at the point of Alexander's retreat.

After Alexander's death, the Katoch were involved in a battle with the Maurya(s) and lost their land on the plains.. Because of this, they had to sign a peace deal and relocate to the hills. Raja Ram Dev of Kannouj conquered Kangra in the 1st century

A.D. In the end, the princesses of Kangra were wedded to Ram Dev's son in a marriage alliance between the two sides. The king of Kashmir, Raja ShreshthaSen, stormed Kangra in 470 A.D., but the Katoch successfully defended the fortress. Fifty years later, the Katoch were forced to cede part of Chamb to ShreshthaSen's son Raja Pravara Sen-I. Huien Tsang, a Chinese traveller who passed through the Jalandhar region, described the area in detail. His records indicate that the Katoch empire covered an area of 25,000 square kilometres. In 1009 A.D., Mahmud of Ghazni (Mahmud Ghaznavi) led his fourth expedition into India, entering through Punjab and laying siege to Kangra Fort because of the fort's strategic location, prestige, and enormous wealth. Al-work Utbi's "Tarikhi-i-Yamini" or "Kitab-i-Yamini" contains details about this siege (English version). Mahmud Ghaznavi launched an assault on the fort after discovering the absence of the Katoch king and most of his troops. Records show that the Katoch garrison was unable to close the city's gates because of his rapid assault. Fortified by his control of the fort, he slaughtered all of its inhabitants and robbed all of its riches. History and the secretary of Mahmud Ghaznavi, Al-Utbi, both claim that the sum is "so vast" that it can't be contained by camels' backs or vessels, written down by writers' hands, or imagined by a mathematical mind.

LAYOUT, ART & ARCHITECTURE

Kangra's fort is atop a high, steep hill at the confluence of the Baan Ganga and Manjhi rivers, which the locals refer to as the "Ptl Ganga". Because of its location between rivers, the castle has maintained its honour and is impregnable, as noted above by Badr-i-Chach (a poet of Muhammad-Bin-court), Tughlaq's "neither Sikander nor Dara was able to make it." As the author of the book, Shah Nawaz Khan, explains, the fort is located on top of a high mountain. Its 23 bastions and 7 gates make it a formidable fortress. 1 Kos & 50 chains make up the internal circumference, which is 14 of a Kos & 2 chains long, 15–25 chains wide, and 114 cubits high overall. Inside the fort, there are two big tanks."

This "fort of the Kangra comprises a long narrow stretch of ground between the Manjhi and Banganga rivers," according to Cunningham. On the Banganga side, the cliffs overhanging the two rivers rise to a height of 300 feet, making it one of the most formidable fortresses in India. However, this short neck of rock that separates the two rivers has been hacked open at the walls' foot by a deep trench and is the only point of entry on the land side approaching town. Small stone Lakshmi Narayan and Ambika Devi temples, as well as a big Jain temple with a colossal image of Adinath, are located in the courtyard below the palace. " Before entering the Kangra Fort, there is a magnificent water tank (Figure 3) on the right hand side.



Figure 3 – Water Tank

The spring that provided water for this tank has since dried up. The tank has a "Lion mouthed" water exit and was built during the Hindu era, which is when it was put. When Nawab Ali Khan, the first Mughal Quiledar of Jahangir, became ruler after the city was annexed by the Mughals, a magnificent "Hammam" was built near the tank. It included a unique system for transferring water from the tank to the chambers' top. After that, the water was heated and sent to the restrooms via hot-water faucets (Figure 4).



Figure 4–Hamam

To honour its builder, Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab, who commissioned its construction to commemorate the annexation of Kangra fort and provide additional security, the fort's first gate is named "Ranjit Singh Dwaar" (Figure 5).



Figure 5 - Ranjit Singh Dwār (Gate)

The gate appears to be formed of bricks thanks to the use of precisely cut and sized sand stone fragments. The gate has a sturdy wooden plank entrance with a hinged arch subdoor (for pedestrians). Proposed arches (typical of mediaeval architecture) flank the door-arch, which is supported by two narrow bastions. The gate had a stone slab with inscriptions on top of it. Guns and oil canisters can be fired from the 15-foot-high gate's high parapet wall, which is heavily crenellated.



Figure 6 - ĀhiniDarwāzā (Gate)

The main property is separated from the gate by a 30-by-12-foot passageway. An old guardhouse still stands in the little courtyard just inside the first gate. There is an arched gate at the end of this courtyard. The entrance gate arch is virtually round in shape. The second gate appears to feature a "Rampant (unequal) round" arch. An expansive area with an incredibly tight passage leads to the third gate, known as "AahiniDarwaza" (Iron Gate), beyond the courtyard (Figure 6).

The first level of AahiniDarwaaza serves as a headquarters for the guards and soldiers stationed there. The front side has gun-points and oil-slots, but the back side is completely open. Toward the fourth gate, a two-story-thick parapet wall blocks the path on the left. There are gun points on this wall on both the ground floor and the first floor (Figure 7).



Figure 7 - Gun Points

The number of gun-points is exactly the same as the number of stairwells. Each stair is 4 to 5 feet wide and 6 inches high. A two-story watch cum battlement tower may be found on the 14th step to the left. With a broad arched aperture, the lower floor offers a covered shelter, while the upper storey has a roofless, gun-pointed area. An oval stone slab etched with the date "A.D. 1878" may be found on the upper storey wall facing the stairwell. There is a second tower on the left at the 25th step, but its lower floor is an enclosed room with an arched doorway, unlike the first tower. Lord Ganesh and Goddess Durga are depicted on the wall above the door and facing the stairs. A "black deer" with a flying scarf tied around its neck lies in the middle of the two photographs. "Lord Hanuman" is shown in a flying pose just above the "black buck" artwork on the first floor wall facing the stairs. Three further images of "Lord Ganesh, Lord Hanuman & Lord Ganesh" may be found further up the wall. Many parts of the depiction of Lord Ganesh at the extreme right are distorted. The fourth gate, "AmiriDarwaaza" (Gate of the Noblemen), is located just ahead. Stairs lead to the fifth gate construction, which is made up of three archways joined together, from AmiriDarwaaza. "JahangiriDarwaaza" is the name of this gate. The name JahangiriDarwaaza may refer to a single archway or the full gate construction. The first archway is 30 feet high, the second is 20 feet high, and the third is 15 feet high since they are all built on distinct stairwells. Emperor Jahangir ordered the building of the "JahangiriDarwaaza" to commemorate the victory over Kangra. In his book "Waqiat-i-Jahangiri," Jahangir describes this victory as a noteworthy and honourable one for the Mughals. The first phase of the fort's construction comes to an end with the JahangiriDarwaaza. This gate opens to a large area. The JahangiriDarwaaza, bastions, towers, and the dead end that gives a spectacular view of the valley through which the Banganga River flows may be crossed by moving sideways and backwards. The steepness of the hill is clearly seen from this vantage point, which is why there is a barrier there.

CONCLUSION

The history and antiquity of Kangra's fort and its history has been carried out by both specialists as well as non-specialists. However, the majorities of these are historical or travel reports. Religious texts, Persian histories, numismatic artefacts, epigraphs, travelogues, and contemporary publications are among the materials that can be used. Previously independent hill states, as well as territory given up by the Punjab, now make up the present Himachal Pradesh state. Hemachal Pradesh was first established on April 15, 1948, when around 30 old Punjab Hill States were merged into one administrative entity. Until October

1966, the Pradesh had a total size of 28, 102 km². Under the "Punjab Reformation Act of 1955," a portion of Punjab was moved to Himachal Pradesh on November 1, 1966, following the reorganisation of the state. All or parts of the districts of Kulu (Kulu), Shimla (Shimla), Kangra (Kangra), Lahul (Lahul), and Spiti (Spiti) were included in this group. Himachal Pradesh is larger than the modern states of Punjab, Haryana, and Kerala in terms of land area. 18 miles long and 35 miles wide was the initial size of the kingdom of Jalandhar, Trigarta, or modern Kangra. Jalandhar, Trigarta, Bhiranagar, Susarmapur, Nagarkot, KotKangra, Katoch, and Kangra are some of the various names given to the fort in the modern Kangra valley. When the fort of Kangra was occupied, it was a hub of military activity and was reportedly invaded by a wide range of foreigners including Turks, Mughals and British soldiers. Suket and Bhagal in the east and Pathankot and Nurpur in the west were established as new principalities or independent nations in the early mediaeval period. The fort, perched atop an island-like mound created by the confluence of the Banganga and Manjhi rivers, is an impregnable citadel even now, preserving various episodes from its storied past and bearing witness to its once illustrious past. The Katoch dynasty, created by Susarma Chandra in the Mahabharata period, is supposed to have been the ancestors of the earliest rulers of Kangra. For the first time, Cunningham drew our attention to the Puranic literature-based antiquity and history of the royal dynasty of Jalandhar Trigarta. Al Utbi's Tarikh-i-Yamini, a thorough account of Mahmud Ghazanavi's conquest of Kangra in the eleventh century A.D., is the first historical reference. After that, the Katoch rulers and the outside forces fought over the fort until it was finally taken over by the British in the nineteenth century.

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Corresponding Author

Sandeep Kumar*

Research Scholar of Sunrise University