

A Historical Study of Himachal Pradesh forts Importance during the Medieval Period

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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 first zone consists of low hills of the Shiwalik, ranging from Ravi river to Yamuna in the south of the region. The second zone comprises of the higher mountains on the height of 1200 to 1500 feet cut into steep ravines and precipitous defiles. This zone contains the Dhauladhar and PirPanjal ranges. The third and highly important zone is the Great Himalayas or Northern zone. It consists of high mountains and ranges. These ranges are snow clad at a height of 500 to 6000 mts above sea level. The huge Himalayan peaks separate the drainage of the Spiti from that of the Beas. The Zaskar range seperates Spiti and Kinnaur from Tibet. While discussing the geographical characteristics of Himachal, the rivers of the Pradesh cannot be overlooked. The complete drainage system in the lowlands primarily depends upon Himachal Pradesh. Because of the snow-clad peaks of Himachal, the rivers are full of water throughout the year. The principal channels of drainage in the region are the Chandra-Bhaga, Ravi, Beas, Sutlej and the Yamuna. A significant feature of Himachal Pradesh is its ability to supply the Indus and Ganga basins. A large chunk of India's terrain is made up of these rivers. This helps us better understand the drainage system of the state. Himachal Pradesh has a wide range of climates. Some areas of this state are colder than others, such the plains of Punjab, while others are warmer. The Pradesh also has a wide range of rainfall distributions. There are three distinct seasons in Himachal Pradesh. The forts of Kangra's history and antiquity have been subject to numerous specialised as well as general investigations in the field of archaeology. Nevertheless, the vast majority of them are about historical events or journeys. Religious texts, Persian histories, numismatic artefacts, epigraphs, travelogues, and contemporary publications are among the materials that can be used.

Keywords - Himachal Pradesh Forts, Medieval Period, Kangra's history, Indus and Ganga basins

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INTRODUCTION

The physical setting of a particular region provides us with the background to understand human reaction, their adaptation to environment, the way the activities and the culture of man has, progressed through the ages. The Himalayas are the greatest of all mountain systems. Tucked in the western Himalayas no other portion of the Indian union, with the single exception of Jammu and Kashmir, extends as far north as the state of Himachal Pradesh; located between Ravi and Yamuna river, its greatest length is 355 Km and maximum width 270 Km from north west to north east and north to south. Topographically, it extends for nearly three latitude degrees and longitude between 30°, 20N and 30° north, 75°, 45 to 79° east. The geography of Himachal Pradesh is fairly compact on account of mountainous terrain. Total area of the state is 55,673 Sq Km, and has 51, 11,079 total population according to 1991 census Physiographically Hinachal Pradesh oan be divided into three zones: i.e. Outer Hinalayas or the Shiwaliks, Inner Himalayas or Hid-mountain and the Greater Himalayas or the Alpine

zone. The area stretching from Kashmir to Himachal Pradesh is one of the most complicated geological regions of the Himalayas. The region falls into four broad strati-graphical zones. i.e. Outer or sub-Himalayan zone, lower Himalayas zone. Higher Himalayan zone and Tibetan Himalayan zone. Himachal Pradesh is bound by certain famous passes which are marked out as important amongst the physical features of the region. It is therefore worth mentioning mountain passes of Himachal Pradesh. It can rightly be said that Himachal Pradesh is a small world in itself having beautiful valleys with slopes covered with pine and typical temperate mountain flora. There are large numbers of permanent valley type glaciers but there are four major concentrations of glaciers in Himachal Pradesh which feed regions, valley and five rivers i.e. Sutlej, Beas, Ravi, Yamuna and Chenab. Besides these there are two natural lakes; Prashar in Mandi district and Khajjar in Chanba district and two artificial lakes of GovindSagar in Bilaspur district and Pong Dam in Kangra district. The other offshoots lakes are GhadaSaru in Bilaspur, Lamba in Chamba,

Manimahesh in Bharmour, Dal lake in Kangra, Karesi Lake in Dharamsala, Kumarwah in Mandi, Chandra Nahani in Shimla, TanuJubbali in Narkanda, Karali in Shinla, Hako in Sirmour and Renuka in Nahani.

The climate of Himachal Pradesh presents a uniform picture with little variations; different aspects and elevation have given rise to various micro-climatic zones. Himachal is popularly divided into three seasons i.e. (Barsat) or rainy season from July to September, (Hyund) i.e. winter season from October to the end of February and the (Jaunda) or summer season begins in the month of March. Geographical formation of Himachal Pradesh dates back to earliest phases of earth formation. Soil formation in this region is marked by difference in character in five under mentioned zones. Low hill soil zone, Mid hill soil zone. Hill soil zone, Mountainous soil zone and Dry hill soil zone. InfactHimachal Pradesh is a land of young and strong nountainous soils, varying greatly in composition even in areas of uniforms climate and land forms. Their profiles, depth and characteristic change as soon as there is a change in the grade of slopes. Etymologically Himachal stands for the region which lies in the slopes and foot hills of new Himachal. Before 1948 A.D. this region was known as Punjab Hill States. Before 1966 A.D. this state was divided into two parts i.e. Old Himachal and New Himachal. It is bordered by the plains of Uttar Pradesh and Punjab on the south and on north west by Kashmir and on the north east by Tibet. Administratively, Himachal Pradesh has 12 districts. There are different types of Pahari dialects. Apart from Hindi, English, Urdu and Punjabi are also spoken in the state. The physiographical features like the mountains system, the rivers, geology, geography, glaciers, climate and etymology, which constitute the permanent basis of every nation's history, are the major determining factors of the historical growth and evolution of people. The influence of geography can be seen not only in the economic prosperity but also in political and military spheres as well. The lack of natural barriers to protect the region from the onslaughts of invaders also accounts for the series of invasions of the Turks, Mughals, Gorkhas, Sikhs and the Britishers. The history of Himachal may be considered as the history of several petty principalities each centering on a particular hill tract and equipped with a fort on it. These hill forts provided safety to the personal wealth of the people who took refuge in it in times of anarchy and disorder during ancient to the medieval period.

For a proper study of ancient and medieval period the foremost requirement is the availability of relevant sources and evidences on which such a study should be based. The study of Himachal's history and especially that of Kangra is full of folk-lore, legends and traditional accounts. The ancient and medieval history of Himachal Pradesh has so far remained neglected and no scholar has attempted a comprehensive monograph perhaps for want of adequate source material. There is a dearth of

historical material on the political history of the Pradesh.

OVERVIEW OF DISTRICT UNA

After Punjab's hilly regions were moved to Himachal Pradesh in 1966, UNA was formed from Hoshiarpur District (Punjab). Kangra, Hamirpur, and Bilaspur are all located in the immediate vicinity of the city. Himachal Pradesh's entry point is UNA (Fig. 1)

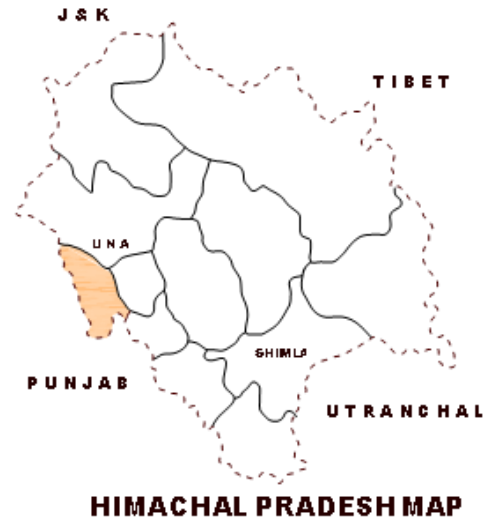


Fig. 1 Himachal Pradesh Map



Fig. 2 Una District Map

Una is a small town on the banks of the Sutlej River's tributary, the Swan River. Temples and historic buildings may be seen around the little town of Una. The Katoach dynasty ruled most of this territory (Fig. 2).

KATOACH DYNESTY

In the Chandravanshi Kshatriya lineage, a Rajput clan called Katoch is known as a Katoch. Trigarta Kingdom, Jalandhar, and Multan were their historic abodes, which mean they mostly live in the Indian

states of Punjab, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu and Kashmir. The Katoch dynasty is widely regarded as the world's oldest royal family. Both the Hindu epics Ramayana and Mahabharata and Alexander the Great's war chronicles feature mentions of them. In the time of Alexander, one of the Indian monarchs who governed an area close to Kangra is claimed to have been a Katoch monarch. They are known as the Trigarta in the Mahabharata when they battle Arjuna [2]. A brawl erupted between Chandra and Arjuna. He was a friend of Duryodhana and an enemy of the Virat and Matsya Kingdoms.

The swordsmanship of the katoch was renowned as well. There were several princely states in the region ruled by them in the past. RajanakaBhumi Chand was the clan's first member and the group's creator. Among the renowned Maharaja Sansar Chand-II was a magnificent ruler. Located in Himachal Pradesh, the Jwalaji Temple was built by the RajanakaBhumi Chand Katoch. The Maharaja Sansar Chand Museum adjacent to the Kangra Fort displays the Katoch Dynasty's history. From the 11th century to the mid-13th century, the same dynastic kings built forts at SolahSingiDhar to mark the boundaries of their dominion. In the regions of Kangra, Una, and Sujampur where the Katoch kings built their forts, the architectural vocabulary of fort design has evolved. They differ greatly in terms of both size and quality of construction.

FORTS OF SOLAH SINGI DHAR

The SOLAH SINGHI or JASWAN DHAR range, which begins near Talwara on the Beas and reaches its highest point at Bharwain, is a sub-Himalyan mountain range. A steep drop of 200 to 300 feet separates the main range from its plains-bound neighbours to the north, while the range itself is progressively submerged into Beas Valley on its north side. This area, which is 24 kilometres in length and 21 kilometres in width, is densely wooded and covered in moss. Shortly south of Amb, the SOLAH SINGHI/JASWAN DHAR range recedes eastward, ceasing to constitute the Una district's boundary and the plains forming a bay in the hills. Although their slopes are covered with grass and brushwood, the parallel ranges are stony and at times steep, even if they are well-protected by grass and brush.

Katoch dynasty kings erected two high hilltop forts, which had a commanding view of the mountain ranges and were strategically positioned (Fig. 3). Currently, the connecting road diverting from the Una-Hamirpur highway via Dhaneta can be used to access these forts. Piplu, a well-known holy site, is the only spot where the road splits. These forts are located on top of a hill and can only be accessed via a gruelling path.



Fig. 3 View of forts from approach road

OLD FORT, UNA

Purab Chand, a cadet of the Katoch line, is supposed to have built this fort around A.D. 1170. This exquisite fort is a testament to the skill and delicacy of stonework that has been passed down for generations. The approach path is like mountain climbing because it lacks a proper pathway. The fort can only be reached by a physically and psychologically fit individual.



Fig. 4 First Glimpse of forts

There is no infrastructure around this fort since it is difficult to get to. Some areas require a jump over a deep valley ring intended hillside, while others have a slope ranging from 60 to 85 degrees. Internal court, external wall, entry gateway, and watchtower are all that remain of the fort. Scattered bushes and trees cover the landscape. A sliver of stone architecture can still be seen despite the lack of a built environment. Mud and dry masonry walls can reach a height of approximately one metre. The entire area can be seen from the summit (Fig. 4). Even the chill of the wing makes it a joy to be here. Small, low-height entrances make it difficult for more than one person to enter at a time; just one person can enter at a time (Fig.6). The most intriguing detail about the fort is that it can only be entered from the front. Inaccessible cliffs on the other three sides make it impossible to get around. Because the old fort sits on a hill, it provides a good vantage point from which to see the new fort rising on the adjacent

hill. Once you've climbed to the top of its towering walls and gazed out over the next uncharted fort, the excitement of exploring the others will only grow. The slope of the hill makes it more hazardous to descend. It's tough to get grass for a stall because the land is rough. Despite the dangers of this location, the memories of this trip will last a lifetime. A quiet hamlet at the base of a hill is a peaceful retreat.

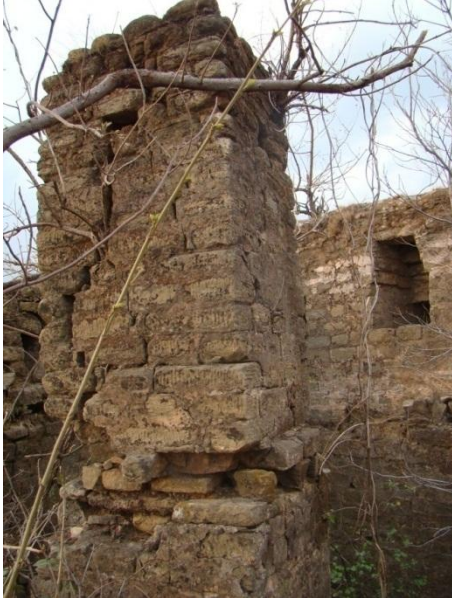


Fig. 5 Dilapidated Wall of Fort Telling the Story of Its Lost Identity in month of June makes you feel as if its heaven. Sitting here and moving in fort is really fun. Fort has lot for all its visitors.



Fig. 6 Entrance gateway giving the glimpse of sky signifying the old glory

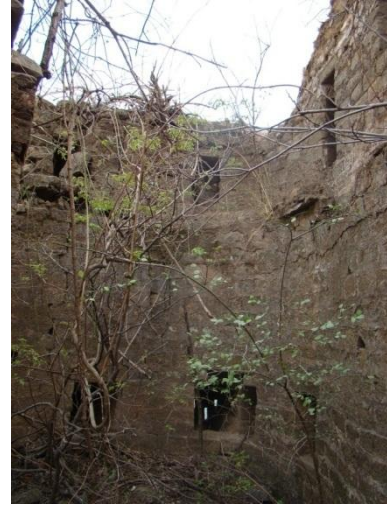


Fig. 7 Internal Court of The Fort, Now Covered With Bushes

Hidimba Devi Cave Temple | Architect in Himachal Pradesh

The Hidimba Devi temple, erected on a massive rock in Manali, is mentioned in the Mahabharata and is dedicated to the goddess. This temple has a bottom level and a three-story roof made completely of wood. The temple's sanctum is covered with a 24 meter-high pagoda-style roof. The designs of Buddhist characters adorn the roof's highest point, giving it a distinctively multiethnic appearance. Vernacular construction methods have been used to build this whitewashed mud and stone base. In 1967, this temple was designated as a National Historic Landmark and listed as a World Heritage Site.



Hidimba Devi Cave Temple



Hidimba Devi Cave Temple



Hidimba Devi Cave Temple

Kangra Fort | Architect in Himachal Pradesh

On the outskirts of Kangra, you'll find this massive fortress, which is the tallest and most ancient fortress in the Himalayas. This granite fort has seen it all, from majesty to invasion to transformation. There are numerous temples within the fortifications, which are protected by high walls and thick ramparts. As a result of the fort's many conquests by the Delhi Sultanates, the Mughals, and the Sikhs, their architectural styles can be seen throughout the fort. Kangra art and architecture have evolved a unique typology that is heavily affected by the local environment and materials thanks to the fusion of all these different forms. The Katoch kings, the Jains, the Mughals, and the Sikhs all left their mark on the fort, which is now a museum.



Kangra Fort

CONCLUSION

The present study entitled, "Himachal Pradesh Forts Importance During The Medieval Period", has been undertaken with a view to have a comprehensive idea of the history, antiquity, geography, topography and the related issues concerning the Kangra, its fort and its rulers during the ancient and medieval period. It is the primary goal of this investigation to identify the concerns and make an attempt at finding a solution to the associated problems. Before we get into the specifics, it's important to understand the geology, terrain, and history of Himachal Pradesh, where the Kangra fort still stands in its ruins. Himachal Pradesh is a mountainous and hilly state. As part of the Punjab Himalayas, its mountain ranges, hills, and valleys are intricately intertwined. According to the ancient Hindus, Himachal Pradesh is known as "DevBhumi." The state of Jammu and Kashmir sits to the north, Uttar Pradesh to the south-east, Haryana to the south, and Punjab to the west, while India's border with Tibet runs along the east. At its widest point, it covers an area ranging from 30 degrees 20 minutes north to 30 degrees 12 minutes south. At elevations ranging from 350 to 7000 metres above sea level, the region resembles a hilly landscape. The low hills of the Shiwalik form the first zone, which stretches from the Ravi River south to the Yamuna in the region's south. The higher mountains, ranging in elevation from 1,200 to 1,500 feet, cut into deep ravines and precipitous defiles make up the second zone. There are two mountain ranges here: the Dhauladhar and the PirPanjal. The Great Himalayas, or Northern zone, is the third and most important zone. High mountains and ranges cover it. At elevations ranging from 500 to 6000 metres above sea level, these mountains are covered in snow. The Spiti and Beas rivers are separated by the huge Himalayan peaks. Spiti and Kinnaur are separated from Tibet by the Zaskar range.

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