

When we go through the temples of Mandi State or some of the temples in the back valleys of Kulu we may come across some Buddhist figures of various periods usually worshipped as Hindu Deity though some of them ~~have~~ in the temple of the old Palace grounds of Mandi are only preserved as relics of another religion. These figures, though not all, at least a good many of them have been brought to Mandi and the other regions in the course of the many invasions of the adjoining Buddhist regions. A great many monasteries in the nearby Tibetan periods have lost their figures to the invaders from the Kangra Valley and these figures now repose in Mandi and other hill states. The old Palace Temple at Manhi has a number of very fine early Buddhist figures, one is especially interesting where Buddha is depicted as a Voddhi Sattva and the Lotus throne is beautifully worked in chased copper gilt work, every petal of the Lotus is finished in a human face. There is an inscription on the back of the figure but it has not been read so far. Further South at Ravalsar one can find a few more figures and there are a number of private houses that have Buddhist figures usually for daily worship. I was able to secure quite a number of figures for my own collection and many of these figures have been of the so-called Spiti workmanship in very pale bronze.

In Suket there is a place where images that could not be worshipped for some reason or other used to be thrown into the river which flows through the valley below. A number of these images have been retrieved from the shallow waters and I believe a great many will come to light later on.

At Nirmand I have heard it said that there are caves which are situated somewhere near the temple; very ancient figures are kept in these caves and can be brought out only one at a time during certain festivals. According to tradition these figures date from the earliest periods and it would be very interesting to have access to the entire collection. The region of Nirmand and the nearby valleys have been the seat where the Atharva have originated and we also know that there were many workers in bronze, makers of figures who worked in the region from the earliest periods. Not long ago a hollow beaten bronze figure of large dimensions of the earlier Buddhist period was found in a cave near Suket. This figure has been taken to the town of Suket but I do not believe it has yet been photographed.

In Kulu at the small cave temple Pawhari Baba in Naggar is an early figure of Gupta period close to the well-known figure in the Lahore Museum. This figure is worshipped as Gautama Rishi and follows the general pattern of the early bronze Buddhist figures with silver inlaid eyes seated on a reversed Lotus, i.e. a Lotus with petals downwards which was the usual position for the Lotus in the early figures. This Lotus ^{is} resting upon a square pedestal without any ornamentation as we have it in the Lahore Buddha. Another later Buddha has been found in the Manikaram Valley and I believe these figures must belong to one school near Manali not far from the old Fort. In Manali village there is an old rectangular raised platform over which heavy logs of wood have been piled up. By tradition within that platform ^{which} is the foundation of an ancient Buddhist Stupa are buried Buddhist manuscripts and other documents and, so tradition goes, they are still there as some years ago when Lamas from Western Tibet came to excavate the Stupa to take out these manuscripts, they have been stopped by the local population from removing them after the manuscripts had been taken out from the Stupa and the local people insisted that the manuscripts be replaced, which was done and the present logs of wood have been piled up to keep others from a similar venture. Lower down the valley at Bajaura, where the present famous Bajaura temple stands, there is also a raised platform which, by tradition, is also a Buddhist site. Somewhere along the lower valley an Ashoka Pillar was erected and seen by the Chinese traveller Huen Siang, and whether it was somewhere in the neighbourhood of Bajaura or lower still, it is difficult to say but I am quite certain that excavations would reveal a great many interesting facts.

During the time of Ranjit Singh the Sikhs made repeated raids on the Kulu valley attracted by vague rumours of vast riches and hoards of silver. They must have carried away and destroyed a great many valuable records as it always happens in times of invasions.

The temple of Rangunath at Kulu had some very fine textiles of the 16th and 17th century presented to the temple by various rulers, but the fate of these textiles today is unknown. I believe they have been sold some 20 years ago.

A great many bronze figures which I remember in the temples 20 years ago are now missing and they must have been removed either by visitors or perhaps by the people who have originally loaned them to the temples.

Thus in the temple of Tawa (Murlidhar) I remember a very fine bronze of the early Pala period which was on loan in the temple. The owner of

the bronze refused to part with it at the time but later the bronze disappeared and no one could possibly remember where it went to. It was a very fine and typical bronze of the earlier period of fine workmanship and well preserved. This bronze was of particular interest as it was a fairly large one and large bronzes are difficult to find.

The Tripura Sundri temple at Naggar has a large figure of the Goddess Kali which, according to tradition was brought to Naggar and installed in this temple from Rampur. The same temple had several early Kulu bronzes all made of the famous Ashtathatu, the eight-metal bronze. These images are greatly respected in the Valley as they consider them very old and therefore much more sacred than the ones of later workmanship. There are other figures in the temple of Jagatsukh the temple itself dating from the 9th century.