

Haridwar, the painters of Chamba refer to themselves as *tarkhan-chitere*, meaning painter-carpenters. It cannot be ascertained whether the painters were already trained as professional carpenters prior to their arrival at Chamba or received training once a workshop at Chamba was established.

In my opinion, the *tarkhan-chitere* were unfamiliar with the usual manner of chiselling, as the early woodcarvings assigned to the painters are rendered in bas-relief, as opposed to the traditional high-relief method. As all of the later woodcarvings assigned to them are executed in the bas-relief style, it is plausible to presume that the painter-carpenters continued to work in the bas-relief tradition in a characteristic method.

Second important evidence reflecting the direct involvement of painters with metal-casting is the inscription pertinent to the gold-plated silver *torana* of the Lakshmi-Narayana temple at Chamba town, installed in the year 1747 CE, on the orders of Raja Dalel Singh. The inscription is the earliest known record to denote a direct participation of painters with metal-casting, as it attributes the design of the *torana* to painters **Laharu** and **Mahesh**. The inscription reads:

Om, Hail. In the year 1804 of the illustrious king Vikramaditya (1747 CE), the Shalivahana Saka year 1669, and in the thirteenth year of the reign of illustrious Dalel Singh; in the month of Shravana during the rainy season; on Wednesday, the eleventh day of the dark fortnight, in Mrigahir Nakshatra during Dakshinayana, gold-plated silver Torana was offered to the Lord Lakshmi Narayana. Of the kingdom of the illustrious Dalel Singh, Kundyal Jaimal is the minister, the minister of Lakshmi Narayana [temple] is Mansueda.

The painters and others who made this [Torana] are; painters Laharu and Mahesh; goldsmiths Yeerju and Kirpu; coppermiths Jairam and Kirpu. Their supervisors and others [are]; Holalu Durga Das Petru and Bhagwan Soni

Bania; Mehta Ludra; Pandit Dayarama. During the term [for Pooja] of the priests Lakshu, Dheech and Kirpu, the watchmen Prashadu, Ablu, Hariya and Sontokhu and the storekeeper Shiv Ram, the Torana was offered. Written on the 21st day of the Shastra year 23. Bliss.

The evidence of the association of painters with sculptors and woodcarvers and the visual correlation of sculpture, woodcarving, and metal-casting with Chamba painting is additionally best understood by analysing the iconography, typology, and symbolism evidenced in the hero-stones of the Rajas (stone), the Torana of the Lakshmi Narayana Temple (metal), the wooden doorways of the Bharmour Kothi, and the woodcarvings of three Devi temples at Chamba²⁸⁴ (wood).

This exchange contributed towards the development of an iconographic and typological lexicon which was very specific to Chamba. In this chapter I aim to locate and pinpoint specific instances of parallel imageries and typologies between the above-mentioned aspects and the Chamba school of painting.

6.1 Hero-Stones of the Rajas of Chamba

The material under investigation is as below:

Hero-stone A – Raja Udai Singh in Vamsigopala Temple (c. 1720)

Hero-stone B – Raja Udai Singh in Udaipur (c. 1720)

Hero-stone C – Mian Lakshman Singh in Vamsigopala Temple (c. 1720)

Hero-stone D – Raja Ugar Singh in Vamsigopala Temple (c. 1735)

During the early 18th century, two Rajas of Chamba – Raja Udai Singh (r. 1690—1720) and Raja Ugar Singh (r. 1720—35) – were assassinated by their court, a fact highlighted in Chapter 3. **Hero-Stone A** (Fig. 6.1) commemorating the demise of Raja Udai Singh is kept at the Vamsigopala Temple (Fig. 6.2), near the royal palace.

²⁸⁴ Chamunda Devi, Chamba; Shakti Dehra, Gand-Dehra; Chamunda Devi, Devi-Kothi

The second hero stone of Udai Singh, **Hero-stone B**, (Fig. 6.3) lies in the memorial shrine erected by Ugar Singh (Fig. 6.4) near the site of the former's assassination (present-day Udaipur). I discovered two additional hero-stones at the same temple – one of which I identified as the hero-stone of Raja Ugar Singh (**Hero-stone D**) (Fig. 6.5) on comparing the appearance of the Raja with a portrait housed at the Victoria and Albert Museum (Fig. 6.6); while the other hero-stone (**Hero-stone C**) (Fig. 6.7) appears to be that of Mian Lakshman Singh, the brother and Wazir of Udai Singh who was killed by the officials for attempting to defend his brother. **Hero-stone C** suggests that Lakshman Singh might have died unmarried as the commemorative plaque does not feature his wife(s), as is the convention observed in the other hero-stones A, B and D.

Two more hero-stones situated in the Lakshmi Narayana temple (Fig. 6.8) are unidentifiable. The apparel and the headdresses of the men suggest that they must have been carved much earlier, around the 14th century (personal communication with Dr. Vijay Sharma).



Fig. 6.1 Hero Stone A depicting Udai Singh, Vamsigopala Temple, c. 1720

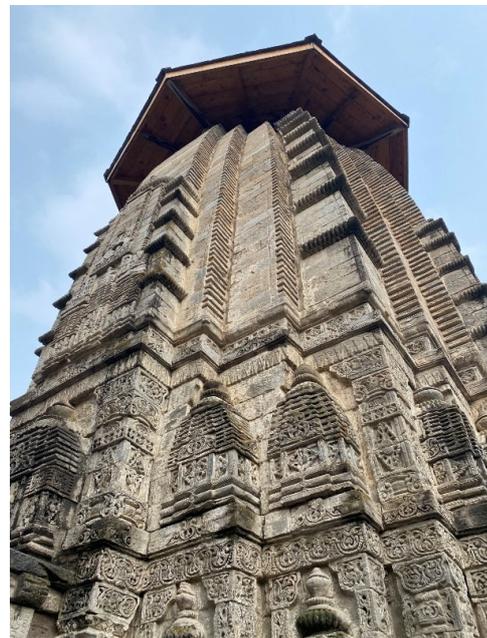


Fig. 6.2 Vamsigopala Temple, late 16th century



Fig. 6.3 Hero Stone B depicting Uday Singh with his 22 Ranis, Udaipur, c. 1720



Fig. 6.4 Memorial Shrine of Uday Singh constructed by Ugar Singh, Udaipur, c. 1720

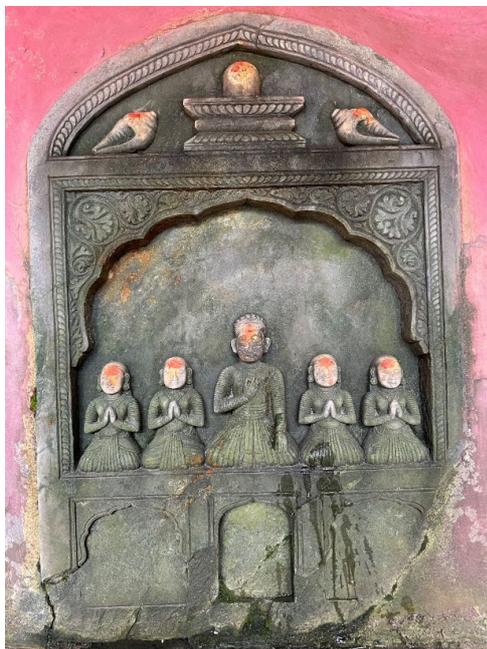


Fig. 6.5 Hero Stone D depicting Raja Ugar Singh with his four Ranis Vamsigopala Temple, c. 1735

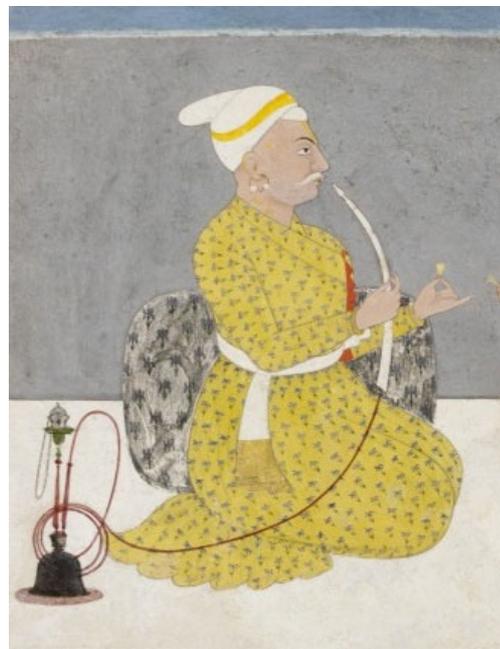


Fig. 6.6 Detail from a portrait of Raja Ugar Singh, Victoria and Albert Museum, c. 1730



Fig. 6.7 Hero Stone C depicting Mian Lakshman Singh, Vamsigopala Temple, c. 1735



Fig. 6.8 Hero Stones installed in the Lakshmi Narayana Temple, c. 14th century.

On studying the iconography and typology of the hero-stones, I have noted that the deceased Rajas are always shown pointing a finger towards their torso, symbolism of which is mired with mystery with no plausible explanation. However, its repetition suggests that the gesture is associated with the hero-stone tradition, and hence, must symbolise the passing-away of the chieftain perhaps. The usage of this gesture in the hero-stone of Mian Lakshman Singh signifies that it is not exclusively reserved for the Rajas, but for any male of significance, as the Ranis are always depicted with folded hands. The symbolism appears to have been adopted in the painting tradition, particularly in portraiture, in which the gesture became a recurring symbolic device to denote the demise of the subject.

The earliest available specimen in which the usage of this symbolic device is demonstrated in the 'Bathu set'.²⁸⁵ In the folio that shows a Raja²⁸⁶ paying his respects to Goswamis Bhagwanji and Narainji (Fig. 6.9), the gesture that Goswami Bhagwanji makes with his right hand is similar to the one observed in the hero-stones of Chamba Rajas, while Narainji folds his hands, in a manner akin to the Ranis in the hero-stones. The proposed methodological correlation between the sculptural and pictorial tradition propels towards the interpretation that this symbolic device signifies the passing away of Bhagwanji. Although the exact details about the life and passing away of Bhagwanji are unknown, this gesture in the painting leads one to deduce that he must have died during the reign of Prithvi Singh (r. 1641—64). Furthermore, had this painting not read in context of its sculptural counterpart, the hand gesture in question would have been read as just a mannerism.

²⁸⁵ The content of the Bathu set is elaborated in 4.2.3

²⁸⁶ Identified in 4.2.3 to be Raja Prithvi Singh of Chamba (r. 1641—64)



Fig. 6.9 The typical hand gesture recorded in the hero-stones of Chamba and its use as a symbol in a c. 1665 Chamba painting

The narrative of Bhagwanji and Narainji is continued further by another portrait of a youthful Raja²⁸⁷ paying respect to Narainji (Fig. 6.10), in which Narainji also make this gesture.



Fig. 6.10 Prince Paying Obeisance to Narainji, identified to be young Raja Chattar Singh of Chamba (r. 1664—1690), Museum Rietberg, Zurich

²⁸⁷ Identified in 4.2.3 to be Raja Chattar Singh of Chamba (r. 1664—90)

A third portrait depicts the two Goswamis sitting together (Fig. 6.11), both pointing fingers towards their torsos, symbolising that the two Goswamis have passed away.

The available historical records pertaining to the demise of Bhagwanji and Narainji are notably scarce. However, employing this methodological framework of comparing the paintings with hero-stones, it is plausible to infer that the two Goswamis died during the respective reigns of Prithvi Singh and Chattar Singh.



Fig. 6.11 Bhagwanji and Narainji seated on Tiger Hide, from the Bathu set, Chamba, c. 1665, National Museum, New Delhi

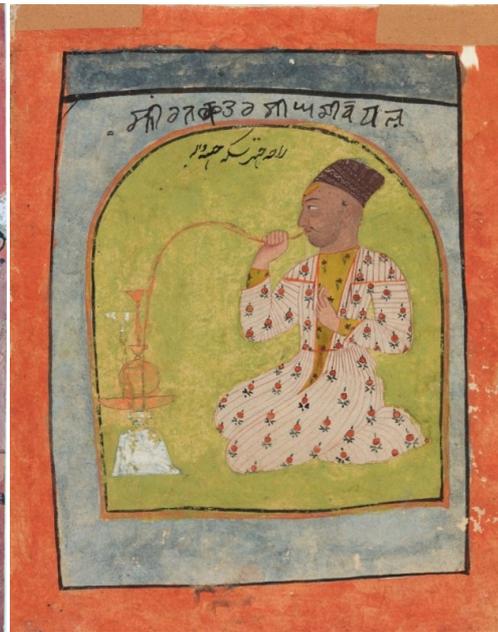


Fig. 6.12 Raja Chattar Singh of Chamba Smoking a Hookah, Chamba, c. 1690, 19.7 x 16.4 cm, Accession Number 2018.109, Cleveland Museum of Art

The earliest available painting in which a Raja of Chamba is depicted in this manner is the portrait of Raja Chattar Singh of Chamba in the Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio (Fig. 6.12). He appears to be old and frail, contrary to his conventional depiction as a towering muscular man. What is notable about the portrait is that the Raja is depicted seated within a framed casing, that resonates with the shape of the hero-stones at the Lakshmi Narayana Temple. It needs to be pointed out the hero-stones are rendered immediately following the demise of the king. Details regarding his death remain unknown, however, his appearance in the portrait suggests that the Raja might have

died due to some illness. Hence, this portrait, in my opinion, due to its visual imagery, must have been recorded immediately after the demise of Chattar Singh in 1690 CE.

Another portrait was identified by me in the Cleveland Museum of Art (Fig. 6.13), in which Chattar Singh is depicted seated with his brother Jai Singh, and his son and successor Udai Singh. Here, Chattar Singh and Jai Singh are depicted with the same hand gesture, while Udai Singh extends one hand out in a gesture which is seen in several portraits from Chamba during this period. While Chattar Singh's depiction is based on his previous portrait, Jai Singh and Udai Singh are added to the composition. Reading the painting in the same methodological framework, the painting, in all likelihood, appears to have been painted after the passing away of Jai Singh in 1696 CE, who had served as the Wazir and regent of Udai Singh. Hence, in my opinion, this painting appears to be the pictorial representation of Udai Singh's succession as the Raja of Chamba, without a regent.



Fig. 6.13 Raja Chattar Singh of Chamba with Wazir Jai Singh and [future Raja] Udai Singh, Chamba, c. 1696, 20.3 x 31 cm, Accession No. 1960.47, Cleveland Museum of Art

No painting rendered in this manner, other than the two mentioned above, has come to my attention. However, the possibility of the existence of such commemorative portraits of Prithvi Singh (d. 1664), Udai Singh (d. 1720), Ugar Singh (d. 1735), Dalel Singh (abdicated in 1735) and Umed Singh (d. 1764) cannot be ruled out. Other than the exception of Udai Singh and Ugar Singh, not one hero-stone of a Chamba Raja who reigned between 1650-1750 has been discovered, although almost all of the Rajas

belonging to this period died in their forties. The sole parallel which Udai Singh and Ugar Singh share with each other, in my opinion, is that both were assassinated by their officials during their respective reigns.

While the influence of the symbolism in the hero-stones on the painting typology is established, it is critical to discuss the role of painters in the development of sculpture tradition during the early 18th century. While sculpture as a tradition, as established before, remained in vogue in Chamba since the 7th century, it, in my opinion, underwent significant transformation during the mid-17th century, coinciding with the arrival of painters in the region. I consider the possibility of painters working as sculptors unlikely, as no plausible evidence to support this claim has come to light. However, I find it reasonable to speculate that they assumed a role as designers, conceptualising the layout of sculptures on paper. Painting being a popular visual medium in the early 18th century and the higher social status of the painter in comparison to other craftsmen would have, in my opinion, also made it possible for painting sensibilities to penetrate other art forms such as sculpture. This transition from two-dimensional representation on paper to the three-dimensional medium of stone was likely facilitated by the traditional sculptors.

This synthesis of painting sensibilities into sculpture finds a compelling exemplification in the four hero-stones (A-D).

Hero-stone A (Fig. 6.1) is divided into five registers. The uppermost register is occupied with the depiction of *Sheshashyai* Vishnu – Vishnu reclining on the Shesha with Lakshmi tending to him. The representation of Vishnu is signifier of Udai Singh's religious inclinations, whose adherence to Vaishnavism is testified by the Vaishnavite subject-matter which remained in vogue during this period. Udai Singh is seated in the centre of the second register, reclining on a large bolster. The other registers contain the depiction of his twenty-two wives. The layout of the hero-stone is in the shape of the multifoil arch which was in fashion in the Mughal architecture (Fig. 6.14). The lotus flowers and shoots appear to be inspired from Chamba painting (Fig. 6.15). The painting influence further extends to the depiction of the apparel of the Ranis – particularly collared blouses and folds on the sleeves (Fig. 6.16).



Fig. 6.14 Comparison of the layout of Hero-Stone B with a Mughal multifoil arch in Agra Fort



Fig. 6.15 Comparison of lotus flower in Hero-Stone B with the same motif in a c. 1690 Chamba painting



Fig. 6.16 Comparison of the female apparel in Hero-Stone B with the same garments in a c. 1720 Chamba painting

The **hero-stone D** (Fig. 6.5) depicts Raja Ugar Singh sitting in company of his four wives. The Vishnu panel noticed in the uppermost register of the two hero-stones of Udai Singh is replaced with a Shivalinga, suggesting Ugar Singh's religious inclination towards Shaivism. The multifoil cusped arch which frames the register depicting Ugar Singh and his wives appears to be inspired from the painting tradition (Fig. 6.17), as firstly, the arch design is not seen in sculptures or woodcarvings made earlier than the mid-17th century; and secondly, ornamented arched structures like these are associated with Mughal architecture. As the manifestation of this architectural embellishment is not witnessed in any temples or palaces constructed prior to this period, it is safe to assume that the motif was introduced in Chamba in mid-17th century by painters trained in the popular Mughal tradition. The design could also be compared to the woodcarvings on the Bharmour Kothi doorway (Fig. 6.18).

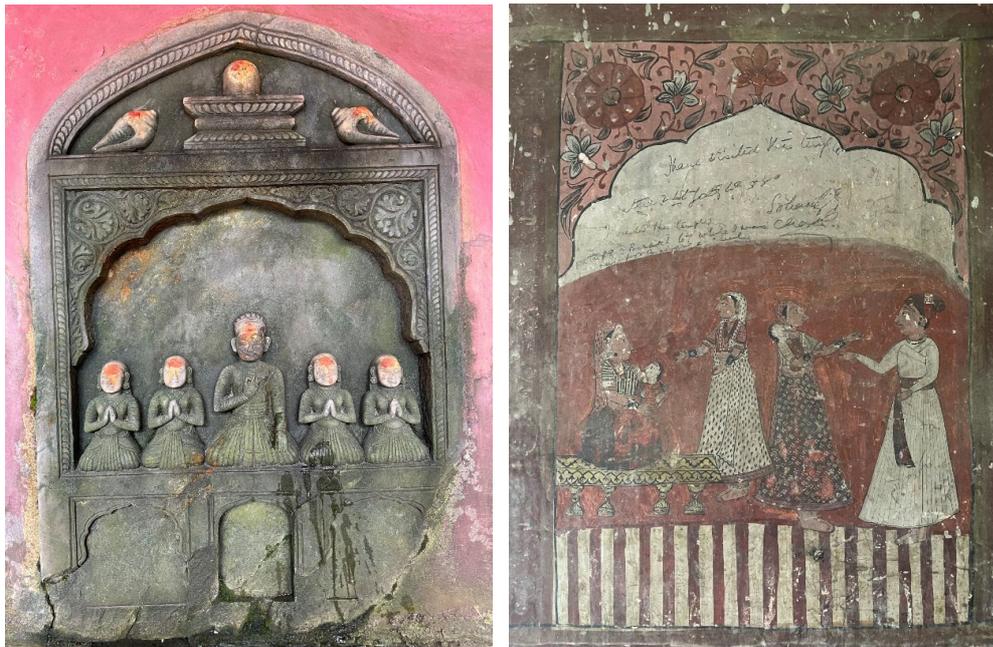


Fig. 6.17 Comparison of the multifoil cusped arch in the hero-stone D and a mural panel in the Shakti Dehra Temple, c. 1725

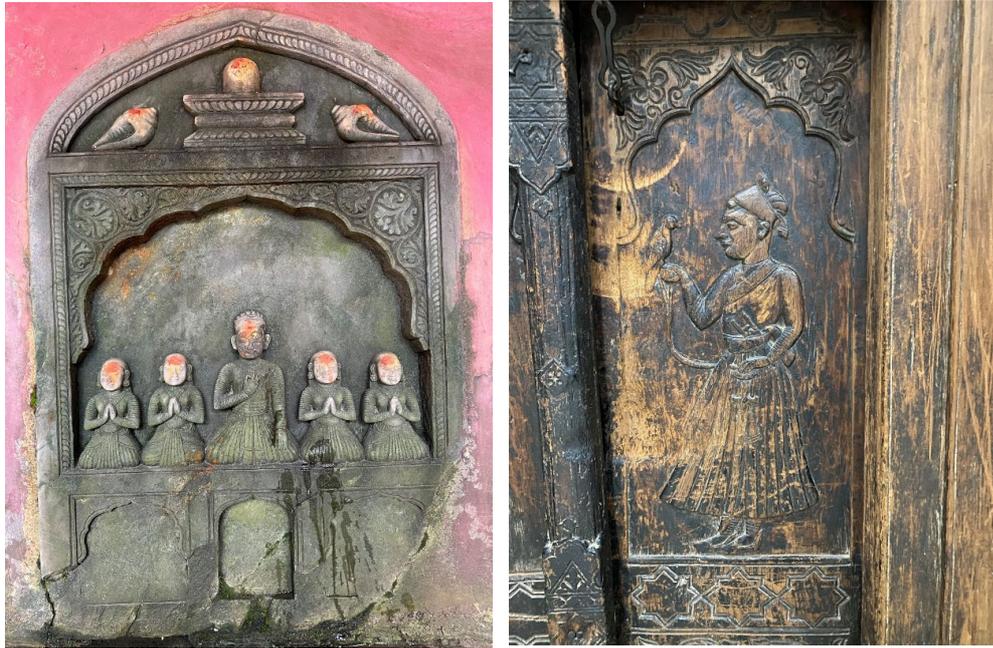


Fig. 6.18 Comparison of the multifoil cusped arch in the hero-stone D and a carved panel in the wooden doorway of Bharmour Kothi, c. 1641-43

The layout of these four hero-stones A-D is dissimilar to the two unidentified hero-stones of the Lakshmi Naryana temple complex (Fig. 6.8) and marks the advent of painting sensibilities in the sculptural culture of the region. In the above light, it becomes an important observation that the design and space-division of the four hero-stones is highly similar to the work of the painter Laharu of Chamba, who is known for the production of a *Bhagavata Purana* (dated 1757 CE). In a fashion similar to the hero-stones, Laharu also composes the painting in registers, with the top register appearing as the courtyard in which the narrative takes place, while the lower register, which is usually comprised of doorways and arched windows, denotes of the outer walls of the building (Fig. 6.19). The practice of dividing space in this manner can be traced to the painting of Janardan Varmana praying at a Devi Shrine (Fig. 6.20), in which Dai Batlo, Bhairava and Ganesha appear to be guarding the entrance to the shrine. On comparing the layout of the hero-stones of the four Rajas to the space-division applied by Laharu, not only is the influence of the painting tradition on the sculpture of Chamba felt, the layout of the hero-stones is also realised. Hero-stones A-D are designed in the form of a chamber, perhaps the Raja's heavenly abode, with lowest register becoming the outer wall. The Raja sits at the end of the chamber,

surrounded by his Ranis, who pay him respect with folded hands. The top portion of the hero-stone is reserved to the deity the Raja prayed to.

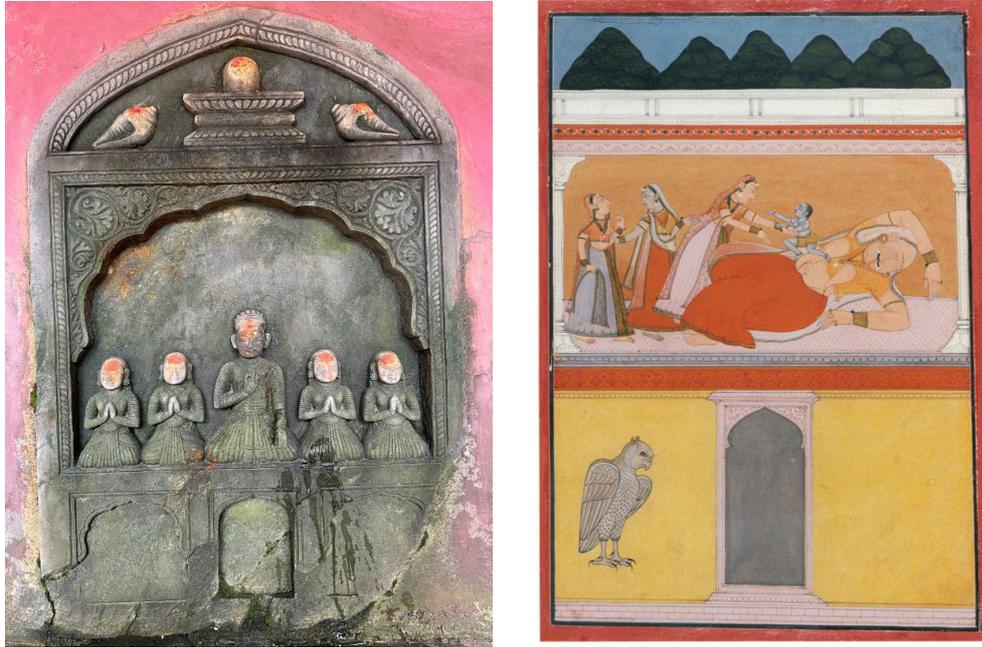


Fig. 6.19 Comparison of space-division in the hero-stone D and a painting from the 1757 Laharu Bhagavata Purana

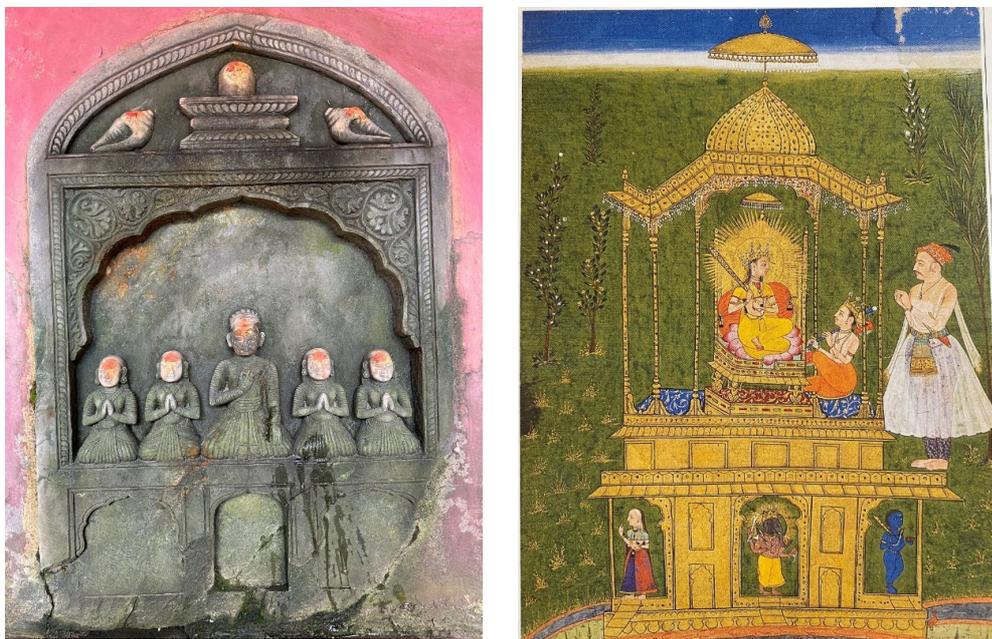


Fig. 6.20 Comparison of space-division in the hero-stone D and the posthumous portrait of Janardana Varmana, c. 1645

6.2 Torana of the Lakshmi Narayana Temple

The Torana of the Lakshmi Narayana Temple is the second instance in which the painters appear to be directly involved in other handicrafts. The names of the painters Laharu and Mahesh find mention in the Torana inscription of the Lakshmi Narayan Temple, making it the earliest document to surface which mentions the involvement of painters in an activity other than painting in Chamba. The oeuvre of Laharu has been identified, and the production of a Bhagavata Purana and two Ramayana sets is attributed to him. On the other hand, the identity of painter Mahesh is a matter of debate, as no painting bearing his name has come to light. Nonetheless, it is safe to assume that the latter was contemporaneous to Laharu, and the body of work which has been attributed to him by Goswamy and Fischer²⁸⁸ bear stylistic and compositional similarities to the paintings credited to Laharu.

The complex of the Lakshmi Narayana Temple falls under the supervision of the Archaeological Survey of India, and photography inside the sanctum sanctorum is strictly prohibited. However, an old photograph, taken by Vijay Sharma (Fig. 6.21) in the year 1995, reveals one portion of the Torana, which shows the design layout and the subject-matter of the structure.

The Dasavatara engravings of the Torana are designed by Laharu and Mahesh are most certainly inspired from the painter's system in terms of visual language and iconography, and they vary remarkably from their counterparts in the Chamba sculpture tradition. Dasavatara is a popular subject-matter in the sculptural heritage of Chamba, and the visual depiction of the ten incarnations of Vishnu ornament the *rathas* of a number of temples in the town.

²⁸⁸ Goswamy, B. N., and Eberhard Fischer. 1992. *Pahari Masters: Court Painters of Northern India*. 182



Fig. 6.21 Torana of the Lakshmi Narayana Temple, dated 1747 CE,
Photographed by Dr. Vijay Sharma in 1995

The Torana is in the shape of an arched gateway, with a semi-circular arch held by two columns on either side. The arch is engraved with the depiction of seven gods and demigods, and yogis of the Hindu faith within multifoil frames, in no particular order. However, it is the two columns of the Torana that draw attention. On either of the

columns, depiction of nine of the ten incarnation of Vishnu is done in a reverse order, beginning from Buddha on the top register.²⁸⁹ Each column is divided into three vertical segments, with the centre panel showing the manifestation of the incarnation, with supporting characters bowing in devotion on either side.²⁹⁰ The engravings of the right column are identical to those of the left one, but in an inverse fashion.

As the content and subject-matter of Dasavatara has already been detailed in the previous chapter, a comparison between the iconography and composition of Chamba Dasavatara sculpture and painting is detailed in the following table:

Table 6.1 Comparative analysis of Chamba Dasavatara sculpture and painter iconography

No.	Name of the Incarnation	Sculpture iconography	Painter iconography
1.	Matsya	A giant fish (Fig. 6.22)	Vishnu emerging from the mouth of a giant fish recovering Vedas from Shankhasura's belly (6.23)
2.	Kurma	Churning of the Ocean on the back of a tortoise (Fig. 6.24)	Churning of the ocean on the back of a tortoise (Fig. 6.25)
3.	Varaha	Boar-headed Vishnu standing in <i>pratyalida</i> asana (Fig. 6.26)	Boar-headed Vishnu slays Hiranyaksha (Fig. 6.27)
4.	Narasimha	Lion-headed Vishnu depicted with four hands (Fig. 6.28)	A lion ripping open the belly of Hiranyakasipu (Fig. 6.29)
5.	Vamana	Dwarf Vishnu receiving alms from Bali (Fig. 6.30)	Vamana receives alms from Bali while Shukracharya looks at

²⁸⁹ The reason behind omission of the Kalki incarnation from the Torana cannot be explained with plausible evidence. One assumption is that the Torana includes only those incarnations which have already happened. The absence of his depiction in the Torana is suggestive of his future incarnation.

²⁹⁰ The only exception in the format lies in the depiction of Vamana panel, in which Bali is depicted in the center.

			him suspiciously (Fig. 6.31)
6.	Parasurama	Parasurama standing with an axe in his hand (Fig. 6.32)	Parasurama chops the many arms of Sahastrabahu while his father's corpse is supported by Renuka (Fig. 6.33)
7.	Rama	Rama standing with a bow in his hand (Fig. 6.34)	Rama and Sita enthroned (Fig. 6.35)
8.	Krishna ²⁹¹	Krishna Fluting (Fig. 6.36)	Not included in the painting system
9.	Balarama	Balarama stands with plough in his hand/ Balarama with Revati (Fig. 6.37)	Balarama changes the course of Yamuna with his plough (Fig. 6.38)
10.	Buddha	Not included in the sculpture tradition	Buddha seated in a temple adored by devotees (Fig. 6.39)
11.	Kalki	A warrior with bow and a sword (Fig. 6.40)	A warrior seated on a pedestal is brought a horse by a groom (Fig. 6.41)

²⁹¹ In the painting tradition, Krishna is omitted and replaced with Balarama.



Fig. 6.22

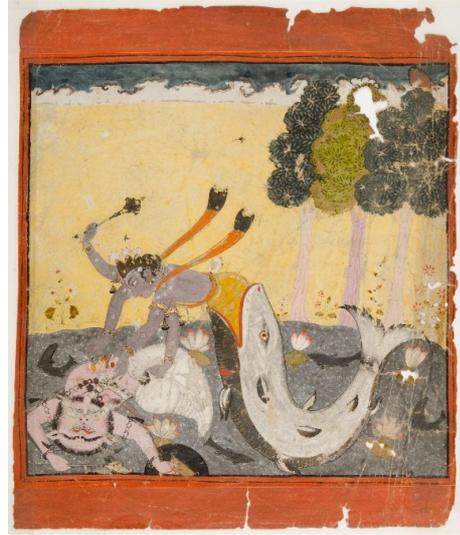


Fig. 6.23



Fig. 6.24

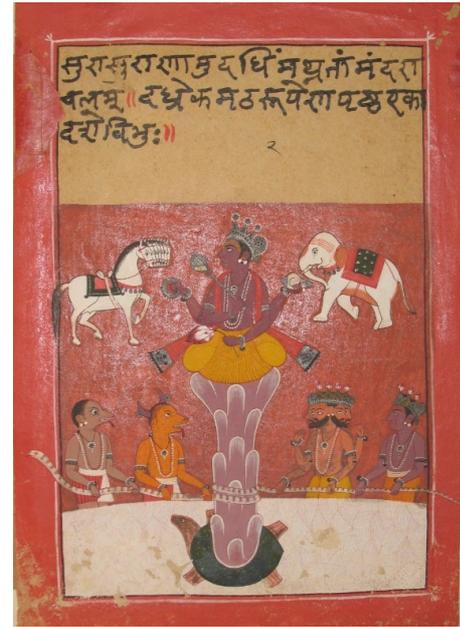


Fig. 6.25



Fig. 6.26

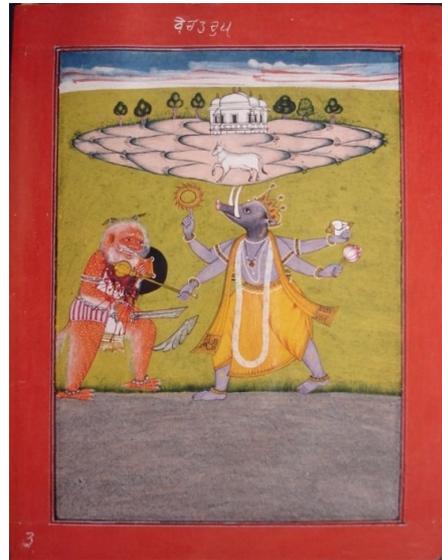


Fig. 6.27



Fig. 6.28



Fig. 6.29



Fig. 6.30



Fig. 6.31



Fig. 6.32



Fig. 6.33



Fig. 6.34



Fig. 6.35



Fig. 6.36



Fig. 6.37



Fig. 6.38

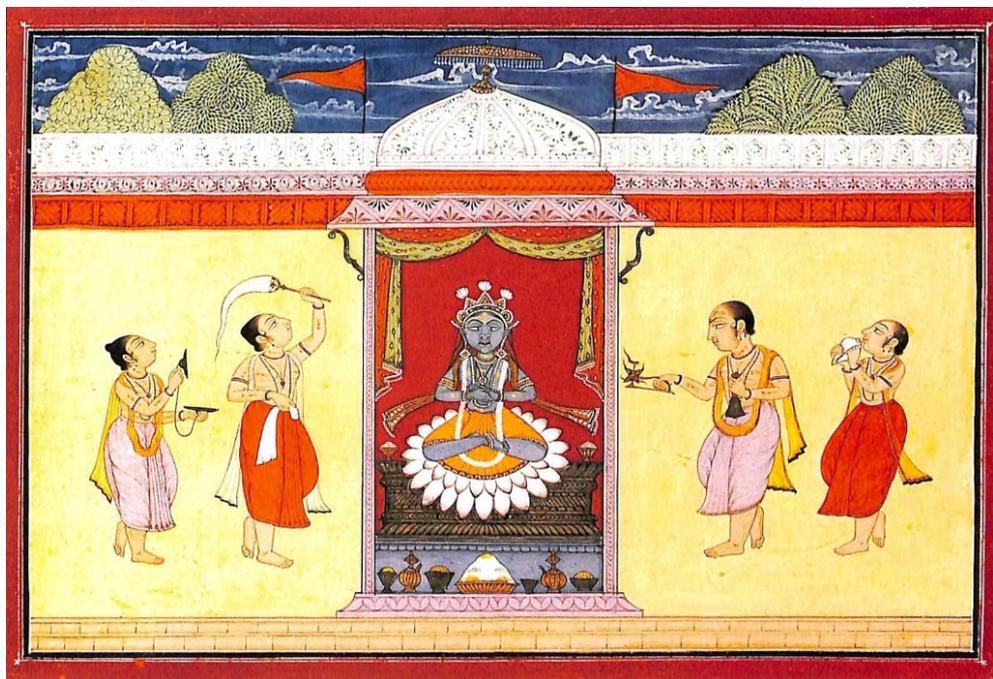


Fig. 6.39



Fig. 6.40



Fig. 6.41

The topmost panel of the Lakshmi Narayana Torana depicts Buddha, the ninth incarnation of Vishnu, who is shown seated on a pedestal, with his hands cusped together. Two devotees are depicted on his either side – one on the left blowing a conch, while the other praying to him with a lamp and a bell in his hands. The Buddha incarnation in the Torana engraving is similar to its representation in several Dasavatara paintings pertaining to the Buddha incarnation (Fig. 6.42).

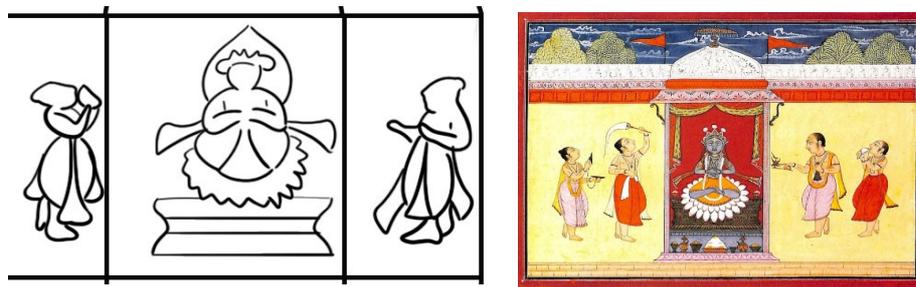


Fig. 6.42 Drawing of the Buddha incarnation as depicted on the Torana and its comparison with a Buddha Avatara painting



Fig. 6.43 Drawing of the Balarama incarnation as depicted on the Torana and its comparison with a Balarama avatara painting

The second panel in the column is Balarama, the eighth incarnation of Vishnu. Balarama is depicted changing the course of the river Yamuna with his plough. The incarnation bears the plough in one hand and his club in the other and turns his head around to look at the river, in a fashion identical to his depiction in the painting tradition (Fig. 6.43). Krishna and Yamuna are depicted on the either side of Balarama. The third panel comprises of Rama, the seventh incarnation of Vishnu. Rama is shown about to shoot an arrow to slay the donkey-headed Ravana. He is flanked by Hanuman on one side and Lakshmana on another. The depiction of the scene is similar to a number of Rama paintings from Chamba (Fig. 6.44), and Hanuman raising his hand is inspired from loose folios showing him in a similar posture (Fig. 6.45).

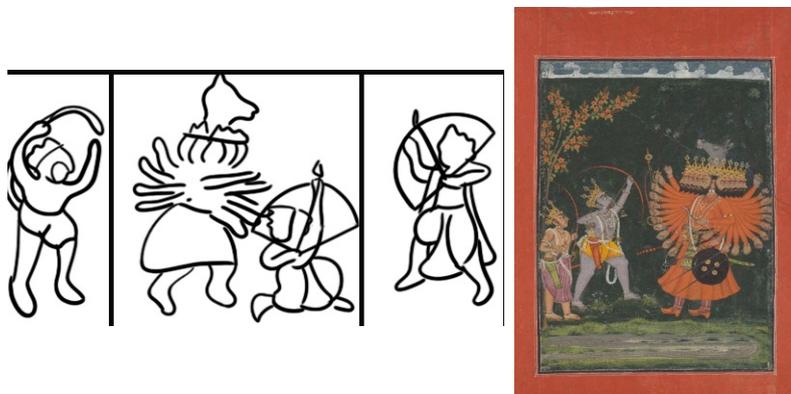


Fig. 6.44 Drawing of the Rama incarnation as depicted on the Torana and its comparison with a Rama Avatara painting



Fig. 6.45 Hanumana, Chamba, c. 1700, Christie's, auctioned on 10 June 2013

The fourth panel depicts Parasurama, the sixth incarnation of Vishnu. Parasurama grips the multiarmed Sahastrabahu by the tuft of his hair and heaves his axe in the air to smite the antagonist of the narrative. Two figures, a female and a male, flank the incarnation on either side. The comparison of Parasurama's depiction reveals a consistency with his portrayal in a number of Chamba Dasavatara paintings (Fig. 6.46).



Fig. 6.46 Drawing of the Parasurama incarnation as depicted on the Torana and its comparison with a Parasurama Avatara painting

The fifth panel represents Vamana, the dwarf incarnation of Vishnu. Unlike the other incarnations in the Torana, who are depicted in the middle section, Vamana is depicted in the corner section while Bali takes the central position in the panel. In my view, the liberty is taken by the designer(s) in order to remain consistent to the painting

convention of Vamana's depiction, in which a suspicious Shukracharya is depicted behind Bali's back, cautioning him of the dwarf's real identity (Fig. 6.47).

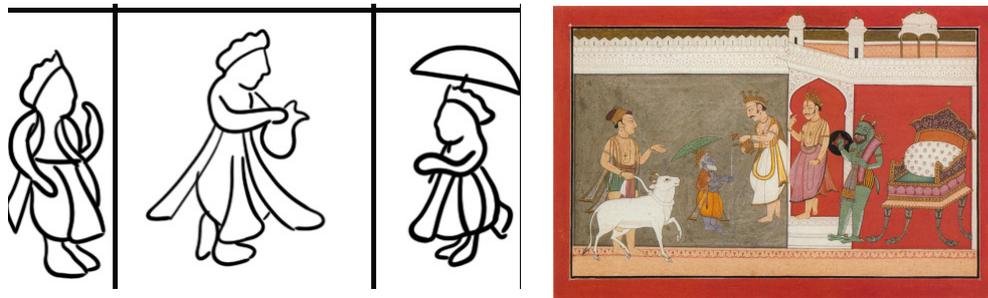


Fig. 6.47 Drawing of the Vamana incarnation as depicted on the Torana and its comparison with a Vamana avatara painting

The next panel depicts a front-facing four-armed Narasimha flanked by Prahlada and Kayadhu on the either side. The custom of depicting Narasimha facing in frontal manner with Kayadhu and Prahlada surrounding him is a repeated arrangement in the painting system (Fig. 6.48). However, the lion incarnation is always depicted disembowelling Hiranyakashyapu, whose lifeless body lies on Narasimha's lap. The exclusion of Hiranyakashyapu's depiction from the Narasimha panel could be attributed to the limitation of space in this medium, which constrained the designers from portraying Narasimha in the customary manner. The depiction of Narasimha in the Torana is similar to a bronze idol in Bharmour (c. 7th century) which shows Narasimha with two of his hands cupped.



Fig. 6.48 Drawing of the Narasimha incarnation as depicted on the Torana and its comparison with a Vamana avatara painting and the Bharmour bronze idol

Throughout the history of the sculptural depiction of the Dasavatara at Chamba, it is observed that Krishna is generally depicted as the eighth incarnation of Vishnu. In the Torana, however, Krishna is excluded from the Dasavatara order and is replaced by Balarama instead, in a manner akin to the painter's system. This appears to be a clear indication of the role of the painting tradition in the sculptural convention.

The Lakshmi Narayana Torana showcases the harmonious blend of metalcasting and painting traditions through its Dasavatara panels. The painters influenced the iconography of metalcasting, while also integrating certain metalcasting motifs into their paintings. One of the most remarkable borrowed elements is the lotus-petal design on the Torana's arch. This exchange highlights the cross-pollination between different art forms and artistic expressions.

6.2.1 Buddha Avatara in Chamba Painting

In the popular culture of Chamba, prior to the 16th century, awareness regarding Buddha appears to be of limited value, as suggested by lack of Buddha images in sculpture and woodcarving tradition of Chamba. While Buddhism bloomed and spread in the neighbouring kingdoms of Kashmir, Ladakh and Lahul, its impact on the society and culture of Chamba was either of little significance or none at all. On the other hand, although the standardisation of Buddha dates back to the Gupta period²⁹², it seems that awareness either did not reach Chamba or was purposefully subdued by the priestly or elite class. It is only in the painted Dasavatara sets from the late 17th century that the earliest depictions of Buddha as an incarnation of Vishnu is seen.

It is a matter of examination and consideration whether Buddha as the ninth incarnation of Vishnu was introduced into the consciousness of the elite and the masses of Chamba due to the migration of Brahmins from Banaras and Kashi in the late 16th century, who popularised Vaishnavism in Chamba through Bhakti literature; or by painters, who migrated to Chamba from diverse backgrounds, bringing along their own sensibilities and frameworks which manifested in the medium of painting.

²⁹² Holt, John C. 2013. *The Buddhist Visnu: Religious Transformation, Politics, and Culture*. Columbia University Press, 14-15

The possibility of both factors contributing equally as well as simultaneously cannot be undermined.

The manner in which Buddha is depicted in paintings deserves substantial attention. Unlike the nine other incarnations of Vishnu, who are depicted in a popular narrative associated with their manifestation, the Buddha incarnation is usually depicted as an idol being worshipped by Brahmin priests inside the *garbhagriha* of a Shikhara temple (Fig. 6.49). The blue complexioned Buddha, with either two or four hands, sits frontally with two of his hands cusped together, while the additional hands tell beads of a rosary. Long tresses of hair fall loosely on his back, and at times a third eye could also be seen on his forehead, suggestive of his attainment of enlightenment. A close examination of the iconographic and iconological details of the Buddha image in painting reveals that his depiction is influenced and appropriated from the sculptural depiction of a Shaivite image, most likely Triloki Nath (Fig. 6.49), who also appears with long tresses and hands cusped in a manner identical to the Buddha in painting. While the Hindu population of Chamba and Lahul venerate the Triloki Nath idol as Shiva, the Buddhist population revere it as Avalokiteshvara, the earthly manifestation of Buddha Amitabha (personal communication with Bhuvaneshwar Sharma).

In my opinion, with the passage of time, embellishments such as – blue complexion, Vaishnavite religious markings, *vaiyantimala*, flowing *uttariyas*, yellow Dhoti, and two supplementary arms – were added into the original iconography to assert a Vaishnavite identity.

The Torana of the Laxmi Narayana temple is important from this perspective as it marks the appropriation of visual language from sculpture to painting and its reassertion and reimagination into the sculptural tradition.



Fig. 6.49 Buddha avatara painting and comparison with Avalokiteshvara/Trilokhi Nath idol

6.2.2 Lotus Petal Motif in the Lakshmi Narayana Torana

The Torana is embellished with decorated motifs on its architrave, comprising of lotus petals ornamented with double stigmas, which are separated with filaments (Fig. 6.50). The design is derived from the woodcarving tradition of Chamba with its earliest depictions manifested in the stylobates of the 7th century Shakti Devi temple at Chattarari; later repeating itself in the stone sculptural tradition in the form of fountain slabs dating back to the 11th century (Fig. 6.51). Variations of this design are also found in the hero-stones A and D (Fig. 6.52). This pattern was adopted by the painters, and they employed this motif to decorate architecture in

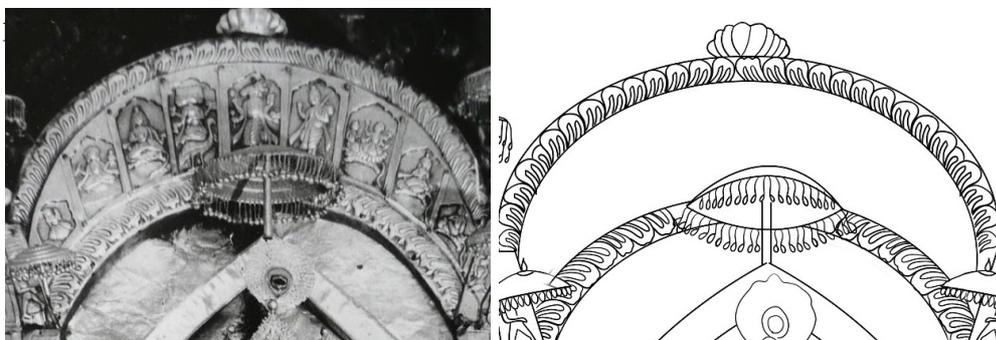


Fig. 6.50 Lotus petal motif on the architrave of the Lakshmi Narayana Torana

roofs, columns, and stylobates (Fig. 6.53), suggesting the interaction, engagement, and collaboration of painters with the sculptors of the region, as both were from the same artisan community.



Fig. 6.51 Lotus petal motif on a stylobate of the Shakti Devi temple in Chattarari, 7th century, and Lotus petal motif on a fountain stone slab, 11th century CE



Fig. 6.52 Variations of the lotus petal motif on hero-stones A and D, c. 1720 and c. 1735 CE



Fig. 6.53 Architectural embellishment in paintings with the lotus petal motif, indicating the influence of sculpture and woodcarving on painting

Once the association of painters with the sculptors and metal-craftsmen is established, it is crucial to examine the influence of painters on the woodcarving tradition of Chamba. The tradition of woodcarving dates back to the 7th century, and the temples of Lakshana Devi at Bharmour²⁹³ (Fig. 6.54) and Shakti Devi at Chhattarari²⁹⁴ (Fig. 6.56) being among the earliest temples adorned with woodcarvings bearing similarities with Post-Gupta sculptures. In the mid-17th century, a sudden change in the visual language associated with the tradition of woodcarving is observed with the manifestation of Perso-Timurid elements in the Bharmour-Kothi wooden doorway, and the three wooden Devi temples – Chamunda Temple, Chamba town; Shakti Dehra Temple, Gand Dehra; and Chamunda Temple, Devi Kothi.

A visual analysis of the pictorial and symbolic elements in the woodcarvings of these sites suggest an influence of Mughal architectural and painting tradition. It appears that the woodcarvings were designed by painters trained in the Mughal tradition who

²⁹³ Goetz, 1955. *The Early Wooden Temples of Chamba*, 72.

²⁹⁴ Goetz, 1955. *The Early Wooden Temples of Chamba*, 86.

migrated to Chamba during the reign of Raja Prithvi Singh (r. 1641—1664).²⁹⁵ In my opinion, while endeavouring in crafts other than painting, these painters likely found a pliant and adaptable medium such as wood to be more advantageous in contrast to the rigid and inflexible nature of stone. This affinity between painters and the woodcarving craft bestowed upon them the designation of *tarkhan-chitere*, signifying 'Painter-Carpenters'.

To comprehend the interconnection between painting and woodcarving, a thorough examination of the wooden doorway of the Bharmour Kothi becomes indispensable.



Fig. 6.54 Lakshana Devi temple at Bharmour, c. 7th century CE



Fig. 6.55 Wooden facade of Lakshana Devi temple



Fig. 6.56 Shakti Devi temple complex at Chattarari and its wooden *garbhagriha*, c. 8th century CE

²⁹⁵ The presence of Mughal painters at Chamba has been detailed in Chapter 4

6.3 Wooden Doorway of the Bharmour Kothi



Fig. 6.57 Bharmour Kothi doorway, Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba, c. 1641-43

The State office at Bharmour, known as the Bharmour Kothi, was built by Prithvi Singh in the Chaurasi town, soon after consolidating his power in 1641 CE.²⁹⁶ The building suffered massive damage in an earthquake in April 1905, and most of the wooden panels and brackets are now preserved in the Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba town.²⁹⁷ The Bharmour Kothi was designed as a royal residence as well as administrative centre, and the importance of the construction is suggested by the entrance doorway (Fig. 6.57), which depicts Prithvi Singh receiving honours from a Muslim noble, now widely identified to be Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan (r. 1627—58).

²⁹⁶ Sharma, Vijay. "The Woodcarvings of Chamba District, Himachal Pradesh." Sahapedia, March 9, 2017, <https://www.sahapedia.org/the-woodcarvings-of-chamba-district-himachal-pradesh>.

²⁹⁷ Sharma, Vijay. "The Woodcarvings of Chamba District, Himachal Pradesh." Sahapedia.

The doorway is divided into two registers. In the upper register, young Prithvi Singh is depicted holding the *Mahi-Maratib*.²⁹⁸ In front of the Raja stands a person of significance, as suggested by his apparel, holding a falcon in his right hand. The falconer appears to be of around the same age as Prithvi Singh who must have been in his early twenties at the time of the construction of Bharmour Kothi²⁹⁹. The falconer, sporting a Shah Jahani turban and a Jama tied in the Mughal fashion, appears to be Dara Shikoh (b. 1615) in all likelihood (Fig. 6.58). Falcons of the North-Western hill-states were popular at the Mughal court³⁰⁰, and a painting depicting Prithvi Singh offering a falcon to Shah Jahan has come to light (Fig. 6.59). It could be said with confidence that the doorway commemorates the meeting of Prithvi Singh with Dara Shikoh in which the Mughal prince awarded the Chamba Raja *Mahi-Maratib* and received the falcon as a tribute in return.



Fig. 6.58 Portrait of Dara-Shikoh, c. 1631-37, British Library, Add.or.3129, f.59v; comparison of his likeness with the depiction in the Bharmour Kothi doorway, c. 1641-43

²⁹⁸ *Mahi-Maratib* (Persian for fish dignity) was a fish standard which was awarded by the Mughal emperors to the Mansabdars and highly valued allies of the emperor.

²⁹⁹ Prithvi Singh was born in the year 1619.

³⁰⁰ Sharma, Vijay. "The Woodcarvings of Chamba District, Himachal Pradesh." Sahapedia.



Fig. 6.59 Shah Jahan receives falcon from Raja Prithvi Singh of Chamba, Chamba, c. 1650, 19 x 18 cm, Object Number 2009.202.217, Harvard Art Museums

The left panel in the lower register shows a royal guardsman wielding a shield and a scimitar, and the right panel depicts a noble holding a rose. The four panels are embellished with multifoil arches and are parted by the Islamic eight-pointed stars – a common decorative motif in Mughal architecture.

The iconography of the wood carved doorway evidently reflects the prevailing political climate in Chamba during the mid-17th century. The Mughals generally refrained from granting the title of 'Raja' to the Pahari chieftains, opting instead to refer to them as 'zamindar' (landlord). However, Prithvi Singh stood apart as one of the few Pahari hill-chiefs to be officially recognized as a Raja in the Mughal records. Hence, the installation of a doorway adorned with elements of Mughal visual language in the administrative office holds significant implications. Firstly, it seemingly aimed

to legitimise Prithvi Singh's claim to the throne of Chamba as the rightful Raja. Secondly, it sought to affirm Chamba throne's allegiance to the Mughal imperial authority. Lastly, the presence of such a doorway indicated the eventual submission of Chamba under Mughal domination.

Dara Shikoh was formally anointed the heir to the imperial throne by Shah Jahan in the year 1642 and was granted the title of Shahzada-e-Buland Iqbal (Prince of High Fortune). Being coetaneous to Dara Shikoh, and possibly a close ally, Prithvi Singh's choice to be depicted next to the Mughal prince symbolises that his loyalty to the imperial crown would be extended to the future generation as well.

The style in which the woodcarvings are rendered is parallel to the tradition of painting in vogue during the reign of Shah Jahan.³⁰¹

The stylistic origins of the Bharmour Kothi woodcarvings, in my opinion, lie in a Narasimha painting. The facial type of this style (Fig. 6.60) is characterised by – arched eyebrow, elongated eye, flat forehead, pointed nose, thin and protruding lips enhanced with the use of fine shading, and a bulging and round chin, with a sharp jawline highlighted by shading. The physiognomic details (Fig. 6.61) comprise of a short torso supported by a long bottom half. In all likelihood, it appears that the painters responsible for the designing of the Bharmour Kothi doorway belong to this workshop.³⁰²

The doorway of Bharmour Kothi paved way for the involvement of painters with the tradition of woodcarving, which was continued to the woodcarvings of the three Devi temples at Chamba.

³⁰¹ It appears that the person(s) active in designing the doorway were trained in the art of Mughal painting and were familiar with the style and iconography of Shah Jahan period painting. There is enough evidence to suggest the beginning of patronage to artists at Chamba who had migrated from a Mughal workshop during the reign of Prithvi Singh. Given the Raja's close association to Shah Jahan, it appears unlikely that Prithvi Singh was not influenced by the Mughal court culture, as suggested by his costumes and the extension of patronage for miniature painting at Chamba.

³⁰² The stylistic details of the painters belonging to this workshop are elaborated in Chapter 7



Fig. 6.60 Comparison of facial details in the c. 1630-40 Narasimha painting and the c. 1641-43 Bharmour Kothi doorway

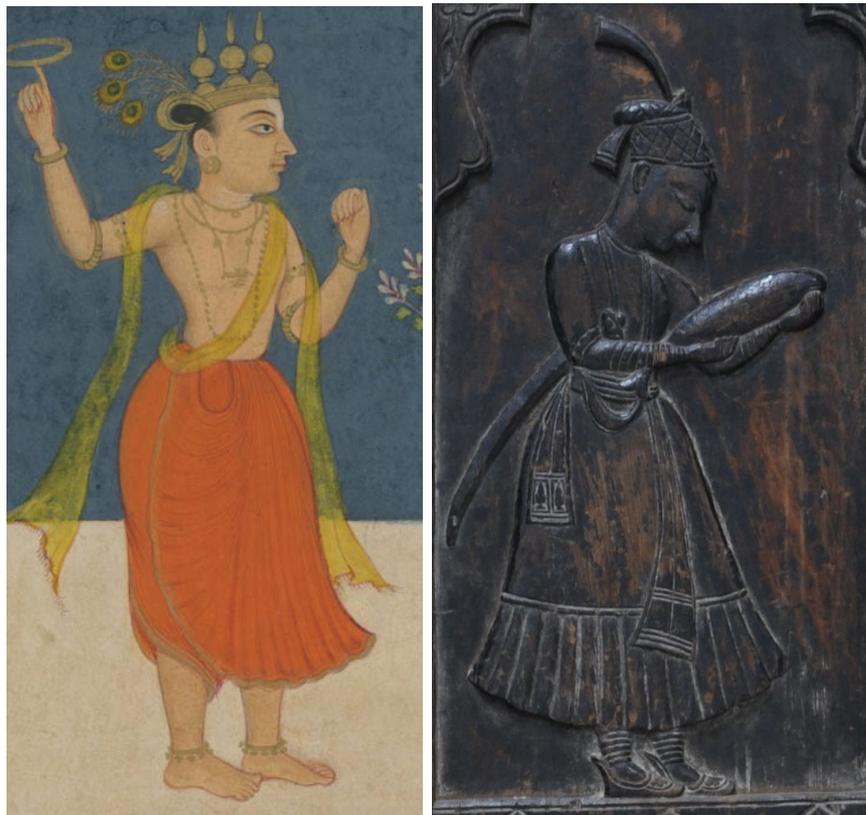


Fig. 6.61 Comparison of physiognomy in the c. 1630-40 Narasimha painting and the c. 1641-43 Bharmour Kothi doorway

6.4 Woodcarvings of the Chamunda Devi Temple at Chamba Town

The Chamunda Temple at the town-centre of Chamba (Fig. 6.62) is among the early temples to contain woodcarvings inspired by the tradition of miniature painting. The information regarding the construction of the temple is scanty, and no exact date can be attributed to the construction of the wooden temple. Dr SM Sethi has suggested that the plinth of the temple predates the woodcarvings, hence the temple must have existed prior to their execution (personal communication). As per my observations, there appears to be the presence of two guilds active simultaneously in the design and construction of the woodcarvings – one guild which is trained in the woodcarving tradition of Chamba, bearing strong stylistic similarities to the sculptural tradition of the region (Fig. 6.63); whereas the other guild is of the painters belonging to the reign of Raja Chattar Singh of Chamba, the workmanship of whom bears indications to the visual elements in vogue in Chamba painting during the last quarter of the 17th century (Fig. 6.64).

Other than the stylistic and iconographic dissimilarities in the visual language of the two types of woodcarvings, the difference between the two guilds is also highlighted by the technical approach, which the two guilds have undertaken. While the woodcarvings attributed to the woodcarvers' guild demonstrate the high-cut approach, suggestive of their familiarity with the tradition, those influenced by the painting tradition appears to be flat in a bas-relief manner. However, no specific criterion appears to be followed in the division of the panels between the two guilds and at times the simultaneous operation of the two groups on a single panel could be observed. Nevertheless, the woodcarvings attributed here to the painters' guild significantly outnumber the panels designed by woodcarvers, suggestive of the patron's preference for the visual language of the painting tradition.



Fig. 6.62 Chamunda Temple, Chamba, late 17th century CE



Fig. 6.63 Chamunda riding a lion, high-relief wooden panel in Chamunda Temple, Chamba



Fig. 6.64 A Rajput warrior, bas-relief wooden panel in Chamunda Temple, Chamba

My observations indicate that subject-matter of the woodcarvings is diverse, ranging from the depiction of Devi, the various incarnations of Vishnu, and demi-gods of Hindu pantheon to the representation of Persian winged fairies, Perso-Timurid eight-pointed star rosettes, arabesque patterns, floral decorations, Mughal cartouches and various nobles and people of importance. The woodcarvings are laden in no particular order and at times the figures appear to be overlapping and interrupting the linear continuation of the subject-matter (Fig. 6.65).



Fig. 6.65 Wood carved panel depicting various forms of Shakti; Kartikeya with peacock; and winged Cherub-heads, Chamunda Temple, Chamba

Of particular interest among the wood carved panels on the ceilings and pillars of the circumambulatory path is the male dancer within a Mughal cartouche (Fig. 6.66). The dancer, wearing a bulbous turban and Turkish boots, joyously raises his arms in enthusiasm, lifting one knee in the air. The depiction is among the rare examples of figures carved in the temple complex by the painters' guild shown in three-quarterly manner. In my opinion, the painter-carpenters have chosen to depict the dancer as Ragaputra Bhramarananda in the Ragamala iconographic system of Chamba (Fig. 6.67) since they were already familiar with the iconography. A comparison of the

Bhramarananda iconography with the dancer in the wood carved panel suggests that the former is the inspiration for the dancer panel³⁰³, securely fixing the iconographic trait to Chamba.



Fig. 6.66 A dancer, Chamunda Temple, Chamba



Fig. 6.67 Detail of Bhramarananda's iconography, Chamba, c. 1720, Provenance Unknown

Second important aspect is the depiction of the female-type (Fig. 6.68). The women are depicted having a short torso supported by an elongated lower body. An *odhni* is kept on the head and comes down to the heavy border of the ankle-length skirt. A short blouse which exposes the midriff is characterised by thick collars at the neck. The jewellery comprises of gullubund, armllets, and bracelets, with anklets at the feet. This depiction of the female-type is typical in a number of late 17th century Chamba paintings (Fig. 6.69). The thick collars of the blouse, particularly, is a trait exclusively found in Chamba painting belonging to this period.

³⁰³ The iconography of Ragaputra Bhramarananda has been detailed in Table 5.4



Fig. 6.68 A female attendant, Chamunda Temple, Chamba



Fig. 6.69 Detail of a female attendant from a Ragaputra Chandrakasa painting, National Gallery of Canada, Accession No. 23614

Lastly, the significance bestowed on the several Perso-Timurid elements in the woodcarvings, particularly the eight-pointed star – known as Najmat-al-Quds (Fig. 6.70) – needs to be discussed. The star appears several times in the woodcarvings, mostly as a frame with images of Hindu deities within. The distinctiveness of the star as the Islamic eight-pointed star, which is formed by imposing two squares over each other, is ascertained by the presence of similar other Timurid elements in the woodcarvings, which include the ten-pointed star rosette (Fig. 6.71). Other than these, the depiction of several Cherub-heads and Peris (Fig. 6.72) – Persian mythological winged spirits, solidify the belief that the Chamunda Temple woodcarvings are laden with Persian-Timurid elements. The Peri-figures (Fig. 6.73) deserve particular importance as they appear highly similar to the depiction of Peris in the murals of the Lahore fort (Fig. 6.74).



Fig. 6.70 Brahma within a Najmat-al-Quds frame, Chamunda Temple, Chamba



Fig. 6.71 Ten-pointed star rosette, Chamunda Temple, Chamba

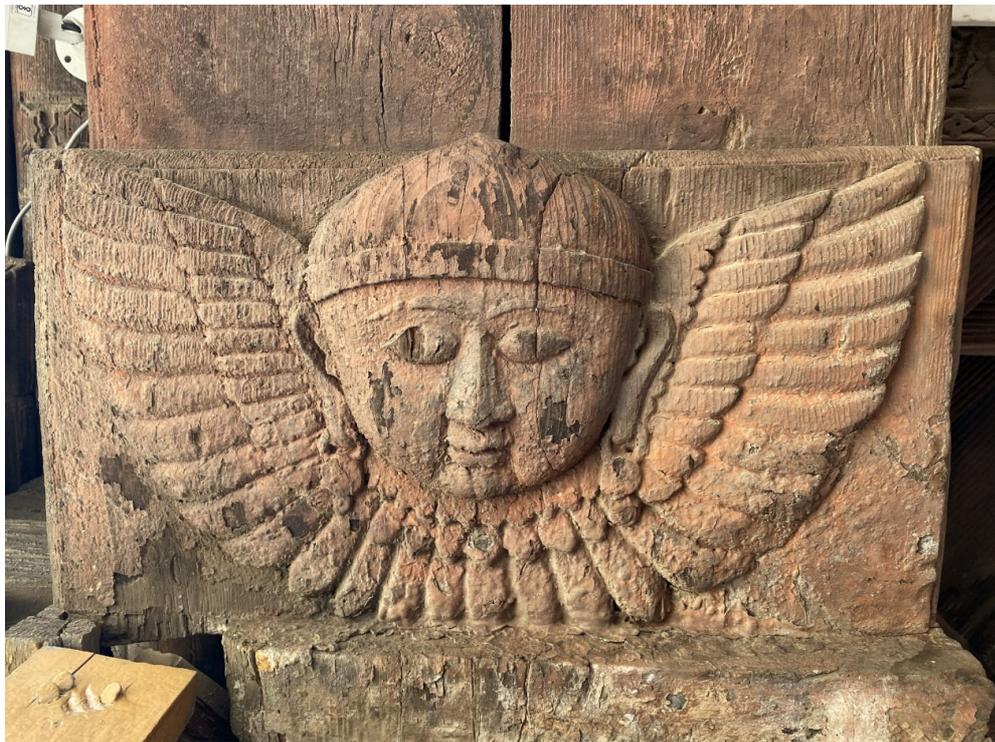


Fig. 6.72 Winged Cherub head, Chamunda Temple, Chamba



Fig. 6.73 Winged Peri, Chamunda Temple, Chamba



Fig. 6.74 Winged Peri, Lahore Fort, Pakistan, c. 1610 CE

Stylistically, the same guild which carved the wooden doorway of Bharmour Kothi, in my opinion, appears to be active in the design of the Chamunda temple woodcarvings. In the discussion on the former, it was ascertained that the painters who designed the woodcarvings must have had origin in the Mughal tradition of painting. On analysing the visual language of the Peri figures, it is not only established that the painters in all likelihood migrated to Chamba from a Mughal workshop, but it is also highly likely that the painters of this guild, prior to their advent in Chamba, must have been active at Lahore. The temple of Chamunda is among the early sites to showcase the Persian Peris in woodcarvings, which became a tradition in later Devi temples in Chamba. The second temple in continuation of this tradition of painters collaborating with woodcarvers is the Shakti Dehra temple at Gand-Dehra (Fig. 6.75), about nine kilometres North-West from the Chamba town.



Fig. 6.75 Shakti Dehra Temple, c. 1720-30, Gand-Dehra village, Chamba

6.5 Woodcarvings of the Shakti Dehra Temple at Gand-Dehra

Although no date of the construction of the temple has come to light – neither in the copper-plate charters nor in the inscriptions on the temple – the style and visual quality of the murals on the circumambulatory path suggests, as discussed in Chapter 4, that the temple must have been constructed in the third decade of the 18th century (c. 1720-30). The temple is dedicated to Goddess Durga and is the family shrine of the Barotra family, a prominent local family having historical ties with the Chamba court. The family maintains that the temple was constructed by one of their ancestors, symbolising their financial affluence and political influence in the state affairs. As the temple was not a royal construction, the structure is rather modest, and woodcarvings lack the splendour of the Chamunda temple. However, the temple is notable for its murals, making it among the earliest known temples in the North-Western Himalayas to have murals inspired from the miniature painting tradition.³⁰⁴



Fig. 6.76 Detail from the ceiling of the Shakti Dehra Temple, c. 1720-30

The woodcarvings in the temple are found on the pillars, the ceiling of the Mandapa, and the two wooden panels at the either side of the sanctum sanctorum. At the centre of the ceiling is an elaborate woodcarving panel (Fig. 6.76), comprising of three squares within one another, each dissecting the outer square into four triangular panels,

³⁰⁴ The murals of the Shakti Dehra temple are discussed in 4.2.5

resulting in the formation of a total of eight panels of equal measurements. At the centre of the inner square lies a protruding triple-lotus design from where the temple bell suspends. The responsibility of crafting the ceiling panel can be primarily ascribed to the painters' guild, with the potential exception of the central triple lotus panel.

I have observed that the woodcarvings of the outer four triangles are based on the subject-matter of Ashtamatrika – depicting a group of eight mother goddesses as described in the text of Devi Mahatmya (also known as Durgasaptashati). The names of the Ashtamatrikas, their attributes, and their depiction in the Shakti Dehra woodcarvings are detailed in the following table (in a clockwise manner):

Table 6.2 Ashtamatrika Panel in the Shakti Dehra Temple, Gand Dehra

No.	Name of the Matrika	Attributes as described in the Devi Mahatmya	Depiction in the Woodcarving
1	Maheshwari	Seated on Nandi, 4-6 arms, white complexioned, <i>tri-netra</i> , holds trident, drum, garland of beads, <i>panapatra</i> , or axe or an antelope or skull bowl, or serpent and is adorned with crescent moon and <i>jata mukuta</i>	 A woodcarving of the goddess Maheshwari, depicted seated on the bull Nandi. She has four arms, holding various symbolic objects. The carving is set within a triangular panel.
2	Varahi	Boar headed, holds <i>danda</i> , plough, goad, <i>vajra</i> or sword, a <i>panapatra</i> , sometimes bell, <i>chakra</i> , <i>chamara</i> , wears a crown called <i>karanda mukuta</i> and other ornaments	 A woodcarving of the goddess Varahi, depicted with a boar's head. She is shown in a seated or standing posture with multiple arms, holding various weapons and symbolic objects. The carving is set within a triangular panel.

3	Chamunda	Identified with Kali and similar in appearance, wears garland of skulls, holding a <i>damaru</i> , trident, sword and <i>panapatra</i> , rides a jackal or corpse of a man, described as having three eyes, a terrifying face and sunken belly	
4	Brahmani	Depicted in yellow, with four heads, 4-6 arms, holds a rosary or noose and <i>kamandalu</i> , or lotus stalk or book or bell, seated on <i>hamsa</i> , basket shaped crown called Karanda Mukuta	
5	Shivadooti	Shivaduti is described as having a dark complexion, with long matted hair, three eyes, and holding a trident, while her right foot rests on the back of a jackal	
6	Vaishnavi	Seated on Garuda, having 4-6 arms, holds Shankha, Chakra, mace, lotus/bow/sword; or her two arms are in <i>varada mudra</i> and <i>abhaya mudra</i> , wears cylindrical crown called <i>kirita mukuta</i>	

7	Kaumari	Rides a peacock, 4-12 arms, spear, axe, bow, cylindrical crown	
8	Indrani	Seated on elephant, depicted as dark-skinned, 2-4 arms, thousand eyes, armed with <i>vajra</i> , goad, noose and lotus stalk, <i>kirita mukuta</i>	

Each panel of the woodcarving consists of two Devis, presented without any specific sequence, occasionally accompanied by depictions of winged-cherubs, trees, birds, and animals. The inner four triangular panels showcase winged-Peri figures, whose portrayal closely resembles that observed on the ceiling of the Chamunda temple (Fig. 6.77) discussed earlier. These Peris are attired in the Mughal fashion, adorned with flowing *patakas*, and each holding, in a clockwise manner, a wine decanter, a rabbit, a peacock, and a betel-leaf container. A comparative analysis reveals the similarity of these Peri figures to those found in the Lahore fort. This observation suggests that the influence of Mughal typology persisted in the works of Chamba painters even after a century of migration.



Fig. 6.77 Comparison of Shakti Dehra Peri figure (left) with the Chamunda Temple woodcarving (centre) and the mural at Lahore Fort, Pakistan (right)

The third square comprises of the decorative motifs, especially the Timurid 12-pointed star rosette banner and the Najmat-al-Quds, which surround the depiction of four Kirtimukhas decorated with floral patterns (Fig. 6.78). The representation of the Kirtimukha appears to be derived from a relief panel in the shrine of Raja Udai Singh.



Fig. 6.78 Comparison of Shakti Dehra Kirtimukha and ten-pointed star rosette (left) with the Kirtimukha and ten-pointed star rosette in the Udai Singh shrine (right)

The adorned wooden column (Fig. 6.79) situated at the entrance of the Mandapa merits particular scrutiny. Notably, this wooden column stands as one of the earliest extant examples of its kind, as no comparable structures have been discovered in sites predating the construction of the Shakti Dehra temple. Despite this uniqueness, the column's design and ornamentation bear resemblances to the architectural innovations popular during the reign of Shah Jahan, as evidenced by the presence of similar columns in the Agra Fort.

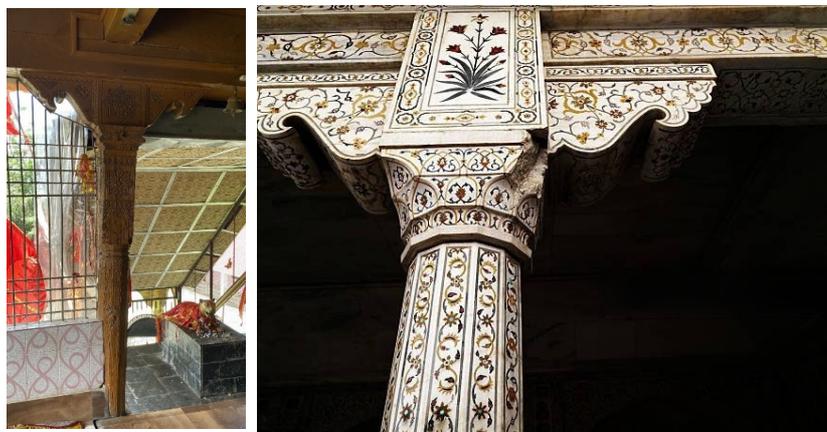


Fig. 6.79 Design of the south-eastern column of the Shakti Dehra Temple (left) and its comparison with a column in the Agra Fort (right)

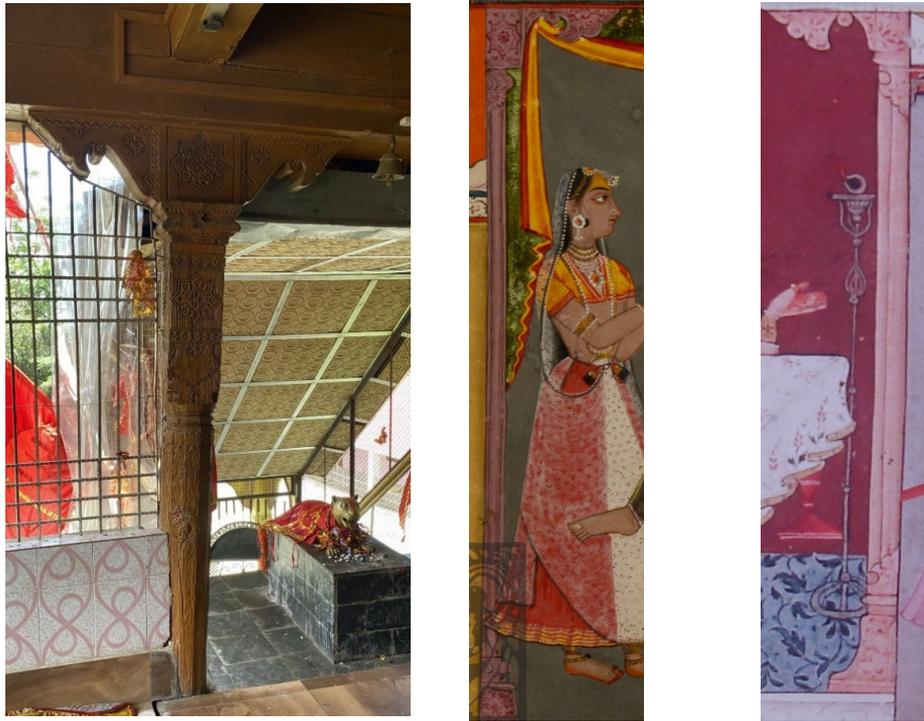


Fig. 6.80 Design of the south-eastern column of the Shakti Dehra Temple (left) and its comparison with a column in Chamba painting (centre and right)

Nonetheless, it becomes apparent that the embellishment of the pillar can be traced back to the painting tradition, for two primary reasons. Firstly, the woodcarvings were executed by painter-carpenters, indicating an inherent connection between the technique of painting and woodworking. Secondly, had an architect trained in the Mughal tradition journeyed to Chamba, the influence of Mughal architecture would likely have permeated other components of the regional architecture as well, which is not the case. Therefore, the transmission of decorative elements to the wooden column in question is more plausibly attributed to the interplay between the painting tradition and carpentry expertise rather than direct architectural importation. This column-type is also a popular architectural motif in Chamba paintings belonging to different periods and rendered by artists exhibiting diverse stylistic traits (Fig. 6.80).



Fig. 6.81 Wooden panel on the western wall, Shakti Dehra Temple



Fig. 6.82 Wooden panel on the eastern wall, Shakti Dehra Temple

Two prominent wooden panels are positioned on each side of the sanctum sanctorum, denoted as Fig. 6.81 and Fig. 6.82. The western wall panel Fig. 6.81 is organized into three distinct registers. The top register portrays Kichaka in a yogic posture, while the middle register is divided into two sections: an elephant depicted on the left and Krishna playing the flute on a pedestal shown on the right. The bottom register features a Dvarapala brandishing a bow and an arrow, accompanied by a small Gana figure supporting the quiver. The panel exhibits a strong adherence to the sculpture tradition and showcases characteristics consistent with the work of a skilled traditional woodcarver.

The wooden panel on the eastern wall Fig. 6.82, however, in all likelihood is carved by a painter, as not only the visual language bear strong influence of painting tradition, but the technique employed by the designer is also low-relief, in contrast to the high-relief carving done by the woodcarver of the western panel. There appears neither a remote connection between the two panels, nor they appear to be complementing each other. Ordinarily, it is expected for the eastern panel to represent another Dvarapala to

support the one on the western panel. However, the panel appears to be divided into two registers, designed in the form of the Mughal cartouche. The top register is laden with the depiction of a royal musician clad in the court apparel, strumming the Rabab. The bottom register consists of a woman carrying an infant on her shoulders. The installation of two contrasting wooden panels at the entrance to the sanctum sanctorum remains an enigma.

6.6 Woodcarvings of the Chamunda Devi Temple at Devi-Kothi



Fig. 6.83 Chamunda Devi Temple at Devi-Kothi, Churah



Fig. 6.84 Eight-pointed Najmat al-Quds star on a column in Devi-Kothi temple

The third wooden temple in continuation of the tradition of painters designing the woodcarvings is the Chamunda Temple at Devi-Kothi (Fig. 6.83), a village in the Churah tehsil of Chamba. A Takri inscription on the entrance of the temple reveals that the structure was laid in the year 1754 by Raja Umed Singh (r. 1748—64 CE) and it is built in accordance with the architectural plan and layout of the Chamunda Temple at Chamba. The ceiling of the circumambulatory path surrounding the sanctum sanctorum is laden with woodcarvings based on the depiction of deities of the Hindu pantheon and ascetics; as well as elements of Perso-Islamic mythology, including Peris, Simurghs, Centaurs, and several composite birds and animals. The elements previously discussed, such as the Najmat-al-Quds, Timurid cartouches and arabesque

floral patterns also appear in the ceilings and columns of this temple as well (Fig. 6.84).



Fig. 6.85 Swastika patterned wooden panel in the Devi-Kothi temple



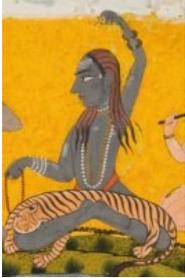
Fig. 6.86 Swastika tile-pattern detail from a Parijata Harana painting

A total of 24 wood-carved squares embellish the ceiling of the Mandapa and the circumambulatory path³⁰⁵, with each square comprised of one central quadratic, encompassing an eight-pointed star; surrounded by four rectangular panels, bearing wooden bas-reliefs within a Mughal cartouche. Hence, the entire ceiling of the temple (including the Mandapa and the circumambulatory path) is decorated with five times twenty-four, 120 reliefs. The arrangement of each of the square is similar to the pattern of Swastika (Fig. 6.85), which appears identical to the ‘Swastika’ tile-patterns as seen in a number of Chamba paintings (Fig. 6.86). A fastidious care is maintained by the painter-carpenters in the arrangement of the figures as not to point their feet disrespectfully towards the cubic sanctum sanctorum.

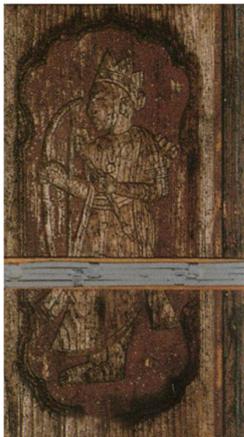
A brief comparison of a number of figures in the bas-reliefs of the ceilings and their typological source in the painting tradition is given in the following table:

³⁰⁵ Fischer, E., V.C. Ohri, and Vijay Sharma. 2003. "The Temple of Devi-Kothi: Wall Paintings and Wooden Reliefs in a Himalayan Shrine of the Great Goddess in the Churah Region of the Chamba District, Himachal Pradesh, India." *Artibus Asiae. Supplementum* 43, 38.

Table 6.3 Comparison of Devi-Kothi bas-reliefs with paintings

No.	Devi-Kothi Bas-Relief	Painting Detail
1	 <p data-bbox="786 698 903 730">Hatha Yogi</p>	
2	 <p data-bbox="810 1135 880 1167">Narada</p>	
3	 <p data-bbox="799 1545 893 1576">Balarama</p>	

4



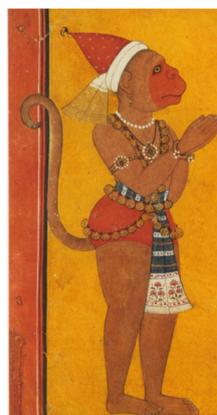
Lakshmana



5



Hanumana



6



Sita



7	 <p data-bbox="778 689 911 719">An attendant</p>	
9	 <p data-bbox="794 1081 896 1111">A Demon</p>	
11	 <p data-bbox="756 1482 935 1512">Vishnu on Garuda</p>	

Conclusion

The confluence of painters, sculptors, metalsmiths, and carpenters in collaborative efforts culminated in a syncretic fusion of diverse artistic procedures, facilitating a multifaceted exchange of iconographic and typological elements. Notably, the painters adeptly integrated decorative motifs drawn from regional cultural contexts. The comprehensive observations presented in this chapter yield a significant revelation:

within the artistic domain of Chamba, distinguished by a conglomeration of painters hailing from diverse origins, iconography emerges as a pivotal criterion uniting these varied stylistic expressions. Furthermore, the progressive intensification of painters' involvement with a range of artistic mediums serves as a reflection of their escalating renown and eminence among their fellow craftsmen in Chamba.

Chapter 7

Classification of Chamba Painting

on the Basis of Style

In Pahari painting scholarship, the concept of 'style' has emerged as a fundamental criterion for the categorisation and differentiation of various schools. This emphasis on stylistic analysis has led to a deeply ingrained belief that each school possesses a unique painting atelier characterised by a specific and consistent stylistic approach. It is through the lens of style that scholars and art historians have sought to delineate the distinctive artistic sensibilities of these schools.

As discussed in the preceding chapter, the Chamba school of painting occupies a remarkable and distinctive position within the broader landscape of Pahari art. This uniqueness arises from the simultaneous existence of multiple lineages of painters who exhibited discernible stylistic and formal disparities. Indeed, it is this remarkable characteristic that fundamentally defines the Chamba school of painting and sets it apart from its contemporaries.

The primary focus of this chapter is to delve deeply into the intricate exploration of the evolutionary trajectories of the various styles that have manifested within Chamba painting across successive generations of painters. In the pursuit of this endeavour, a meticulous categorization of eight distinct styles has been undertaken. These categorizations are based on a comprehensive analysis of specific criteria, encompassing the portrayal of facial-types, evolving physiognomies, nuances in clothing depiction, architectural details, techniques employed in rendering the sky and ground, and other technical attributes that set these styles apart from one another. For the convenience of reference and analytical clarity, these styles have been designated with alphabetical labels, such as 'A', 'B', and 'C'.

Through this comprehensive examination, this chapter seeks to shed light on the dynamic nature of Chamba painting as it evolved across different epochs, offering insights into the nuanced shifts and stylistic developments that have defined its rich artistic heritage.

7.1 Classification of Paintings on the Basis of Style

7.1.1 Style 'A' (1630—1720 CE)

Originally Attributed To: Chamba³⁰⁶

My nomenclature for Style 'A' is among the oldest and most popular styles in vogue in 17th century Chamba painting.³⁰⁷ Generally associated with the period of Raja Chattar Singh of Chamba (r. 1664—90), examples of this style are part of the pictorial tradition that was being practiced during the reign of Raja Balabhadra Varmana (r. 1589—1613/1623—41) as portraits of him and his younger son Mian Bishambar Varmana have come to light, made in the second quarter of the 17th century.

Several portraits made in this style of Chamba Rajas and their neighbouring chieftains have come to light and are in the collection of Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba, and Himachal State Museum, Shimla. The visual language exhibited in paintings rendered in this style suggest a Nurpur origin, and the migration of artists took place while Balabhadra Varmana was reigning in subjection of Raja Jagat Singh of Nurpur (r. 1618—46). No paintings rendered in Style 'A' bear signature of the artist. I have noted that paintings produced in this style belong to the timeframe of c. 1630—1720 CE, indicating that the style remained in practice for at least three generations. As per my observations, developments within this style are recorded in paintings produced in the period of 1690—1720 CE.

Arguments for Attribution to Chamba School: As portraits of three generations of Chamba Rajas made in this style have come to light, it is plausible to suggest that the painters belonging to this workshop remained active in Chamba for at least three generations. As per my observations, a number of iconographic elements and decorative motifs devised by these artists became exclusive to the identity of Chamba school which continues in varying styles.

³⁰⁶ The style has also been attributed to various centres such as Nurpur, Basohli and Bilaspur in museums and auction catalogues.

³⁰⁷ The only known portrait of Raja Balabhadra Varmana is recorded in this style.

Facial-type: Within this style, the Facial-types are characterized by a unique combination of features that set them apart. This includes a round forehead, an outwardly pointed nose, thin lips, and a small, curved chin that almost touches the lower lip, as exemplified in Fig. 7.1. Furthermore, in the female-type, the back of the head is skilfully rendered in a conical fashion. The bodies are outlined using a deep, rich crimson hue. Notably, the eyes take on a bold appearance, with their upper lashes meticulously delineated in black, and the lower lashes elegantly rendered in carmine. A subtle touch of redness graces the end of the eyes, achieved through sensitive strokes of carmine. In portraits, the artist(s) employ delicate lines and faint washes to accentuate periorbital sagging, facial swellings, and wrinkles, showcasing the distinctive characteristics that define Style 'A'.

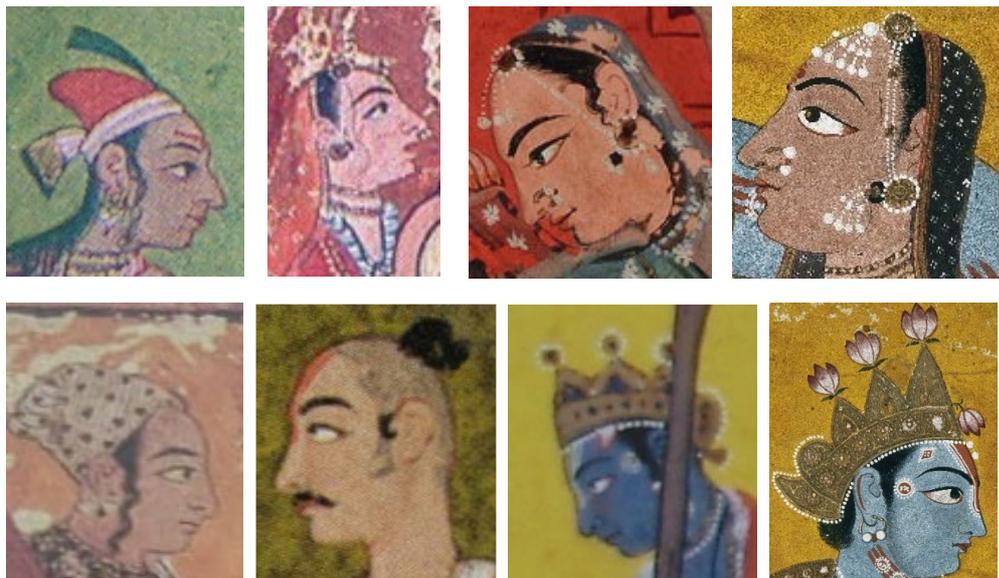


Fig. 7.1 Evolution of style 'A' Facial-types (1630—1720)

Physiognomy: The physiognomic details in style 'A' comprise of short torsos supported by a long bottom body, with torsos front facing, and faces rendered in profile-manner. The male physiognomies are characterised with broad shoulders, thin waist, heavy limbs, and small hands with tender fingers. Female-type is slender, with

a long neck, narrow shoulders and slim waist. The female hands with long and gentle fingers and feet are usually dyed in henna.



Fig. 7.2 Style 'A' male and female physiognomies

Clothing: In the early phase of this style, the males are depicted clad in a fashion associated with Jahangir's reign, with notable characteristics such as loose turbans, ankle-length *jamas* and monochrome *payajamas*. However, under the patronage of Chhattar Singh, the fashion sensibilities in vogue during the reign of Aurangzeb become prominent – marked with short turbans, knee-length *jamas* with *pataka* sash tied around the waist, and striped *payajamas*. Rajas and other men of importance are usually depicted adorning colourful *jamas* with floral patterns whereas attendants are depicted clad in white *jamas* over white tunics with red floral *pataka* sash tied around the waist. The male jewellery comprises of pearl and ruby earrings, strings of pearls with gold pendants, gold armlets and bracelets.

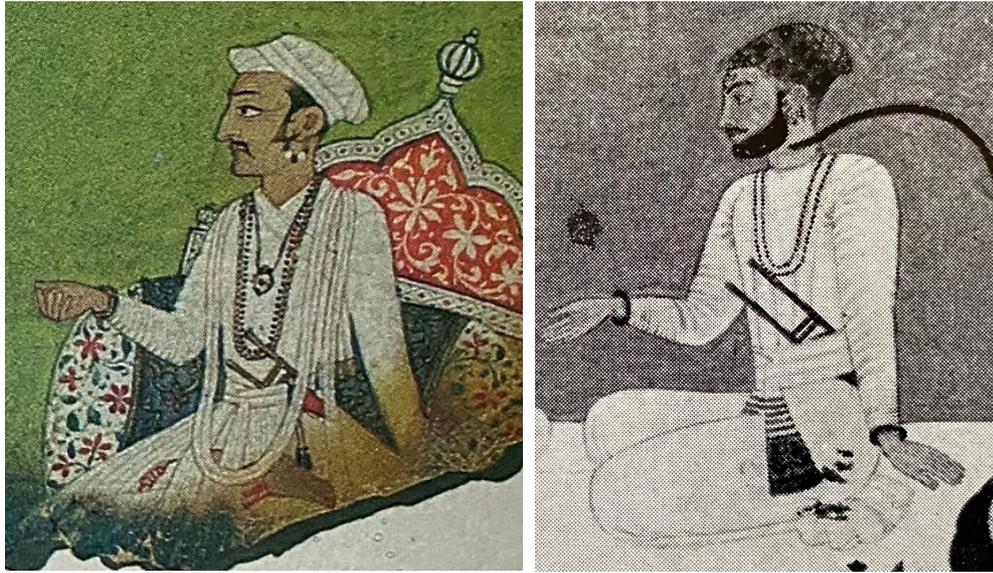


Fig. 7.3 Comparison of male clothing in c. 1630-35 with c. 1680

The female fashion as conceived in paintings of this style include collared blouses, which are hallmarks of Style 'A', complemented with colourful ankle-length skirts. A dyed but diaphanous *odhani* studded with pearls or other decorated patterns is shown taken over the head and tucked under the skirt at the waist. The female jewellery as depicted in Style 'A' appears to be standardised in the form of pearl studded *tikka* joined with a string of pearl to the earrings. They are adorned with gold *gulubands* and necklaces which are ornamented with pearls. The women-type are further embellished with gold armlets and bracelets having pompoms hanging from them. In some cases, the female-type is also shown wearing gold anklets.



Fig. 7.4 Comparison of female clothing in c. 1670 with c. 1720

Composition (Indoors): Indoor settings generally comprise of court scenes which are void of architectural details. Figures are generally depicted at either the left or the right corner of the composition, seated on striped *durries* against a monochromatic backdrop of either green or yellow. Figures of significance are usually depicted smoking *huqqas*, while the people addressing them are depicted either seated with one hand raised, holding handkerchiefs, or standing with their hands placed on their daggers or swords. Men of prominence are depicted larger in proportion than other figures. The attendants are generally youthful men signified by their long sideburns, holding peacock flywhisks.

Indoor scenes, which are associated with subject-matter such as Dasavatara, Ragamala and Parijata Harana, generally take place either inside a chamber situated at the corner of the composition, displaying a slanted roof embellished with domed cupolas and turrets, with fluted pillars on a side. The rest of the composition is dominated by a monochromatic backdrop of either yellow or green with minimal detail, usually with a tree to fill up the empty space. The division of space in this compositional type is done in a way that the placement of figures inside or outside the architectural arrangement symbolises the indoor or outdoor space. In compositions in which depiction of an outdoor scene is not necessary, the architectural layout is placed at the centre of the composition.

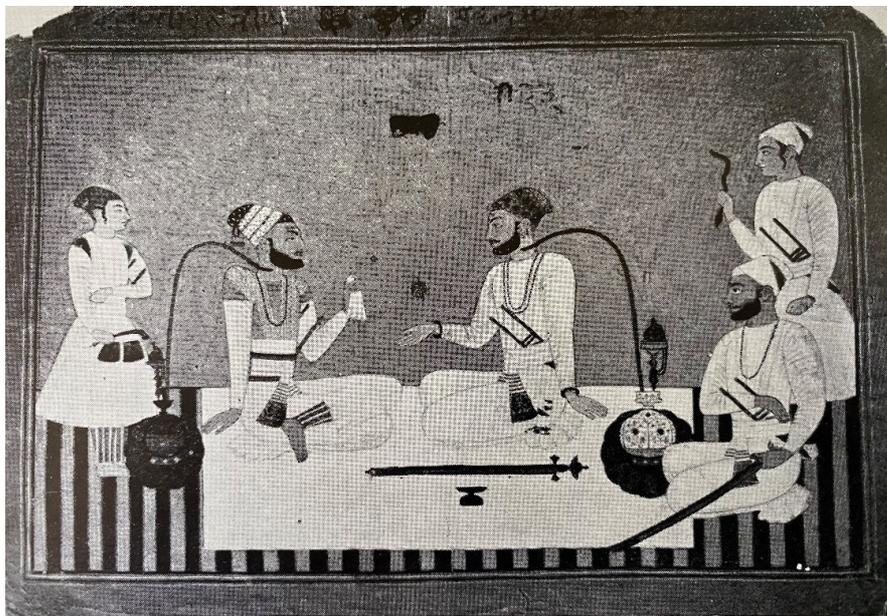


Fig. 7.5 Style 'A' indoor composition (court scene)

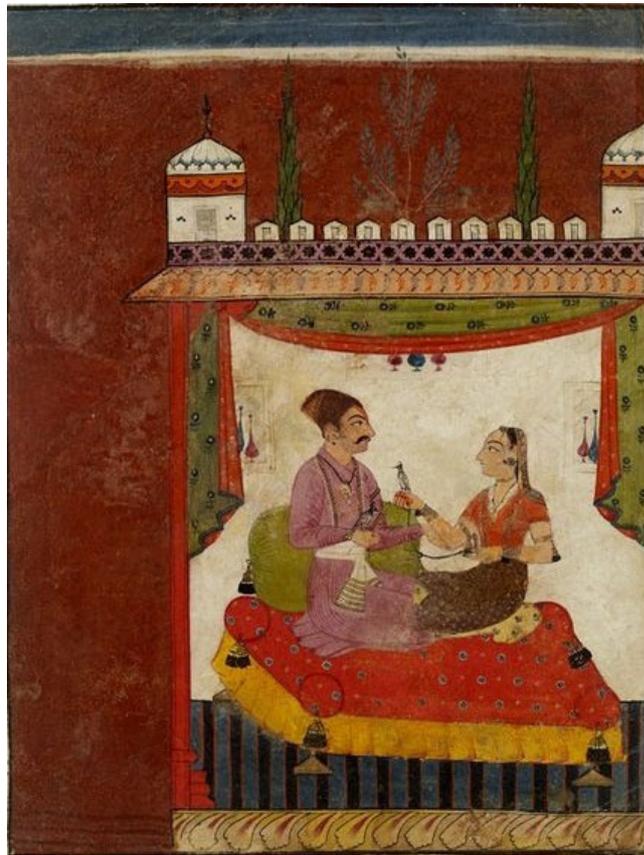


Fig. 7.6 Style 'A' indoor composition (second variant)

Composition (Outdoors): In compositions which are based on an outdoors scene are generally devoid of an architectural arrangement unless suggested in the narrative of the episode. The figures are placed against a monochromatic backdrop of yellow, green, burnt umber, with minimal detail of flora and fauna.



Fig. 7.7 Style 'A' outdoor composition

Flora and Fauna: Popular tree-types in Style 'A' include weeping willows; pair of cypresses; and conical and bulbous pine trees characterised with thick foliage and flowery vines. Depiction of birds and animals is scanty unless described in the narrative of the text.



Fig. 7.8 Popular tree-types in Style 'A'

Architecture: The hallmark architectural elements of this style consistently feature layouts that are both distinctive and iconic. A terraced roof, adorned with a pointed cornice, serves as the foundation for this architectural narrative. At the pinnacle of the terrace, a central domed cupola takes center stage, flanked by two stately turrets, each meticulously crafted to precision. The roof, otherwise characterized by its simplicity, is punctuated by battlements, thoughtfully spaced at regular intervals, evoking a sense of structural balance and elegance.

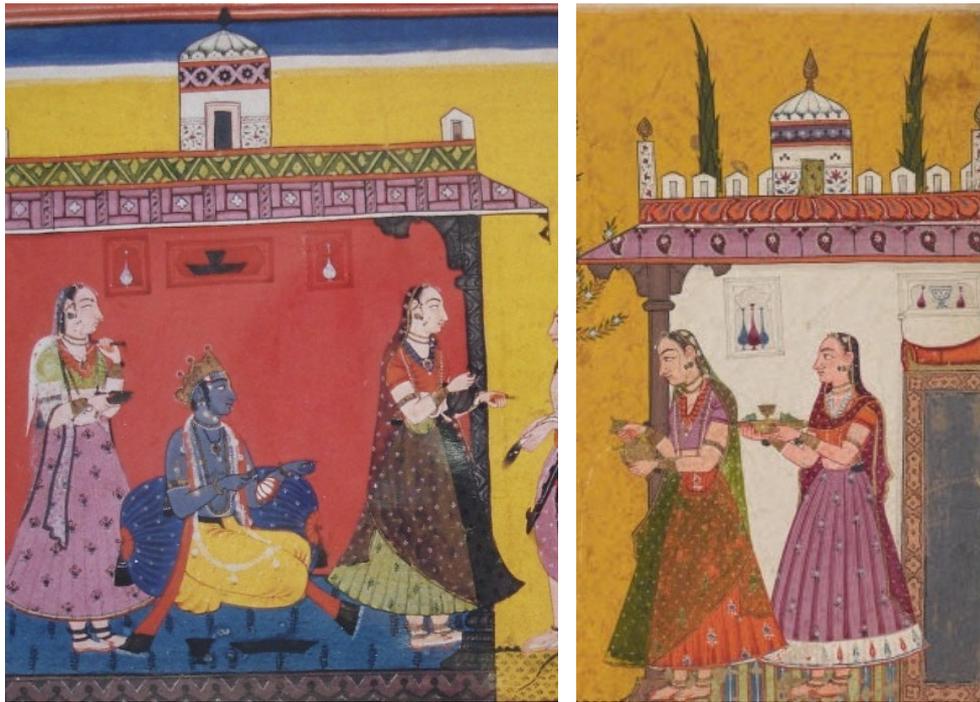


Fig. 7.9 Architecture in Style 'A'

Notably, this architectural style refrains from the overt use of floral patterns, with exceptions surfacing primarily in paintings from the latter part of the 17th century. The structural essence, it seems, requires no additional adornment.

Treatment of Ground: The defining hallmarks of the style manifest through meticulous attention to the ground's depiction. It is delineated using delicate washes of green, creating a foundation that subtly suggests the presence of grass. Notably, within this hallmark style, the artist(s) go further to craft patches of vibrant green, strategically applied to emulate the appearance of flourishing grasslands.

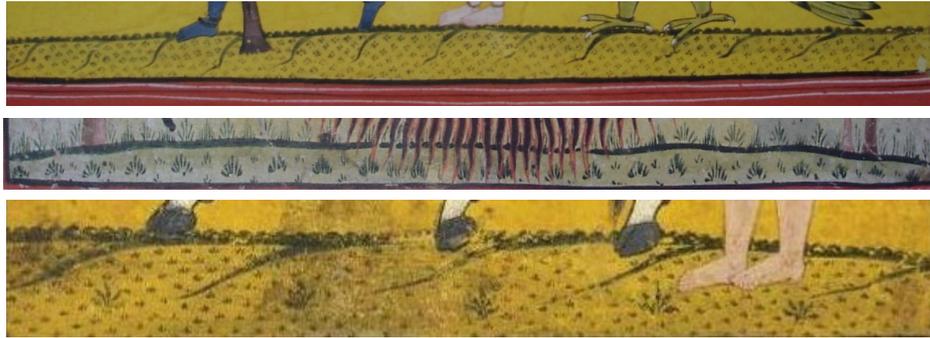


Fig. 7.10 Treatment of ground in Style 'A'

Treatment of Sky: The depiction of the sky is limited in the early paintings of this style. The later paintings show sky as a strip of blue distinguished at the horizon by a strip of white pigment.



Fig. 7.11 Treatment of sky in Style 'A'

Treatment of Background: The background is generally monochromatic, rendered in yellow, green, and burnt umber.



Fig. 7.12 Treatment of background in Style 'A'

Technical Details: The painter(s) of this style depict crowns with flowers attached with stalks.

Similarity with other Styles: Styles ‘B’ and ‘C’

Portraits: Portrait of Raja Balabhadra Varmana; Bust study of Bishambar Varmana; Bust study of Jagat Singh; Portraits of Raja Chattar Singh; Portrait of Wazir Jai Singh and Mian Shakat Singh; Portrait of Mian Raghunath Singh of Chamba with Mian Sardar Singh of Kishtawar; Portrait Studies of Wazir Jai Singh, Mian Shakat Singh and Raja Raj Singh of Guler.



Fig. 7.13 Portraits rendered in Style ‘A’

Painting sets in this style: Ragamala (c. 1670), Ragamala (c. 1680), Ragamala (c. 1690), Bhagavata Purana (c. 1690), Rasamanjari (c. 1690), Dasavatara (c. 1690), Parijata Harana (c. 1690), Svapna Darpana (manuscript, c. 1690).



Fig. 7.14 Painting sets rendered in Style 'A' (arranged chronologically)

7.1.2 Style 'B' (1680—1720)

Originally Attributed To: Chamba (Personal observation)

The style is an offshoot of Style 'A', developed in all likelihood by a novice painter active in the workshop of the painter(s) of the Style 'A'. The first specimen of this facial-type is evident in a portrait of Raja Chattar Singh, in which one of the raja's attendants are rendered by the painter in question. Although the number of available paintings attributable to the painter is highly limited, paintings rendered in his hand are discovered by me dating to the first quarter of the 18th century, leading to the indication that the painter was in the service of at least two generations of rajas. In my view, the compositional intricacies and sophistication in terms of workmanship exhibited by the painter in his later phase is suggestive of his maturity as a craftsman.

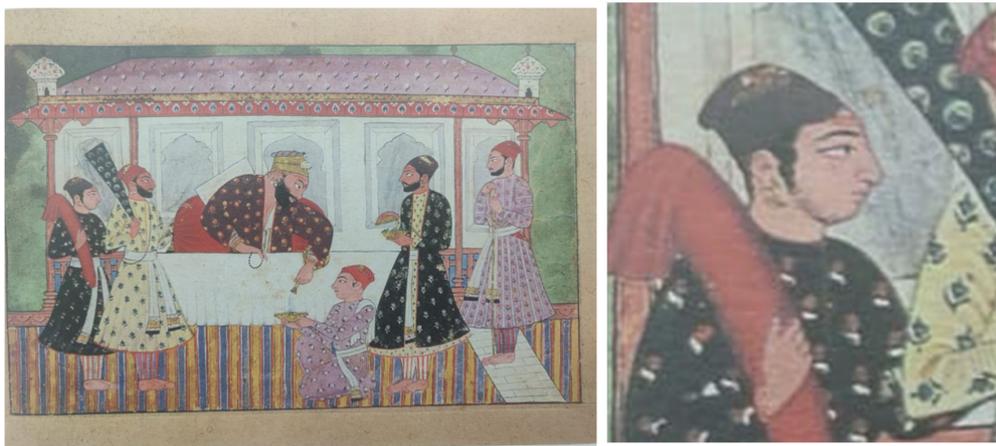


Fig. 7.15 Portrait of Raja Chattar Singh (c. 1680) with Style 'B' Facial-type (detail)

Arguments for Attribution to Chamba School: A portrait of Raja Chattar Singh contains a male figure rendered by the master of this style, suggestive of his presence in the Chamba court. Two folios of a Rasamanjari set produced at Chamba have come to my attention, rendered in the same hand. As the artist likely trained in the workshop of Style 'A', a number of compositional elements and decorative motifs are borrowed by the painter into his own workmanship.

Facial-type: The facial-types are distinguishably characterised with a slanted forehead, outwardly pointed broad aquiline nose, protruding thin lips and curved but small chin with round jawline touching at the earlobes. In a manner similar to Style 'A', the eyes are bold with the upper lashes delineated in black while the lower lashes are rendered in carmine. A slight redness is observed at the end of the eye which is obtained by sensitive strokes of carmine. The delineation is done in a dark crimson. An attempt by the painter is made to create a sense of modelling in the facial-type using light washes and fine strokes of crimson under the eyes, nose and in the ears.



Fig. 7.16 Development of Style 'B' Facial-type

Physiognomy: The physiognomic details in style 'B' comprise of short torsos supported by an elongated bottom part. Similar to Style 'A', the torsos are front facing, while the faces are rendered in profile-manner. Further details include narrow but curved shoulders, thin waist, slender limbs and long but tender hands. The female-type is slender, with a short neck, narrow shoulders, slim waist, hands with long and gentle fingers. To depict the back of the head small is a hallmark of the painter.



Fig. 7.17 Male and female physiognomies in Style 'B'

Clothing: In accordance with the popular fashion in the court of Chattrar Singh – the male dress includes short turbans, knee-length *jamias* with *pataka* sash tied around the waist, and striped *payajamas*. Men of importance are usually depicted adorning colourful *jamias* with floral patterns whereas attendants are depicted clad in colourful *jamias* void of decoration with a plain *pataka* sash tied around the waist. The male jewellery comprises of pearl and ruby earrings, strings of pearls with gold pendants, gold armlets and bracelets.

As the style developed in the workshop of 'Style A', the female fashion as captured in paintings of this style continue the unique elements of the former, which include collared blouses complemented with colourful ankle-length skirts. A dyed *odhani* studded with pearls or other decorated patterns is shown taken over the head (two-folds in some cases) and tucked under the skirt at the waist. The female jewellery as depicted in this style appears to be standardised in the form of pearl studded *tikka* joined with a string of pearl to the earrings. They are adorned with gold *gulubands* and necklaces which are ornamented with pearls.



Fig. 7.18 Male and female clothing in Style 'B'

Composition (Indoors): Indoor scenes of the Rasamanjari are depicted inside a chamber situated at the corner of the composition, displaying a slanted roof embellished with domed cupolas and turrets, with fluted pillars on a side. The monochromatic backdrop is void of detail, usually filled with a tree. The division of space in this compositional type is done in a way that the placement of figures inside or outside the architectural arrangement symbolises the indoor or outdoor space.

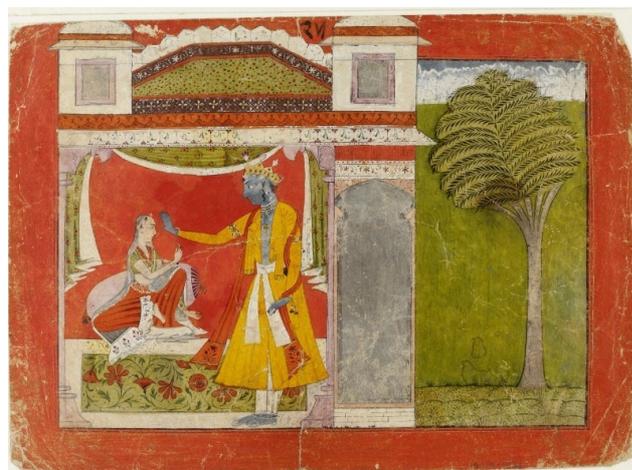


Fig. 7.19 Style 'B' indoor Composition

Composition (Outdoors): While a great number of paintings based on outdoor scenes did not come to my attention, the figures are generally placed against a monochromatic backdrop of yellow or deep green with minimal detail of flora and fauna.



Fig. 7.20 Style 'B' outdoor Composition

Flora and Fauna: Popular tree types include conical and bulbous trees characterised with thick foliage and flowery vines. No paintings depicting a bird or an animal, with the exception of Nandi in 'Descent of Ganga' (Fig. 7.20) has come to light.



Fig. 7.21 Tree-type in Style 'B'

Architecture: The architecture layout is similar to ‘Style A’ regularly comprising of a terraced roof embellished with pointed cornice. The terrace is crowned with a domed cupola at the centre accented with two turrets on either side. Separated by equal indentations, battlements adorn the roof decorated with floral patterns. The buildings have a single chamber which is flanked on either side by fluted columns. The chamber is furnished with a vibrant *durries* and colourful wine decanters.

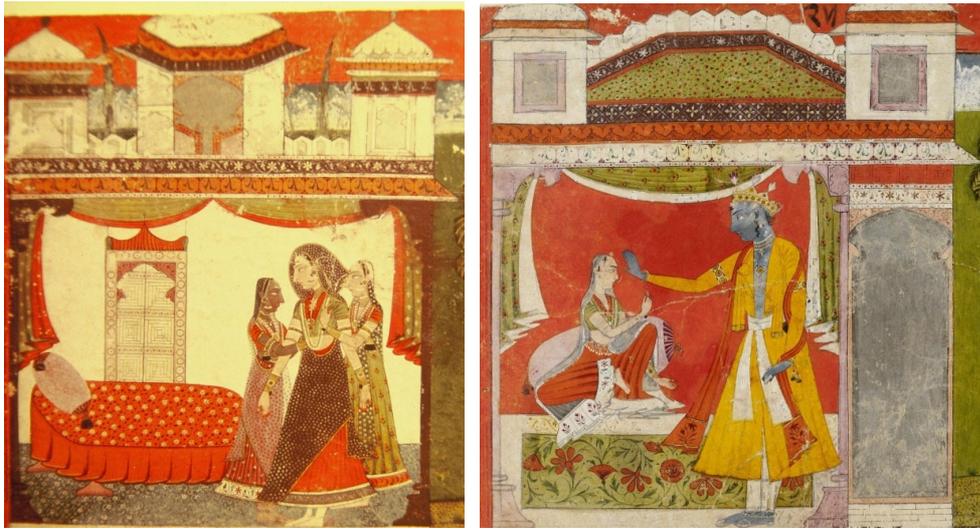


Fig. 7.22 Architecture in Style ‘B’

Treatment of Ground: The ground is delineated with dark green, with tufts of grass and shoots.

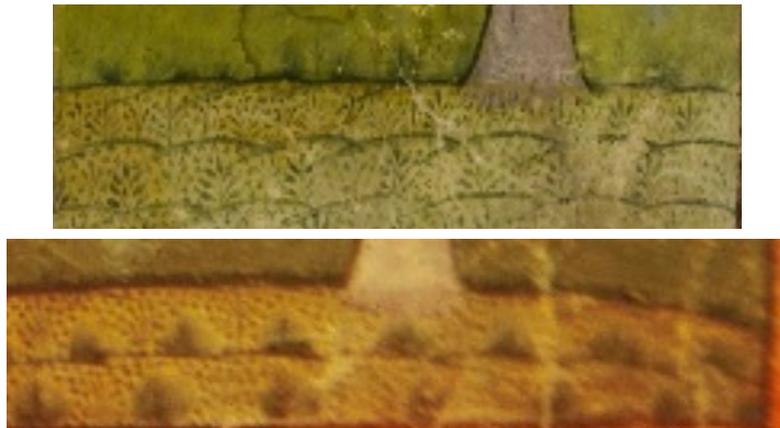


Fig. 7.23 Treatment of ground in Style ‘B’

Treatment of Sky: The depiction of the sky is limited in the early paintings of this style. The later paintings show a band of white clouds gathering at the horizon, delineated with a white outline, a feature which is unique to Style B.



Fig. 7.24 Treatment of sky in Style 'B'

Treatment of Background: The background is generally monochromatic, rendered in either yellow or green.



Fig. 7.25 Treatment of background in Style 'B'

Portraits: Portrait of Raja Chattar Singh, a likeness of the Goswamis Bhagwanji and Narainji.



Fig. 7.26 Portraits rendered in Style 'B'

Painting sets in this style: A dispersed Rasamanjari set (c. 1710).



Fig. 7.27 Two paintings belonging to the dispersed Rasamanjari set rendered in Style 'B'

7.1.3 Style 'C' (1635—1725)

Originally Attributed To: Guler.³⁰⁸

Style 'C' developed at Chamba during the first half of the 17th century and matured in the period of over a century in a linear continuation (personal observation of the researcher). Portraits of the Rajas of Chamba and their neighbouring chieftains rendered in this style have surfaced. No paintings rendered in Style 'C' bear signature of the artist. The time frame for which this style was active suggests that the style remained in vogue for at least three generations, and the painters of this workshop were patronised by Balabhadra Varmana, Prithvi Singh, Chattar Singh and Udai Singh. The painters following this visual language were also involved with mural painting, and the murals of the Shakti Dehra temple (c. 1725) are attributed to them on stylistic basis.

Arguments for Attribution to Chamba School: I have attributed painters of this workshop with the production of the Bathu manuscript on the factors detailed in Chapter 4 (4.2.3) as well as typological details highlighted in Chapter 6 (6.1). I have discovered portraits of two generations of Chamba Rajas made in this style. As the style flourished in Chamba uninterruptedly from the Bharat Kala Bhawan Dasavatara

³⁰⁸ Bhatia, Usha. 1995. "Rediscovery of the Dispersed Bathu Manuscript." In *Indian Painting: Essays in Honour of Karl J. Khandalavala*, edited by B. N. Goswamy, 53. Lalit Kala Akademi.

to the murals of the Shakti Dehra temple, it is plausible that the painters following this style had settled at Chamba and remained active for the course of at least a century.

Facial-type: The facial-types of Style C are among the most easily distinguishable, and are characterised with a slanted forehead, a short and stout nose, thin lips, a round but small chin complimented by the jawline extending till the neck. The back of the head in the female-type is rendered in a conical fashion with a slight curve at the centre. The eyebrows are plumed and angularly arched, and the eyes are bold with minimum details. The upper and lower lashes are rendered in black. The outline is delineated in dark crimson. The faces are also noteworthy as they appear flat as emphasis on modelling and shading is negligible.



Fig. 7.28 Development of the Style 'C' Facial-types

Physiognomy: The physiognomic details in style ‘C’ are greatly similar to Style ‘A’, comprising of short torsos supported by an elongated lower half. The torsos are front facing, while the faces are rendered in profile-manner. The male physiognomies are characterised with round shoulders, slender waist, slender limbs, and small palms supporting long fingers. The female-type is slender, with a tender neck, narrow shoulders, slim waist, and the hands and feet are rendered with long and gentle fingers.



Fig. 7.29 Style ‘C’ male and female physiognomy

Clothing: In subject-matter pertinent to mythological episodes, the male figures are clad in dyed dhotis with mauve, yellow and saffron being the dominating shades. In portraits, the figures are usually depicted adorning colourful *jamans* with floral patterns. The male jewellery comprises of pearl and ruby earrings, strings of pearls with gold pendants, gold armlets and bracelets.

The female fashion includes striped blouses with white colours, complemented with colourful ankle-length skirts. A dyed *odhani* is shown taken over the head. The female-type is adorned with pearl studded *tikka* joined with a string of pearl to the earrings. Further embellishments include gold *gulubands* and necklaces which are ornamented with pearls.



Fig. 7.30 Male and female clothing in Style 'C'

Composition: The paintings are laden with minimal details, and the figures are generally placed against a monochromatic backdrop.



Fig. 7.31 Style 'C' compositions

Flora and Fauna: Popular floral decorations include lotus supported by stalks, and flowery bushes. No birds or animals are rendered in the specimens discovered during the research.

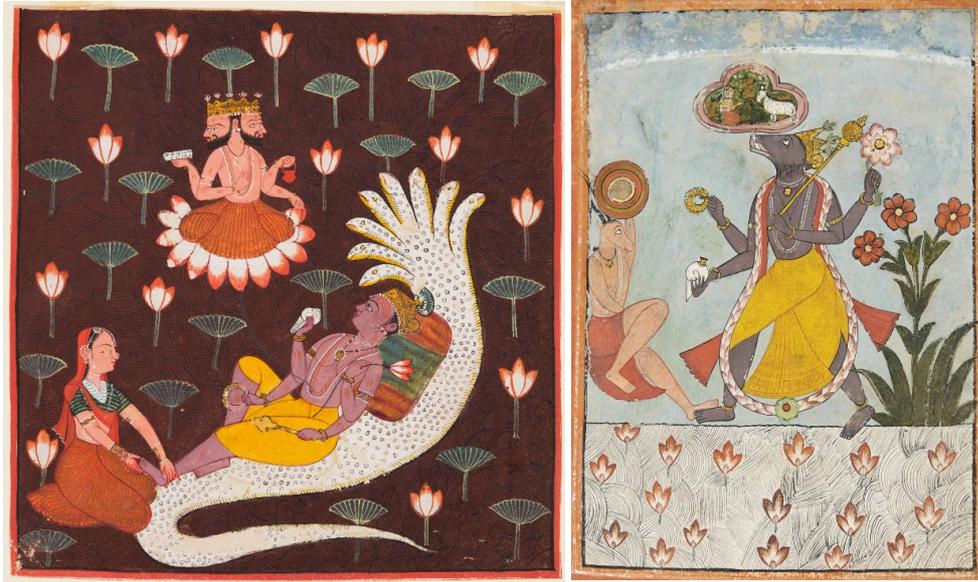


Fig. 7.32 Style 'C' vegetation

Architecture: None of the paintings which came to my attention are set within an architectural setting, greatly limiting the understanding of the popular architectural elements rendered by painters following this visual language. The only specimens where a sense of 'indoors' is emulated by the painter(s) belong to the Bathu set, in which the saint Narainji is seated underneath a canopy.



Fig. 7.33 Narainji seated underneath a canopy

Treatment of Ground: The painters appear to not favour the treatment of ground; hence the figures appear to be floating in an atmospheric setting.

Treatment of Sky: The sky is rendered depicted with thin washes of white pigment on the top portion of the monochromatic backdrop.



Fig. 7.34 Treatment of sky in Style 'C'

Treatment of Background: The background is generally monochromatic, rendered in yellow, green, and burnt umber.



Fig. 7.34 Treatment of background in Style 'C'

Technical Details: The painters following this style usually depict water with a basketweave pattern.



Fig. 7.36 Basket-weave water pattern in Style 'C'

Similarity with other Styles: The depiction of jewellery and fashion is similar to Style 'A'



Fig. 7.37 Comparison of female fashion of Style 'C' with Style 'A'

Portraits: Portrait of Raja Prithvi Singh; Raja Chattar Singh; Raja Bikram Singh (Guler); Posthumous portrait of Raja Chattar Singh



Fig. 7.38 Portraits rendered in Style 'C'

Painting sets in this style: Bharat Kala Bhawan Dasavatara (1635-40); Bathu Set (c. 1665); Ragamala (c. 1690); Shakti Dehra murals (c. 1725).



Fig. 7.39 Painting sets in Style 'C'

7.1.4 Style 'D' (1630—1765 CE)

Originally Attributed To: Bilaspur³⁰⁹/Chamba³¹⁰

The discovery of a large number of paintings executed in this style suggests that successive generations of painters from this atelier continued to receive patronage from the Chamba court. The earliest known examples of this style are the Narasimha incarnation painting (c. 1630-1635) and the Bharmour Kothi woodcarvings (c. 1645), in which the Facial-type and physiognomies of the figures closely resemble those of the paintings. I have therefore presumed that the painters of this workshop were also active as woodcarvers in Chamba and were largely responsible for incorporating painting typologies into the regional woodcarving tradition. As described in the previous chapter, the familiarity with Perso-Islamic motifs suggests that the painters of this workshop migrated from a Mughal centre. None of the paintings attributed to this workshop's painters bear the names of the artists, severely limiting the comprehension of the Style 'D' painters. However, the stylistic and typological characteristics displayed by the artist Laharu in his 1757 Bhagavata Purana set closely resemble those of Style 'D,' leading to the likelihood of Laharu being trained in the aforementioned workshop. According to the bahis at Haridwar, Laharu belonged to the Manikantha family of painter-carpenters at Chamba, who must have resided in Chamba since the first quarter of the 17th century³¹¹. On corroborating this information with my conjecture of the trajectory of the origin of Style 'D' workshop at Chamba in 1630 to the active period of Laharu (c. 1750-1765), it seems probable that the painters working in the Style 'D' sensibilities were members of the Manikantha family of which Laharu was a descendant. Hence, Style 'D' could alternatively be called the **Manikantha style**.

³⁰⁹ This phenomenon has existed for some time, although it is questionable when Bilaspur became associated with paintings executed in this manner. The majority of museums and auction houses attribute this stylistic mannerism to Bilaspur.

³¹⁰ The paintings ascribed to Laharu in the 1757 Bhagavata Purana were recognised as having been painted in Chamba, but no effort had been made to connect the earlier paintings to Laharu's work.

³¹¹ Goswamy, B. N., and Eberhard Fischer. 1992. *Pahari Masters: Court Painters of Northern India*.

Mahesh, a contemporary of Laharu, demonstrates remarkable stylistic similarities to this style, indicating that he, too, received training at the Manikantha workshop. However, Mahesh's ancestry is insufficiently documented, and it is unlikely that he was a member of a family of painters, much less the Manikantha family. In this instance, it can be assumed that style was passed down from master to disciple, regardless of their familial relationship.

Arguments for Attribution to Chamba School: A large number of Ragamala paintings rendered in this style has come to my attention, bearing close resemblance to Chamba Ragamala iconographic system. Woodcarvings of Bharmour Kothi, Chamunda Temple and Devi-Kothi are also similar in style and typology to the mannerisms of this style. The identification of a portrait of Raja Chattar Singh at the Cleveland Museum of Art by me is also a major factor associating this style with the Chamba court.

Facial-type: The facial-types are characterised by a broad forehead, aquiline nose, slender lips, and a small, curved, protruding chin. The eyebrows are arched, and the eyelids are drooping over the eyes, which are curved and elongated. The pupils are concealed by long eyelids, which is a distinguishing characteristic of this face type. Early in the eighteenth century, the painters of this style begin to favour an inclined forehead and a sharper nose, with an emphasis on the stylization of the eyes, depicting the eyebrows, sclera, and iris in minute detail. By 1730, painters placed a greater emphasis on the modelling of the face, resulting in the application of dense shading to the eyes, forehead, and chin. Midway through the eighteenth century, the modelling of the chin produces a circle, which becomes a defining characteristic of Style 'D'. Fine stippling is applied to the lips to make them appear fuller. The eyelids also begin to appear heavy.



Fig. 7.40 Development of Style 'D' Facial-types

Physiognomy: The physiognomic details in style 'D' comprise of short torsos supported by a longer bottom half. The torsos are front facing, while the faces are rendered in profile-manner. The male physiognomies are characterised with broad and round shoulders, slender waist, toned limbs, and fleshy hands with long fingers. The female-type is slender, with a tender neck, narrow and round shoulders, slim and curved waist, and hands with long and gentle fingers. The faces are proportionately larger compared to the body.



Fig. 7.41 Style 'D' male and female physiognomies

Clothing: In the early phase of this style (c. 1630-1650), men are depicted wearing clothing associated with Shahjahan's reign, including tight turbans, full-length muslin *jamas*, an embroidered *pataka* sash with a dagger tucked inside, and loose-fitting striped *payajamas*. The men's jewellery consists of pearl stud earrings and pearl necklaces with gold embellishments. However, the fashion sensibilities exhibited in this style evolve over time, influenced by the evolving fashion sensibilities at the Chamba court. From c. 1670 to c. 1720, the paintings depict males adorned with the costumes popular during Aurangzeb's reign, comprising of short turbans, knee length *jamas* and striped *payajamas*, while the later paintings (1730-1760) depict the figures favouring ankle-length *jamas* with a short *pataka* sash and loose turbans.



Fig. 7.42 Evolution of Style 'D' male fashion

The female fashion as captured in paintings of this style include collared blouses complemented with colourful ankle-length skirts. A dyed *odhani* is shown taken over the head. In a manner similar to style 'A' the female-type is adorned with pearl studded *tikka* joined with a string of pearl to the earrings. Further embellishments include gold *gulubands* and necklaces which are ornamented with pearls.



Fig. 7.43 Evolution of Style 'D' female fashion

Composition (Indoors): Typically, indoor settings consist of court scenarios devoid of architectural details. Figures are typically depicted sitting on *durries* against a monochromatic background. Men of prominence are portrayed proportionally larger than other figures.

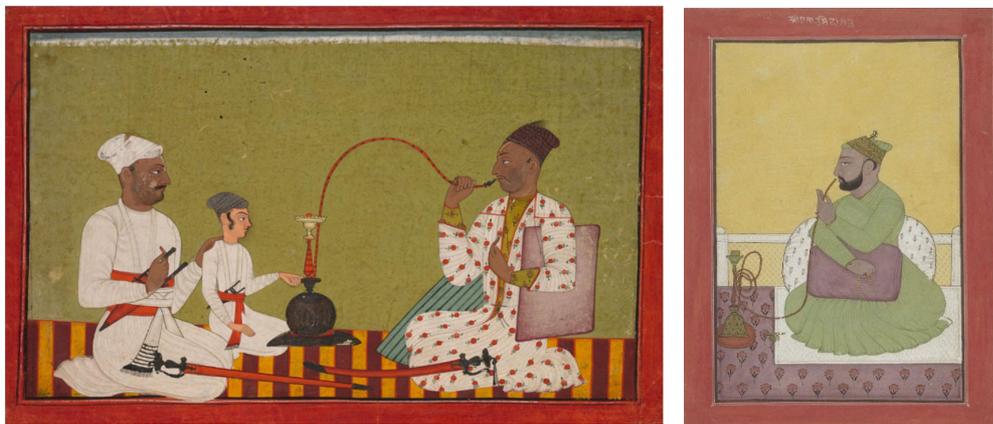


Fig. 7.44 Style 'D' composition indoors (court sequences)

Indoor settings also feature highly embellished structures flanked by aisles of cypress trees. Typically, the main figures are supported by tall bolsters against white walls. The central characters in the narrative are typically positioned in the composition's centre.



Fig. 7.45 Style 'D' composition indoors

Composition (Outdoors): Typically, the figures in the outdoor scenes are depicted standing on a rocky, grass-sprout-studded, frequently floral ground. A bulbous tree or blossoming willow would be depicted at a composition's corner to deftly balance it. The background is typically monochromatic.

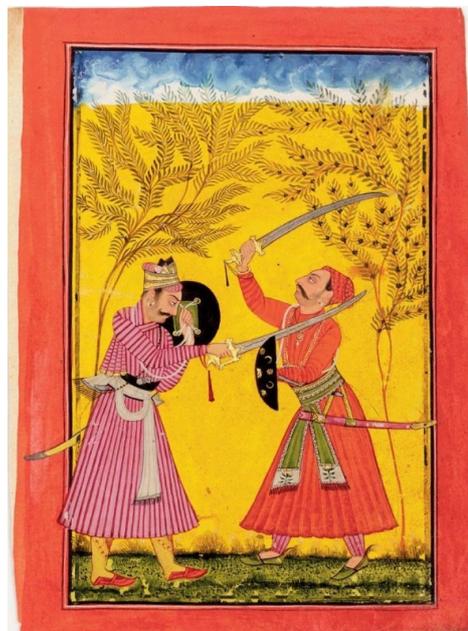


Fig. 7.46 Style 'D' composition outdoors

Flora and Fauna: Popular tree varieties in Style 'D' include weeping willows, cypress rows, and stylized conical and bulbous trees with dense foliage and flowering tendrils. Birds and animals are portrayed as per their significance in the subject matter.



Fig. 7.47 Popular vegetation type in Style 'D'

Architecture: This style typically depicts architectural designs with a terraced roof adorned with a pointed cornice. The terrace is topped with a central conical cupola and flanked by two golden structures. Battlements, separated by equal indentations, embellish the otherwise simple roof. The buildings have a solitary chamber that is flanked by fluted columns on either side. Typically, cypress trees are planted in straight rows behind structures. This formula continues to the period of Laharu (1730-1765), however, he favours depicting the architecture in a cubical formation in which

the outer walls appear to be intruding inwards, forcing the central chamber to protrude towards the beholder. This produces a pseudo-three-dimensional space in which the primary area of activity is emphasised. Laharu also divides his architectural compositions into two levels, with the lower level representing the outer walls and the upper level representing the inner chamber.



Fig. 7.48 Architecture in Style 'D' (c. 1720); Architecture in Laharu Bhagavata Purana (1757 CE)

Treatment of Ground: The ground is depicted as a rocky, uneven surface with tufts of flowery grass sprouting out of it.



Fig. 7.49 Treatment of Ground in Style 'D'

Treatment of Sky: In paintings from the last quarter of the 17th century, the sky is typically depicted as white and blue bands delineating the monochromatic horizon background. By the beginning of the 18th century, the painters of this atelier favour the technique of blending white pigment into blue pigment with a wet brush. In the works of Laharu and Mahesh, the blue sky is adorned with white lines representing clouds.



Fig. 7.50 Development of the treatment of sky in Style 'D' (1690-1757)

Treatment of Background: The background is generally monochromatic, mostly in yellow and green.

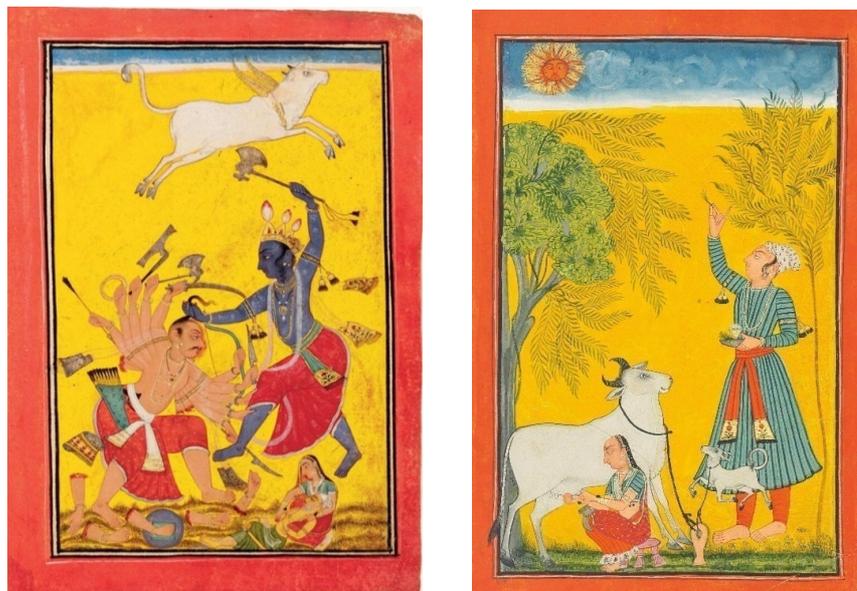


Fig. 7.51 Treatment of background in Style 'D'

Technical Details: The painters of this style exhibit their dexterity by employing very fine stippling and shading to create modelling.

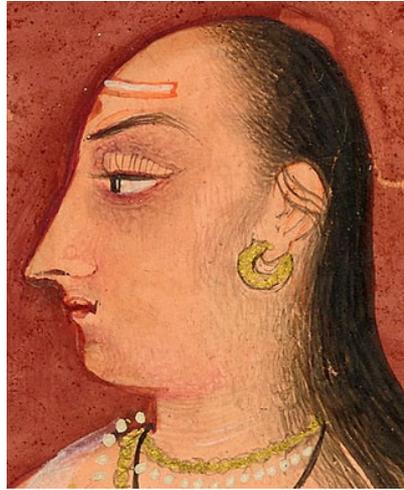


Fig. 7.52 Detail from a painting exhibiting the use of fine shading

Portraits: Portrait of Raja Prithvi Singh (Bharmour Kothi doorway), Portrait of Raja Chattar Singh, Jai Singh and Udai Singh (c. 1696), Portrait of Udai Singh (c. 1720), Portrait of Ugar Singh (c. 1735), Portrait of Shamsheer Singh (c. 1760), Portrait of Raja Umed Singh (c. 1760).



Fig. 7.53 Portraits rendered in Style 'D'

Painting sets in this style: Dasavatara (c. 1630-40), Ragamala (c. 1680-90), Dasavatara (c. 1690), Ragamala (c. 1710), Dasavatara (c. 1730-40), Dasavatara (c. 1730-40), Ragamala (c. 1740), Bhagavata Purana (1757), Dasavatara (c. 1760), Ramayana (c. 1765).



Fig. 7.54 Painting sets rendered in Style 'D'

7.1.5 Style 'E' (1640—1750 CE)

Originally Attributed To: Mandi/Chamba/Bilaspur

Style 'E' bears close resemblance to the tradition of Shahjahan-period popular Mughal tradition that was already in vogue in Mandi during the mid-17th century. Raja Prithvi Singh of Chamba had spent a significant part of his youth at Mandi in the foster care of Mandi, and it was hence natural for him to observe the development of a highly sophisticated painting style. As mentioned in Chapter 4, Raja Prithvi Singh must have brought along with himself an artist from Mandi to Chamba in 1641 CE, who resided

at the capital and founded his own workshop. It is likely that the painter settled in Chamba for a long time and his tradition was followed for generations as traces of this workshop's activity could be traced till the mid-18th century.

Arguments for Attribution to Chamba School: While it is argued that the style must have flourished at Mandi prior to the migration of the painter to Chamba, I believe that by the end of the 17th century, the style begins to take on its own distinctive characteristics as a result of the painters' exchange with other painter workshops active at Chamba during this period. As a consequence of stylistic, iconographic, and typological exchange, the style developed its own individualistic characteristics during this time period. As the Devi-Kothi temple contains murals made in a stylistic derivation of Style 'E', it is probable that the painters of this workshop had already spent four generations at Chamba by the mid-18th century.

Facial-type: The facial-types are characterised with a slanted forehead, a long and pointy nose, full lips and a protruding small chin. The back of the head is rendered round and soft. The eyebrows are arched, and the eyes are bold with both the upper and lower lashes rendered in deep black. The delineation is rendered in dark crimson. Minute shading is done on the nose and the eyes to suggest modelling.



Fig. 7.55 Evolution of Style 'E' Facial-types

Physiognomy: The physiognomic details in Style ‘E’ comprise of short torsos supported by long legs. The torsos are rendered in three-quarter profile, while the faces are side facing. The male physiognomies are characterised with narrow shoulders, slender waist, long and narrow arms, and small hands with long and tender fingers. The female-type is slender, with an elongated neck, narrow shoulders, slim waist, hands with long and gentle fingers. In the paintings belonging to the late 17th century, the figures are often depicted having stronger build and muscular limbs.



Fig. 7.56 Style ‘E’ male and female physiognomies

Clothing: In the portrait of Raja Janardana Varmana, he is depicted draped in fashion associated with Jahangir’s reign, comprising of loose turbans, full-length muslin *jamias*, *pataka* sash with a dagger tucked in, and tight fitting coloured *payajamas*. The male jewellery comprises of pearl earrings and strings of pearls with gold pendants. In the later paintings of this style, the men are usually depicted wearing colourful *jamias* with striped *payajamas*.

The female fashion as captured in later paintings of this style include colourful blouses with broad collars, complemented with colourful full-length skirts. A diaphanous

odhni is shown taken over the head. In a manner similar to style 'A' and 'D', the female-type is adorned with pearl studded *tikka* joined with a string of pearl to the earrings. Further embellishments include gold *gulubands* and necklaces which are ornamented with pearls.



Fig. 7.57 Evolution of male clothing in Style 'E' (1640-1690)



Fig. 7.58 Evolution of female clothing in Style 'E' (1650-1690)

Composition: In the paintings rendered in this style that I found, the scenes generally take place outdoors, with little consideration towards decorating the compositional space.

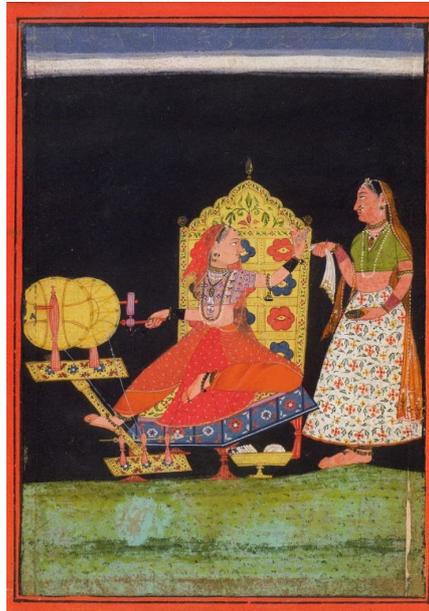


Fig. 7.59 Outdoor composition in Style 'E'

Flora and Fauna: Popular tree-types in Style 'E' include weeping willows, conical and bulbous trees characterised with thin branches. Depiction of birds and animals is scanty unless described in the narrative of the text.



Fig. 7.60 Vegetation in Style 'E'

Architecture: This architectural style is typically characterised by a terraced roof adorned with a pointed cornice. The terrace is topped by a central superstructure with a dome and two turrets on either side. Battlements, separated by equal indentations, embellish the otherwise simple roof. The buildings have a solitary chamber that is flanked by fluted columns on either side. The room is furnished with colourful wine decanters and vibrant durries.

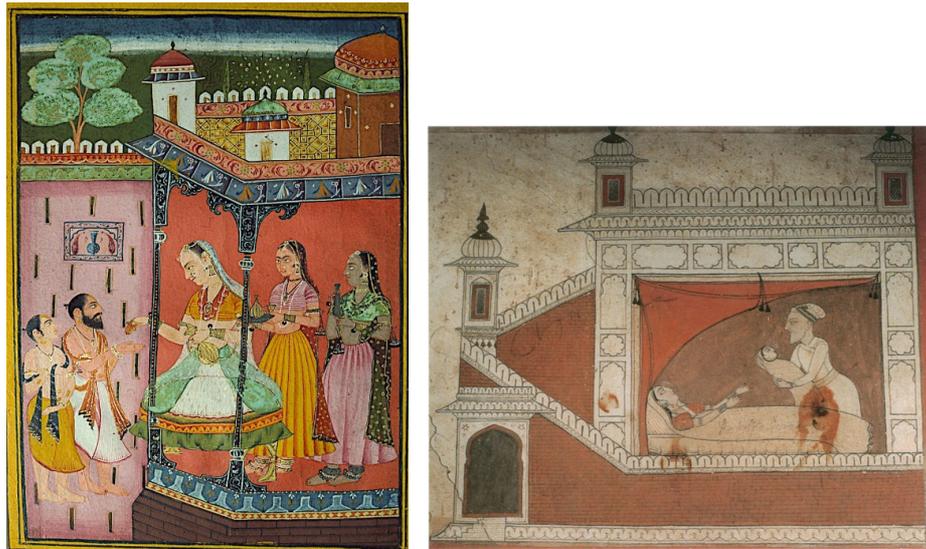


Fig. 7.61 Comparison of Style 'E' Architecture: Ragini Punyaki (c. 1685-90) and a detail from Devi-Kothi murals (dated 1754)

Treatment of Ground: Typically, the earth is depicted as an uneven surface with grass sprouting from irregular depressions.

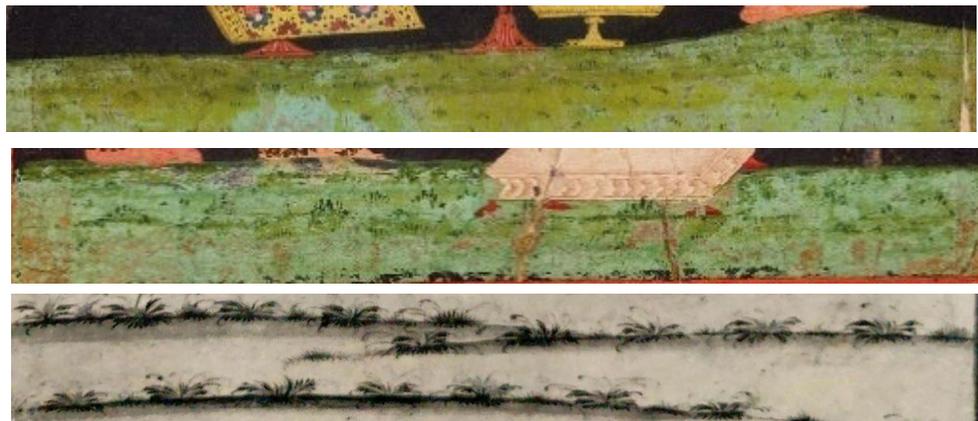


Fig. 7.62 Treatment of ground in Style 'E'

Treatment of Sky: The sky is depicted as a blue pool with a white pigmented band distinguishing it from the background at the horizon. In the paintings belonging to the second quarter of the 18th century, clouds are depicted with white swirling white lines, in a manner akin to Laharu and Mahesh. It can be assumed that painters of this workshop were working in close proximity to the Manikantha painters, leading to an exchange of techniques and motifs.

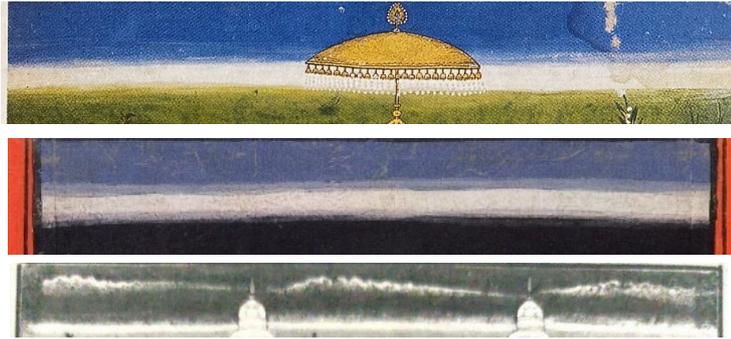


Fig. 7.63 Treatment of sky in Style 'E'

Treatment of Background: The background is generally monochromatic, rendered in yellow, green, burnt umber and black.



Fig. 7.64 Treatment of background in Style 'E'

Technical Details: The painters of this style evolved from a Popular Mughal sensibility in the mid-17th century to a regional Chamba idiom in the late 1600s, culminating in the temple of Devi-Kothi as the pinnacle expression of Himalayan mural tradition in 1754 CE.

Similarity with other Styles: Style ‘A’ (clothing and jewellery), Style ‘D’ (architectural embellishments; treatment of sky)

Portraits: Posthumous Portrait of Raja Janardan Varmana (c. 1645 CE) Portrait of Udai Singh (c. 1720), Portrait of Umed Singh (dated 1754), Portrait of Shamsher Singh (dated 1754).

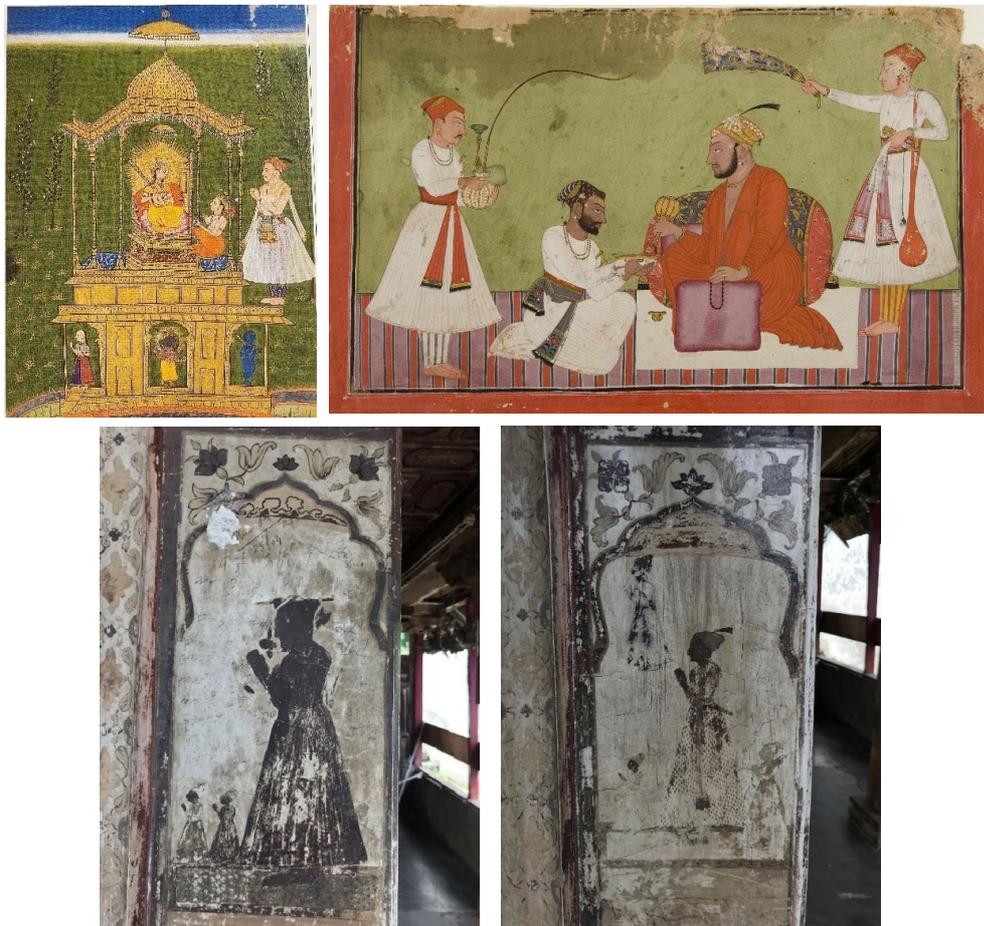


Fig. 7.65 Portraits rendered in Style ‘E’

Painting sets in this style: Ragamala (c. 1685-90), Ragamala (c. 1740), Murals of Devi-Kothi temple (1754).

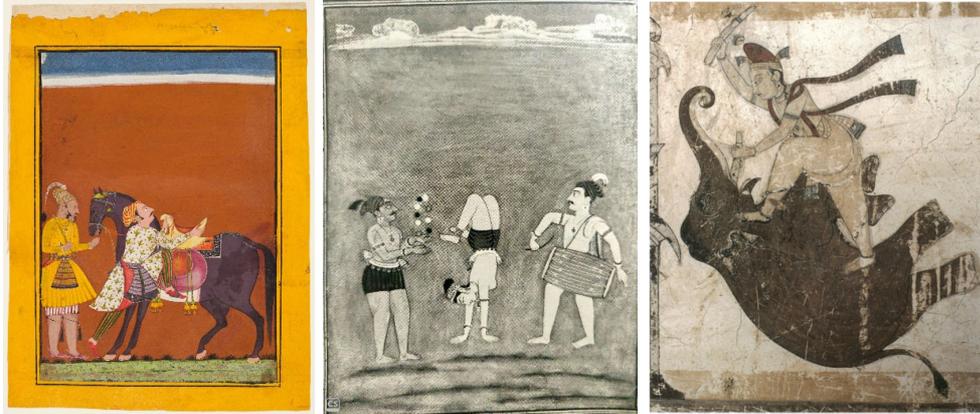


Fig. 7.66 Painting sets and murals rendered in Style 'E'

7.1.6 Style 'F' (1630—1720 CE)

Originally Attributed To: Chamba/Nurpur³¹²

While the number of paintings rendered in this style is limited, the number of portraits I have discovered suggests that the painters following Style 'F' must have been regarded high in the Chamba court. The availability of the portrait of Prithvi Singh offering a falcon to Shahjahan suggests that the painter(s) of this workshop were present at Chamba since the reign of Prithvi Singh and must have established an atelier which flourished till at least the first quarter of the 18th century. While appearing to be very close in colour composition and physiognomies of Style 'A' and 'E', Style 'F' is particularly individualistic for its supple delineation and fine brushwork in facial detail.

Arguments for Attribution to Chamba School: The availability of a portrait of Raja Prithvi Singh (r. 1641—64), portrait studies of Wazir Jai Singh and Shakat Singh (c. 1680-1685) and a portrait of infant Raja Udai Singh (c. 1690) suggests that the painters of this workshop were consistently patronised by three generations of Chamba Rajas.

³¹² Attributed by Archer (1973) to Nurpur

Facial-type: The facial-types are characterised with a slanted forehead, a long and fleshy nose, full lips and round chin. The eyebrows are angularly arched, and the eyes are bold with minimum details, with upper eyelashes delineated in deep black. The beards are rendered thick and full, and details in facial-type are minimal.



Fig. 7.67 Style 'F' Facial-types

Physiognomy: Akin to style 'A', physiognomic details in style 'F' comprise of short torsos supported by longer legs. The torsos are rendered in three-quarter profile, while the faces are always side facing. The male physiognomies are characterised with broad shoulders, stocky waist, heavy limbs, and small hands with long fingers. None of the paintings discovered contain the female-type.



Fig. 7.68 Style 'F' male physiognomies

Clothing: In accordance with the popular fashion in the court of Chattr Singh – the male dress includes short turbans, knee-length *jamias* with *pataka* sash tied around the waist, and striped *payajamas*. Rajas and other men of importance are usually depicted adorning colourful *jamias* with floral patterns whereas attendants are depicted clad in colourful *jamias* void of decoration with a plain *pataka* sash tied around the waist. The male jewellery comprises of pearl and ruby earrings, strings of pearls with gold pendants, gold armlets and bracelets.

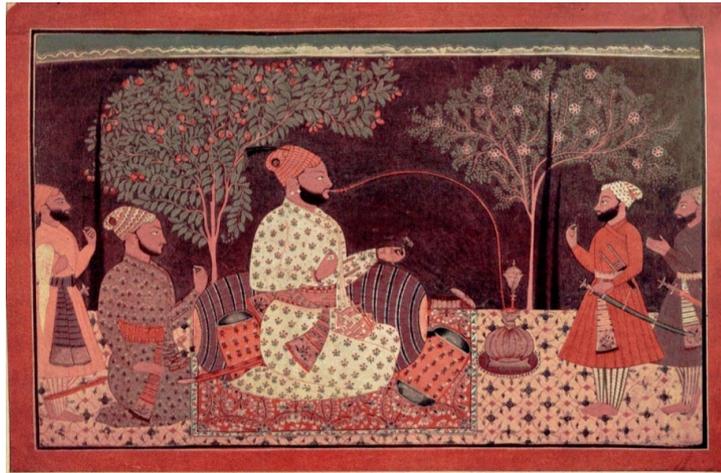


Fig. 7.69 A portrait in Style 'F' denoting royal fashion

Composition: In the available paintings rendered in this style, the scenes generally take place outdoors with minimal details and negligible attention towards the architectural space as well as flora and fauna.



Fig. 7.70 Style 'F' compositional layout

Flora and Fauna: Popular tree-types in Style 'F' include weeping willows and stylized flowering tree-types.

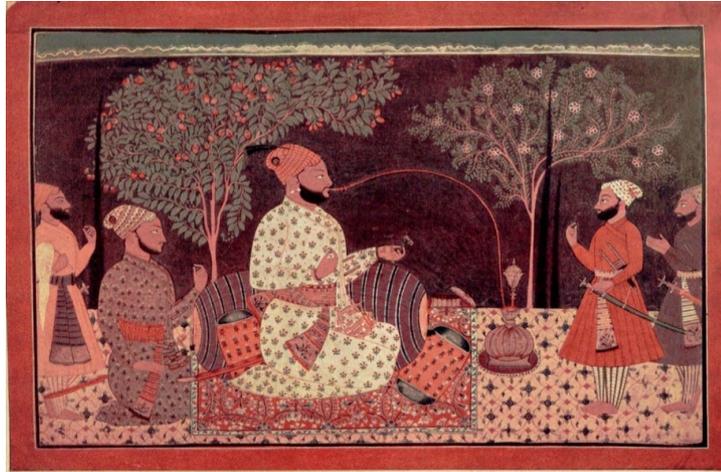


Fig. 7.71 Portrait in Style 'F' depicting tree-types

Treatment of Sky: The depiction of the sky is limited in the early paintings of this style. The later paintings show sky as a strip of blue differentiated at the horizon by a strip of white.



Fig. 7.72 Treatment of sky in Style 'F'

Treatment of Background: The background is monochromatic, rendered in green and burnt umber.



Fig. 7.73 Treatment of background in Style 'F'

Similarity with other Styles: Style 'A' (clothing and physiognomy)

Portraits: Portrait of Raja Prithvi Singh with Shahjahan, Portrait of Raja Bikram Singh of Guler, Portrait studies of Mirza Jai Singh, Mirza Shakat Singh and Raja Raj Singh of Guler, Portrait of Raja Raj Singh of Guler, Portrait of Aurangzeb, Portrait of young Raja Udai Singh.



Fig. 7.74 Portraits rendered in Style 'F'

Painting sets in this style: None discovered.

7.1.7 Style 'G' (1650—1760)

Originally Attributed To: Basohli/Nurpur/Chamba/Mankot

Style 'G' is characterised by assertive lines, radiant colour compositions, and hefty body-types, traits it shares with the painting traditions prevalent in the mid-to-late 17th century CE in the neighbouring states of Nurpur and Basohli. Given the close proximity of the three states, it must have been reasonable for painters to migrate from one state to another. This must have been the impetus for the painters of this workshop to migrate from the neighbouring states (probably Nurpur) to Chamba. In the mid-17th century, a portrait of Raja Prithvi Singh is the first indication of this style in Chamba. The portraits of Chattar Singh and Udai Singh reveal that the painters must have resided in Chamba for successive generations. The discovery of two Bhagavata Purana sets and a Ragamala set executed in this style suggests that the painters of this workshop must have had an established credibility in order to have received such noteworthy commissions.

Arguments for Attribution to Chamba School: As portraits of three generations of Chamba Rajas painted in this style have been discovered, it is plausible for me to hypothesise that this workshop's painters remained active in Chamba for at least three generations. Moreover, the handwriting of Takri inscriptions on paintings executed in this style is analogous to that of copper-plate charters from this time period. Additionally, typological and iconographic similarities between paintings of this style and other Chamba paintings indicate a Chamba connection.

Facial-type: The facial-types are distinguished by a round, broad forehead, an outwardly pointed nose, full lips, and a round, prominent chin that almost touches the lower lip. In the female-type, the back of the cranium is rendered conically. The upper lashes of the eyes are rendered in black, while the lower lashes are rendered in carmine.

A faint redness is observed at the end of the eye, which is achieved by applying carmine with delicacy. The outlining is done in a dark crimson colour.

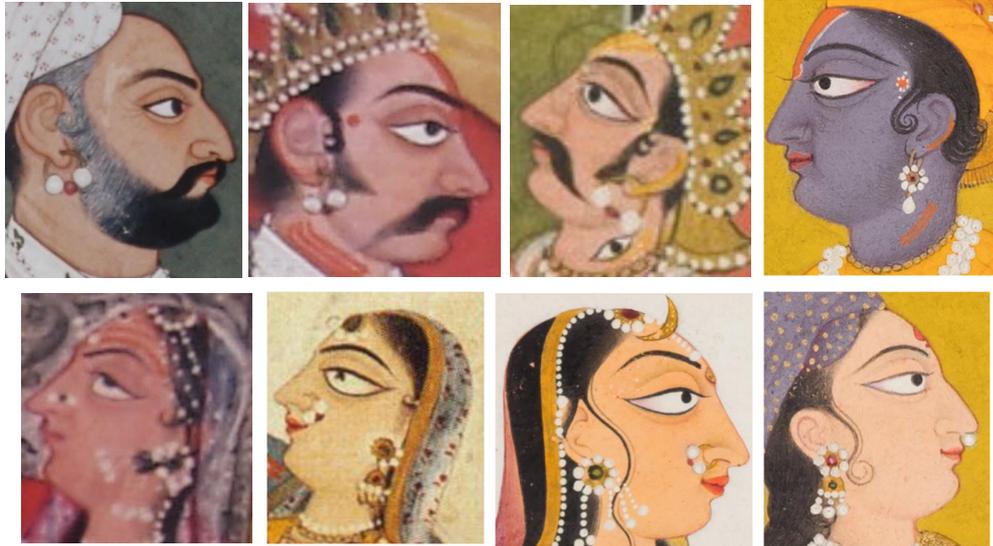


Fig. 7.75 Evolution of Style 'G' Facial-type

Physiognomy: The physiognomic characteristics of style 'G' consist of short torsos supported by long legs. The torsos are depicted frontally, whereas the features are rendered in profile. Male physiognomies are distinguished by broad shoulders, a thin waist, heavy limbs, and small hands with delicate fingers. The female form is thin, with a long neck, narrow shoulders, slim waist, and long, delicate fingers on the hands. Typically, female hands and feet are coloured with henna.



Fig. 7.76 Style 'G' male and female physiognomies

Clothing: As the majority of paintings that have come to my attention were produced during the reign of Chattr Singh, the fashion sensibilities prevalent during the reign of Aurangzeb stand out, as evidenced by short turbans, knee-length *jamias* with *pataka* sashes tied around the waist, and striped *payjamas*. Rajas and other important males are typically depicted wearing vibrant floral-patterned *jamias*, whereas attendants are depicted wearing white *jamias* over white tunics with a red floral *pataka* sash tied around the waist. Men's jewellery consists of pearl and ruby stud earrings, pearl necklaces with gold motifs, gold armlets, and gold bracelets.

The female fashion depicted in paintings of this style consists of collared blouses paired with ankle-length, vibrant skirts. A dyed but translucent *odhani* adorned with pearls or other adornments is draped over the head and slipped into the waist of the skirt. The female ornamentation depicted in this style appears to be standardised in the form of pearl-studded tikka earrings connected by a string of pearls. They are dressed in pearl-adorned gold *gulubands* and necklaces. Gold armbands and bracelets with pompoms dangling from them are also worn by the women-like figures. In some instances, the female-type is depicted with gold anklets.



Fig. 7.77 Style 'G' male and female clothing

Composition (Indoors): Indoor scenes associated with subjects such as Dasavatara, Ragamala, and Bhagavata Purana typically occur within a chamber located at the composition's corner, with a sloping roof adorned with domed cupolas and turrets, and fluted pillars on the side. The remainder of the composition is typically dominated by a monochromatic green background with minimal detail and a tree to occupy the empty space. This compositional type divides space such that the placement of figures inside or outside the architectural arrangement symbolises the interior or outdoor space, respectively.



Fig. 7.78 Style 'G' indoor composition

Composition (Outdoors): In compositions which are based on an outdoors scene are generally devoid of an architectural arrangement unless suggested in the narrative of the episode. The figures are placed against a monochromatic backdrop of green or yellow with minimal detail of flora and fauna.



Fig. 7.79 Style 'G' outdoor composition

Flora and Fauna: Popular tree-types in Style 'G' include weeping willows; pair of cypresses; and conical and bulbous trees characterised with thick foliage and flowery vines. Depiction of birds and animals is scanty unless described in the narrative of the text.



Fig. 7.80 Style 'G' vegetation

Architecture: This style typically depicts architectural designs with a terraced roof adorned with a pointed cornice. The terrace is topped by two turrets on either side. Battlements, which are separated by equal indentations, ornament the roof. The structures contain a single chamber flanked by fluted columns on either side.



Fig. 7.81 Example of architecture in Style 'G'

Treatment of Ground: The ground is delineated by thin green washes, with patches of green applied to imply grass. In a number of paintings, the artist(s) have also attempted to depict ground by depicting outcropping shrubs.



Fig. 7.82 Treatment of ground in Style 'G'

Treatment of Sky: The depiction of the sky is limited in the early paintings of this style. The later paintings show sky as a strip of blue differentiated at the horizon by a strip of white.



Fig. 7.83 Treatment of sky in Style 'G'

Treatment of Background: The background is generally monochromatic, rendered in yellow, green, and burnt umber.



Fig. 7.84 Treatment of background in Style 'G'

Similarity with other Styles: The style is highly similar in terms of composition and clothing to style 'A'.

Portraits: *Jharokha* portrait of Raja Prithvi Singh, Raja Chattar Singh as Bhagiratha praying to Shiva and Parvati, Portrait of Raja Udai Singh smoking a hookah.

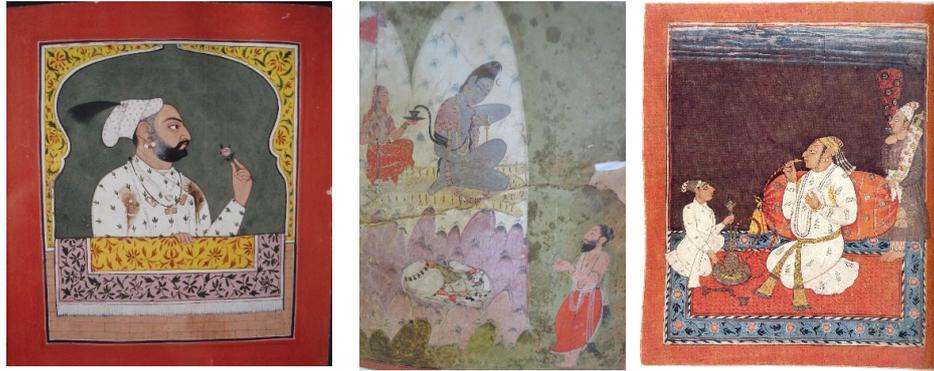


Fig. 7.85 Portraits rendered in Style 'G'

Painting sets in this style: Dasavatara (c. 1680), 'Horizontal' Bhagavata Purana (c. 1690-1700), Ragamala (c. 1700), Dasavatara (c. 1700-1720), Ragamala (c. 1710-1720), 'Vertical' Bhagavata Purana (c. 1725-1730).



Fig. 7.85 Painting sets rendered in Style 'G'

7.1.8 Style 'H' (1690—1760 CE)

Originally Attributed To: Basohli/Nurpur/Chamba

Style 'H' appears to have been developed at the same workshop as style 'G' given the uncanny resemblance between the two styles. The latter marks its first appearance in c. 1690, indicating that the painter must have been a second-generation artist from the Style 'G' workshop. Compared to his former counterparts, the artist(s) working in this style exhibit a greater emphasis on capturing detail, with sensitive rendering of shading as well as execution of hair. While the number of paintings rendered in this style are limited, it is, however, assumed that the painter of this workshop must have enjoyed some favour at the court, given his consistent career spanning more than three decades. The style appears to have continued for another generation.

Arguments for Attribution to Chamba School: Given the striking similarity between styles 'H' and 'G,' it is safe to infer that these paintings were created for the Chamba court. The handwriting in an inscription on the painting 'Ordeal by Liquor' attributed to this artist also suggests a Chamba origin.

Facial-type: The facial-types are distinguished by a round, broad forehead, an outwardly pointed nose, full lips, and a pointy and prominent chin that almost touches the lower lip. In the female-type, the back of the cranium is rendered conically. The upper lashes of the eyes are rendered in black, while the lower lashes are rendered in carmine. The eyes are elongated dramatically at the end, and a faint redness is observed. The outlining is done in a dark crimson colour. The artists skilfully apply fine shading at the nose and the lips to suggest modelling.



Fig. 7.87 Evolution of Style 'H' Facial-type

Physiognomy: The physiognomic features of the design 'H' are short torsos supported by long legs. The torsos are portrayed frontally, while the faces are profiled. The physiognomies of men with large bodies are characterised by broad shoulders, a slender waist, heavy limbs, and swollen hands. The female form is slender, characterised by a long neck, narrow shoulders, a slim waist, and long, delicate fingertips.



Fig. 7.88 Style 'H' male and female physiognomies

Clothing: Of the six paintings that have come to my attention, three are based on mythological episodes, depicting the male-type adorning *dhotis* and flowing *uttariya* scarfs. Since the painting of the Ordeal by Liquor depicts a scene rendered during the time of Jahangir, the clothing is parallel to the fashion sensibilities in vogue during his reign, including full-length *jamias*, long striped *pataka* sash, and loosely tied turban. A c. 1760 painting in the Victoria and Albert Museum depicts fashion sensibilities in vogue during the mid-18th century.

The only available depiction of the female-type in which the garments are visible is the c. 1760 Victoria and Albert Museum painting. However, as the female-type is clad in a shawl, it is difficult to ascertain the appropriate clothing style in vogue in Style 'H'. Nevertheless, given the style's close resemblance to Style 'G', it could be assumed that the fashion sensibilities would have been similar to how it has been portrayed in the latter.



Fig. 7.89 Style 'H' male and female clothing

Composition: The six paintings that have come to my attention are all rendered with void spaces comprising of empty monochromatic backdrop lacking architectural or vegetational details.



Fig. 7.90 Example of Style 'H' composition layout

Similarity with other Styles: The style is highly similar to style 'G' in terms of facial details and colour composition.

Portraits: None

Painting sets in this style: Dasavatara (c. 1680-90), Svapna Darpana (c. 1700), Ananga Ranga (c. 1720).

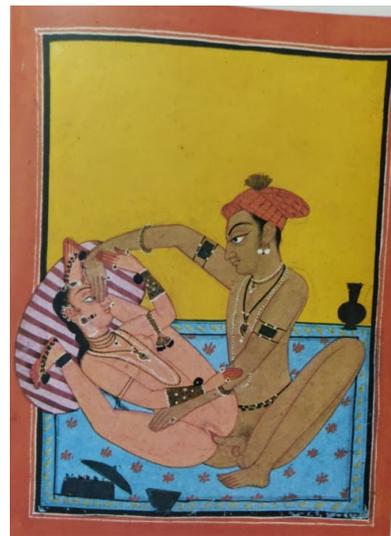
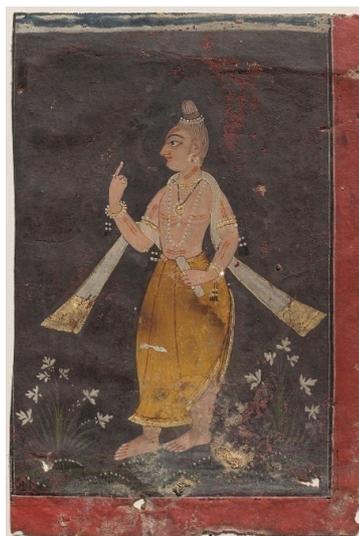


Fig. 7.91 Painting sets rendered in Style 'H'

7.2 Physiognomic, Typological and Compositional similarities

While the eight different styles have varying characteristics that distinguishes one hand/style from another, there are certain physiognomic, typological and compositional similarities that are shared among various styles that constitute the entire Chamba school. A detailed account of these is provided below:

7.2.1 Physiognomic similarities

- (i) **Physical Proportions:** Across a diverse array of styles, a prevailing tendency emerges in a configuration characterised by a truncated torso in conjunction with elongated lower limbs. The torsos assume a frontal orientation, presenting the viewer with the frontal aspect, while the faces are skilfully rendered in profile.



Fig. 7.92 Physiognomic similarities across various styles

- (ii) **Body gestures:** Numerous instances portray men in reclined posture in a manner where one hand is positioned perpendicularly on the ground, while the other hand is raised forward, conjuring the semblance of grasping a rosary. Accompanying these figures, attendants are commonly depicted with their feet conjoined, capably wielding flywhisks positioned atop their shoulders.



Fig. 7.93 Similar body gestures in Styles ‘A’, ‘D’ and ‘F’

The prevailing depiction of Shiva, in general, showcases his one arm bent as he dutifully clings to the rosary, with one leg gracefully crossing over the other.



Fig. 7.94 Similar depictions of Shiva in Styles ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘F’ and ‘G’

- (iii) **Clothing and Fashion:** The depiction of male fashion throughout the centuries appears to have evolved in accordance with the prevailing fashion sensibilities observed at the Mughal court. The traditional depiction of women wearing *ghaghra*, a collared blouse, and a colourful *odhani* draped over the head has exhibited a remarkable degree of consistency. On the other hand, the depiction of standardized female ornamentation showcases the prevalent usage of *tikka* earrings adorned with pearls, which are elegantly strung together by delicate strands of

pearls. Furthermore, the recurrent inclusion of pearl-embellished gold *gulubands* and necklaces serves as a characteristic element of the feminine archetype. Notably, gilded anklets occasionally enhance the portrayal of the female-type.



Fig. 7.95 Similarities across depiction of male and female clothing across various styles

7.2.2 Typological similarities

- (i) **Thrones:** Thrones are commonly portrayed in a distinctive three-quarterly manner, showcasing an ornate foiled top rail adorned with intricate decorative motifs. The back-post provides substantial support to an enormous bolster, while the seat itself is flanked by exquisitely stylized armrests. The apron, exhibiting a rich tapestry of design elements reminiscent of various architectural settings of Chamba, features arrays of conical patterns, tiles arranged in swastika shapes, and the double-lotus motif. The robust, wine decanter-shaped legs lend a sturdy and elegant foundation to the throne's overall aesthetic.



Fig. 7.96 Depiction of throne across various styles belonging to different periods

- (ii) **Trees:** Although the depiction of trees in various styles is highly stylised and appears to lack a common consensus, the most common variety of trees that are represented as decorative motifs are inspired by the local vegetation of Chamba town. The most popular tree-type is the longleaf Indian pine (*Pinus Roxburghii*, locally known as *chir*) which is depicted in conical and bulbous forms.

The second significant tree-type is the weeping willow (*Salix Babylonica*, locally known as *majnun*), depicted with leaves that are long, narrow, and pointed at the tip. These are depicted with elongated, slender leaves tapering to a pointed tip which are arranged in spirals along the extended yellow-green stems that gracefully cascade from the tree's crown.



Fig. 7.97 Common tree-types across various styles

- (iii) **Architecture:** The prevailing architectural characteristics of the several styles entail a terraced roof augmented by a pointed cornice. The central area of the terrace is crowned with a domed cupola, accentuated by the

presence of two accompanying turrets on either side. Equally distributed indentations introduce a distinctive battlement pattern, adorning the otherwise understated roof. Internally, the buildings typically house a solitary chamber, flanked by the elegant presence of fluted columns. Within this chamber, vibrant *durries* and colourful wine decanters contribute to a visually captivating environment. Notably, cypress trees are consistently portrayed in straight rows positioned behind these structures.

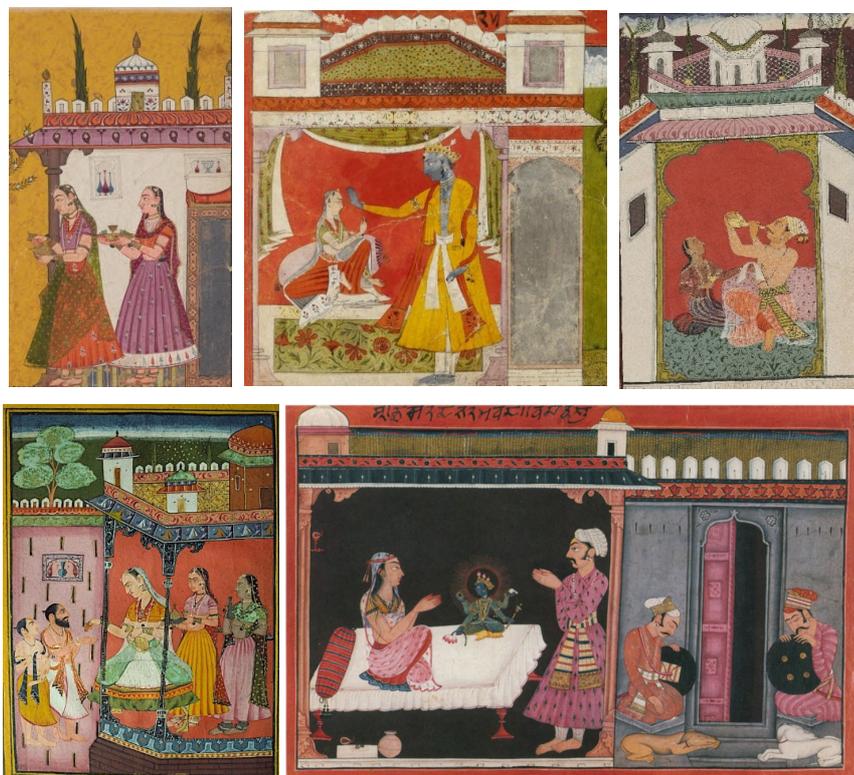


Fig. 7.98 Common architectural elements across various styles

- (iv) **Cows:** The visual representation of cows is distinguished by the presence of a small, circular forehead and a conical head, which rests upon a robust neck adorned with stiff flaps of dewlaps delineated through staccato brushstrokes. The dense body conveys a sense of sculptural solidity, despite being supported by comparatively delicate and slender limbs. Extending from the rear of the animal is a slender, elongated tail that gracefully reaches down to the hooves. It is noteworthy that the horns of these cows exhibit an exceptional brevity and slenderness.



Fig. 7.99 Depiction of cows across various styles

7.2.3 Compositional similarities

- (i) **Composition indoors:** In paintings adhering to a horizontal layout, painters observe the guiding principle of thirds, which directs the placement and distribution of visual elements within the composition. Notably, episodes of significance assume prominence within the indoor quarters, occupying a substantial two-thirds of the pictorial space. This allocation of space ensures that architectural structures are given due emphasis and occupy a prominent position. Concurrently, the remaining one-third of the composition is dedicated to the depiction of outdoor scenes. This outdoor space serves multiple purposes, including the portrayal of subplots or symbolizing the division of space within the narrative. It is within this designated outdoor area that the arrival or departure of secondary figures is often portrayed, contributing to the overall dynamism of the painting.

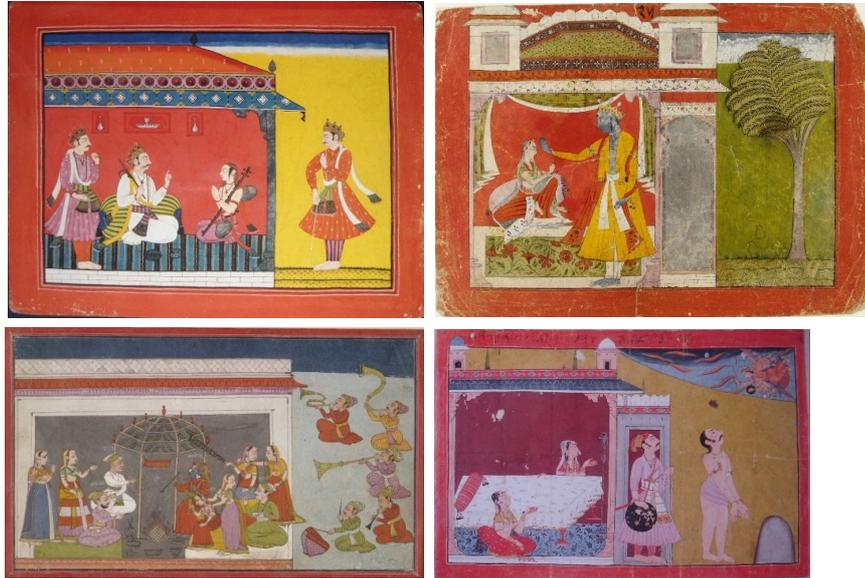


Fig. 7.100 Indoor composition in horizontal format across various styles

In paintings following a vertical layout, a similar approach is adopted. In certain instances, however, the architectural structures assume a central position within the composition, carefully situated to occupy the focal point. Marginal spaces are deliberately left on either side of the central architecture, providing room for the inclusion of decorative tree motifs. These trees serve as embellishments and contribute to the overall aesthetic balance of the painting, framing the central architectural element and enhancing its visual impact.



Fig. 7.101 Indoor compositions in vertical format across various styles

- (ii) **Composition outdoors:** The depiction of outdoor sequences in paintings often exhibits a deliberate absence of intricate details, wherein figures are situated against a monochromatic backdrop. These outdoor compositions typically lack elaborate elements, except for the inclusion of decorative vegetation, unless specifically warranted by the narrative context. Notably, architectural structures assume a symbolic role, serving as motifs that imply the arrival or departure of figures within the given episode. As such, the emphasis is placed on conveying the broader narrative and the symbolic significance of the depicted scenes, rather than intricate visual details.



Fig. 7.102 Outdoor compositions across various styles

7.3 Observations

Based on the stylistic analysis of Chamba paintings, it can be concluded that multiple artists with distinct artistic sensibilities were active in Chamba concurrently for a span of approximately a century, from the mid-17th century to mid-18th century. These painters hailed from diverse backgrounds, bringing forth their individualistic approaches, which remained intact in this period time.

A central focus of this research inquiry was the intrinsic nature of style in Chamba painting, specifically exploring the extent to which external influences, particularly the preferences of patrons commissioning these artworks, shaped artistic expression. It was essential to examine whether patrons held specific aesthetic preferences that compelled painters to adhere to particular stylistic paradigms. This perspective raises the question of whether painters lacked complete artistic agency in selecting their preferred styles, instead being driven to modify their creative pursuits to meet the demands of patrons.

Through the analysis of various styles, it appears unlikely that certain styles were favoured over others, as painters working with diverse sensibilities seem to have consistently received patronage over the years. While there may be instances where paintings of certain styles are more numerous than others, it is important to consider alternative explanations for this discrepancy rather than attributing it solely to a greater preference for a specific style. It is plausible that paintings rendered in other styles have either yet to be discovered or have been lost to time. In any case, even if patrons did exhibit preferences for particular styles, there is no evidence of an external force compelling painters to conform to a singular style, as the presence of diversity in various styles is evident.

Therefore, the existence of an external agency dictating a distinct 'regional' style in Chamba appears improbable, considering that patronage was extended to artists working in their own distinctive styles. This leads to the conclusion that the continuity of specific 'styles' was voluntary rather than coerced, suggesting that a singular 'Chamba style' does not truly exist.

The analysis highlights that Chamba painters possessed a considerable degree of artistic autonomy, affording them the freedom to exercise their own creative judgements and stylistic preferences. This perspective suggests that the observed diversities in stylistic expressions within Chamba painting might have originated from the inherent artistic sensibilities of the painters themselves. By recognising the presence of formalistic similarities across various sets of paintings executed by different artists, it can be inferred that the painters in Chamba operated in close proximity to one another, engaging in frequent exchanges of ideas and incorporating elements from other workshops into their own works. Such interactions and assimilation of influences were characteristic of the environment in which these painters operated, indicating a natural and organic process of stylistic evolution within Chamba painting.

Furthermore, the investigation delves into the transmission of stylistic traditions in Chamba painting, specifically exploring whether such transmission occurred through hereditary channels. The inquiry sought to determine whether specific painting styles transcended generational boundaries within painter families. This investigation into hereditary transmission adds a layer of complexity to the comprehension of Chamba painting, prompting inquiries into the influence of lineage, training, and apprenticeship on the formation and evolution of artistic style among Chamba painters.

While it is evident that the style was indeed inherited across generations, resulting in a linear continuity spanning over a century, it remains uncertain whether this transmission was exclusively restricted to hereditary lineage. Although records such as the Bahis of Haridwar demonstrate that painters operated within family units and that the tradition was passed down from father to son, it is essential to consider that viewing hereditary lineage as the sole channel for the transmission of style might limit the potential for individuals from non-painterly backgrounds to embrace and adopt the painting tradition. Moreover, the majority of paintings, with few exceptions, do not bear the signatures of the painters, making it challenging to attribute them to specific individuals and comprehend the genealogical inheritance of artistic expression. Therefore, in my opinion, the transmission of style should be perceived as a master-to-disciple tradition rather than solely a father-to-son lineage. This perspective allows

for a broader understanding of the social aspects inherent in the craft tradition of Chamba and sheds light on the osmosis of artistic sensibilities among the various styles, considering that a disciple was not necessarily trained exclusively under a single master.

Acknowledging that disciples were not confined to the exclusive tutelage of a single master opens possibilities for a broader exchange of ideas, techniques, and stylistic elements within the Chamba painting community. It highlights the fluidity of artistic interactions, where disciples could have received guidance from multiple masters, contributing to the assimilation and evolution of stylistic expressions. This dynamic interplay among artists nurtured a vibrant artistic environment, fostering the development and diversification of styles over time.