

Trade and Trade Routes of Garhwal and Kumaon Region: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract

The prosperity of the region is not only the sum total of various social and economic factors but is also majorly endorsed by the layout of the roads that constantly helps in the faring of commodities from one region to other. The Kumaon and Garhwal region are no strangers to the same despite several geographical and social restraints. This Himalayan territory have been no strangers to the cultural exchanges not only throughout India but also the rest of the world. The article will be an analysis of these trade relations shared by the communities of the region.

Keywords: Kumaon and Garhwal Region, Numismatic Records, Fairs, Festivals, Trade Routes, Tibet.

Introduction

The prosperity of a region is shaped by various social and economic factors. It is quite evident that the nature of these activities and the progress that they eventually make is directly proportional to the accomplishments of the said region. Trade in early India was the result of the synergic effort between different economic activities and political regions. It was significantly aided by the extensive network of trade routes that linked even the remotest of areas. Trade between politically and geographically diverse regions was not only connected with the exchange of exotic goods and commodities, it was also the amalgamation of varied cultures. 'A distinguishing feature of the ancient trade routes...' says Moti Chandra '...was that they connected ancient capitals with one another. When these capitals changed, the routes also changed their directions.'¹ The expanse of the trade routes, whether land or water, brought various communities on a common platform to converse with each other.

The political history of the Himalayas concerning with the Kumaon and Garhwal regions received a fickle of attention due to the surveys conducted by the British scholar-administrators. Its economic history is still shrouded under a thick veil. The area known as Kumaon-Garhwal, constituted a single politico-cultural region, first during the Kuninda period, followed by the Paurava and finally the Katyuri.² In the present article, a humble attempt is being made to explore the aspect of trade and trade routes in the aforementioned regions during the early period.

A cursory glance at the geography of the Indian subcontinent would make the observer believe about the isolation imposed by the towering peaks and the unending mountain ranges of the Himalayas. This, however, was utterly false as the presence of passes made it plausible for inhabitants to maintain contact with the parts of Asia-social or commercial. There are several passes in the north which may be divided into three groups- the Shipki group, the Almora group and the Sikkim-Darjeeling group.³ From these passes, a well-connected network of commercial routes was established from Tibet to India. Life in the Himalayas has never been an easy one. The rough terrain and its hardships have shaped the innate character and the society of its people. The Kumaon and Garhwal regions of Uttarakhand have shared a close proximity of social and cultural beliefs from Tibet and the neighboring Nepal. However, trade between these regions was a Herculean task-partially because of the fact that the roads were covered with the thick sheet of snow for major part of the year. The trade routes usually opened at the end of the month of June and with that, trade with the northward regions commenced. The trade was carried out in two rounds- the second round of trade used to start in the month of September.

The Himalayas have been a great source of raw materials with the likes of quartzite, copper, steatite, gold, sandstone, soapstone, etc. found in ample amount. The presence of alluvial gold washing in the Kumaon-

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Garhwal region has been noted by J. Coggin Brown and A.K. Dey.⁴ The Sthalapurana entitled Kedarakhanda also mentions that in the region around Bhillangana many precious stones and gold were found.⁵ The presence of the Polished Grey Ware (PGW) at Ranihat and Thapli and its striking similarity with those found at Ahicchhatra gives us information about the exchange of communication and raw materials with the Gangetic plains. In fact, the beginning of a well-defined proto-historic phase in the Himalayas with clear Gangetic valley ceramic traits clearly underlines the presence of a significant line of communication between the two sub-regions.⁶

By the beginning of the sixth-century BCE, pastoralist economy gave way to agriculturist economy and the growth of trade in metals and other utilities. With the discovery of iron in the lower Gangetic region, the trade of the Kumaon and Garhwal region suffered a heavy blow. Though, the subsequent centuries saw a decline in trade contacts between the regions, it did not wholly disappear. Trade was being carried through the lower Terai region where the rivers were accessible and the vegetation was not dense. Excavations at sites like Ranihat and Moradhvaj show the advent of the urban centres as early as fourth century BCE.

Numismatic Records

The ancient Indian coins, known as 'Tribal Coins', form an important series of the indigenous coinage covering a long period of over five centuries. They exert great influence in shaping the political and cultural tradition of India from c.2nd century BCE to c.4th century CE. Scholars like Sir Alexander Cunningham, John Allan and some other scholars have made ample observations by studying these coins. However, the nomenclature of these coins is rather debatable and these coins should be termed as the janapada⁷ coins for their more obvious features. It is in these janapada coins that we discover the earliest evidences of trade in the region of Kumaon and Garhwal. The Kuninda coins (including the Almora set of coins), succeeded by the Yaudheya coins and the coins issued by the Kushanas paint an elaborate picture from c.2nd century BCE to c.3rd century CE. Chronologically, the Kunindas can be considered as the harbinger of the numismatic history in the region followed by the Kushanas. However, the coins issued by the Yaudheya tribe have over powered both of them with their sheer prominence in the Kumaon region that have well shaped the numismatic history of the region.

Kuninda Coins

The mention of the name Kulinda or Kuninda is a common occurrence in several contemporary literary works but the same cannot be said about the numismatic records. The coins of the Kunindas can be segregated into two categories: one issued at the end of 1st century BCE and the other issued around three centuries later. The former are the coins made from silver and copper and bear the name of a king named Amoghabhuti and the latter group is anonymous with the only title of Shiva inscribed on these coins. In the first group of coins, the silver coins are modelled after the hemi drachms issued by the

later Greek kings but they are essentially Indian in style. The legends are in Prakrit-the obverse being in Brahmi and the reverse being in Kharosthi. The dialect used in the obverse can be closely identified with Sanskrit than that of the reverse. In the case of copper coins, the border of dots replaces the legend in Kharosthi and the symbols are absent on the obverse.

The silver coins issued by the Kunindas was an attempt by the ruler for gaining significant edge over the market by producing native silver that would compete with the later Indo-Greek coins. After the reign of the king Amoghabhuti, the Kuninda coins disappear completely for around three centuries, till the turn of 3rd century CE, when the Kuninda coins are once again discovered. The pieces are large in size and are modelled after the Kushana copper coins.

Almora Coins

The set of three coins found in the region of Almora, according to J. Allan, are quite singular and differ in fabric, size and style from the rest of the contemporary ancient Indian coins. Almora is now the district headquarters of the Almora District in the state of Uttarakhand. The inscriptions were in large Brahmi characters from the second half of the 2nd century BCE and the coins were, possibly, indigenously manufactured. The names mentioned in the obverse are probably of the kings namely Shivadatta, Shivapalita and Haridatasa, but the historicity of their reigns cannot be ascertained. In the views of the scholars like Powell Price, E.J. Rapson⁸ and K.P. Nautiyal, the coins can be attributed to the Almora branch of the Kunindas. The coins mentioning the name of Shivadatta and Haridatta have similar obverse type and both of their legends are in Prakrit. In case of the coin of Shivapalita, it is differed from the other two coins by the replacement of a symbol at the centre with that of a figure of a human or divine.

Yaudheya Coins

The Yaudheyas, as the name itself signifies, were a class of significant warriors, holding their sway over the whole of Rajputana, Eastern Punjab, and districts of Saharanpur and Dehradun. They have supposedly issued the coins from c.2nd century BCE to the beginning of 4th century CE, which came to an end with the advent of the Guptas. The coins issued by the Yaudheyas are divided by J. Allan into six classes in which the variants were classified under the classes of I, II, III and VI. The coins of Class II can be considered as the earliest of the Yaudheya coins. Most of them are manufactured from copper, the remaining few are made from potin and silver. The coins are of vrisha- gaja type and the legend on these coins is doubtlessly Yaudheyanam Bahudhanyaka. The type is probably the same as that of the coins of the Arjunayanas, who are regularly associated with the Yaudheyas in the literature.⁹ Both, J. Allan¹⁰ and K.D. Bajpai¹² agree about the term Bahudhanyaka being a geographical location comprising of eastern parts of Haryana and some fertile areas of Uttar Pradesh. The coins have been recovered from eastern Haryana, from Saharanpur and Meerut in Uttar Pradesh, and from Dehradun in Uttarakhand.

There was yet another discovery of a hoard of copper coins of the Yaudheyas reported from Lansdowne by S.C. Kala.¹² There were about 129 coins in total excavated from the hoard and ranged between the end of 2nd century CE and first half of 3rd century CE. The obverse exhibited a six-headed Karttikeya, standing and holding a spear. There was no legend represented on the coin. K.D. Bajpai has observed that the goddess, on the reverse, was sometimes replaced with lord Shiva holding a trident. In fact, he also discovered in his collection some coins excavated from Garhwal in which Shiva and Karttikeya were portrayed wearing trousers¹² that is typical fashion of the later Kushanas. In some of the coins of this class, legends like Bhanuvasa, Ravanasa, etc. were also found which might have been the names of the Yaudheya chiefs who might have enjoyed a limited amount of influence in these areas. There are several coins of the chief named Bhanuvasa, while twenty-five coins exhibit the name Ravanasa. However, the use of the royal titles like the raja or maharaja is absent with these names. But the use of epithets Jaya and Rajano, in the legend on reverse, in some cases have been found.

The coins classified by Allan in Class III and IV are of later date and are closely identified in style and type with the coins issued by the Kunindas. The coins are mostly made of copper and very few of them are made up of silver. The coins of both the classes were mostly excavated from Jaunsar- Bawar, Lansdowne and some sites of Tehri Garhwal and Almora. The Class IV of these coins is based on the same structure of Class III and exhibit an incomplete legend bhanuva with a chandrameru (mountain) and a swastika on the obverse along with a snake seated below them and a trident with a standard on the reverse. The full inscription was deduced to be Bhanuvarmasa by J. Allan.

Kushana Coins

The early Kushana coins were far more secluded from their Bactrian and Indo- Greek predecessors and much more Indian in essence and style. Though their portraits showcase the same dress and manner, the portraits retain their northern characteristics. In the case of blueprint and execution, these early Kushana coins are far more sophisticated from the Indo- Parthian ones. Later Kushana coins of about the third century, however, tend to be more and more clumsy and crowded in design; though the execution remains clear and precise, the types and forms are heavily influenced by those of Persian and Sassanian origin¹³. The excavations carried out at a mound near Kashipur, Nainital yielded around 252 copper coins and three gold coins of later Kushanas.¹⁴ Succeeding the Almora coins of the Kunindas, these are supposed to be the first series of coins of the Kushana dynasty to be found in the Kumaon region.

A hoard of forty-five Kushana gold coins and some ornaments was found in September 1972 at Muni-ki-reti, Narendranagar, in the Tehri- Garhwal district. Forty- four belonged to Huvishka and the remaining one to Vasudeva.¹⁵ There are interesting inferences drawn from the excavations of the

Huvishka coins in the region. There is a great possibility that after defeating the Yaudheyas in the Tehri- Garhwal region, the Kushana king Huvishka, issued some of these coins. In these gold coins, he specifically replaced his mace in the right hand with that of the Cock- standard (kukkuta- dhawaja). A.K. Srivastava¹⁶ has observed that '...this hoard brings out for the first time Kushana coins from the Tehri region in the extreme north of the country. In the early decades of the second century, this region was occupied by the Yaudheyas, as is attested by the finds of their coins. The present hoard seems to suggest that the land was soon occupied by the Kushanas. It is not unlikely that the Kushanas took it from the Yaudheyas. This finds an indication in the cock standard, which is seen on one of the coins of Huvishka in the present hoard. It is needless to say that cock was the vehicle of Karttikeya, who was the favourite deity of the Yaudheyas and is depicted on their Coins.' However, O.P. Singh¹⁷ does not adhere to this theory on the grounds that similar coins have been reported by Percy Gardner and John M. Rosenfield from other places. He has termed the evidence to be 'fickle' to make such a huge conjecture that the motif was the outcome of a great victory of the Kushana King Huvishka over the Yaudheyas. Evidently, he has made certain observations about the gold coins issued by Huvishka, terming it a 'numismatic novelty'. The profile bust of the king faces right and appears to be young, he is wearing a crown and an embroidered coat while his left hand holds a spear and in his right hand is a Kukkuta- dhawaja. With these features, it can be easily inferred that Huvishka, the Kushana ruler, was portrayed in the form of lord Skanda and admits the ruler's Admiration for the deity.

Fairs and Festivals

The prestige of the Himalayan territory as a spiritual region and the abode to several mystics also helped in flourishing of several temple towns, aided by roads that were part smooth and part perilous. We find the mention of several tirthas in the Mahabharata accessible through foot, for example Gandhamadan, Bhrguteerth, Kankhal, Nagateerth, Kushavarta and many more. Situated on the banks of pious rivers or where probable mythological incidents took place led to their popularity round the nation. However, the epic does not mention any religious places with the suffix prayaga and the evidences of temples enacted in these places are also obscure¹⁸. Nevertheless, from the c. fifth century onwards, we have a picture about the temples being erected in the hills of Uttarakhand. These temples were not only the symbols of the spirituality and the beliefs shared by the masses but were home to several fairs and festivals celebrating the birth of the gods, changing of the seasons or simply providing a source of entertainment in the monotonous life.

In all agricultural countries, especially where communication is difficult, and where the land is cut up by mountain or water, the need is felt for periodical meetings at convenient centres, where exchange and sale of commodities may take place.¹⁹ The region of Kumaon and Garhwal, with its rough-hewn territory

interspersed with steep hills and abundant valleys, was always contingent on such assemblage for the supply of commodities and other essentials which led to organization of several fairs and weekly markets. These annual fairs were an amazing source of entertainment and an occasional relief from the monotonous life of the village folks.

The festival of Makar Sankranti is one of the highly anticipated festivals of the Hindu luni-solar calendar. Referring to the transition of the Sun deity (Surya) into the zodiac of Capricorn (Makara), in the lunar month of Magha (mid- January)- it marks the end of winter solstice. The event is celebrated across India since time immemorial but the biggest of these conventions is the Maha-Kumbh Mela, celebrated every twelve years and the Ardhha- Kumbh Mela, celebrated every six years. Though the historicity of the mela is obscure, the Markandeya Purana asserts on ritual bathing in the holy rivers as, 'without taking up five pindas one should not bathe in another man's water; one should bathe in holy ponds, and in the Ganges, in lakes and rivers.'²⁰ In his travelogue, Hiuen Tsang mentions about King Shiladitya, distributing his accumulated wealth of five years in one day at the confluence of Ganga-Yamuna-Sarasvati in Prayaga.²¹ He might be referring to the Hindu- bathing ritual and the religious fair held during the month of the Magha that attracted a large crowd and can be acknowledged as the predecessor of the Kumbh mela.

Bathing at the banks of Ganga in Gangadwar (Hardwar) is considered to be most sacred in all the tirthas and helps oneself in relieving from the constant cycle of birth and death.²² Mentioned as Gangadwara in the Mahabharata²³, it has been bestowed with high praises. It is addressed as the one of the chief tirthas along with Gandhamadan and Badrikashrama, where one should bathe and receive the sermons from ascetics to be freed from his fears. The text also lauds about the bathing ritual here which cleanses the individual of his sins and helps in his ascent to heavens.²⁴ The only Kumbh Mela of the four cities to be celebrated featuring the Aquarius (Kumbha) astrologically is the Hardwar mela, which has led scholars to argue that the mela first began there.²⁵ To state simply, the occurrence of Surya in Makar rashi and Brahaspati in Kumbha rashi is a rare phenomenon occurring in twelve years and is celebrated with great pomp and gaiety but in ancient texts the fair was notably called only the Magha mela, there was no reference to Kumbh Mela. It was during these yearly gatherings that lasted for months, it provided a fertile opportunity for the merchants to exhibit their goods and make a good amount of profit.

The town of Varanavata is worth mentioning as it is one of the sites where the most important episode of the Mahabharata takes place. It is said to be a prosperous town enriched with precious jewels and thriving by the annual fair held in the honour of Lord Shiva. The festival and the procession it held was described as the most delightful to be ever witnessed on earth by king Dhritrashtra²⁵. The Pashupati form of the god was considered to be the most majestic of all and was venerated accordingly. The carnival consisted of performing puja to the main

deity, followed by music, dance and the bali. The festival was supposed to be so popular that it was attended by the revered brahmanas for preaching sermons, the musicians and popular dancers. This annual fair suggests not only about the economic significance of the town but also about its easy accessibility via roads. The location of the town is uncertain though Kedarkhanda predicts its location to be near Uttarkashi.²⁶

One of the celebrated and the revered places in the Kumaon- Garhwal region is the town of Bageshwar, in the Bageswar district. Located at the confluence of the Saryu and the Gomati rivers and surrounded by mountains and glaciers, it offers a panoramic view to the visitors and hence acts as an ideal site for the organization of great annual fairs or melas since time immemorial. The junction of the rivers is a sacred spot with the river valley surrounded by high woods emanating warmth which attracted the traders from the nearby Almora and the Bhotia merchants from the snow-clad peaks to carry out their business. Though the historicity of the Uttarayini mela²⁷, held here, is quite recent, it can be duly noted that the town was a major location of thoroughfare since time immemorial. The temple erected on the site is as latest as 1450 CE but there is an interesting Sanskrit inscription on a stone slab which is predicted of early centuries. Commodities like blankets, woollen wraps, carpets, thulma, etc. that were manufactured in Danpur, Johar and Darma were sold in the fairs held at Bageshwar and Jauljibi fairs.²⁸

The Thaal fair is one of the most profitable fairs of the region to this date. This place is situated on the eastern banks of the Ramaganga river and exerts a strategic position where the main roads, coming from different directions, from the important towns of Pithoragarh, Bageshwar, Askot and Tejam meet. It functions as the last market for the Bhautantik traders after which they proceed to their summer abodes for the Tibetan trade.²⁹ The market was probably quite large and ancient, as the name and historicity of the fair is much recent. The route was frequented by the traders from time immemorial as the establishment of a 13th century Shaiva shrine might suggest. It was a great mart for the sale of woollens and grains.

Trade Routes

Trade with the trans-Himalayan region concerning Tibet and Burma was also alive and thriving during the early period. It was mainly carried out by the Bhotias, a semi-nomadic community. They used to sell rice, wheat, sugar, molasses and Indian cloth in Tibet in exchange of salt, gold dust, borax, goat, sheep, mules, etc. The trade with Tibet and other intra-regional trade were carried out by these traditional communities, whereas the inter-regional trade was controlled by the communities belonging to the plains. It was conducted via a web of trade routes that converged on the grand route from Peshavar to Tamralipti.

The Tangana tribes used to take their commodities of gold, ivory and other things to the towns of dakshinapatham where 'the produce of the regions watered by the Ganges; all that is grown on

the banks of the Kaviri; articles of food from Elam or Ceylon and the manufacturers of Kalakam (in Burma) were brought to the markets of Kaviripaddinam.³⁰ For the sake of procuring gold, the adventurous traders from the northern plains used to carry ornaments, lac, cloth, etc. for exchange and on the advice of the guide used to light a fire and removed themselves from that place. Seeing the fire, the Tankanas³¹ came there, and in exchange for their goods, they left goats, food and other commodities of exchange, and then as a signal of their departure, other fire was lit.

Types of Routes

The trade passage ways connecting the plains to the Tangana region were difficult to access and dangerous to tread upon. They were addressed by different names like vamsapatha, daripatha, mushikapatha, aja-mendhrapath, shankupath, chhatapath and many more. Panini refers to various kinds of routes, e.g. varipatha, sthalapatha, rathapatha, karipatha, simhapatha, adding two more, viz...hamsapatha and devapatha.³² these roads were christened according to the hurdles faced by the travellers. The jannupatha or the vannupatha route was the sandy tract of Sindh-Sagar Doab, leading to Bannu; ajapatha was the goat track; mendhapatha referred to ram-track; shamkupatha was spike-track, chhattapatha was the parasol route, vamsapatha bamboo-track, sakunapatha bird-track, mushikapatha was the mouse passage denoting to a narrow tunnel, daripatha a big tunnel and vettachara course of reeds.³³ In the Mahabharata³⁴, when the Pandavas with Draupadi, reach the domain of king Subahu in Gangadwar (Hardwar), they are welcomed by the site of a populous country. From the capital onwards, the region gives way to a tough terrain leading to the higher regions of the Himalayas which could not be explored on a chariot. The anecdote gives a strong impression of the terai- bhabar region being accessible to the travellers and mendicants with smooth roads and pathways.

The road leading from the Shivalik foothills to the east and the west was considered to be safe as it was free from the terror of dacoits and bandits. One route proceeding from Taxila passed Bhadrakara, Udumbara and Rohitaka to reach Mathura. It was controlled by the Udumbaras who shared commerce between Magadha and Kashmir, and who also had a share in the trade with Kangra.³⁵ It was the uttarapatha of Panini and the sthalapatha of Kautilya that connected the janapadas of North India and important cities with Tamralipti- Rajagriha at one side and Takshashila- Kapisha on the other.³⁶ Uttarapatha boasted of two major routes: one was the northern route proceeding from Lahore through Jalandhar to Saharanpur courting the Gangetic plains, passing Bijnor and Gorakhpur towards Bihar and Bengal. The second was coming from Lahore and proceeding to Delhi, Hastinapur, Varanasi and Pataliputra. Apart from these main routes, a large number of feeder routes and combinations are indicated in ancient literature.³⁷ These feeder routes stretched southwards and made their way to small and large ports that eventually led to the countries in the east and the west. At Kapisha, this vanijyapatha joined the highway

that had its eastern branch leading to the Tarim-foothills towards the silk nation of China; and the western branch was leading to Asia-minor and Egypt, eventually leading to the major towns of Europe.³⁸ Another such feeder route joined Sthaneswara with Kalsi via Shrugghna and Gokantha. It was also the shortest and the most direct route that joined ancient capitals of Mayapura, Brahmapura, Ahicchhatra, Kanyakubja, Indraprastha, Prayag, Kashi, Ayodhya, Ujjayani, Vidisha and many more to Tibet.

Proceeding further, from the banks of river Yamuna to the town of Barahat, there was a path that formed the main artery of the Kuninda kingdom that conjoined its commercial, religious and political ambitions into a single morphed route. According to the inscriptions³⁹ and whatever has been known by the unearthed coins, the big and small towns falling on this passage were Shrugghna, Singhpura, Kalsi, Jagatgram, Ambari, Lakhamandal, Purola and Barahat. At the height of their prominence, the Kushanas governed a large territory stretching from Shivaliks to present day Ambala, Saharanpur, Bijnor and Rampur- Moradabad, which helped in a peaceful exchange of goods and commodities leading to the prosperity. Situated at the crossroads of the major routes, Shrugghna prospered to great heights. Proceeding further, one would witness the confluence of the rivers Tons and Yamuna at Kalsi, which became an important center of Buddhist and Brahmanical preaching. Adjacent to it, at the east banks of Yamuna⁴⁰ was situated the famous site of Jagatgram, which gained popularity for the organization of the Ashvamedha sacrifices by king Shilavarman. Nearby, a king by the name Shivabhavani also made Ashvamedha sacrifices at the Ambari village around the same time i.e. third or fourth century C.E., which propagates about the pervading peace and prosperity and the skilled administration of the place.

The trek towards Badrinath and Kailash-Mansarovar passed through Devaprayag that became one of the chief sacred centres at the convergence of rivers Alakananda and Bhagirathi. The road wound along the embankments of Bhagirathi towards the glaciers. The ruins of the Sun temple and the Buddhist mathas excavated near Devaprayag exhibit two rock edicts- possibly inscribed to commemorate the victory of a Varman (Vardhan) king over the Hunas cements its position as an important pilgrimage centre.⁴¹ Devaprayag acted as the gateway towards the sacred centres of Uttarakhand where the pilgrims and the purohits from the western and the southern parts of India emerged here fervently. A little distance from Devaprayag, the ruins of the ancient towns in Shrinagar, Ranihat and the village of Sumadi are very much evident. It was in the village of Sumadi where around thousand coins issued by the Kushana King Amoghabhuti were unearthed and also acted as the center of the Kuninda prowess in the hilly region. The roads from Kotdwara, Chaukhutia and Gairsain also merged in and around it. The Srinagar-Ranihat-Sumadi region boasted of being one of the chief economic, strategic and religious centers and was greatly swayed by the political upheavals time and

again. It may be noted here that at Ranihat which is located near this 'Pilgrim Road', the core of a Tibetan goat's horn was found at a level which the excavators have dated between 200 BCE and 200 CE-another case for the antiquity of this trade.⁴²

The Kailash- Mansarovar route went from confluence of Sarju- Ramganga and passed through Askot, Dharchula to Lipulekh pass that surfaced to the Huna country. This was the path that became steep and restricted to go any further and was only accessible to goats and sheep (medhapatha/ ajapatha), only one person could pass through at a time. If there was an encounter between two groups coming from opposite directions, there was always the possibility of bloodshed and injury. The Naiyyar valley in Uttarakhand has a narrow passage known as the moosa-gali or the mouse- way.⁴³ These roads were lying on the highest altitudes and passed through the steep hillsides that were clad with snow around the year. These Himalayan ranges were prone to sudden avalanches which sometimes destroyed the roads altogether which left a very tapered path to fare with for the traders. This was the shankupatha, where every undetermined step led to inevitable death of the adventurer. In the Saddhamapajotikah, the traveller taking the shankupatha, after reaching the foot of the mountain tied a crampon in a knot and threw it up and when it got firmly fixed, he ascended to that point with the rope.⁴⁴ Here he made a hole with a diamond drill (vijiraggena lohадandena) and nailed a peg there.⁴⁵ Then disengaging the crampon, he threw⁴⁶ it again upwards and after climbing to that point made another hole. Then holding the rope with the left hand, he uprooted the first peg with his right hand with a wooden hammer.⁴⁷ By repeating this routine slowly and steadily, the top of the mountain was reached with much efforts. For coming down too, a strong nail was firmly fixed at the top of the mountain and a leather sack filled with all necessities was tied to the rope, seating itself on this cushioned bag the traveler used to gradually descend from the top of the mountain.

India was connected with Tibet and the rest of Central Asia via routes that went through deep inside the Himalayan ranges and through rigorous passes. The Tangana country was accessible to Tibet through one of the most ancient and popular roads that stretched along the banks of the rivers Alakananda, Vishnuganga and Sarasvati and then went through the Mana village, finding its way to Tibet. During extreme winters this pass also became the passage for the Sarus cranes and the swans to come to the warm Indian regions, hence the pass was also called krauncha dwara or the hamsa-dwara.⁴⁸

Modes of transportation

The modes of conveyance were primarily sturdy animals' horses, oxen dragging heavily loaded carts on the rough tract. However, on the higher reaches of the mountains where the paths disappeared and the rocky terrain gave little to no scope of access, the traders were greatly dependent on sheep, yaks and goats to carry their load. In the broad valleys of the bhabar region the commodities were carried out in carts (shakata) and chariots

(ratha) pulled by horses and oxen. In case of short travels or for carrying goods to minimum distance, ox-carts were preferred, whereas for long destinations horse- drawn wagons were popular. In some cases, oxen were used even in long distances as horses came at a slightly heavy price. With the coming of the Greeks in India led to a greater use of horses along with donkeys and camels. For crossing the river systems, the use of leather water-bags (mashak), leather clothing (bhastra) and bamboo sticks for making rafts was common. The bhautantik valley and Tibet were a great source of cow and yak hides for the same purpose. During the age of the Kushanas,⁴⁹ the rivers were bridged with the bamboos, though their safety was unguaranteed.

All available evidence suggests a thriving trade and a line of communication between the Kumaon-Garhwal region and upper Gangetic plains. This trade was sustained by a well-developed coinage system. Around the third century BCE, the Audumbaras, Yaudheyas, Kunindas and Malavas issued their coins. Circulation of their coins through trade is shown by the fact that Yaudheya coins have been discovered in Kumaon and Garhwal and Kuninda coins have been discovered in Himachal Pradesh, Panjab and Haryana.

Aim of the study

Aim of the study is to analyze the existence of Trade routes in the early Kumaon- Garhwal Region and the nature of trade relations enjoyed by them with the rest of the country.

Conclusion

The political upheaval and turmoil, that marked the early centuries of the Christian era, greatly influenced the trading activities of the Bhautantiks. Till 3rd century C.E., they were an integral part of the state of the Kunindas, based around Mayapura.⁵⁰ With the establishment of the Mauryan empire under Chandragupta Maurya and the subsequent Dhamma-vijaya by his successor Ashoka, laid the foundation of perpetual peace and prosperity across northern India. This greatly helped the Tanganas, whose products now reached as far Greece and Rome as now the roads to the west were free from the shadow of the dacoits, most of whom converted their beliefs because of the doctrines of non-violence preached by Ashoka. With the coming of the Kushanas in the Indian political scene and the admittance of their authority by the Kuninda chiefs greatly facilitated the Tanganas' trade which now gained popularity in many western empires along with the Yaksha puja. By the turn of the 4th century C.E., the Katyuri chiefs became the sovereigns that catapulted the trade of the Tanganas to enormous heights. The commodities like gold, precious stones, musk, guggal, water from the sacred rivers, etc. had a huge demand during the Gupta period. The magnificent ruins of the temples in the Mandakini valley, Adibadri, Kedarnath, Joshimath, Barahat, and Pandukeshwar are prominent examples of that glorious period.

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