SOME DYNAMICS
OF INDO-TIBETAN TRADE
THROUGH UTTARĀKHANḍA
(KUMAON-GARHWAL), INDIA

BY

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The area known as Kumaon-Garhwal, comprising the present eight districts of the Uttar Pradesh District hills region of India, constituted a single politico-cultural region first during the Kuṇinda period followed by the Paurava and finally the Katyūrī. Sometime during the beginning of the thirteenth century, the Katyūrī kingdom disintegrated and was succeeded by the rise of many small independent principalities, the most famous of which were the Chandras in Kumaon and the Panwāras in Garhwal. Regarding the trade of the area, a great number of items were produced locally and exported during the pre-British period since much of the subsistence economy of the area had been dependent on trade with outside regions. The situation changed, however, with the advent of the British economy which introduced trade items hitherto unknown to the region such as machine-made cloth, agricultural and household equipment, etc. This caused a set-back to local production which otherwise had been the sheet anchor of the Uttarākhanaṇḍa economy through the ages.

It is difficult to trace the antiquity of this cis- and trans-Himalayan trade, but taking into account the existence of an ancient route leading from Pātaliputra to Taxila which was connected to this region

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through a link route via Kālsī (Dehra Dun District) where Aśoka had a set of 14 rock-edicts inscribed, it may certainly be traced to the third century B.C. 1). Interestingly enough, along the Uttarākhanda foothills whence starts the vast stretch of the plains, explorations and excavations at different sites 2), notably Bahadarabad, Moradhvaja, Vīrabhadra, Ahichhatrā, Kāśipur, Ramnagar, etc., have revealed traces of settlements some of which belong to the Copper Hoard, the Painted Grey Ware, and the Northern Black Polished Ware cultures. Recent excavations at Rānihat and Thāplī in Garhwal have clearly shown that the Painted Grey Ware and the Northern Black Polished Ware peoples had already settled in the hills area itself and established contacts with the still earlier inhabitants of the region whose presence is attested by the palaeolithic tools, rock paintings and possibly the megalithic monuments 3). The earliest material remains directly associated with trade in this region are the Kuninda coins 4), including the Almorā coins 5), followed by those of the Yaudhēyas and


5) Allan, op. cit., pp. lxix-lxxx, plate XIV nos. 7, 8, 9; Joshi, M. P., in Ut-