

houses and graves. The sitting platform (Fig. 23) outside the gate of the enclosing wall, which serves as a favourite gathering-place of the greybeards of Chaturkand, the fine panelled shrine at Dodō-kōt (Fig. 28) and the elaborately decorated wooden enclosure of a grave outside Samagiāl, reproduced in Fig. 24, may help to illustrate this local craft. A number of the prevalent motifs, including the four-leaved clematis-like flower within a rectangular or round frame, the scrolls of half-open lotus buds or twining vine-leaves, seemed to me directly derived from relievo ornaments common in the Graeco-Buddhist art of Gandhāra. Both in design and style of work they recalled the decorative wood-carving on various architectural or domestic objects that I had excavated in the sand-buried ruins of the Niya and Lou-lan Sites.¹⁸ I deeply regretted that time was not available for a closer study of these Darēl carvings and for similar antiquarian research.

Descent
towards
Rajī-kōt.

From Chaturkand I moved down the open ground in the middle of the valley towards the old site of Rajī-kōt. The rocky hill that it occupies, an almost detached offshoot of the high spur flanking the Bachai valley on the north, forms a conspicuous landmark, as seen in the photograph Fig. 18, where it appears in the distance above Mankiāl. After descending by the road for over a mile I was shown on steep cliffs by the mouth of a side valley westwards the ruined terraces and walls of Bodō-kōt and Diwāri-kōt, but was obliged to pass them unvisited. We reached Galī-kōt after crossing another mile or so of fertile ground where, however, the fields are sown only at intervals, obviously a mark of under-population and inadequate labour. The ruins, of only moderate extent, found at Galī-kōt were of the usual type and occupied the extreme northern offshoot of the Rajī-kōt hill. Ascending towards this over boulder-strewn ridges south-westwards we everywhere passed terraces built up of big blocks of stone and completely overrun by scrub. Of the irrigation channels which once must have brought water here from the Bachai stream no trace could be found. At a point known as Ranōt I came, to my surprise, upon a narrow perfectly levelled strip of ground, embedded between two low rocky ridges, which according to local tradition was used as a polo ground in old times when Rajī-kōt was the residence of the 'Rās' or kings of Darēl. The tradition is all the more curious that the practice of the noble game so common in all the Dard valleys from Astōr to Chitrāl has completely disappeared from Darēl. Nor does it appear now to be known in Chilās and the other Kōhistān communities down the Indus.

'Darband'
of Ranōt.

A little above Ranōt we struck a steep ridge which, running NNW. to SSE., connects the Rajī-kōt hill with the spur above the Bachai valley. Its slopes were covered with a thick growth of old Ilex, while along the whole length of its bare and narrow crest there extended the ruinous remains of a massive wall which my guides spoke of as a 'Darband' or *chiusa*. It was evident that it had been intended primarily for this purpose of closing the valley west of Rajī-kōt and protecting the flank of the latter. But the 'Jyeshtëros' or headmen of Mankiāl accompanying me volunteered the further information that the wall was intended also to safeguard an earthen pipe line laid underneath it, which had once served to carry water from the Bachai stream to the ruined fort on the top of the Rajī-kōt hill. No trace of this pipe line could be seen where we followed the crest, nor had I time to make a search for possible remains. But considering that the use of water pipes or underground conduits appears to be now quite unknown in Darēl the statement is of distinct interest, whether it be based on tradition or on some actual find. As the fortified top of Rajī-kōt rises considerably above the crest of the connecting ridge just described it is obvious that no water-supply could have been brought to it except by the means just indicated.

Remains on
Rajī-kōt
hill.

The hill-top, which, as seen in Figs. 21, 22, is fairly clear of vegetation, lies about 5,680 feet above sea-level and rises probably about 500 feet above the river bed at its east foot. On reaching

¹⁸ Cf. e. g. details in Fig. 23 with carvings of the Niya Site, *Serindia*, iv. Pl. XVIII, XIX; those in Figs. 24, 28 with Lou-lan motifs, *Serindia*, iv. Pl. XXXI.