

information and the condition of their interior. In front of the lower caves a walled space had served as shelter for cattle, and the headman of Warang remembered how in his youth the people of the village used to place their cattle, as well as their womenfolk, here for the night when raids of Afghān soldiers or Kirghiz were expected. There was nothing to indicate the age of these humble cave shelters, nor to justify their being dignified with the name of 'cave fortress'.¹⁰

Captain
Wood's visit
remem-
bered.

While proceeding the same day to Yamchin, 6 miles lower down, I had on the way opportunities for two interesting observations. At the hamlet of Wenukut I was able to pay a visit to Iḥsān Karīm 'Alī Shāh, the chief 'Pīr' of the Ismailias of Wakhān, who was staying there to perform faith-healing on a sick 'Murīd' or devotee. The old man, worshipped as a great saint, claimed an age of well over a hundred years, and his bodily state seemed to support this. Yet his mental faculties were not impaired, and to my surprise he furnished exact data which left no doubt about his having at his home been the host of Captain Wood, when in the winter of 1838 he was on his way to the Pāmīrs. He had clear recollections, too, of the tyrannical rule of Sultān Murād of Kunduz, often named in Wood's classic narrative.

Khandūt,
Hsüan-
tsang's
Hun-t'o-to.

On nearing Yamchin a good view was obtained of Khandūt, on the opposite bank of the Ab-i-Panja, situated on a fertile alluvial fan. With its 50 to 60 houses it is considered the largest village of Wakhān. In former times it may have been larger still; for two abandoned canals could be seen above that now in use, and there is plenty of additional cultivable land commanded by them. The identity of Khandūt with *Hun-t'o-to* 昏馱多, which Hsüan-tsang mentions as the capital of Wakhān, is not subject to any doubt.¹¹ The pilgrim describes a Buddhist convent in the centre of the town 'built by the first king of the country', and the miracle observed in the great Vihāra of this convent about a canopy of gilt copper suspended above a stone statue of Buddha. It was therefore of special interest to me to learn that Khandūt possesses a famous Ziārat, visited as the resting-place of a saint, Shaikh Bēg, and marked by an old mosque. The shrine was not visible from across the river, being hidden in a grove near the western edge of the fan. But the conspicuous domed tombs close to it suggested a sanctuary of importance, such as tenacity of local worship might lead us to expect in the place of the Buddhist Vihāra.¹²

Ruins of
*Zamr-i-
ātish-parast*.

A day's stay at the pretty hamlet of Yamchin was devoted to a survey of the large hill stronghold known as *Zamr-i-ātish-parast* near by. It was duly noted by Captain Wood, and a sketchy account of it is found in Captain Olufsen's book.¹³ Its remains are remarkable enough in extent and construction to warrant a detailed description. As the sketch-plan in Pl. 47 shows, the fortifications ascend a height of about 1,000 feet on the extremity of the steep spur which flanks the debouchure of the Yamchin stream from the north-west. A peculiar bifurcation of the Vichkut stream, which descends in a gorge farther west, has cut off the lower end of the spur from the rest and given it the shape of a triangle, the base of which faces SE. The foot of the spur is reached beyond the scrub-covered mouth of the Yamchin stream at a distance of about a mile from the hamlet. About 400 feet higher up on the bare rocky slope the outermost line of the defences is

¹⁰ See Olufsen, *Unknown Pamirs*, pp. 89 sqq. The 'ramparts' of an 'upper fortress' there referred to are in reality the walls supporting terraced fields, now abandoned, on the plateau above the cliffs, to which a *jaubār* or canal, since washed away, once carried water.

On p. 92 the frequent occurrence of small caves, natural or artificial, still used as dwellings by poor people in Wakhān, is correctly mentioned.

¹¹ Cf. Julien, *Mémoires*, ii. p. 201; Watters, *Yuan Chwang*, ii. p. 279; *Serindia*, i. p. 63.

¹² I may note here that at Yamchin I was told that at a Ziārat of the village of Inif, almost opposite on the left bank, there is to be seen a stone slab with the footprints of a holy man. These may well have received worship before as *pādukās* of some Buddha or Arhat. Another stone was said to represent a sheep petrified by the same holy man's curse.

Both Khandūt and Inif, being on the Afghān side of the river, were inaccessible to me and also to Afrāz-gul.

¹³ See Wood, *Source of the Oxus*, p. 218; Olufsen, *Unknown Pamirs*, pp. 183 sqq.