

have changed materially within historical times, nor can the volume of water available for irrigation, given the vicinity of two high snowy ranges. But flocks and herds play a great role in the economic conditions of Wakhān, and during periods when a strong rule assured safety from raiding neighbours on the side of Shughnān and the Pāmīrs, these must have represented a very considerable addition to local resources. Nor ought those sources of profit to be ignored which might have accrued from a brisk trade between the Tārīm basin and Badakhshān by this route during periods of assured security. The vicinity of Khandūt, the old capital of Wakhān and probably its naturally most favoured site, suggests that the spur above Yamchin, very strong by nature, was fortified, perhaps, for the purpose of serving as a safe refuge for the rulers. They alone could have carried out so extensive a scheme of defences and provided for adequately manning them.

Position
fortified as
temporary
refuge.

In character the defences correspond in a very striking fashion to the mountain fastness of Ādh-i-samūdh in the vicinity of Kohāt, which I surveyed in 1904, and to that of Kiz-kurghān in Sarīkol.¹⁸ In each case a position naturally very strong was fortified to serve as a temporary refuge in case of serious danger, not for the purpose of permanent occupation. This view is supported by the great scarcity of potsherds at the site above Yamchin—I found only a few behind the main circumvallation and within the citadel—and also by the absence of any remains of habitations except within the latter.¹⁹ The parallel offered by the remains of Kiz-kurghān is particularly instructive also in another respect. I have been able to prove in *Serindia* that these are identical with the mountain stronghold which is mentioned by Hsüan-tsang as the site of a legendary event ascribed by local tradition to Han times and which had become ruined long before his own passage in A. D. 642.²⁰ If so much of the walls of Kiz-kurghān, built with sun-dried bricks and rough stonework above slopes if anything even more precipitous than at Zamr-i-ātish-parast, could survive to the present day, it does not seem impossible that the fortifications of the latter site—no doubt, on the whole somewhat better preserved—were already in being when Hsüan-tsang passed through Wakhān, or were erected not very much later. For it should be remembered that the climate of Wakhān is probably quite as dry as that of Sarīkol, and the snowfall on Kiz-kurghān, at a height of about 13,000 feet, if anything heavier than at the Wakhān site.

Cliff of
Līw-bar
near
Shītkharw.

On September 5th our march down the valley past the pretty hamlets collectively known as Putup brought us, after we had proceeded some 7 miles, to a portion of the 'thalweg' which drift-sand, carried up from the wide river-bed by the prevailing western winds, has converted into a sandy steppe, with tamarisk-cones and desert scrub curiously reminiscent of the Tārīm basin. At the small village of Shītkharw, reached after a march of another 7 miles, on a fertile alluvial fan, I was joined by Qāzī Qadam Shah, whose intelligent help enabled me during the next few days to secure specimens of Ishkāshmī, a Galcha language not previously recorded.²¹ Farther down, where an extremely steep cliff (Fig. 448) rising above the river used, before the making of the Russian bridle-path, to be passable only by sure-footed men with the use of 'toe-holes', he showed me a curious recess in the rock known as *Līw-bar* (Persian *dīw-dara*). Here a demon, who was wont to kill people passing, is believed to have retired into the mountain on being vanquished by a saint.

Before reaching the village of Darshai, where we halted, a remarkably narrow cañon had to be tract, was believed to be somewhat greater, notwithstanding the drain due to emigration caused by the prevailing exactions, &c.

¹⁸ See Stein, *Archaeological Survey Work in NW. Frontier Province*, 1905, pp. 2 sqq.; *Serindia*, i. pp. 73 sqq.

¹⁹ I may note here that I could find no traces of terraced fields on the slope within the protected area, as mentioned

in Olufsen, *Unknown Pamirs*, p. 187, nor of irrigation channels. To bring water to the slope below the citadel would scarcely have been possible without extensive blasting.

²⁰ Cf. *Serindia*, i. p. 75.

²¹ These materials have been published by Sir George Grierson in *Ishkāshmī, Zēbakī and Yazghulāmī*, R.A.S. Prize Publication Fund, 1920.