

in the second half of the eighteenth century Chinese political power made itself felt in Shughnān, just as it did beyond the Oxus valley, too, in Badakhshān and Chitrāl.¹² A local tradition of Chinese control still survives and, as communicated to me by Tūrān Bēg of Shākh-dara, seems to connect it with the Chinese advance across the Pāmīrs which took place in 1759 after the occupation of Kāshgar.¹³

This extension of Chinese political influence to Shughnān and even beyond it may confidently be recognized as a result of the comparative facilities of access that the valleys of Shughnān afford, both from the side of the Pāmīrs and from the open plateaus of Badakhshān. The same geographical factor, together with the Shughnī people's proneness to supplement the scanty resources of their own country by seeking profit outside it, may probably help to explain the admixture of foreign racial elements with the original *Homo Alpinus* type of the population (Fig. 442) which is clearly indicated by Mr. Joyce's analysis of the anthropometrical materials secured on my passage through Shughnān.¹⁴ Racial type of people.

In this connexion I may note that tradition puts the former population of the whole of Shughnān at the high figure of 7,000 households. There can be little doubt that this estimate is greatly exaggerated. Nevertheless I found clear evidence that a great deal of arable land, particularly in the upper portion of the Shākh-dara valley, had gone out of cultivation since an earlier period. Whether this was due to the effects of prolonged maladministration under local Afghān and Bokharan rule, to the slave-trading practices of the last local Mīrs, or possibly to the recently increased facilities for emigration I was not able to ascertain. According to the information uniformly supplied to me, the three tracts of Shākh-dara, Ghund, and Khāruk, visited by me on the Russian side of Shughnān, were reckoned to contain 210, 220, and 60 households, respectively. To this figure a considerable addition would, no doubt, have to be made for the tracts stretching along both banks of the Oxus from below the Ghund debouchure to above Kala-i-Wāmar. Estimates of population.

On September 15th I left Khāruk in order to ascend the valley of Shākh-dara to its head.¹⁵ The march of that day led along a bridle-path following the right bank of the stream and passing a number of picturesque hamlets separated by stretches of grazing grounds. The valley bottom allowed of easy progress throughout and widened to fully half a mile at the village fort of Rāch-kala (about 8,400 feet), once the seat of the Mīrs of Shākh-dara,¹⁶ where we halted. The second march brought us, after we had proceeded about 8 miles, to the point above the hamlet of Bezets where the bottom of the valley turned into a belt of luxuriant riverine tree growth. From the debouchure of the large glacier stream of Bāzun-dara, which we next passed, a difficult route, often used in the old raiding times, leads to Shitkarw in Wakhān. Beyond that we reached a point near the mouth of the Zanōch-dara where the river is hemmed in between wall-like cliffs, and the passage through the defile obstructed by huge masses of fallen rock. The 'Darband' thus formed was defended by two towers. Journey up Shākh-dara.

About two miles farther this defile widens into a basin broken by small rocky ridges. Here at the grazing ground of Bidēch, a terrace rising about 80 feet above the riverine jungle is covered over an area of about 150 yards by 120 with massive walls of ruined dwellings (Fig. 417), to which tradition ascribes 'Kāfir' origin. The masonry of flat unhewn stones set in mud plaster shows considerable solidity and is certainly superior to any seen by me in Shughnī buildings. The walls, Ruins at Bidēch.

¹² See *Serindia*, i. p. 33.

¹³ Cf. above, ii. pp. 857 sq.; also below, p. 883.

¹⁴ See Mr. Joyce's Appendix C.

¹⁵ For a detailed description of Shākh-dara, see Schultz, *Forschungen im Pamir*, pp. 129 sqq.

¹⁶ Of the family of these Mīrs of Shākh-dara Tūrān Bēg

remembered six generations: Daulat Bēg, Hassan Bēg, Atam Bēg, Nādir Shāh, Obaidullah Khān, Azīz Khān (the Mīng-bāshi of the valley at the time). Atam Bēg, the last independent Mīr, was surprised at Rāch-kala by Mīr Abdurrahīm, and with his six brothers killed by being thrown over the precipice below the fort.