

where the cultivated ground at the valley bottom was broken by steep rocky spurs descending close to the river or by stretches of sandy waste along its bank, the eye could rest with joy on the glorious vistas opening to the south. Towering above narrow side valleys, and seemingly quite near, there showed in magnificent boldness ice-clad peaks of the Hindukush main range rising to 22,000 feet and more (Fig. 138). They looked indeed, just as Sung Yün, an early Chinese pilgrim who passed here on his way to the Indus, had described them, like peaks of jade.

There offered welcome opportunities for anthropological work by measurements and observations on the Wakhi population. Of ancient stock, it has preserved, like its Eastern Iranian language, also its well-marked *Homo Alpinus* type. The fair hair and fair eyes of the Wakhis had struck already that observant Jesuit traveller, Benedict Goës, when he passed up Wakhan in 1602 on his way in search of 'Cathay' and noted their resemblance to Flemings.

But what claimed my attention most were the ruins of ancient strongholds, some of them of considerable extent and in part remarkably well preserved, to be found on hill spurs overlooking the valley (Fig. 139). There was much of antiquarian interest to observe in their plans, the construction and decoration of their bastioned walls. The natural protection afforded by unscalable rock-faces of spurs and ravines had always been utilized with skill in these defences. This is not the place to describe them in detail, nor need I set forth the reasons which even in the absence of direct archaeological evidence such as only excavations could produce lead me to believe, that several of these fastnesses go back to a period roughly corresponding to Sasanian