

Ruined
Stūpa near
Thōl.

For such passing observations as my hurried marches along the difficult tracks of Hunza allowed me to gather, I must refer to the pages of my Personal Narrative⁶. But in respect of the only monument of antiquity which I was able to trace along the route, where it winds round the foot of the great Mount Rakiposhi (Fig. 3), the brief description there given requires to be supplemented by some more exact details. Close to the hamlet of Thōl, on the first of the highly cultivated little plateaus which are passed in succession on the left river bank above the historic gorge of Nilth, there stands a ruined Stūpa, shown with its west face in the accompanying photograph (Fig. 4). Considering its exposed position, the relatively good preservation of this monument of Buddhist worship is remarkable. The only serious damage it has sustained is of very recent date, being a characteristic result of the 'advance of modern civilization': the masonry of the base on its southern face has been removed to save a détour of a few feet to the hill road constructed since the occupation of Hunza territory at the close of the campaign of 1891.

The Stūpa is constructed of unhewn slabs, more or less flat, set in rough horizontal layers with a fairly hard plaster. The surface of the rough masonry originally bore a coating of similar plaster, patches of this material being found still adhering to the north face of the upper courses of the base and to the more sheltered mouldings. The lowest story of the base forms a square of 10 ft.; and has a height of 3 ft. 9 in. from the present ground level. On the top of this base, but receding by about 1 ft. from its edge, rests a second story, which is also square, and with its projecting cornice, about 14 in. high, rises to the same height of 3 ft. 9 in. The next story is octagonal and, including its cornice, 3 ft. 10 in. high. It supports a circular drum, about 1½ ft. in height, also surmounted by a cornice. From the latter finally springs the dome of the Stūpa proper. This, in its original shape, appears to have been hemispherical, but its top has been broken, and the extant masonry reaches only a height of about 3½ ft. from the sloping plinth of the drum. Judging from what subsequent experience showed me in the case of Stūpa ruins examined in the Turkestan plains, it may be supposed that treasure-seeking operations for the relic deposit likely to be contained in the centre of the little dome were the main cause of this injury. The total height of the structure, allowing for this loss, cannot have been less than 18 ft. and probably approached 20 ft.

Architecture
of Thōl
Stūpa.

This relatively great elevation, in proportion to the dimensions of the square base, strikingly distinguishes the Thōl Stūpa from the Stūpas examined by me in Chinese Turkestan. Those among the latter which were found sufficiently well-preserved to permit exact measurements, like the Stūpas of Maurī-Tim, the Niya Site, Endere and Rawak, in their original state showed a total elevation approximately equal to the side of their square base where it rested on the ground, i.e. to the greatest dimensions of the ground-plan. Striking differences are to be found also in the introduction of an octagonal above the square stories of the base, and in the boldly projecting and massive cornices by which these several stories and the circular drum beneath the dome are surmounted. For neither of these distinguishing features am I able to adduce exact parallels from Stūpa ruins with which I am acquainted in the North-West of India and the adjoining frontier regions. But there appears in them something curiously recalling the style and general character of the Chortens of Sikkim and Ladāk, and suggestive of Tibetan influence.

Mountain
tracks in
Hunza.

The small alluvial plateaus fringing at intervals the deep-cut bed of the Hunza river between Nilth and Baltit are the only portion of the valley where a track fit for regular use by laden animals could be maintained without recourse to modern methods of engineering. Above the village of Baltit, probably from early times the seat of Hunza chiefs⁷, the route towards the

⁶ See *Ruins of Khotan*, pp. 32 sqq.

⁷ For a photograph of their picturesque old castle see Fig. 2.