

Panjāb Muhammadans for the Indian Army.<sup>1</sup> The Brahmans, too, of the Salt Range hold a good record in military service.

The next day's march took us over much rough ground and presented varied interest. It first led south to the famous Janjūa stronghold of Makhiāla, which occupies the extremity of a steep ridge flanked by ravines with precipitous rock walls near the brink of the outer range. Within it we were hospitably received at the ancestral home of one of the chief families of the tribe, the one headed by the Janjūa 'Sultāns'. Descending thence to the south-west we visited the large village of Salōi, favoured by a plentiful spring and a place of some consequence. Past it an old route descends across several spurs to Chanuwāla and thence leads on to Haranpur.

Continuing for some 5 miles, first to the south-west through a fairly open valley and then up a steep track, we reached the village of Kusk, once a place of importance in connexion with the salt trade from the great Khewra Salt mines. The small basin in which it stands, and through which two routes to the riverine plain pass, is dominated on the east by a completely isolated rocky hill which rises boldly to a height of more than 200 feet (Fig. 12). The hill falls away in sheer precipices (see Plan 2) on all sides except that towards the village, where the steep slope is ascended by a difficult path and the top is defended by a massive wall faced with dressed slabs of sandstone and flanked by two large octagonal bastions. Owing to the natural strength of the position, this stronghold was practically impregnable before long-range guns came into use. Hence Mahārāja Ranjit Singh about 1810 besieged it ineffectually for six months, until want of water compelled the Janjūa Rāja of Kusk who held it to surrender.

The defences have suffered comparatively little by time. That chief's grandson ascribed the construction of the fort to his ancestor Sultān 'Ālim Khān of ten generations back. The statement seemed compatible with the constructive features shown by the crenellated curtain walls and bastions, which point to Mughal times. The crest of the hill is occupied by a heavily plastered Hindu shrine, a place of regular pilgrimage for Hindus from the plains and probably of some antiquity. The hill itself, owing to its great natural strength, is likely to have been used as a safe place of refuge from early times. A long ride along bare hills to the west brought us late the same evening to Chōa Saidān Shāh.

I well remembered the place from previous visits as perhaps the pleasantest in the Salt Range, and was glad to use a stay of several days there for renewing my acquaintance with localities in the vicinity presenting distinct archaeological

<sup>1</sup> It is probable that many if not most of the mercenaries who, under the term of *Saindbava*, figure prominently in the later Hindu period of

Kashmīr history, were soldiers from the Salt Range area; cf. my note on *Rājatar*. viii. 1868.