

The deeply-cut square holes, arranged outside the trefoil niche in the form of a pentagon, undoubtedly served to support a wooden framework which once protected the image.

Colonel Biddulph has already noticed the remains of an ancient irrigation work, which can be traced close by, along the right or eastern side of the mouth of Kergah-Nullah. The square sockets which are seen there, sunk into the steep rock face at a uniform level and for a considerable distance, were manifestly designed to hold stout pieces of timber, on which a wooden trough could be fixed to conduct water from the stream of the Nullah for the irrigation of fields in the main valley. The comparatively high level at which this conduit runs above the rock-strewn bottom of the Nullah is easily accounted for by its purpose of carrying water to slopes which could not be reached by irrigation cuts taken from the stream at its actual mouth.

Ancient
water-con-
duit.

That the construction of this watercourse belongs to an early period, certainly pre-Muhammadan, is proved beyond doubt by the excellent cutting of the sockets, which shows a command of stone-craft long lost among the population of these valleys. We may well suppose that in a period of greater material culture Gilgit was more thickly inhabited than it is now, and that in consequence portions of ground on the hill sides and on alluvial plateaus more elevated than any now under cultivation were utilized for fields and required to be irrigated. Throughout the Gilgit valley it is only the water obtained from the side-streams that renders agriculture and the growing of fruit trees possible⁴.

In connexion with these few notes on ancient remains in Gilgit, I may mention that the ruined mounds which Major J. Manners Smith and other officers on duty in Gilgit have noted at Hanzil and Jutiāl in all probability represent the remains of Stūpas. I was not able to visit them, but the photograph of the mound near Hanzil (a village about nine miles above Gilgit Fort) which is reproduced in the report of the Pamir Boundary Commission, distinctly suggests this origin⁵. The fact that in either place the ruin shows only rough masonry of unhewn stone would render it difficult to arrive at any conclusion as to the date of construction without systematic excavation.

Ancient
mounds in
Gilgit.

The valley of the Hunza river, through which I passed from Gilgit to the Tāghdumbāsh Pāmīr, is, alike by the stern grandeur of its peaks and glaciers, the natural difficulty of its communications, and the strange mixture of races and languages among its population, a mountain region of exceptional interest. But the same ice-crowned ranges and almost equally formidable gorges which have rendered Hunza until our days so secure against foreign invasion, have also effectively barred the valley from ever serving as a real line of communication or otherwise acquiring historical importance.

Valley of
Hunza.

We have striking evidence of this isolation in the survival of Burisheski, the tongue spoken in Hunza proper, which has no relation whatever to any of the great language families (Indian, Irānian, Turkī, Tibetan) that meet close to this easternmost point of the Hindukush watershed. Nor can it be doubted that these secluded communities, in their customs, traditions, and economic conditions, must have preserved much that would prove highly instructive to antiquarian students.

⁴ See Drew, *Jummoo*, p. 407; compare also the remarks, p. 404, illustrating the reduction of arable land in Astōr which has followed long-continued decay of the artificial watercourses.

⁵ See *Report of the Pamir Boundary Commission*, p. 33. The decidedly circular shape of the mound makes it very improbable that the remains can be those of a 'frontier tower of ordinary fashion', as assumed by one of the members of

that Commission. Such towers are regularly built square throughout the whole of the Dard region. On the other hand, I fail to see how 'the construction of the masonry' can be adduced as an argument against 'the theory of Buddhist construction', considering that neither the masonry nor any other details of construction of pre-Muhammadan ruins in the valleys between the Hindukush and Kashmīr have as yet been examined by a trained archaeologist.