

treated within square or circular frames,⁸ played the chief part. In the decoration of the abacus above the pillars of the architraves and corbels, the familiar open lotus prevailed. The two 'Mihrābs' or niches occupying the centre of the spaces between the three pilasters of the west wall, were flanked by side panels which distinctly recalled the slanting door-jambs familiar to Gandhāra architecture no less than to the wood construction of the Niya Site dwellings.⁹ The triangular and undulating frets decorating these side panels can easily be traced also in the remains of ornamental wood-carving from ancient Turkestan sites.¹⁰ Even more ancient, perhaps, is the Stūpa-shaped fret which appears, both in convex and concave form, on the panels forming the lintels; it is common both in early Indian and in Graeco-Buddhist architectural ornament and traceable also in Turkestan.¹¹

Quite as rich and old in design was the carving on articles of furniture, no doubt of local manufacture, such as trunks, cupboards, boxes. But in the absence of illustrations, which I had no time to secure, a detailed description would be useless. There was a gratifying display, too, of graceful Aptābas, Chaugāns, Chilapchis or ewers in metal. But by their forms and work I could clearly recognize them as imports from Western Turkestan or from Khotan, so that they were of interest only as evidence of continued trade connexion. The same applies probably also to much of the silversmith's work which I was allowed to admire among the treasures, such as ear-rings, necklaces, amulets, brought forth from the ladies' brass-bound safe. But even among these I came upon articles of rougher make but curiously old design, which clearly were of local manufacture. Fortunately there could be no doubt on this score in regard to the Chitrāl rugs which covered the sitting platforms, &c., and of which some are visible in the photograph, Fig. 16. Though all of modern make, as shown, alas, by the crude aniline dyes used for their colouring, they abounded in simple geometrical patterns of manifestly ancient origin. Thus I noticed the particular frequency of the Svastika, the cross, a Stūpa-border, and a duplicated Greek fret, most of which can be made out in the photograph. Widely spread as these patterns are in the art of different regions, it is yet of interest to observe that all of them can actually be found also in the fragments of ancient rugs which were brought to light by my excavations from Khotan to Lop-nōr.¹²

Designs on
furniture.

I felt doubly grateful for the glimpse which this interesting house afforded of the old art traditions surviving in these Hindukush valleys; for the succeeding long march from Mīragrām to Shuyist showed only too plainly the increasing harshness of the climatic conditions with which civilization has to contend higher up in the Yārkhūn Valley. At the small hamlets of Jhōpu which were reached after passing long barren slopes of rock or detritus, and where the route to Yasīn across the Tui Pass diverges, I saw the last fruit-trees of the valley, still in wintry bareness. Beyond the valley narrows to the gloomy defile appropriately known as 'Darband' (Fig. 17), flanked on either side by unscalable spurs of great height, and here I was able to examine the decaying watch-towers which on either side of the river guard this natural gate of Mastūj.¹³ A position of such manifest defensive strength must always, down to quite recent times, have claimed importance in the invasions threatening from the Wakhān side. But there was no record or tradition to tell me of the fights which this 'Klause' is likely to have witnessed in the past. Already before reaching Warsam, a hamlet of Jhōpu, I had noticed traces of old cultivation on a large alluvial fan now abandoned to desolate waste of detritus. Once beyond Darband I was struck by the stretches of riverine flat or

The Dar-
band of
Mastūj.

⁸ Circular frames enclosing the same flower pattern were frequently observed by me also in modern Khotan wood-carvings. Their origin is traceable also in ancient carvings, though there in connexion with other floral patterns; cf. Pl. XVIII, XIX, XXXI. For square frames see Pl. XLVII.

⁹ Cf. Foucher, *L'Art du Gandhāra*, p. 108; Figs. 31, 32; below, Fig. 56.

¹⁰ See Pl. XVII.

¹¹ Cf. e. g. Foucher, *L'Art du Gandhāra*, i. Fig. 98; below, Mi. xi. 00126, Mi. xii. 0028 in Pl. CXXXVII.

¹² Cf. below, Pl. XLIX, CXX; *Ancient Khotan*, i. pp. xxiv, 397 sqq.; ii. Pl. LXXV.

¹³ See *Desert Cathay*, i. p. 49.