

to archaeological excavations on both sides of the Perso-Afghān border may soon be able to extend the activity of its scholars to the rich field reserved in Sīstān. It only remains for me to add that it will be convenient in dealing with this region to disregard the chronological order followed elsewhere in recording my labours and to treat the remains surveyed by me according to topographical grouping.

SECTION II.—THE REMAINS OF KŌH-I-KHWĀJA

On December 6th I left the hospitable roof of the Sīstān Consulate at Nasratābād for Kōh-i-Khwāja, and passing next morning beyond the village of Daudī over flat uncultivated ground liable to inundation, arrived at the edge of the Hāmūn where it faces the rock island of Kōh-i-Khwāja (Fig. 473). My reason for visiting the ruined site to be found there first was that this conspicuous hill, rising in complete isolation more than 400 feet above the central portion of the Hāmūn marshes and the level expanse of the Helmand delta, bears on its top much-frequented Muhammadan shrines which form the object of regular pilgrimages. Its sanctity is marked by its very name, the 'hill of the Saint', i. e. 'Alī. The very striking natural features of this hill, rising as it does in the very centre of a wide lacustrine basin, were calculated to attract local worship from early times, and belief in the tenacity of such worship suggested antiquity for the ruins.

The hill of Kōh-i-Khwāja is separated from the western edge of the alluvial plain by a stretch of reed-covered marsh, about a mile across in the winter season of low water but probably much wider later in the year. The elevation of the shore as recorded by the survey near this point, 1,600 feet, is so low that the position occupied by the hill is likely to have been an island for a very long period in the past. Its ruined site is mentioned as an island stronghold in the Hāmūn by a Muhammadan chronicle of Herāt, in connexion with events of the 15th century A. D.¹ The summit of the hill forms a rock-girt plateau (Fig. 475) extending, as the sketch-plan, Pl. 52, shows, for over a mile from NE. to SW. and not much less across. For about 150 feet the cliffs below the plateau edge fall off with great steepness (Figs. 458, 463, 473), while lower down their foot is hidden in easier talus slopes stretching to the narrow fringe of salt-encrusted foreshore. At the south-eastern end of the hill a narrow ridge (Fig. 455) tails off from below the ruin-crowned knoll of Kok-i-Zāl; on the terraced slopes of this ridge stand the ruins of the site usually known as *Ghāgha-shahr*, the 'town of the Ghāgha'.²

Steep ravines separate the ridge both on the west and east from the adjacent slopes of the hill and account for the choice of this position as a place capable of defence. The main circumvallation, as seen in the sketch-plan, Pl. 52, is built, like the structures within, of sun-dried bricks, and encloses an area measuring about 170 yards from N. to S. and about 130 yards where it is widest. Where this area narrows in its highest portion, it reaches close to the foot of the cliffs crowned by the walls of Kok-i-Zāl. An outer enclosure, of much weaker construction, appears to have stretched from the foot of the cliffs in a semicircle round this walled area at a distance varying from about 160 to 100 yards. But this has badly decayed and is traceable only on the south and south-west; scarcely any structural remains are found between it and the main walls.³ These show a thickness nowhere less than 8 feet and, where they ascend the slopes, are built on foundations far more massive. They rise in places still to 30 feet or more. The bricks, like those in most of the large

¹ See Tate, *Seistan*, p. 267.

² This is the form of the name as I heard it. Mr. Tate, *Seistan*, p. 265, spells the name as *Kakha* or *Kak-hā* and connects it with that of a section of the Farsiwān, the supposed autochthonous population of Sīstān; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 281, 295.

³ See the rough plan, Pl. 53. The measurements shown in this plan, owing to the difficulties presented by the ruined condition of the buildings, their extent, &c., must be treated as only approximate. Of the circumvallation in particular no detailed survey was practicable within the available time.