

archaeological explorations on the ground are likely to elucidate. The hurried examination I was able to carry out of the ruined site has sufficed to show that its remains look back on a long history. Not until they have been systematically cleared and studied—a matter of protracted labours, perhaps of years—will it be possible to determine the original purpose of the main structures and the changed uses to which they have probably been put down to late medieval times. Hence it would not be safe to see in these mural paintings of Buddhist type more than a proof that the site established at the 'hill of the Saint' included a shrine devoted to Buddhist worship.¹² That the site must have attracted Zoroastrians in still larger numbers, since theirs was probably by far the largest community in Sīstān throughout historical times before the advent of Islām, may be considered as certain, particularly in view of the reference in the Avesta to be mentioned below. But that places of popular pilgrimage in the East, especially if they are of the 'Svayambhū-tīrtha' type, are apt to be provided with sacred establishments ministering to the needs of wholly different sects and creeds is a fact abundantly illustrated from India to Turkeṣtān and China.

Owing to the advanced state of decay of the central hall, v, whose dominating position and size necessarily gave it special interest, my examination had failed to reveal the original purpose for which it was intended. Could it be the principal apartment of a palace or possibly a place of Zoroastrian worship? The relievos found on the walls facing the terrace in front suggested that the building had a secular character, but could scarcely be considered to furnish a definite proof. Therefore the discovery of remains of mural painting beneath that terrace was particularly welcome. They were found in a subterranean vaulted corridor, Gha. iv, which evidently once extended along the whole length of the terrace facing the quadrangle and was meant to support it. In its present ruined condition it can be traced for about 62 feet, from its broken opening seen in Fig. 461 near the porch of the central hall, running towards the SW. Its width between the side walls as I found them is $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet. The facing of the wall towards the quadrangle showed a small break in one place, and here one of the men prospecting for more 'pictures' noticed a piece of painted plaster on the surface behind. Removal of a little of the coarse outer brickwork disclosed part of a painted human figure and proved that here, too, later masonry was hiding an older wall and vaulting. This later masonry consisted of sun-dried bricks, $24'' \times 13'' \times 3''$ in size and carelessly set in mud plaster. It had, no doubt, been inserted in order to strengthen the vaulting at some time when its condition had caused misgivings.

Remains of
wall-paint-
ings in
corridor
Gha. iv.

The portion of the earlier wall surface laid bare showed the head and bust of a nude male figure painted in terra-cotta colour and in unmistakably classical style. In order to follow up this interesting discovery I decided to have as much as possible of the adjacent later masonry removed. But in order to do this in safety it proved necessary to strengthen the vaulting, which had evidently become insecure already in ancient times, and to lighten as far as possible the weight of the brickwork and debris resting upon it. For the former purpose I had a wall built along the centre line of the corridor right up to the top of the vaulting. This task and the removal of the heavy debris from the terrace above was carried out under the supervision of the Public Works employee attached to the Consulate, while the time needed for its execution was profitably utilized by me for a reconnaissance in the desert to the south. When on my return the later wall facing was carefully removed for a distance of about 15 feet on both inner and outer walls, it was seen that white ants, together with the moist plaster with which the later masonry had been applied, had destroyed the original decoration of the walls and vaulting almost entirely, with the exception of a space about 8 feet long at the place of the first discovery.

Removal of
later wall.

¹² It is in this sense that I wish now on fuller consideration to restrict the cursory reference to a 'large Buddhist

monastery' made in my preliminary account, *Geogr. Journal*, xlviii. p. 221.