

ribbons. The whole of this decoration, like the figures below, clearly suggested a strong Hellenistic influence. Remains of the same or a closely similar decoration could be traced also at other places on both inner and outer walls, but far less clearly. Such painted plaster surface as had survived on the wall portions that were cleared of the later masonry was too much effaced or broken to permit designs to be recognized with certainty. But it may be mentioned that some 5 feet beyond the composition above described a curving portion of a large festoon-like ornament, marked by a succession of differently coloured bands, could be made out. Small leaf-like shapes were visible both above and below this festoon (?), but the significance of the scheme was not clear.

The clearing of the debris above the SW. end of the corridor showed that the right-hand side of the doorway *k* leading into the chamber viii was decorated below with a panel in hard plaster of Paris. This showed a sunk pattern of geometrical design as seen in the drawing, Pl. 54. The grooves in the sunk surface retained traces of red colouring. The doorway was filled with brickwork to above the level of the panel and this had helped to protect the latter. The plaster of Paris covering had extended below the panel down to the floor. There is nothing to prove that this stucco decoration is contemporary with the construction of the chamber where it was found, and it looks decidedly later than the mural painting on the original wall of the corridor below. That the corridor must belong to the earliest portion of the ruins is quite certain from its position beneath the terrace which bears the central cella v, upon which the whole of the quadrangle with the structures surrounding it is aligned. How remote may be the period when that mural decoration was executed it is impossible at present to determine. But if the distinctly Hellenistic appearance of the design of the two facing figures is considered, together with the architectural detail of the terrace wall (the Doric capitals of the columns hidden behind the buttresses), it seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that the construction of the central part of the ruined site dates back to early Sasanian times.

Decorated
plaster
panel.

SECTION IV.—REMAINS ON THE HILL-TOP

Outside the northern face of the circumvallation the slope rises rapidly towards the foot of the precipitous cliffs (Fig. 458) that line the hill-top on this side as along most of its edge. Wherever the slope permitted construction, small terraces are found here, roughly built with stones and occupied by superterrene tombs. Thus an extensive cemetery encircles the walled area. Most of these tombs appeared to be correctly orientated after Muhammadan custom. Generally the flat stones placed above the low stone walls had fallen in and allowed remains of bleached bones to be seen. Some of these closely packed groups of tombs lie quite near the torrent beds down which occasional rain finds its way along both sides of the circumvallation. The revetments or *bands* of large slabs which are to be seen here and there along and within these beds are more likely to have been placed there to prevent tombs being undercut and washed away than for the purpose of catching rain-water.

Tombs on
slope behind
Ghāgha-
shahr.

The edge of the plateau, which, where it is highest, rises approximately 200 feet above the topmost ruins of Ghāgha-shahr, is gained by a fairly well preserved road ascending along the cliffs over walled-up ramps (Fig. 463). In one place the bare rock face has to be climbed over a height of about 20 feet. Following a natural ledge the road then passes through what appears to have been a stretch of roughly built stone wall, closing a dip in the rocky rim of the hill-top. The height overlooking this dip from the NE. is occupied by the small walled ruin known as *Kok-i-Zāl* (Fig. 474). The area enclosed by massive brick walls measures about 50 yards by 30, and comprises a row of square vaulted apartments along the north-western wall and a congeries of small quarters, also vaulted, on the side towards Ghāgha-shahr. There can be little doubt that this walled enclosure

Ruins of
Kok-i-Zāl.