

was intended to protect the site below against attack from the height immediately above. The sun-dried bricks used in its walls measure mostly about $17'' \times 12'' \times 4-5''$, and thus differ from the somewhat larger ones found in most of the older structures below.

Ruined
mounds on
plateau
edge.

Ascending from the previously mentioned dip along remains of a wall for about 50 yards to the SW. one reaches a small completely decayed mound raised on a stone foundation, as seen in the foreground of Fig. 474. It probably marks the position of a brick-built tower intended to guard the road leading down through the dip. A second small mound of the same character, about 160 yards farther to the SW. (Fig. 458), occupies the top of the cliffs just above the point where the outer enceinte of Ghāgha-shahr ends at their foot (Pl. 52).

Fort of
Chihil-dukhtarān.

Proceeding along the edge of the plateau westwards for about one-third of a mile one arrives at the ruined fort known as *Chihil-dukhtarān*, the 'Forty Maidens'. It occupies the southern extremity of a plateau tongue which falls off very precipitously to the south and west. On the latter side it overlooks the small valley of *Dara-i-sōkhta* through which leads the easiest ascent to the hill-top. It was, no doubt, in order to guard this approach that the little fort was placed there. Its enclosing wall of well-laid solid brickwork forms an oblong about 40 yards by 30. It has loopholes along most of its length, placed only a few feet above the ground. The gate in the middle of the east face is flanked by two small round towers, one of which retains the vaulting between an upper and a lower story. Round bastions defend the corners. A long hall, once vaulted, extends along the inside of the western wall and has a foundation of large roughly squared stone slabs. Similar foundation walls found along the north and east walls mark decayed smaller quarters. The potsherds found at this small fort as well as at Kok-i-Zāl mostly show the same superior red clay and ribbed outer surface which is characteristic of the type of pottery prevalent at Ghāgha-shahr. This and the general condition of the ruin point to Chihil-dukhtarān belonging approximately to the same period as the latter. A popular legend reproduced by Mr. Tate accounts for the name.¹ About 80 yards to the north there are found remains of a much-decayed square enclosure built of rough stones, which might mark a Sarai. Some 20 yards farther in the same direction a series of ruined rooms of the same construction extends for about 30 yards from east to west.

Places of
local
worship.

The other objects to be noticed on the top of Kōh-i-Khwāja claim antiquarian interest as visible evidence of the sanctity that attaches to the hill in present-day local worship. Close to where the old road passes through the dip of the rocky rim two round holes in a stone are pointed out to the faithful as the footprints of Rustam's famous horse, and are known as *Zum-i-Duldul*. A spring is believed to have once issued from them. A larger rock farther up and about 250 yards west of Kok-i-Zāl is supposed to retain the supernaturally long footprints left by 'Khwāja' or holy 'Alī. They are marked by two furrows nearly 2 feet long, separating natural corrugations of the rock surface. A rough stone enclosure protects the sacred spot. Here, as in so many places on the Indian North-East Frontier and in Central Asia, tenacity of local worship may have substituted the Muhammadan saint for Gautama Buddha.²

Ziārats on
Kōh-i-
Khwāja.

Muhammadan pilgrims from all over Sīstān venerate and visit in their thousands a group of Ziārats situated towards the northern edge of the plateau (Fig. 475; Pl. 52). Particularly at the Naurōz or New Year's festival the whole plateau is a scene of great rejoicings, and for one night also, according to local report, of a good deal of promiscuous licence. The principal shrine appears to be that of *Pīr Ghaltān* near the brow of the hill-top. At three other sacred tombs on somewhat lower ground I found large stones set upright, near which the pilgrims' offerings are deposited. At the supposed last resting-place of Pīr Gandum these consist of grain. Another Ziārat is that

¹ See Tate, *Seistan*, p. 266.

² Cf. my paper on 'Buddhist Local Worship in Muhammadan Central Asia', *J.R.A.S.*, 1910, pp. 839 sqq.