

Two observations are particularly instructive. One is the extreme copiousness of that fine regularly ribbed ware which is so common at Ghāgha-shahr and which can there be associated definitely with Sasanian times and probably also with a somewhat earlier period.¹ The second is the fact that of glazed pottery fragments such as abound at all sites regularly occupied during Muhammadan times, whether early or late, only very few could be found. On the other hand, ornamented pieces such as are to be picked up at Shahrīstān with comparative frequency show types of decoration which are altogether absent at the ruins of the numerous sites of the Muhammadan period visited by me in Sīstān. The decorative motives used are of a type which, as far as Sīstān is concerned, may be called archaic. For details of these patterns, which are either incised, punched, or done in relief, I must refer to Mr. Andrews' analysis of the decorated specimens described in the List at the end of this section.^{1a} Here, however, it deserves to be noted that neither at Shahrīstān nor at Ghāgha-shahr did I come across a single piece of that painted prehistoric pottery with which I had such ample opportunities of becoming familiar at wind-eroded sites in the desert south of the present cultivated area of Sīstān, both before and after my survey of Shahrīstān.

Indications
from
pottery.

Only from systematic excavations could definite evidence be hoped for as to the period to which the earliest remains of the site go back and as to the length of time over which its regular occupation extended. The indications detailed above appear to me, however, sufficient to justify the belief that the occupation of Shahrīstān dates from historical times preceding Sasanian rule, but may well have continued for some time during the latter. Subsequently, the ridge with its crumbling fortifications may have on occasion served as a temporary place of refuge. But it is very unlikely that after its final abandonment the site could ever have been permanently occupied by more than a few huts, such as are now to be found there belonging to cultivators of recently reclaimed jungle (Fig. 477).

Early period
of occupa-
tion.

Local tradition certainly ascribes great antiquity to the remains of Shahrīstān, but in spite of inquiries made with due care and caution I failed to hear of the name 'Rām Shahrīstān' being applied nowadays to the site. It is mainly on the strength of such a designation that Mr. Tate has proposed to identify the site with the Rām Shahrīstān of which a passage of Istakhrī (tenth century A. D.) quoted by Sir Henry Rawlinson states that it was the ancient capital of Sīstān, then lying in ruins and situated on the high road to Kirmān at a distance of three marches from Zaranj.² The latter place, the early medieval capital, is, by common belief, and it seems rightly, located at Nād-'Alī, about 12 miles to the north-east of Shahrīstān. Hence the distance, if correctly indicated, clearly points to some site farther away to the south-west.³

Alleged
identity
with 'Rām
Shahrīstān'.

From Shahrīstān I visited the remains known as *Ātish-kadah* or *Ātish-gāh*, 'the fire-temple', situated to the west of the village of Kimmak and at a direct distance of about 6 miles from the former site. They occupy the northern extremity of a narrow ridge of clay which rises quite detached, like a Mesa, close to the wide belt of ground liable to inundation from the Rūd-i-Sīstān.⁴ The

Site of
*Ātish-
kadah*.

¹ Owing to its commonness at Shahrīstān, I omitted to include more specimens of this ribbed ware among the pieces brought away; for the type see Pl. CXV, Gha. 02, 8.

^{1a} Cf. also Mr. Andrews' 'General Note' in Chap. XXX. sec. iii.

² Cf. Tate, *Seistan*, pp. 194 sq. For Sir Henry Rawlinson's quotation, cf. his 'Notes on Seistan', *J. R. Geogr. Soc.*, 1873, p. 283.

³ Sir Henry Rawlinson had for this reason suggested Rāmūd (see below, ii. p. 947) as a likely location for Rām

Shahrīstān. It is true the ruins now known as Rāmūd are of recent date. But to the NE. of that site I found remains of a far earlier period; cf. below, ii. pp. 951 sqq. The direct distance to these from Zaranj (Nād-'Alī) is about 56 miles on the map.

It ought to be mentioned that the name *Shahrīstān*, not Rām Shahrīstān, is shown as that of the site above discussed in the record of the Sīstān survey as originally reproduced.

⁴ For a brief reference, cf. Tate, *Seistan*, pp. 192 sq.