

Effect of
wind-ero-
sion.

it at intervals and a small quadrangular work guarded the point where a gate known as Darwāza-i-Bakhtiārī led through the north-eastern face. It was of interest to observe here how closely the results of the erosive action of the prevailing wind in Sīstān resemble those which are illustrated so strikingly by the ruins of the Lop and Su-lo-ho basins. The wall facing to the north-west, exposed to the full force of the 'Sad-ō-bīst rōz' wind, has for the most part been eroded nearly to the level of the ground, as shown by Fig. 482, while the lines of wall lying close to the direction of wind still rise in more or less continuous stretches.

Interior of
walled
enclosure.

The resemblance of the whole site to those surveyed in those distant Central-Asian deserts was made still more impressive by the appearance of the area within the circumvallation. As the sketch-plan, Pl. 56, shows, it is in places overrun by dunes and elsewhere presents a sandy waste covered with tamarisks and thorny scrub. Within and outside the walls near the south-eastern corner the ground left unprotected by vegetation has been furrowed into regular Yārdang ridges from 3 to 7 feet or so in height. At the same time the destruction due to cultivation could be judged by the almost complete disappearance of the circumvallation near the citadel, where fields laid out around the modern village of Zāhidān have invaded the enclosed area. A considerable portion of the interior is covered with Muhammadan graves. Many of them looked quite recent, the area near the Ziārat known as Chihil-pīr forming a favourite burial-place for the neighbouring villages. Wherever the ground near the citadel and amidst the scattered ruins of the town area to the NE. of it has been scoured by wind-driven sand, pottery debris is disclosed in abundance. Much of it is glazed ware, as shown by the specimens in the List below. The absence of ribbed pieces here was significant, proving that occupation of the town did not go back to the pre-Muhammadan period.

Ruin of
Kala-i-
Timūr.

About 300 yards beyond the NE. face of the circumvallation there lies a smaller walled enclosure, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ furlongs square, known as *Kala-i-Timūr*. The walls facing NE. and SW., though only about 4 to 5 feet thick, are in fair preservation, while those on the two sides directly exposed to the force of the wind have been badly breached or completely effaced, as seen in the foreground of Fig. 482. Near the centre of the enclosed area rises the imposing ruin of a mansion (Fig. 495), double-storied, with vaulted rooms surrounding a central hall about 30 feet by 23.⁴ The sketch-plan in Pl. 58 shows the interior disposition of the building. It undoubtedly was intended to serve as the residence of the ruler when regard for safety did not oblige him to seek it within the fortified palace represented by the citadel. The arrangement of the plan suggests that the main entrance lay from the east, where a broad terrace, once probably fronted by steps, gave access to a kind of ante-chamber. At the back of the central hall space was spared in the thickness of one wall for stairs leading to the upper floor. The orientation of the building was, as in all Sīstān structures, old and new, adapted to the purpose of securing protection against the prevailing wind, blowing from a little west of north.⁵ The sun-dried bricks measure either $10'' \times 6'' \times 2\frac{1}{2}''$ or $10'' \times 10'' \times 2\frac{1}{2}''$. It deserves to be noted that throughout the building the vaulting shows voussoirs with masonry of the regular Western type.

Ruined
mosque and
Yakhdān.

Within the same enclosure rise the ruins of several other structures, as marked in Pl. 56, which probably served for the accommodation of the chiefs' retinue and similar purposes. The largest of these, built against the south-western wall of the enclosure, shows a plan resembling that of the central mansion. At a distance from the latter of about 3 furlongs to the NW., and closely adjoining a line of wall which is traceable for some distance in that direction, the remains are found of two structures which local tradition, probably rightly, considers to have been a Masjid and *Yakhdān*

⁴ For a photograph of the interior of this hall, see Tate, *Seistan*, p. 221.

⁵ According to McMahon, *Geogr. Journal*, xxviii. 1906, p. 224, the direction varies between $316\frac{1}{2}^\circ$ and $333\frac{3}{4}^\circ$.