

of the Helmand.⁴ Towards the close of the eighteenth century Malik Bahrām Khān, then ruling over Sīstān under Afghān suzerainty, among other irrigation works assured a supply of water to the old channel of the Rūd-i-biyābān sufficient to permit of the renewed cultivation of portions of the southern delta near Hauzdār and Machī in the north and Rāmrūd in the south.⁵ But the recovery of this ground was of short duration, and early in the nineteenth century the whole of it was finally abandoned to the desert, together with what cultivation had survived along the Rūd-i-biyābān near the ruins of Trākun and Gina on the Afghān side of the boundary.

Successive periods of abandonment of S. delta.

It is directly due to this present complete abandonment and to the effect of previous similar periods of relinquishment, when this region was completely bereft of surface water from the Helmand, that archaeological evidence of occupation at widely different periods can be traced here with greater clearness than is possible in the main Helmand delta to the north. The remains of approximately the same period are not confined to a particular neighbourhood, but can be found, distributed in layers as it were, over the greater portion of the area. Hence in describing the remains surveyed by me it will be convenient to follow a quasi-historical grouping rather than a purely topographical one. We may well start with the latest ruins; for it was these that I saw first, and their date is attested by living memory.

Trace of unfinished Kārēz.

Proceeding on December 19th by the high road leading south from the present 'capital' of Persian Sīstān, I noticed with interest the striking resemblance of the belt of gravel-covered Dasht crossed beyond the cultivated ground of Lūtak village to the tongues of 'Sai' fringing the terminal basin of the Su-lo-ho. Lines of isolated clay terraces or Mesas rise near the plateau edge, and here, too, they seemed to me to owe their existence to the combined effect of wind-erosion and water action.⁶ About 7 miles beyond Lūtak the caravan track across the plateau runs parallel to little decayed earth heaps of circular shape and low in the middle, which my guides pointed out as spoil heaps of an old Kārēz.⁷ This Kārēz was said to have been intended to carry water towards the southern delta from near the village of Warmāl, but never to have been finished.

Ruins of Hauzdār.

Beyond the plateau the road crosses a wide bay of the area annually inundated from the Hāmūn, and then reaches the ruins of Hauzdār, enclosed by a quadrangular circumvallation. This has its gate on the east face, which measures about 140 yards. Apart from a domed water reservoir (*hausz*), which has given the place its name, the interior is occupied by domed mud hovels clustering around a dilapidated mansion; their construction and condition bear out the local view that occupation of the fortified village continued till cultivation on this tract was abandoned early in the last century. The few scattered ruins, including a high windmill of the usual Sīstān type, to be seen within a radius of about 2 miles to the north and east of Hauzdār, proved all of the same late origin. In all of them the bricks are of small size and the arches and vaults of the regular Western type. The same holds good also of the ruins of the small fortified village known as Kundar (Fig. 490), situated about 4 miles to the SW.

Remains of Ākhur-i-Rustam.

But a low mound in the same direction rising above the bare flat plain at a distance of about $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles from Hauzdār (Fig. 489) was found to bear remains of manifest antiquity. They are called *Ākhur-i-Rustam*, being popularly supposed to have served as a manger for Rustam's giant steed. A central mound of brickwork (see the sketch-plan, Pl. 57) rises to a height of about 23 feet above the top of the low mound, but is too badly decayed to allow of determination of the original shape

⁴ See Tate, *Seistan*, p. 163.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 167 sq.

⁶ Cf. *Serindia*, ii. pp. 575, 589.

⁷ Possibly it was here that Mr. Tate, *Seistan*, p. 195, thought to recognize 'a succession of low pillars constructed

with baked brick' and now dissolved 'into dust of a dull orange colour', which he believed to be intended to mark an ancient trade route. I could find nothing to support this interpretation; but the line followed by the track is probably an old one.