

strength and good proportions, serves to illustrate the architectural skill which has survived in Sīstān till very recent times. Two or three other residences visited farther to the south show an interesting ground plan with a cruciform central hall, as illustrated by the sketch-plan in Pl. 58.

About 2 miles to the SSW. of the fortified mansion rises a mound, about 20 feet high and measuring about 80 yards by 30. This old Mesa is now covered with Muhammadan graves, but the abundance of potsherds found on it conclusively proves that it had previously served through successive ages as a site for habitations. The range covered by the pottery fragments from this mound extends from 'chalcolithic' painted or plain pottery, as shown by the specimens, Machi. 01-12, Pl. CXIII, to well-made plain red ware of the type associated with Ghāgha-shahr and Shahrīstān. Pieces of blue-glazed pottery were rare, and none were found with painted design under glaze. The fragment of a stone pot, 016, such as found elsewhere with 'chalcolithic' pottery in this area, also belongs to this earliest period of occupation. The remains of this occupation, so abundant at other points of the southern delta, will be discussed in the next section. The List in section iii also includes specimens of pottery and of glass fragments picked up at other points of the site. Of these many, if not most, probably belong to modern times. But it must be remembered that wind-erosion has probably, in places, brought to the surface also relics of earlier periods. This was obviously the case in the southern portion of the Machī area; for in the vicinity of the mound just mentioned the ground showed clear marks of wind-scouring, and rudimentary tamarisk-cones could be seen in course of formation, just as at sites but recently abandoned to the desert along the southern edge of the Taklamakān.

Mound
with pre-
historic
pottery.

It was while proceeding from Machī towards the well and post of Girdī-chāh, on the trade route some 16 miles to the SW. from Hauzdār, that I first passed a belt of regular Yārdangs, or *kalward*, as they are called in Sīstān. They were only from 4 to 5 feet in height, but duly prepared me for the effects of wind-erosion as exhibited by the ruins of the southern group of Muhammadan sites. These are scattered over an area which extends for about 9 miles to the south-east of Girdī-chāh with a maximum width of about 3 miles. This area once received water from branching outlets of the Rūd-i-biyābān, still clearly recognizable, which trend to the west and south-west from where the Perso-Afghān boundary line crosses them between the pillars marked B.P. 17, 18 b on the map. The old canals fed by these outlets can still be followed in places.

Wind-
erosion at
work.

In the vicinity of Rāmrūd, the nearest of these sites and the best known, cultivation had, as already stated, been carried on as late as the beginning of the nineteenth century. But the examination of the ruined fort village to which that name is principally applied (Fig. 494), as well as of certain other remains, soon showed me that this late occupation meant merely a partial reclamation of land which had previously for a considerable period been abandoned to the desert. The circumvallation of the fort, as shown by the sketch-plan, Pl. 57, has been so badly breached—in places on the N. and NW. it is almost completely effaced—that exposure to the eroding force of wind-driven sand must reasonably be supposed to have extended here over more than one century. The same impression is conveyed by the appearance of the ground around the walls, which, as the photograph in Fig. 503 shows, has been cut up into regular Yārdang trenches and ridges. I am hence inclined to believe that this fort, and probably also a smaller one about half a mile to the SE., were already ruins when water was again brought to this neighbourhood in Malik Bahrām Khān's time. On the other hand, a group of eight or nine domed tombs, some of good size, which stand on ground but very slightly eroded, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the east of Rāmrūd fort, may perhaps date back only to that latest occupation. A stretch of perfectly flat ground covered with a crust of hard silt, which we passed within a mile or so of Rāmrūd fort to the SE., probably also marks land that was then under cultivation.

Site of
Rāmrūd.