

portion of the town site. The crest rises, as Plan 17 shows, at first gently to an elevation of about 200 feet, and then more steeply to a knoll, marked 333 feet on the plan. There the debris heaps from ruined walls of dwellings stop. All along the crest extend shapeless remains of decayed houses, closely packed on the lower parts of the ridge where more fairly level ground could be found, and at short intervals where the slope becomes steeper. At numerous points, marked in the plan, are circular wells and cisterns cut into the rock. One of the latter, measuring 51 by 10 feet and 17 feet deep, still retains a portion of the vaulted roof, such as had originally covered all of them. The depth to which the wells had been sunk here may be judged from the fact that some of them are located at elevations from about 230 to 300 feet above sea-level. One of the highest wells measures at its mouth 9 feet in diameter, another proof of the immense trouble taken to utilize even such difficult building ground. To draw water from wells of such depth must have involved great labour, and this may explain the provision of cisterns, sometimes placed quite close to them, which could be used instead, provided there had been enough rain ('water of grace', to use the modern Persian expression) to fill them.

At a point on the lower portion of the ridge, about 125 feet above sea-level, there stands a conspicuous square structure, locally known as the *madrasa* (Fig. 67). It is built, as all the houses of Sīrāf were, with rough stones set in mortar. Its comparatively fair state of preservation, in contrast with the complete decay of other buildings of the site, distinctly points to its being of later date. The walls measure 21 feet along their outer surface. The entrance, which is provided with a porch, faces east. The interior consists of a hall with arched recesses on three sides, those on the north and south having a small niche in the centre and a window, 2 by 3 feet, at a height of 7 feet above the floor. The niche to the south admits light only by a narrow opening like a loophole. Four squinches carry a circular drum on which a domed roof, now fallen, had rested. Much of the stucco plastering still survives, and this, together with the thin pieces of timber still found in position at the top of the windows, seems to necessitate a late date being assigned to the structure. It may have been intended to contain a tomb, but I could find no remains of such on the broken floor.

Even more impressive than the picture of utter decay to be seen at what was once a thriving town of the living was the view gained from this hill-crest of the great necropolis in the valley behind it, known as Shilau. The panoramic view reproduced in Fig. 73 shows it in its forbidding barrenness and desolation. All over the bare lower slopes of the rugged hill range, which rises to a crest line from about 500 to 600 feet above sea-level, hundreds of rock-cut graves and grottoes are to be seen. Owing to their very great number and the