

conspicuous half-ruined fort built in the third quarter of the last century by a Balūch chief of Geh who claimed authority over the neighbouring portion of Persian Makrān. A small plateau known as Jasa-mētag, which adjoins the hill on the south, is protected by cliffs which form a natural wall rising above the narrow foreshore. Small mounds of rough stone-built dwellings and pottery debris, including glazed ware manifestly of Muhammadan times, could be traced over a considerable portion of the plateau and on some small ridges close by. On one of these over which the track from Chāhbār descends I had noticed on our first arrival rows of oblong cavities cut into the bare rock surface, obviously graves, all orientated in the orthodox Muslim fashion.

For a distance of about a mile from Jasa-mētag, the ground which stretches from east to west along the torrent bed and the narrow strip of cultivation adjoining it bears similar marks of former occupation. That this dated principally, if not wholly, from Muhammadan times was shown by the extensive graveyards found in several places where the rocky layer of calcareous sandstone crops out with a gently tilted bare surface. The graves covering these spaces in regular closely serried rows are invariably alined from north to south in accordance with Muhammadan religious practice. The selection of such spaces as burial grounds was evidently due to the fact that their bare rocky soil and inclined surface precluded their use either for building or for cultivation. Moreover, excavation in rock comparatively easy to cut provided protection for the resting-places of the dead which otherwise would have had to be secured, in obedience to Muslim custom, by lining the grave with masonry or timber.

At first it was somewhat puzzling to find that in a considerable number of graves, either laid bare by the partial crumbling away of the rock ledge which they adjoined or else affected by erosion, what seemed the bottom of the grave was exposed at a depth of only 2 or 3 feet. But the explanation was soon furnished by the systematic clearing of more than a dozen graves at the burial ground marked *I* in the sketch plan (Plan 9), measuring about 318 yards from north-west to south-east and 90 yards across. The rock shelf exposed did not mark the bottom of the grave. A narrow excavation descended by its side 3 or 4 feet deeper and was adjoined on the opposite side by a kind of low niche, allowing just adequate space for the laying out of the body. This arrangement facilitated also the closing of the grave proper by means of large stone slabs placed over it slantwise, their ends resting on the raised shelf. By this means the available space could also be utilized with greater economy. I may add that exactly the same arrangement was to be seen at the far more extensive rock-hewn graveyards which stretch all over the hill-sides behind Tāhirī, the medieval Muhammadan port of Sīrāf, visited by me on my tour of 1932-3 along the