

seen by me far away in Chinese Turkeṣtān in places on the edge of the Takla-makān, where cultivated ground had in recent times been abandoned to the desert.

The first inspection of the Tal-i-Iblīs site (Plan 15) made the same day completely confirmed the impression I had gained from the Surveyor's report and previous mapping. The mound was found to be situated almost due south of Ḥaidarābād at a distance of close on 4 miles. It rises above an alluvial plain, now utterly waterless, covered with light drift sand, which scanty growth of thorny scrub has gathered and fixed here and there into small rudimentary cones. In places shallow dry channels mark the course of drainage from rare rain floods. Quite close to the east of the mound there passes a well-marked dry river-bed, some 100 yards across, descending from the foot-hills visible to the south through which the Lālehzār river debouches into the Bardsīr trough. Over an area surrounding the mound, which subsequent measurement showed to extend for about 1,100 yards from north to south and for a maximum distance of some 740 yards west of the old river-bed, fragments of ancient pottery including painted pieces as well as worked flints and fragments of alabaster vessels, all marking prehistoric occupation, could be picked up on patches of ground clear of drift sand.

The mound (Fig. 55) was found to rise to a height of 37 feet from the present ground-level around. It measures about 110 yards from north to south and 95 yards across where widest; but it may have been considerably reduced by prolonged digging for manuring earth. The latest evidence of such digging was afforded by large holes and cuttings seen on the slopes and particularly at the south-western foot. Here successive layers of earth containing pottery debris, rubble and animal bones, interspersed with layers of ashes, could be clearly made out. Smaller holes on the slopes looked as if dug by seekers for treasure, and from one of these on the north a large jar was said to have been extracted a year or so before. As pieces from unpainted large vessels as well as fragments of bones, apparently human, were found exposed on the northern slope, that portion of the mound suggested itself for a trial excavation.

To this the officer in charge of the escort, who had kept his eye on us at this preliminary inspection, agreed after hesitation on condition that the digging would be limited to a small depth. The keen interest shown by us in the surface finds seemed to have temporarily removed at least some of the doubts and suspicions he evidently entertained then and afterwards as to the 'real' purpose of my tour. But when on the following morning I had started the opening of a narrow trench at the place just indicated with the few labourers, less than a dozen, that could be collected at Ḥaidarābād, the work had to be stopped at the