

It was the same also at a far more conspicuous mound, known as *Tappa-i-Mauru*. Situated about half a mile to the south-east from the last-named it rises to an approximate height of 45 feet, and measures at the base about 230 yards from east to west and some 170 yards across. Here, apart from coarse plain ware, we found on the slopes only pieces of poor glazed ware, white, yellow, or brown, and of late medieval look. A few fragments of painted pottery were picked up at the foot of the mound; but these were quite small, and the traces of black patterns left either on the light red ground or on a dark red slip covering this were too indistinct to permit them to be definitely recognized as prehistoric. Here, too, excavation might yet prove fruitful by revealing chalcolithic deposits under the cover of debris left behind by occupation down to medieval times. Even a prolonged search on the surface was made difficult by the escort, attracted probably by the prospect of reaching Mīnāb and its town comforts sooner, having moved on with the baggage to Birinti, the last inhabited place in the valley and a considerable distance lower down. When we arrived there by nightfall we found the place completely deserted—out of respect for our protectors. This portion of the Rūdān tract with its fertile soil may count as much as a thousand households. But the people seemed all wretchedly poor and could scarcely be expected to welcome official guests!

On November 29th a long march took us down to the town of Mīnāb at the head of the fertile oasis which extends down towards the coast and once comprised the famous trading-place of Old Hormuz. The route lay all the way through the narrow winding gorges in which the river, formed by the streams of Rūdān and Manujān uniting close below Birinti, has cut its passage towards the sea. It is a route affording ample opportunities for marauding exploits, still heard of nowadays as in Marco Polo's time. They must be particularly easy to carry out at two points where the track leaves the river-bed hemmed in by precipitous cliffs and in narrow ravines clambers across projecting spurs. Only at one point about 12 miles below Birinti does the track pass some cultivation in the shape of some neglected date-palm groves, known by the name of Mīr 'Alī-Dād. But numerous burial cairns seen a mile lower down on a stony terrace suggested a former settlement of some size.

The small town of Mīnāb is situated close to where, some 8 miles farther down, the river debouches on a wide alluvial fan. With its modest bāzār, Mīnāb has nothing to show that might recall the great importance that Hormuz once enjoyed as an emporium for the sea-borne trade of Persia and the regions adjacent to the Gulf. 'Merchants come thither from India', so Marco Polo tells us, 'with ships loaded with spicery and precious stones, pearls, cloths of silk and gold, elephants' teeth, and many other wares, which they sell to the merchants