

much damage, the structure as a whole is in so much better condition than the rest of the buildings of the town that its being of later date can scarcely be doubted. The local tradition, which ascribes to it an approximate age of six centuries, supports this conclusion.

The ruined mosque, with its entrance facing north-east, shown in Fig. 68, contains a central hall 27 feet 6 inches wide; if its badly broken arcaded south-western end, orientated towards Mecca, be included, it was probably of the same length. On either side are two shallow niches divided by semi-detached columns and having an oblong narrow window high up under their pointed arches. The entrance, which is 7 feet wide and 8 feet deep, is adjoined on either side by a small room measuring 8 by  $12\frac{1}{2}$  feet, and is approached through a porch also 7 feet wide. The porch is provided with seats on both sides under small niches, and its ceiling still retains stucco decoration with geometrical tracery. Judging from the style of this decoration and the survival of stucco elsewhere on the walls, it seems difficult to believe that the structure as it now stands can be earlier than the fifteenth to sixteenth century. But the massive substructure of the terrace which bears the mosque looks distinctly old. An outer room adjoining on the north-west holds a large tombstone, now upturned, bearing an inscription in Kufic characters.

Along precipitous ledges of the same knoll, both to the west and south of the mosque, there are to be seen rows of graves cut into the rock. Many of these are partly destroyed owing to the rock having crumbled away, a sign of the long period that must have elapsed since they were used for burial. Higher up on the knoll a steep ridge to the north contains more rock-cut graves, among them three that manifestly had remained undisturbed. On examining one of them, 1 foot 6 inches wide on the surface, we found at a depth of 3 feet stone slabs, 9 inches wide, covering the opening of the grave proper, and to the right a shelf of the same width cut in the solid rock. Of the body interred only a few decayed bones survived. The construction of the grave corresponded exactly with that of the graves found at Tiz.<sup>6</sup> The graves were orientated from north-west to south-east, though, being undoubtedly Muhammadan, they ought to have lain in the orthodox north and south direction. I shall have occasion later to refer to similar irregular bearings observed at the great cemeteries of Shilau. On the same ridge lay scattered half a dozen coffin-like tombstones, most of them broken or upturned, all bearing Kufic inscriptions. Fig. 81 shows the best preserved of these.

Crossing the depression in which the dry torrent-bed of Shilau bends southwards to the sea, we ascended the crest of the ridge which overlooks the main

<sup>6</sup> Cf. above, p. 89.