

the same time. At the very top of the area some cutting had been done for three graves which had never been finished. One grave near the middle of this cemetery, on being carefully cleared to the bottom, proved to be filled from the surface downwards with detritus and sand. Apart from this, only completely decayed fragments of rotten wood were found, which probably belonged to a coffin. The length of the grave was 6 feet 10 inches, its width 2 feet, and the total depth 2 feet 3 inches. A groove 3 inches wide was cut at a depth of 6 inches on both the long sides, meant to hold the covering slabs. The same arrangement was noted in the graves found empty or half-filled. Nowhere did I observe the previously described mode of Islamic burial by which the body was laid to rest under a rock shelf.⁷ On the whole, the evidence points to the conclusion that this cemetery had served a non-Islamic community, and as the same east to west direction is still customary for graves among the small Jewish communities found along the coast, it appears probable that this eastern graveyard was laid out by Jews settled at Sīrāf.

It remains to be noted that within the area of this graveyard there are seen (Fig. 71) two natural rock pillars rising to a height of approximately 10 to 20 feet. They are obviously 'witnesses', which had somehow escaped erosion and have for some reason been cut into a tower-like shape. The one to the north contains a regularly cut cavity intended to serve as a kind of crypt. It measures 7 by 4 feet and has a height of 4 feet from above the entrance. A cemented flooring, partially preserved, divided the little chamber from a lower crypt. There are remains of a rough cemented wall once closing the entrance facing east. On the top some masonry remains could be made out which may have belonged to some form of monument.

All over the slopes to the north of the Shilau valley, as shown by the panoramic view (Fig. 73), there are to be seen shallow grottoes honeycombing the steeper rock faces. They are to be found also on the other side of the valley near where it turns eastwards into a very narrow winding gorge, known as Tang-i-Līr. Many of them appeared to be natural cavities due to peculiarities of the rock formation or to erosion. But two small grottoes I was able to examine near the entrance of the gorge showed signs of having been roughly cut into the rock. In one of them there were found two small bones, apparently human phalanges, in the other nothing besides dust and loose stones. Neither at these nor at other grottoes could I see any trace of their having been walled up. All the same there is a possibility of such natural cavities having been used for the deposit of human remains, perhaps of bones from bodies previously exposed to birds and beasts in compliance with surviving Zoroastrian practice.

⁷ See above, pp. 89, 206.