

climatic conditions far more favourable to agriculture than those observed along the coast. It might thus be reasonably assumed that a much larger population than at present had occupied this tract in former times; and this might well account for the remains of extensive fortifications, obviously meant for places of refuge, to be found, as I was told, on the hills rising north of the valley.

The nearest of these, and the only one which under the prevailing conditions of insecurity were considered accessible at the time, could be sighted on a hill spur above the hamlet of Haraj, about  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles to the east of Asīr. On proceeding towards this my attention was attracted by a low mound rising on absolutely level ground about 500 yards to the south of the hamlet (see Plan 18). It could scarcely be natural, and on examining its surface, largely occupied by Muhammadan graves, this conclusion was very soon confirmed by plentiful finds of worked flints, cores, and fragments of painted pottery, obviously prehistoric. It was a very gratifying discovery to have come here upon evidence of manifestly prolonged occupation in prehistoric times, after having vainly looked for such since reaching the coast.

While the necessary arrangements were being made for trial excavations I occupied the spare time in visiting some old remains reported to be close to Haraj. On the narrow rocky ridge rising immediately to the east of the hamlet to a height of about 100 feet, only foundations of roughly built walls and broken plain pottery, both of uncertain date, could be traced. Some 300 yards to the north, at the foot of the spur bearing the fortification already referred to, I found a series of small caves, some eighteen in all, forming an irregular row, hewn into the limestone rock. None were more than 6 feet deep, and the entrances so low and narrow as to suggest tombs. The interior showed only the bare rock floor, and no indication of age could be found. Some of these cavities seemed never to have been finished.

The survey of the bastioned lines of wall clearly visible high up on the spur had to be left for a later visit. But before regaining Nauba fort in the dusk I took the opportunity to visit rapidly some low mounds sighted amidst fields about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles to the south-east of Haraj. They were found to lie close together, varying from 110 to 150 yards in length and none rising more than 8 to 10 feet above the surrounding ground. The low grass covering the surface impeded a close search. As, however, apart from potsherds of well-made plain red ware, a worked flint blade with finger-hold, a painted pottery fragment of chalcolithic type, and several small pieces of alabaster were picked up, prehistoric occupation here, too, appeared very probable.

Before proceeding to a trial-excavation at the *Tal-i-pīr*, as the ancient mound near Haraj village is called, it seemed advisable to make, on January 24th, a