

The background of the cover is a sepia-toned photograph of a tropical landscape. In the foreground, the dark silhouette of a palm tree trunk is visible on the left. The middle ground shows a valley with various plants and a small structure. In the background, a large, rounded hill or mountain rises against a light sky. The overall tone is historical and evocative.

# KUML

ÅRBOG FOR JYSK ARKÆOLOGISK SELSKAB  
1954

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ÅRBOG FOR JYSK ARKÆOLOGISK SELSKAB

1954

*With Summaries in English*

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UNIVERSITETSFORLAGET I AARHUS

1954

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Bronzealderhøj ved Ali, Bahrain

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Fig. 1. Snit gennem Høj <sup>21</sup>/<sub>1</sub>.  
Section through Tumulus <sup>21</sup>/<sub>1</sub>.

## FEM AF BAHRAINS HUNDREDE TUSINDE GRAVHØJE

Af T. G. BIBBY

### *Høje fra Bronzealder*

Der findes steder på Bahrain, hvor øjet hele horisonten rundt intet andet møder end gravhøje, tusinder og atter tusinder. Man studser ved synet af dette umådelige antal tætpakkede nøgne sand- og grushøje. Det er umuligt ved første blik at fatte, at hver enkelt af disse høje virkelig dækker en begravelse. Man forsøger forgæves at finde en naturlig forklaring på det hav af høje.

Videre undersøgelse forstærker den undren, man føler ved synet af højfelterne. Højene er ikke alene lagt så tæt sammen som overhovedet muligt, men dækker også et meget stort areal. Langs hele den nordlige og vestlige kyst af Bahrain ligger et bredt opdyrket bælte med dadelplantager

og lucernemarker. En del af dette område, særlig ved vestkysten, er nu atter blevet ørken, men her kan man – tydeligst på luftfotografier – se svage spor af fortidskultivering, af vandkanaler og markskel. Bagved dette bælte, og dækkende hele området mellem det og øens centrale sænkning, ligger en højere stenet strækning, krydset af wadierne som afleder vinterens sjældne, men voldsomme regnstorme. Det er denne strækning, som i næsten hele sin længde er dækket af gravhøje. De er aldrig blevet talt, men efter et skøn på grundlag af luftfotografier må deres antal være henved 100.000.

Det svarer omtrentlig til antallet af høje i hele Danmark. Men på Bahrain er de begrænset til et areal, der nok er stort i forhold til øens størrelse, men alligevel ikke er over ca. 50 km<sup>2</sup>.

Højene varierer en del i størrelse, er fra 1 til 6 m høje. De forskellige størrelser er nogenlunde jævnt blandet. I nærheden af landsbyen 'Ali, ved det nordligste punkt af det største højfelt, ligger dog en gruppe bestående af ca. 20 høje, som afviger fra de øvrige i størrelse. Den største af disse 'Ali-høje er nemlig ikke mindre end 12 m høj. De øvrige er kun lidt mindre.

Tilstedeværelsen af dette uhyre antal gravhøje på Bahrain blev først kendt i videnskabelige kredse i 1880 gennem et uddrag af en rapport af kapt. E. L. Durand til det engelske Indian Office<sup>1</sup>). Kapt. Durand åbnede to af højene ved 'Ali og fandt, at de indeholdt store stenbyggede gravkamre. Durands rapport vakte megen opsigt i den akademiske verden, og de næste 30 år arbejdede flere interesserede amatører i 'Ali-højene<sup>2</sup>). Først i 1906–08 blev en rigtig undersøgelse af højene foretaget af den engelske politiske repræsentant, oberst F. B. Prideaux, på opfordring af The Archæological Survey of India<sup>3</sup>). Han holdt sig ligeledes til højene ved 'Ali og åbnede 44 ialt, heraf 9 af de store.

Den første omfattende undersøgelse af højfeltene udførtes af Ernest Mackay i 1924 for The Egyptian Exploration Society<sup>4</sup>). Han udgravede 30 høje, men skønt hans konklusioner i mange tilfælde var mindre heldige, danner hans publikation af de forskellige høj- og kammertyper stadigvæk grundlaget, hvorpå senere arbejde må hvile. Resultaterne af en undersøgelse udført af P. B. Cornwall i 1940–41 er desværre endnu ikke udgivet<sup>5</sup>), men resuméerne, som er trykt, giver indtryk af, at kun lidt kan føjes til Mackays resultater.

Som ovenfor anført var det ikke meningen, at »Dansk Arkæologisk Bahrain-Ekspedition« ville ofre ret megen tid på gravhøjene. Da imidlertid enkelte spørgsmål, særligt vedrørende højkonstruktionen, ikke var blevet klarlagt, og da det var ønskeligt at få nogle af lerkartyperne, som brugtes af højbyggerne, til sammenligning med lerkar fra bopladser, begyndte udgravningssæsonen med undersøgelsen af to bronzealderhøje.

Det er ikke let at vælge to høje ud, når man har 100.000 at vælge

imellem. Valget faldt på en afsides liggende højgruppe imellem Janabiya og Sar i det nordvestlige hjørne af øen. Denne gruppe valgtes, fordi den ikke før havde været genstand for arkæologiske undersøgelser, og fordi den lå langt fra de nuværende landsbyer og derfor muligvis kunne være skånet for gravrøveri, som havde hærget andre områder. I denne gruppe udvalgte to høje, som efter deres regelmæssige, kuplede form at dømme syntes at være uberørte. Begge høje havde dog tidligere været åbnet og var blevet plyndret.

### Høj 31/1

Den første høj var af gennemsnitsstørrelse, 2,35 m høj og 17 m i tværmål. Den blev udgravet af undertegnede. For at få et klart skøn over konstruktionen blev det besluttet af skære halvdelen af højen væk, og derved lægge et snit tværs igennem den i retning NNV-SSØ, en retning som ligger vinkelret på den normale orientering af gravkamrene (fig. 1).

Fjernelsen af halvdelen af højen afdækkede indgangen til kamret, samt den første af dækstenene og de korte formure til selve kamret. Der afdækkedes samtidig en fodkrans af hovedstore sten, som dannede en kreds med et tværmål på 10,5 m, 3 m indenfor den nuværende højfod. Fodkransen var i det meste af sin længde dannet af ophobede sten. I forlængelse af kamret var der ovenfor indgangen en åbning i kredsen, een meter bred. På hver side af åbningen – og særlig mod nord – viste fodkransen en mere regelmæssig opbygning med en lodret tørmur på den indadvendte side og ophobning af løse sten udenfor denne. I en

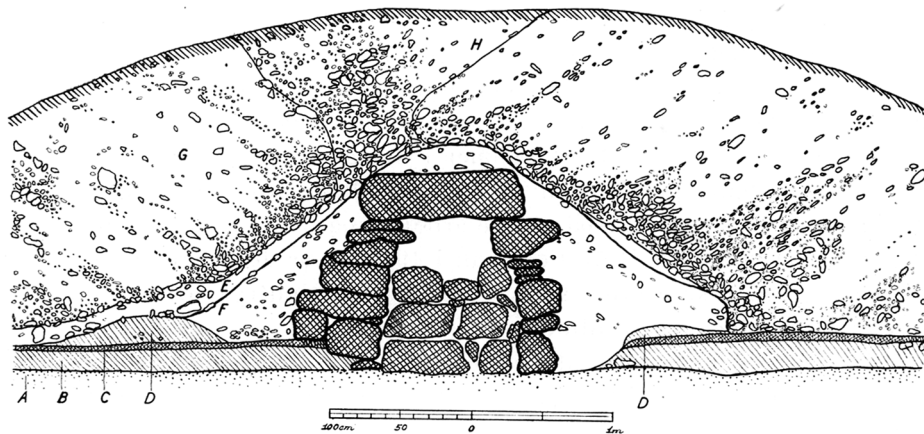


Fig. 2. Midterste del af snittet gennem Høj 31/1. A: faste klippebund. B: kalkjord. C: humuslag. D: opkastede kalkjord. E: mørk sand (overflade til F). F: lys sand. G: lys sand og sten. H: mørkere sand og sten (nedgravning).

Centre portion of section through Tumulus 31/1. A: bedrock. B: chalk soil. C: humus layer. D: chalk upcast soil. E: brown sand (surface of F.). F: light sand. G: light sand and stones. H: darker sand and stones (shaft).

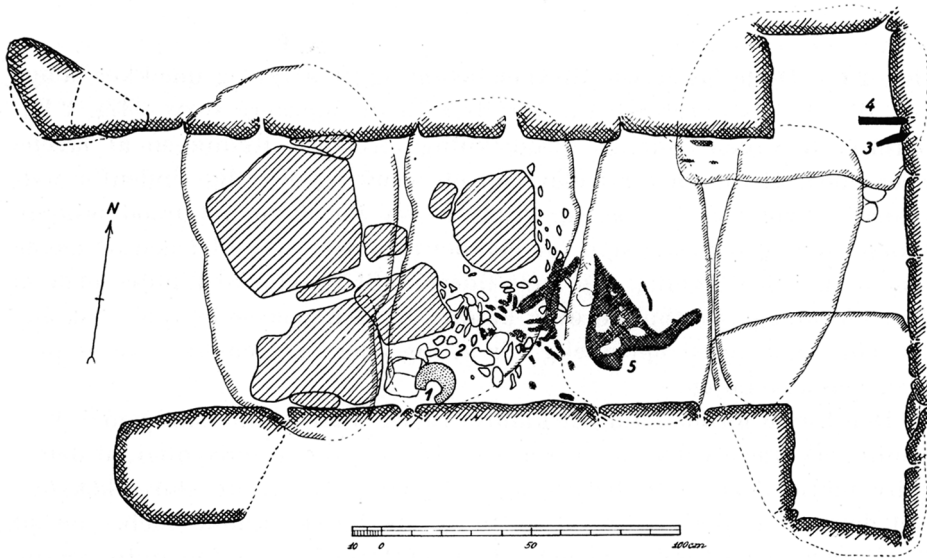


Fig. 3. Plan af kamret, Høj 31/1. 1: strudsægskaller. 2: lerkarskår. 3: spydspids. 4: spyddupsko. 5: skelet.  
Plan of chamber in Tumulus 31/1. 1: ostrich eggshell. 2: potsherds. 3: spearhead. 4: spearferrule. 5: skeleton.

afstand af 1–1½ m fra åbningen og udenfor denne lå et antal løse sten, som syntes at være den oprindelige fyldning af åbningen.

I snittet gennem højen (fig. 2) dannede indgangen til kamret et imponerende midtpunkt. Sidevæggene var bygget op af fem uregelmæssige skifter af let tilhuggede kalkstensblokke med tunge dæksten foroven. Indgangen til kamret var blokeret af tre skifter sten, hvorover sås et 40 cm højt hul, der viste, at kamret tidligere var blevet åbnet. Hullet og synet i det dunkle indre af kamret af de sten, som en gang havde fyldt hullet, viste det klart. I profilen derover sås en tragtformet sænkning fyldt med sten og mørkere sand end i resten af højen, markerende ruten, som røverne havde taget (fig. 2 H).

I profilen kunde de forskellige stadier i højens opbygning klart skelnes. Over hele denne del af højfeltet ligger den faste kalkstensklippegrund (fig. 2 A) lige under jordoverfladen, kun dækket af 10–15 cm kalklignende jord (fig. 2 B), dannet ved forvitring af kalkstenen. Højen er blevet rejst ovenpå dette kalklag, og imellem kalken og højens fyld kunde der ses en tynd brun, humusagtig stribe (fig. 2 C), som muligvis kan betyde, at ørkenen engang var græsdækket.

Midt i højen var kalklaget gravet væk og stenkamret rejst på den bare klippegrund. På hver sin side af nedgravningen kunne i profilen ses en bunke kalk hobet op fra nedgravningen (fig. 2 D).



Det første stadium i dækningen af kamret synes at være repræsenteret af et lag lyst sand, ikke mere end nødvendigt for at skjule stenene (fig. 2 F). Dette lag havde tilsyneladende ligget urørt og udækket længe nok til, at dets overflade var forvitret til en mørkere farve (fig. 2 E). Derefter blev den endelige jorddækning foretaget. Retningen af lagene viser klart, at jorden først blev lagt op ovenover eller lige indenfor fodkransen, hvorefter lag på lag gradvis blev hobet op ind imod midten. Mange sten og skærver, som var blandet i sandet, var rullet ned og havde samlet sig i den lavning, som hele tiden indtil slutstadiet fandtes mellem den oprindelige jordbunke over kamret og den voksende vold omkring det. Om fodkransen oprindeligt var synlig eller ej, fremgik ikke af profilen gennem højen.

Den første jorddækning af kamret rejser interessante spørgsmål, hvis løsning vil kræve videre undersøgelser. Det er ikke usandsynligt, at denne indre kerne havde sin betydning ved pålægning af de store dæksten, idet den gav mulighed for, at de tunge stenblokke kunde slæbes op ad en skrånende jordflade i stedet for at måtte løftes. Da den indre kerne også strækker sig over dækstenene, kan det dog ikke have været dens eneste formål.

Udgravningsmetoden gav ikke mulighed for at konstatere, om den indre kerne også dækkede indgangen til kamret. Men tilstedeværelsen af de korte mure, som ragede ud foran kamrets egentlige indgang i forlængelse af kamrets sidemure, lader formode, at kamret kan have været åbent og tilgængeligt, efter at den indre jordkerne var opkastet.

Vi har således et billede af to skarpt afgrænsede stadier i opførelsen af gravhøjene, hvorimellem der teoretisk set godt kan være gået nogle år. Ved slutningen af det første stadium stod kamret åbent, dækket af en minimal jordhøj og omgivet i ca. 2½ m's afstand af en ubrudt stenkrans. Når derefter jordfæstelsen skulle finde sted, blev stenene fjernet fra indgangen i stenkransen, liget lagt i gravkamret, og indgangen muret til. Det kan være på dette tidspunkt, eller under den efterfølgende opbygning af højen, at nogle sten blev væltet ud fra sidemurene foran indgangen.

Selve kamret viste sig at være 90 cm bredt og 1,80 m langt indenfor indgangsmuren, hvortil skal tilføjes 90 cm, længden af murene udenfor indgangen. Kamret havde to alkover ved den indre, vestlige ende, som målte henholdsvis 35 × 40 (NØ) og 38 × 38 (SØ) cm. Kamret havde en højde af 116 cm, mens alkoverne kun var 80 (NØ) og 70 (SØ) cm høje. Væggene i både kamret og alkoverne var opbygget som tømursskifte, for det meste af store, let tilhuggede kalkstensblokke, hvorimellem mindre sten var indpasset. Hver alkove var dækket af en enkelt stor sten. Taget til kamret bestod af fire vældige sten. Kamret var orienteret i 84° Ø for geografisk Nord.

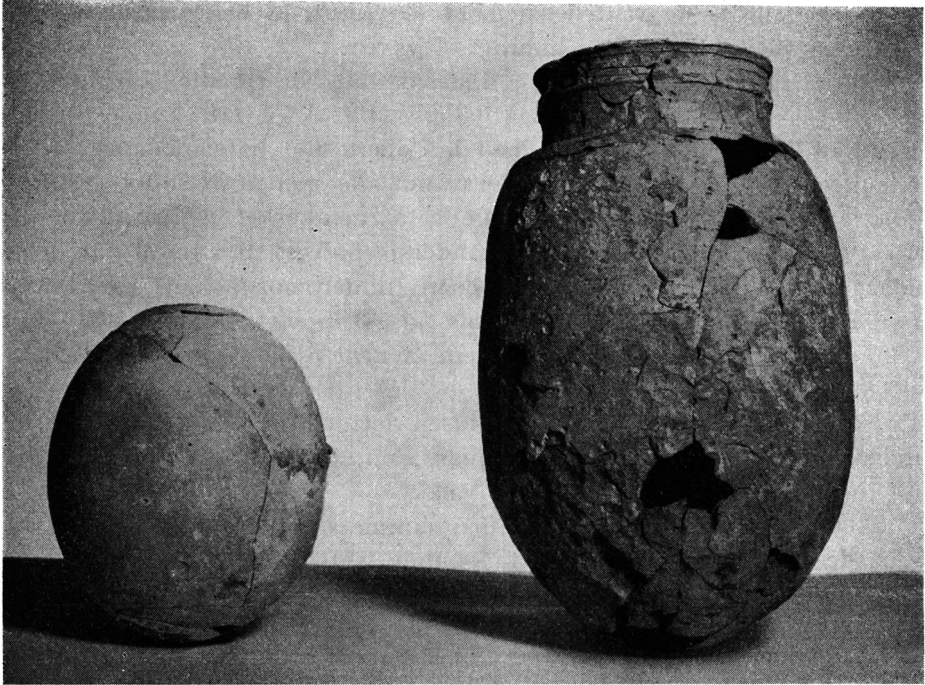


Fig. 4. Strudsæg (tv.) og lerkar fra kamret i Høj <sup>31/1</sup>. 1 : 3,3.  
Ostrich egg (1.) and pottery vessel from chamber of Tumulus <sup>31/1</sup>. 1 : 3.3.

Kamret var således af den type, som hyppigst træffes i de bahrainiske gravhøje, som er beskrevet af Prideaux og Mackay. Det er en type, der ellers ikke er fundet udenfor øen. Den nærmeste parallel er stenkisterne fra protodynastisk tid ved Tepe Gawra<sup>7)</sup>, men afvigelserne er alligevel for store til, at man kan antage noget egentlig slægtskab. Medens orienteringen er nogenlunde ens begge steder, findes de typiske alkover ikke ved Tepe Gawra. Gravgodset i Gawra afviger fuldstændig fra det bahrainiske, og liget ligger der på venstre side, hvorimod reglen på Bahrain, som senere skal omtales, synes at have været, at den døde lå på højre side.

Da udgravningen af kamret begyndte, var dets gulv dækket af 6–10 cm fint sand og støv, som var sivet igennem sprækkerne i væg og tag. Ved indgangen, hvor fjernelsen af de øverste sten havde tilladt mere jord at falde ind, nåede jordbunken næsten op til taget. Da denne bunke blev fjernet (fig. 3), fandtes fire sten lige indenfor indgangen, øjensynlig de sten, som oprindeligt havde dannet det øverste skifte i tilmuringen, og som var blevet væltet ind af gravrøverne. Ved siden af og til højre for disse sten lå skallerne af et strudsæg (fig. 3, 1) og en stor del lerkar-skår, rester af et meget skørt lyserødt lerkar (fig. 3, 2). Da ingen af

skårene lå under de væltede sten, er det klart, at både ægget og lerkarret var hele, da de blev anbragt i graven.

Lidt længere inde i kamret, og under de inderste spredte skår, fandtes rester af skelettet i pulveragtig tilstand (fig. 3, 5). Det kunde ses, at liget har ligget på højre side med lidt mere end halvbøjede ben mod indgangen. Lidt over hoftehøjde forsvandt alle spor af skelettet. I resten af kamret fandtes kun spredte stumper af menneskeben ude af leje og oftest liggende langs murene. Den inderste halvdel af kamret var uden oldsager. Umiddelbart under tagstenen til den nordøstlige alkove var imidlertid to bronzeting, en spydspids (fig. 3, 3) og en spyddupsko (fig. 3, 4) stukket ind i sprækker imellem stenene i endemuren. Dupskoen sad stadigvæk klemt fast i væggen, og det var nødvendigt at fjerne en af stenene for at løsne den. Spydspidsen derimod var faldet ned på den underliggende sten, efter at dens spids, som stadigvæk kunde ses klemt ind imellem stenene, var smuldret væk.

Skelettets stilling i kamret er den samme som i Mackays høje nr. 2 og 5, de eneste, hvori en placering kunde iagttages<sup>9</sup>). I hans høj nr. 5 lå skelettet i halvbøjet stilling på højre side med hænderne foran ansigtet, hvilket måske er almindeligt for bahrainske grave i denne periode. Denne stilling kendes fra Ur i Jemdet Nasr perioden eller tidlig dynastisk tid, selvom der her ikke er nogen fast gravorientering<sup>9</sup>). Placeringen af de to spydspidser er nøjagtig den samme som af to spydspidser fundet af Mackay<sup>10</sup>).

#### *Oldsager.*

1. Strudsægskal, 15 cm høj. Den ene ende af skallen er afskåret. Omkring åbningen ses spor af en rødlig farve. Måske har den været brugt som drikkebæger. (Fig. 4).
2. Lerkar af lyserødt ler, 26,5 cm høj, med afrundet bund, skarpt afsat skulder og lodret hals med tre parallelle horisontale riller. (Fig. 4). Lerkarret er drejet, og lermassen er blandet med rød okker<sup>11</sup>). To kar af samme type kendes fra tidligere fund<sup>12</sup>).
3. Spydspids af kobber eller tinfattig bronze med sammensmedet dølle. Stykket er nu 11,5 cm langt, men har oprindeligt været omtrent 16 cm, idet spidsen er smuldret bort.
4. Spyddupsko af kobber eller tinfattig bronze, 15,5 cm lang, og med kvadratisk tværsnit. Døllen er sammensmedet.

#### *Høj 31/2*

Denne høj lå i umiddelbar nærhed af høj 1. Den var en del større, målte 20 m i diameter og 4,60 m i højde. Højen blev udgravet af P. V. Glob, hvis oplysninger om kammerkonstruktion og fundforhold er benyttet i det følgende.



Fig. 5. Udgravningsfeltet i Høj <sup>31/2</sup>. Skakten går ned foran det øverste åbne kammer.  
Excavated portion of Tumulus <sup>31/2</sup>. The shaft lies in front of the open upper chamber entrance.

Da det forventedes, at denne høj indeholdt et dobbeltkammer med skakt, blev et segment udskåret fra højens vestlige side. Hurtigt viste der sig svære sten i højsiden. Flere af disse lå uden orden, men under dem viste der sig kredse omkring højen (fig. 5). Da hele siden blev rensat op, sås det, at højen oprindelig var omsluttet af to koncentriske mure af store nødtørftigt tilhuggede sten. Den indre kreds lå højere oppe på højsiden end den ydre, således at de dannede to rundtløbende høje trapper på højsiden, den øverste ca. 2,50 m over jordoverfladen. At disse stenkonstruktioner oprindelig var synlige, fremgik af profilerne i udgravningens sider.

Øverst i udgravningsfeltet kom en stenbygget skakt til syne. Den målte 4,30 m × 2,40 m foroven og 3,45 m × 1,20 m forneden, og var 2,50 m dyb mod højsiden og 3,90 m ved kamrene. Ca. 1,80 m over skaktbunden fandtes en 20–30 cm bred afsats på langsiderne (fig. 6). Ved skaktens østside og mod højens midte sås dørene til to kamre, den ene over den anden (fig. 7). Disse indgange, hvoraf den nederste var 1 m høj og den øverste 1,16 m, var blokeret af svære sten, men et hul i det øverste hjørne i stenpakningen til begge indgange viste, at de to kamre tidligere var plyndret. Begge kamre var halvt fulde af jord. I det øverste fandtes ingen oldsager eller knogler, i det nederste kun spredte potteskår og



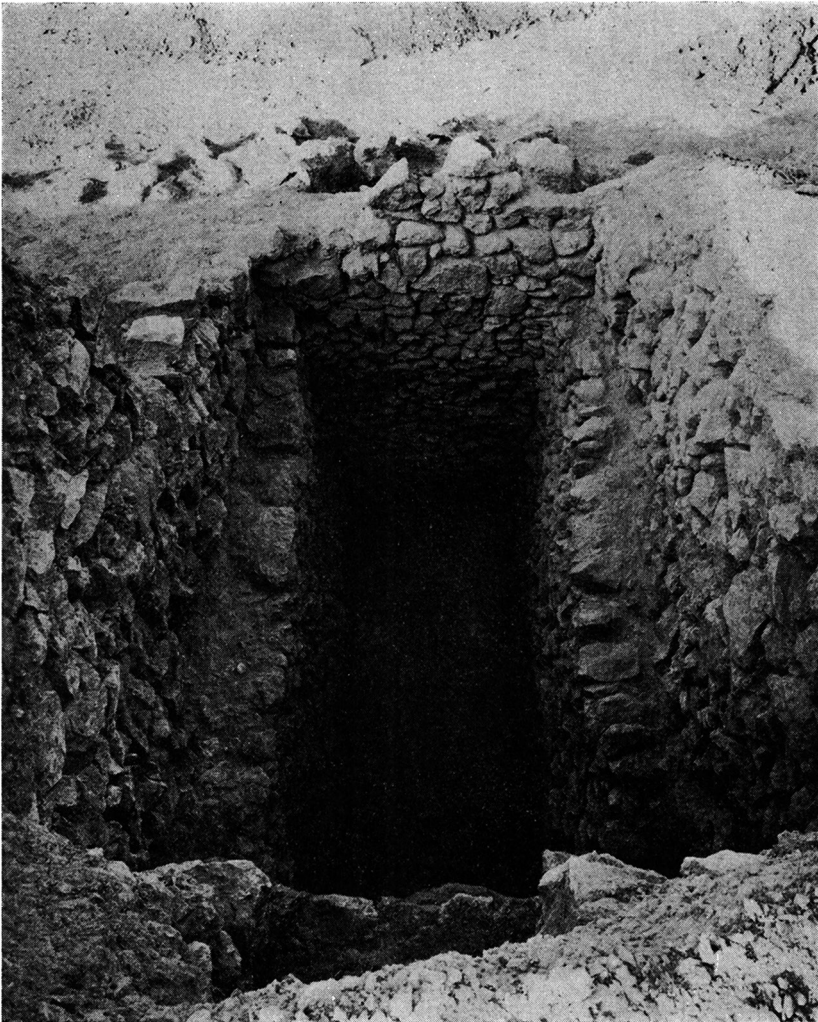


Fig. 6. Skakten, set fra toppen af Høj <sup>31/2</sup>.  
The shaft, viewed from the top of Tumulus <sup>31/2</sup>.

stumper af ben og bronze, hvoraf det største stykke synes at være en del af et bronzespejl.

I det nederste lag i skakten fandtes mange spredte stykker trækul, som blev indsamlet til C<sub>14</sub> undersøgelse, hvoraf resultaterne endnu ikke foreligger.

Det nederste kammer var 3,20 m langt, 1,08 m bredt og 1,67 m højt. Dets gulv lå på den faste klippebund, 40 cm under bundniveauet af skakten. Kamret havde to alkover i sidevæggene ved østenden. De var begge 60 cm brede og 1,32 m høje; den venstre var 66 cm dyb og den

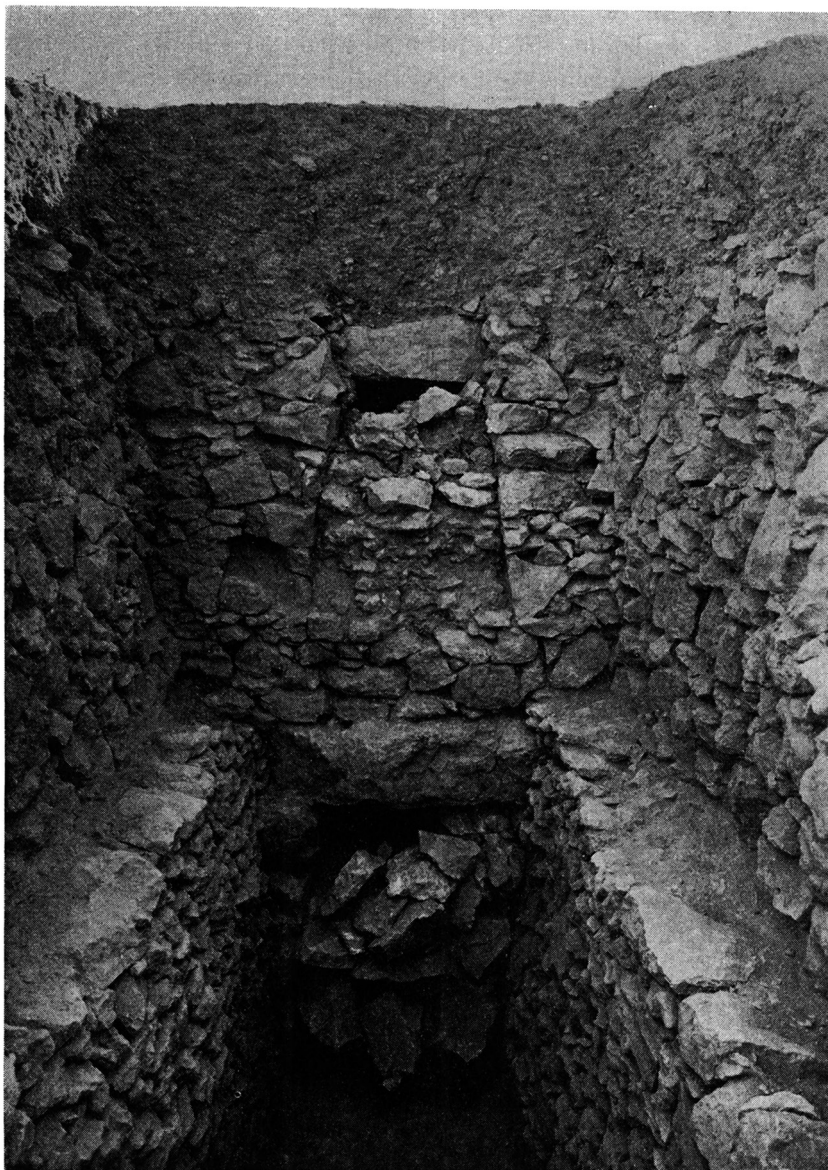


Fig. 7. Indgangene til kamrene, Høj <sup>31/2</sup>, før fjernelse af stenfyld.  
Entrances to chambers in Tumulus <sup>31/2</sup>, before removal of stone blocking.

højre 55 cm. Kammervæggene bestod af fem skifter af store og nogenlunde regelmæssigt tilhuggede sten, hvoraf det femte skifte dannede tag til alkoverne. Kamret var dækket af fem store sten.

Det øverste kammer havde ingen alkover. Det var 3,38 m langt, 1,04 m højt og 97 cm bredt ved indgangen, snævrende ind til 84 cm ved bag-

væggen. Væggene var ikke så regelmæssigt bygget som i det nederste kammer. De bestod af fire skifter med en del mindre sten imellem. Længdeaksen af kamrene var  $81^\circ \emptyset$  fra geografisk nord.

Til trods for dets fundtomhed viste det øverste kammer interessante enkeltheder. Det var fuldt af sand helt op til dækstenen ved indgangen, medens der ved bagvæggen kun lå et par cm sand. I de øverste få cm af denne sandbunke lå en mørk kulholdig horisont, uden tvivl resterne af et bål fra plyndringen. Under sandet lå et 15 cm tykt lag brun jord, den egentlige gravfyld, ved kamrets bund. Væggene af det øverste kammer stod imidlertid ikke, som det kunne ventes, på dækstenene til det nederste kammer, men på et 30 cm tykt lag sterilt sand og grus. Derunder kom 20 cm ren ral ovenpå dækstenene til det nederste kammer. Dette sterile sandlag viser, at man også ønskede, at den døde, som i de grave, der er anlagt i undergrunden, skulle hvile på jomfruelig jord, et træk, der blandt andet kendes fra samtidige danske gravfund.

Høje, som indeholder kamre i to etager med skakt-indgang, er allerede kendt fra Mackays udgravninger. Høj 2 viser således en påfaldende lighed med Mackays høj nr. 10<sup>13</sup>). Her, som ved høj 1, er det sandsynligt, at kamrene har stået åbne nogen tid efter opførelsen med stenkrede og skakt synlige og først er blevet tildækket efter gravlæggelsen.

Det store spørgsmål om Bahraíns gravhøje – af hvem de var bygget og hvornår – giver undersøgelsen af disse to høje ikke nogen endelig løsning på. Gravtypen kendes således ikke fra noget andet undersøgt område, og rygterne om, at lignende høje findes på det arabiske fastland, er endnu ikke blevet bekræftet. Ingen daterende importsager er endnu fundet i gravene. Spydtypen med smedet dølge peger mod tidlig bronzealder, medens lerkarrene påfaldende ligner tidlig dynastiske mesopotamiske former. De nærmeste paralleller i Mesopotamien er utvivlsomt af sargonisk dato – rundt regnet fra 2300 f. Kr., således at de udgravede høje synes at tilhøre slutningen af det 3. årtusinde.

### *Høje fra jernalder.*

Den nye hovedvej mod vest fra Bahraíns hovedstad, Manama, løber de første tre kilometer imellem gamle plantager, hvor dadel- og bananpalmer, mandel- og pappajatræer læner sig ud over vejen, en stadig fryd for øjet på hjemturen efter lange dages udgravninger i ørkenens støv og evige solskin. Efter landsbyen Jidd Hafs begynder ørkenen at skyde sig ind mellem plantagerne og hovedvejen, og på de næste fire km ligger bevoksningen godt et tusind meter fra vejen. Denne lange smalle ørkenstrækning er dækket med høje i stort antal – måske et tusind gravhøje, der i form og størrelse adskiller sig fra bronzealderens høje. De er bredere, ikke altid kredsrunde, og flere er sammenbyggede, så de danner



Fig. 8. Grav-ramme og dække i Høj 36/1, med to indbrudshuller.  
Grave-frame and cover in Tumulus 36/1, showing two robber entrances.

uregelmæssige figurer. Det var tydeligt mindesmærker fra en anden tidsperiode.

Videnskabelige undersøgelser var ikke tidligere foretaget her. Enkelte af højene er blevet gennemgravet af nysgerrige eller af skattegravere, andre skåret igennem under anlæggelsen af vejen, og en lille samling lerkar, som siges at være fra disse høje, findes nu hos den engelske rådgiver for den bahrainiske regering, Sir Charles Belgrave. Enkelte af dem er af parthisk oprindelse<sup>14</sup>). For at få lidt klarhed også over disse høje, blev nogle vestligt i gravfeltet nær hovedvejen udvalgt til undersøgelse (cf. c. 94, fig. 2, nr. 36).

#### *Høj 36/1*

Den første høj, som blev undersøgt, målte 3,20 m i højde og 29 m i diameter. En 1,20 m bred undersøgelsesgrøft blev fra sydsiden af højen ført mod centrum, således at grøftens højre væg dannede et snit gennem midteraksen af højen. Da centralgraven var fundet, blev grøften udvidet, indtil hele det midterste område var afdækket.

Højen bestod udelukkende af sandet jord, hvori laginddeling kun svagt kunne ses. Der var ingen fodkrans af nogen art, hvilket sammen med højens mere ensartede fyld var grunden til disse højes mere udflydende sider.



Centralgraven viste sig som en rektangulær cementramme, som målte 4,18 m × 2,46 m, og hævede sig 9 cm over den faste klippebund under højen. Gravrammens orientering var NNV-SSØ. Midt på rammen lå et rundt dække af store stenblokke cementeret sammen. Det var ca. 3 m i diameter og stak ud over langsiderne af den underliggende ramme. Tykkelsen var fra 38 til 26 cm (fig. 8).

Midt i dækket var der hugget et hul, og ligeledes i nordenden af rammen. Det var således klart, at denne grav var plyndret, og ikke een, men to gange. Ved oprensning af området ved indbrudshullet i gravens nordvesthjørne fandtes et antal dyretænder og stumper af knogler samt nogle stykker af jernbeslag og nagler med rester af træ indrustet i jernet. Da dækket var fjernet, kom graven til syne som en lang smal, firkantet åbning nøjagtig midt i rammen. Den målte 2,40 m × 0,86 m og var fuld af sand næsten til randen.

Fjernelsen af dækstenene åbenbarede samtidig et antal små jernpigge med kvadratisk tværsnit, som stak ca. 4 cm ned i cementrammen og afsluttedes lige ved overfladen. Jernpiggene, hvoraf 20 kunde ses, dannede en uregelmæssig oval om graven. De havde alle været skjult af dækstenene, men havde tilsyneladende ingen forbindelse med disse, da de ikke fortsatte ind i stenene. Forklaringen på disse pigge kendes ikke, men det er muligt, at de har dannet en del af et jerngitter, som er blevet bygget over graven og senere fjernet, da dækstenene blev lagt på plads.

Ved udgravning af graven viste laginddelingen af den nedsivede fyld, at indbruddet igennem nordenden af rammen var sket før indbruddet gennem dækstenene. Graven viste sig at være meget dyb. De cementerede vægge gik lodret ned til bunden, som lå 1,52 m under rammens overflade, hvilket vil sige, at graven har været hugget 1,45 m ned i den faste klippe. I de sidste få cm af fylden fandtes tæt ved nordenden af graven flere jernbeslag og noget formuldet træ.

Og så – i samme område og niveau – kom pludselig en uventet gevinst. Siden udgravningen begyndte, havde kulierne ofte talt om det guld, som vi, efter deres mening, gravede efter. Nu rettede den kuli, der var ved at rense graven, sig op og rakte mig noget. »Her er guldet,« sagde han. Og guld var det, en brakteat, en tynd guldskive, 2,75 cm i diameter, med mønstre, som gengav en blomst med otte kronblade. Senere fandtes endnu en guldskive. Bunden af graven var, som siderne, cementeret, og jordbundsforholdene har bevirket, at cementen i bunden aldrig var stivnet helt. I denne halvstørknede cement, 8 cm fra østvæggen og omtrentlig midt i graven, sad den sidstfundne brakteat. Den var lidt større, 3 cm i diameter, og mønstret var anderledes, en firkant afbrudt af fire hjerteformede figurer. Guldskivernes brug er tvivlsom. Lignende skiver har været brugt i historisk tid til pynt på dragter og slør, og de er også kendt fra parthiske og tidligere perioder som hårbåndsprydelser.

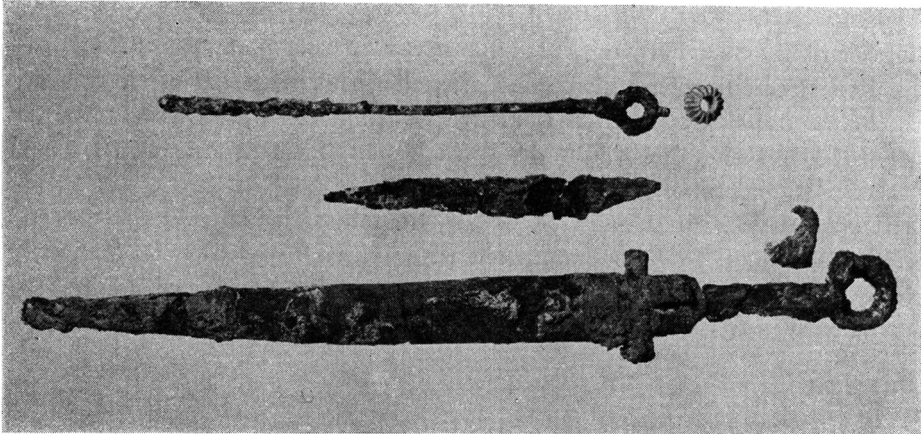


Fig. 9. Oldsagerne fra Høj 36/2. 1 : 3,4.  
Objects found in Tumulus 36/2. 1 : 3.4.

### Høj 36/2

Den anden høj, som blev udgravet, var kun 1 m høj og 9,5 m i tværmål. Graven viste sig at være af nøjagtig samme type som den foregående, bestående af en ramme, som målte 4,30 m × 2,88 m, med en åbning, 2,16 m × 0,77 m, midt i rammen. Graven og rammen lå næsten nøjagtig Ø-V, og således afvigende i orienteringen fra den foregående.

Graven var tydeligt forstyrret gentagne gange. I sydsiden var der hugget et hul i cementrammen, hvorigennem adgang kunne forceres under dækstenene. Dækstenene fandtes dog ikke. Graven var derfor til randen fuld af sand. I sandlaget lå et skelet af et fuldvoksnet menneske kun 18 cm under rammens overflade. Det lå udstrakt på ryggen med hovedet i det sydvestlige hjørne af graven og med krop og ben liggende skråt over mod nordvæggen. Der fandtes intet gravgods ved denne sekundære begravelse.

17 cm dybere fandtes en anden sekundær begravelse, skelettet af et barn, to-tre år gammelt, som lå midt i graven, men på tværs af dens længderetning. Det lå på højre side med hovedet mod nord og benene let bøjet.

Under disse begravelser fandtes rent sand ned til bunden af graven, 1,59 m under overfladen af rammen. I sandet fandtes c. 60 cm over gravbunden et gennemboret sneglehus og et stykke af et sølvarmbånd.

Bunden af graven var tilsyneladende tom, men da sager kunne skjules i den halvbløde cement, børstedes bunden ren. Derved fremkom c. 15 cm fra nordvæggen og 70 cm fra vestvæggen en grøn plet, øjensynligt et sted, hvor bronze havde ligget, og da cementen blev skrabet forsigtigt bort, viste en lille samling oldsager sig under den (fig. 9). Det syntes klart, at disse sager under den første plyndring var blevet trådt ned i den bløde cement. Der var intet spor af skelet.

### *Oldsager (fig. 9).*

1. Jerndolk, 39,2 cm lang, med håndgreb afsluttet af en bronzering og i en skede af en tynd jernplade. Skeden afsluttedes af en 8,2 cm lang bronzedupsko og har en kort bronzestang lige under håndgrebet. Et lille stykke, fundet lige under håndgrebet, er sandsynligvis den eneste rest af en ophængningsanordning.
2. Jernkniv, 15 cm lang, med en 2,8 cm lang grebtunge.
3. Bronzestang, 22,7 cm lang, med ringformet hoved.
4. Fajanceperle, 1,9 cm i diameter, kugleformet med tværgående riller og svag antydning af lyseblå glasur.

### *Høj 36/3*

En undersøgelsesgrøft blev lagt fra sydsiden mod midten i den 2 m høje gravhøj. Midt i højen og 1 m over bundniveauet fandtes tre skeletter, de to liggende side om side og det tredje ca. 1½ m længere mod nord. Alle lå udstrakte på ryggen, de to med hovedet mod vest og det tredje med hovedet mod VSV. Der fandtes intet gravgods bortset fra nogle ubestemmelige jernstumper ved det midterste skelet, muligvis nåle fra svøbet. I profilet gennem disse begravelser kunde nemlig ses en tynd mørk stribe, måske spor af et stykke stof eller en måtte, hvori liget har været begravet. Disse sekundære begravelser var tydeligt før-islamiske. På Bahrains breddegrad skal islamiske grave ligge NV-SØ, for at liget, liggende på højre side, kan have blikket rettet mod Mekka.

Ikke langt fra disse tre begravelser, lidt længere mod SV i den midterste del af højen og kun 30 cm under højoverfladen, blev nu fundet en grav med den rigtige muhammedanske orientering. Vore kulier var i begyndelsen i tvivl om, hvorvidt graven hørte til den islamiske periode, da den bestod af en stenbygget, cementeret kiste, 192 × 40 cm stor. Normalt bruger muhammedanerne ikke kiste. Skelettet lå imidlertid på ryggen på samme måde som ved de øvrige begravelser, så vi var sikre på, at den ikke kunde være islamisk; men vi tog fejl. Da hovedet var afdækket, viste det sig, at ansigtet var drejet tilhøjre, sådan at den døde så over skulderen mod Mekka. Da vi ikke ønskede at forstyrre muhammedanske grave, standsedes videre udgravning af denne kiste omgående, og den dækkedes til igen.

Her var tilsyneladende en begravelse fra allerførste islamiske tid, fra slutningen af det syvende århundrede, og øjensynligt var den gamle skik at begrave ligene på ryggen blevet bevaret i nogen tid, efter at den nye orientering og retning af blikket var blevet indført. De øvrige sekundære begravelser er derfor måske også fra tiden lige før Islams indførelse.

Under de tre første skeletter fandtes centralgraven, som viste sig at være af nøjagtig samme type som i de to først undersøgte høje. Hele rammepladen kunne ikke afdækkes på grund af den islamiske grav, som

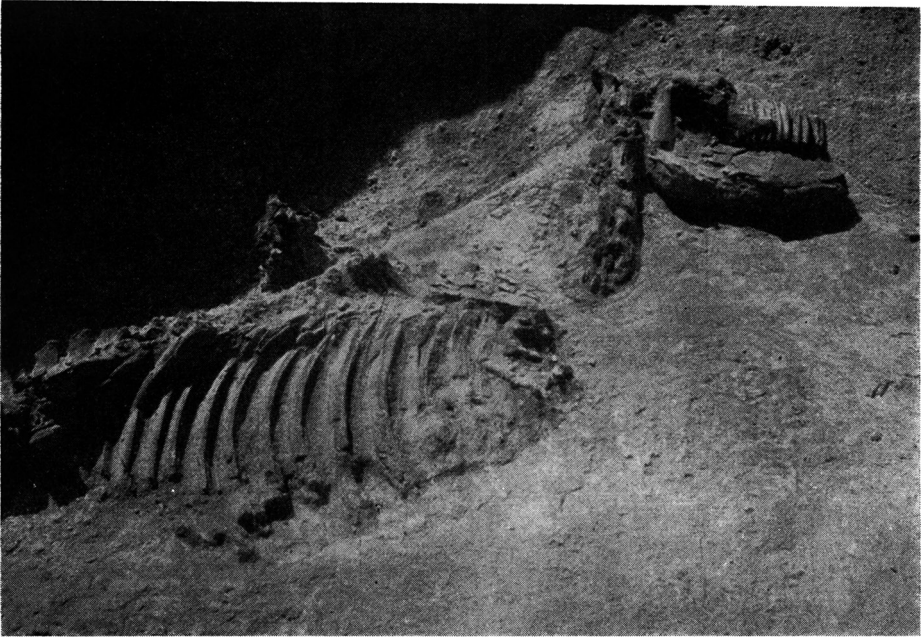


Fig. 10. Kamelskelet liggende på hjørnet af rammen i Høj 36/3.  
Skeleton of camel, lying on corner of grave-frame in Tumulus 36/3.

lå over det sydvestlige hjørne, men den målte c. 4,60 m × 3,30 m. Rammen var orienteret i retning NNV–SSØ. Graven, som lå midt i rammen, målte 2,18 m × 0,78 m og var 1,88 m dyb. Den var dækket af een stor sten, cementeret ved siderne.

Også denne grav var plyndret. To huller, i sydenden og i sydvesthjørnet, var hugget gennem rammen under dækstenen, og der fandtes ingen oldsager eller benstumper i den.

Langs den vestlige kant af rammen med hovedet hvilende på det nordvestlige hjørne fandtes skelettet af en ung kamel, hvis ben var afskåret (fig. 10). Der kan ikke være tvivl om, at kamelen var et offer, nedlagt samtidig med den primære begravelse. Fund af dyretænder og knogler ved nordvesthjørnet af rammen i høj 1 får derved sin forklaring. Der har nok ligget et lignende offer, som er blevet forstyrret ved gravrøvernes nedgravning.

Selv om der aldrig før er blevet fundet spor af kamelofre ved grave i det arabiske område, er sådanne ofte omtalt fra tiden lige før Islam i et kendt digt, skrevet af Hassan ibn Thabit i begyndelsen af det syvende århundrede. Da han rider på kamel forbi graven af en berømt før-islamisk helt, synger han: »Var det ikke for min rejses skyld, og for ørkenens brede strækninger, vilde jeg efterlade min kamel ved graven med afskårne ben«<sup>15</sup>).



De tre høje viser en ny begravelseskik på Bahrain fra jernalderen. De fortæller også om en udbredt brug af sekundærbegravelser i tiden lige før og efter Islams indførelse i slutningen af det syvende århundrede efter vor tidsregning.

På grund af den gentagne plyndring er det ikke muligt at sige ret meget om gravskikken. I ingen af højene fandtes det mindste spor af liget i de primære begravelser. De særprægede »rammegrave« kendes endnu ikke fra andre områder end Bahrain, og skikken at ofre kameler kendes kun fra digtet, som omtaler det arabiske fastland.

*Five among Bahrain's Hundred Thousand Grave-mounds.*

There are places on Bahrain where in every direction to the horizon nothing meets the eye but thousands upon thousands of burial tumuli. Imagination baulks at the sight of this enormous number of closely packed naked hillocks of sand and gravel – it is impossible at first sight to believe that every single tumulus in fact covers a burial. One tries in vain to discover some natural cause which could explain this ocean of mounds.

Further investigation but deepens the wonder which one feels at first sight of the moundfields. For not only are the mounds packed so closely together as they can be, but even so they cover an immense area. Along the whole of the north and west coasts of Bahrain lies a deep belt of cultivation, of date-palm plantations and lucerne fields. Some of this area, particularly on the west coast, has now relapsed to desert, but here it is possible to see on air photographs the shadowy outlines of earlier cultivation, of water channels and field boundaries. Behind this belt, between it and the central depression, lies higher stony ground, seamed by the wadis which carry off the infrequent but heavy winter rainfall. It is this area which is covered, almost in its entirety, by the gravemounds. They have never been counted. But by a rough calculation on the basis of air photographs their number would appear to be in the region of 100.000.

This is approximately the number of gravemounds in the whole of Denmark, whereas the area covered by the Bahrain mounds, large though it is in relation to the size of the island, can hardly exceed 20 square miles.

The mounds vary greatly in size, with heights ranging from 1 to 6 meters, and the various sizes are mixed fairly uniformly. However, near the village of 'Ali, at the northernmost point of the main moundfield, there is a group of about 20 mounds distinguished from the remainder by their uniform large size. The largest of these 'Ali mounds is no less than 12 meters high, and the remainder are very little less.

The presence of the immense number of tumuli on Bahrain was first brought to the attention of scientific circles in 1880 through the report made by Captain E. L. Durand to the British Indian Office<sup>1</sup>). Durand opened two of the mounds near 'Ali and found them to contain large stone-built burial chambers. His report caused wide-spread interest in the academic world and during the following thirty years several interested amateurs worked for short periods on the 'Ali mounds<sup>2</sup>). Finally in 1906–08 a serious campaign was conducted by the Political Resident of the day, Colonel F. B. Prideaux, on the instigation of the Archaeological Survey of India<sup>3</sup>). He, too, confined his attention of the mounds at 'Ali, opening 44, including 9 of the largest.

The first comprehensive investigation of the moundfield was carried out by Ernest Mackay in 1924 under the auspices of the Egyptian Exploration Society<sup>4</sup>). He opened a series of 30 mounds and, while his conclusions were in many respects wide off the mark, his publication of the various mound and chamber-types still provides the foundation upon which future work must be based. The results of an investigation by P. B. Cornwall in 1940-41 are unfortunately still unpublished<sup>5</sup>), but the summaries which are available<sup>6</sup>) suggest that little can be added to Mackay's conclusions.

As has been stated in the introduction, it was not the purpose of the Danish Archeological Bahrain-Expedition to devote much of its time to the mound-fields. However, as certain questions, particularly relating to mound construction, had been left unanswered, and as it was desired to obtain specimens of the pottery used by the mound builders for comparison with pottery found in settlements, the excavation programme opened with the excavation of two of these mounds.

It is not easy to select two gravemounds among the 100,000 available. The choice settled upon an outlying group of tumuli between Janabiya and Sar, towards the northwest corner of the island. This group was selected because it had not previously been investigated by archeologists, and because it lay far from any present-day village, and might therefore have suffered less from the attacks of grave-robbers than the other areas. In this group two tumuli were picked out which appeared, from their perfectly rounded shape, to be undisturbed. Both tumuli had, nevertheless, previously been entered and robbed.

#### *Tumulus 31/1*

The first of the tumuli was of average size, being 2.35 meters high and 17 meters in diameter. It was excavated by the present writer. In order to obtain a clear view of the construction it was determined to cut away half the mound, leaving a section clear through the centre on the line NNW-SSE, a direction which lies at right angles to the normal longitudinal axis of the grave chambers (Fig. 1).

The removal of half the mound laid bare the entrance to the chamber and the first cap-stone as well as the short flanking walls to the entrance. It also revealed a ring-wall of small boulders forming a circle 3 meters within the present boundary of the mound with a diameter of 10.5 meters. This wall was for the greater part of its length formed of piled up stones. On the axis of the chamber, however, and opposite its entrance, there was a gap one meter wide. To either side of this, more noticeably to the north, the ring-wall showed a more regular construction, a vertical dry-stone wall on the inner side with a jumble of stones piled outside. Beyond the gap, and some 1-1½ meters from it, lay a number of stones which gave the appearance of being the original filling of the gap.

In the section through the mound (Fig. 2) the entrance to the chamber formed an impressive centrepiece, with its side walls built up of five irregular courses of roughly squared limestone blocks and with its massive capstone above. The entrance to the chamber was blocked by three courses of stones, and above them there was a gap of 40 cms., which showed that the chamber had already been entered. The gap, and the sight in the dim interior of the tumbled stones which had once filled it told their own story, while in the section above a funnel-shaped depression filled with stones and with sand of

a darker colour than the remainder of the tumulus showed the route which the thieves had taken (Fig. 2, H).

From the section the stages of construction of the mound could be clearly distinguished. Throughout this part of the moundfield the limestone bedrock (Fig. 2, A) lies just beneath the surface, topped by 10-15 cms. of chalk-like soil (Fig. 2, B), the result of weathering of the limestone. The mound had been raised on top of this chalk layer, and between the chalk and the substance of the mound lay a thin brown humus-like layer (Fig. 2, C) which may perhaps indicate that the desert once lay under grass. At the centre of the mound the layer of chalk had been dug away and the chamber raised upon the actual bedrock. On either side of this depression the heap of chalk cast up from this digging could be seen in the section (Fig. 2, D).

The first stage in the covering of the chamber appears to be represented by a heap of light-coloured sand, no larger than was required to hide the stones from view (Fig. 2, F). This apparently lay uncovered long enough for the surface to weather to a darker brown (Fig. 2, E). Thereafter the final covering (Fig. 2, G) was built up, the direction of the stratification showing clearly that the earth was first piled upon or within the ring-wall, after which layer upon layer was gradually heaped up towards the centre. The many stones and chippings which were mixed with the sand tended to roll down and to accumulate in the hollow which would always until the end exist between the original covering of the chamber and the rising mound. The stratigraphy did not show whether the ring-wall was originally visible or not.

The centre cap of earth around the chamber raises interesting questions which it will require further investigation to answer. It is not impossible that this inner core served its purpose in the setting up of the capstones, enabling the heavy stones to be dragged up a slope of earth rather than having to be lifted. But the fact that the core also extends above the capstones shows that this cannot have been its sole purpose.

The method of excavation adopted did not allow of a determination whether the inner core also masked the door of the chamber. But the presence of the short flanking walls protruding beyond the blocked doorway suggests that the chamber may well have been open and accessible after the central core was constructed.

We thus get a picture of two very distinct stages in the construction of the burial mounds, perhaps separated by a period of years. At the first stage the chamber stands open, covered by a minimal mound and surrounded at an interval of some 2½ meters by an unbroken ring-wall. When thereafter the body was to be placed in its tomb the stones were pulled away from the entrance to the ring wall, the body laid to rest, and the entrance to the tomb blocked. It may have been at this point, or during the subsequent building up of the mound, that some stones found lying in front of the entrance were displaced from the flanking walls.

The chamber proved to be 90 cms. wide and 180 cms. long within the entrance blocking, to which should be added a further 90 cms. beyond this point forming the flanking walls. The chamber possessed two alcoves at the inner, eastern end, measuring 35 × 40 (NE) and 38 × 38 (SE) cms. respectively. The chamber had a height of 116 cms., while the alcoves were only 80 (NE) and 70 (SE) cms. high. The walls of both chamber and alcoves were constructed of courses of dry-stone work, mainly large roughly-squared stones with the gaps between filled with smaller stones. Each alcove was

roofed with a single large stone, and the roof of the main chamber consisted of four massive stone slabs. The longitudinal axis of the chamber lay 84° E of Geographical North.

The chamber is thus of the type most commonly met with in Bahrain and described by Prideaux and Mackay. It is a type not met with outside the island. The nearest parallel is to be found in the stone cists of Protodynastic date at Tepe Gawra<sup>7</sup>), but even here the discrepancies are too many to suggest a relationship. While the orientation is similar the typical alcoves are not found at Gawra. At the latter site, too, the grave furnishings are completely different, while the body is laid on the left side, whereas in Bahrain, as we shall see, the rule appears to have been that the body should lie on the right side.

When excavation commenced the floor of the chamber was covered with 6-10 cms. of fine sand and dust which had percolated in through chinks in the wall, though towards the entrance, where the removal of the top stones of the blocking had permitted more earth to enter, the heap of debris sloped up almost to the ceiling. On this being cleared away (Fig. 3) four stones were found lying within the entrance, clearly the stones which originally formed the top of the blocking and which had been pushed in by the robbers. Besides and to the right of these stones lay the broken shell of an ostrich egg (Fig. 3, 1) and a quantity of sherds of an extremely friable light red pottery vase (Fig. 3, 2). As no sherds lay under the fallen stones it is clear that the vase and the eggshell were unbroken at the time of burial.

A little further into the chamber, and below the last scattering of potsherds, came the remains of the skeleton in a very powdery state (Fig. 3,5). It could be seen that the body had lain on its right side with knees rather more than half bent and feet towards the entrance. A little above the hips all traces of the skeleton disappeared. The rest of the chamber only contained splinters of bone obviously out of position and mainly lying by the walls. The upper part of the chamber and the alcoves were moreover completely bare of artifacts. However, immediately below the ceiling of the NE alcove were two objects of bronze, a spearhead (Fig. 3, 3) and a spear-ferrule (Fig. 3, 4), which had been driven into chinks between the stones of the end wall. The ferrule was still jammed hard into the wall, necessitating the removal of a stone to extricate it, whereas the spearhead had fallen down onto the stone below when its point, still jammed between the stones, had corroded away.

The position of the body in this chamber agrees with that in Mackay's mounds 2 and 5, the only ones in which any posture could be identified<sup>8</sup>). In Mackay's mound no. 5 the skeleton lay in a flexed position on the right side with the hands before the face, a posture which is perhaps the norm for Bahrain graves of this period. It is a posture reported from Ur in the Jemdet Nasr or Early Dynastic Periods<sup>9</sup>), though there no orientation of the grave is discernible. The position of the two spear-points is exactly the same as that of two spearheads found by Mackay<sup>10</sup>).

### *Contents*

1. Ostrich eggshell, 15 cms. high. One end of the shell has been cut away and around this opening traces of a reddish colouration can be seen. The shell may have been used as a drinking beaker. (Fig. 4).
2. Vase of light-red clay, 26.5 cms. high, with a rounded base, a sharply angled shoulder and a vertical neck bearing three parallel horizontal ridges. (Fig.

- 4). The vase is wheel-made, and the clay is mixed with red ochre<sup>44</sup>).  
Two vases of the same type are known from previous discoveries<sup>42</sup>).
3. Spearhead of copper, or of bronze with a high copper content, with a forged socket. The spearhead is now 11.5 cms. long, but its original length was about 16 cms., the point having corroded away.
4. Spear-ferrule of copper, or of bronze with a high copper content, 15.5 cms. long and square in section. The socket is forged.

### *Tumulus 31/2*

This tumulus lay in the immediate vicinity of tumulus 1. It was considerably larger, measuring 20 meters in diameter and 4.60 meters in height. It was excavated by P. V. Glob, whose notes on chamber construction and contents have been referred to for this report.

As it was considered probable that the tumulus contained a double chamber and a shaft a segmental excavation was made in the western side of the mound, and soon massive stones were discovered on the slope of the barrow. Several of these lay in disorder, but beneath them could be seen stone rings surrounding the mound (Fig. 5). When the whole of the side had been cleaned up it was clear that the mound had originally been ringed by two concentric walls of large roughly squared stones. The inner wall lay higher than the outer, forming two high concentric steps up the side of the mound, the top of the second step being about 2.50 meters above ground level. The section at the edge of the excavation showed that this stone construction had originally been visible.

At the top of the excavated area a stone-walled shaft was found. It measured  $4.30 \times 2.40$  meters at the top and  $3.45 \times 1.20$  meters at the bottom, and was 2.50 meters deep at the outer end and 3.90 meters at its highest point by the entrance to the chambers. About 1.80 meters above the foot of the shaft there was a ledge, 20–30 cms. broad, along the two sides of the shaft (Fig. 6). At the eastern end of the shaft, towards the centre of the tumulus, could be seen the entrances to two chambers, the one above the other (Fig. 7). These entrances, the lower 1 meter high and the upper 1.16 meters, were blocked by large stones, but a hole in the upper corner of the blocking showed in the case of both entrances that the chambers had already been plundered. Both chambers indeed proved to be half full of earth; in the upper chamber no bones or other objects were found, while in the lower chamber lay only scattered potsherds and fragments of bone and bronze, of which the largest piece appears to be a portion of a bronze mirror.

At the bottom of the shaft, at original ground level, much scattered charcoal was found and collected for  $C_{14}$  analysis, of which the results are not yet to hand.

The lower chamber was 3.20 meters long, 1.08 m. wide and 1.67 m. high. Its floor was formed by the bedrock, and lay 40 cms. below the floor of the shaft. The chamber possessed two alcoves in the side walls at the east end. They were both 60 cms. wide and 1.32 m. high; the lefthand alcove was 66 cms. deep and the righthand one 55 cms. The chamber walls consisted of five courses of large and fairly regularly shaped stones, the fifth course also forming the roof of the alcoves. The chamber was roofed with five large stone slabs.

The upper chamber possessed no alcoves. It was 3.38 m. long, 1.04 m. high and 97 cms. wide at the entrance, narrowing to 84 cms. at the opposite end.



The walls were not so regularly constructed as in the chamber below. They consisted of four courses with a quantity of smaller stones filling the chinks. The longitudinal axes of both chambers were 81° E of Geographical North.

Despite its lack of contents the upper chamber showed some interesting peculiarities. It was full of sand right up to the capstone at the entrance, the heap sloping down until there was only a few cms. at the end wall. In the top few cms. of this heap there was a dark carboniferous level, the remains of a fire lit by the robbers. Under the sand and level with the bottom of the chamber walls lay a layer of brown earth, 15 cms. thick, forming the actual burial deposit. However, the walls of the upper chamber did not, as might have been expected, rest upon the capstones of the chamber below, but upon a layer, 30 cms. thick, of sterile sand and gravel. Below this again were 20 cms. of pebbles before the capstones of the lower chamber were reached. This sterile layer shows a desire that here, as in the graves built on the bedrock, the deceased should lie on virgin earth, a feature which is frequently met with, also in contemporary Danish burials.

Tumuli containing two-storied chambers with an entrance shaft are already known from Mackay's excavations. Tumulus 2 shows a close resemblance to Mackay's mound no. 10<sup>13</sup>). Here, as in the case of tumulus 1, it is probable that the chambers have been open and accessible for some time after the building, with the stone circles and the shaft visible, and that the covering was first completed after the burial.

To the main question with regard to the grave-mounds of Bahrain – by whom they were built and when – the excavation of these two mounds gives no definite reply. This type of burial is not known from any other investigated site, and the rumours that similar moundfields are to be found on the mainland of Arabia are still unconfirmed. No dateable imported articles have yet been found in the graves. The type of spear with the forged socket points to the Early Bronze Age, while the pottery resembles closely Early Dynastic forms in Mesopotamia. The closest Mesopotamian parallels are without a doubt found in the pottery of the Sargonid Period, around 2300 B.C., so that the tumuli excavated would appear to belong to the closing period of the third millennium.

#### *The Tumuli of the Iron Age.*

The new motor-road running westward from Manama, the capital of Bahrain, threads for the first two miles fully grown plantations, where date and banana palms and almond and pappaya trees overhang the road and provide a constant feast for eyes strained by long days of digging in the dust and unrelenting sunshine of the desert. But after the village of Jidd Hafs the desert begins to intrude between the plantations and the road, and for the next three miles the route is bordered by a half-mile wide strip of sand. This long narrow stretch of desert is sown with countless tumuli – perhaps a thousand all told – of a very different character and size from the Bronze Age mounds. These are wider and not always completely circular, while several are built into one, forming irregular shapes. They were clearly monuments of a different period.

There had been no previous scientific investigations here. Several of the mounds had been opened by curious treasure-seekers, and others cut through during the making of the road; and a little collection of pottery, said to be from these mounds, is now in the possession of the Adviser to the Government

of Bahrain, Sir Charles Belgrave. Much of this is of Parthian date<sup>44</sup>). To obtain more exact information concerning these mounds a group lying at the western end of the moundfield near the motor-road was selected for investigation (cf. p. 94, Fig. 2, no. 36).

### *Tumulus 36/1*

The first mound to be investigated measured 3.20 meters in height and 29 meters in diameter. A trial trench, 120 cms. wide, was driven in from the south side of the mound towards the centre, aligned in such a way that the righthand wall of trench formed a section through the centre axis of the mound. When the central grave was found the trench was extended until the whole of the central area was uncovered.

The mound consisted entirely of sandy soil in which the stratification could only with difficulty be made out. There was no ring wall of any sort, and this, together with the uniform nature of the mound substance, accounts for the flatter shape of these tumuli.

The grave in the centre proved to consist of a rectangular plaster frame, measuring  $418 \times 246$  cms. and raised 9 cms. above the bedrock below the mound. The frame lay in the direction NNW-SSE. On the centre of the frame lay a round "lid", formed of large stone blocks cemented together. It was about 3 meters in diameter and projected over the sides of the frame below. It was between 38 and 26 cms. in thickness (Fig. 8).

A hole had been cut in the centre of the lid, and another in the northern end of the frame. It was thus obvious that the grave had been robbed, and not once but twice. In the course of cleaning up the area around the thieves' entry hole in the northwest corner of the grave a number of animal teeth and bone fragments were found, as well as some iron fittings and nails with remains of wood preserved by the rust.

When the lid was removed the grave could be seen as a long narrow rectangular opening in the exact centre of the frame. It measured  $240 \times 86$  cms. and was full of sand almost to the brim.

The removal of the stones of the lid also revealed a number of small iron dogs of rectangular cross-section, which were driven about 4 cms. deep into the plaster of the frame and terminated at its surface. 20 of these iron spikes were visible, and they formed an irregular oval around the grave. They had all been covered by the capstones but had apparently had no connection with them, as they terminated before the stones. These iron dogs are as yet unexplained, but it is possible that they are the remains of an iron grille, originally constructed over the grave and later removed when the capstones were put in position.

The excavation of the grave revealed, through the stratification of the sand which had run down through the two openings, that the breach in the northern end of the frame was earlier than the hole through the capstones. The grave was very deep. The plastered walls descended vertically to a bottom which lay 152 cms. below the surface of the frame, so that the grave was excavated 145 cms. into the living rock. In the last few cms. of sand some further iron fittings and mouldered wood were found close to the northern wall of the grave.

Then suddenly came an unexpected prize, in the same area and level. Since the commencement of the excavation the coolies had often talked of the gold which, in their opinion, we were seeking. And now the coolie who was cleaning up the last inches of the grave straightened himself and handed something up.

"Here is the gold", he said. And it was gold, a bracteate, a thin gold disc, 2.75 cms. in diameter, bearing a pattern representing an eight-petalled flower. Later yet another gold disc was found. The bottom of the grave was plastered like the sides, but here natural conditions had prevented the plaster from ever quite hardening. It was in this putty-like layer, 8 cms. from the east wall and about midway from north to south in the grave, that the second bracteate was found. It was a little larger than the first, 3 cms. in diameter, and the pattern was different, a square interrupted by four heart-shaped designs. The manner of employment of the gold discs is uncertain. Similar discs have been in use up to recent days as ornaments for dresses or veils, and they are also known from Parthian and earlier periods as hairband ornaments.

#### *Tumulus 36/2*

The second mound to be excavated was only one meter high and 9.5 meters in diameter. The grave proved to be of precisely the same type as the preceding one consisting of a plaster frame measuring 430 × 288 cms., with an opening, 216 × 77 cms., in the centre of the frame. The only difference was in the lie of the grave, this second grave and frame being oriented almost exactly E-W.

The grave had clearly been repeatedly disturbed. On the south side a hole had been cut through the plaster of the frame, permitting entry to be forced under the capstones. The capstones themselves had, however, later been removed entirely. The grave was in consequence completely full of sand, and in this sand, only 18 cms. below the level of the frame, lay the skeleton of a fully grown individual. The body lay outstretched on its back with the head in the SW corner of the grave and the legs and body extended obliquely over to the north wall. There lay no burial furnishings with this secondary burial.

17 cms. further down came another secondary burial, the skeleton of a child of 2-3 years which lay in the centre of the grave but at rightangles to its longitudinal axis. The body lay on its right side with its head to the north and its legs slightly bent.

Beneath these two burials the sand extended to the bottom of the grave, 159 cms. below the surface of the frame. The sand contained two loose objects found about 60 cms. above the bottom of the grave, a pierced cowrie shell and a fragment of a silver bracelet.

The bottom of the grave was apparently empty, but, as small objects could be hidden by the semi-soft plaster, the floor of the grave was swept clean. There could then be seen, about 15 cms. from the northern wall and 70 cms. from the western end of the grave, a green stain, clearly a spot where bronze had once lain, and when the plaster was scraped carefully away a little collection of objects was found under it (Fig. 9). It would appear that, during the first robbery of the grave, these objects were trod down into the soft plaster. There was no trace of the skeleton of the primary burial.

#### *Contents*

1. Iron dagger, 39.2 cms. long, with a hilt terminating in a bronze ring, and with a scabbard formed of a thin iron plate. The scabbard terminates in a bronze chape, 8.2 cms. long, and possesses a short bronze crossbar immediately below the hilt. A little hook, found immediately below the hilt, is presumably the remains of some mechanism for attachment to the belt.
2. Iron knife, 15 cms. long, with a tang 2.8 cms. long.

3. Bronze rod, 22.7 cms. long, with a ring-shaped head.
4. Faience bead, 1.9 cms. in diameter, spherical with grooves running from one end of the cord hole to the other, and with slight traces of a light blue glaze.

*Tumulus 36/3*

In this two meter high mound a trial trench was driven in from the south towards the centre. In the centre of the mound and one meter above ground level three skeletons were found, two lying side by side and the third about 1½ meters further to the north. All three lay extended on their backs, two with their heads to the west and the third with its head pointing WSW. No burial furnishings were found apart from some indistinguishable fragments of iron with the centre skeleton, perhaps shroud-pins. For in the section through these burials it was possible to distinguish a thin dark line, which was perhaps the trace of a piece of material or a mat, in which the body had been swathed for burial. These secondary burials were clearly Pre-islamic. In the latitude of Bahrain Islamic graves lie NW-SE, in order that the body, lying on its right side, may look towards Mecca.

Not far from these two burials, a little distance to the SW in the central area of the mound and only 30 cms. beneath the surface, was found a grave with the correct Islamic orientation. The coolies were, to begin with, in doubt as to whether the grave belonged to the Islamic period, as it consisted of a stone-built plastered cist, 192 × 40 cms. in size. A cist is not normal Moslem practice. Moreover, the skeleton lay on its back in the same posture as the other secondary burials, and we were now certain that it could not be Islamic. We were wrong. When the head was uncovered it was seen that it was turned to the right, so that the deceased was looking over its shoulder towards Mecca. As we did not desire to disturb Moslem graves the excavation of the cist was immediately halted and it was covered up again.

It would appear that we have here a burial from the very beginning of the Islamic period, from the end of the seventh century A. D. Clearly the older custom of burying the dead lying on their backs was retained for some time after the new direction of burial and the rule of looking towards the Ka'ba was introduced. The remaining secondary burials are therefore probably from the period immediately before the conversion to Islam.

Beneath the first three skeletons the central grave was found, and it proved to be of exactly the same type as in the first two tumuli investigated. The whole of the surface of the frame could not be uncovered on account of the Moslem grave, which lay above the SW corner, but the frame measured about 460 × 330 cms., and lay in a NNW-SSE direction. The grave which lay in the centre of the frame measured 218 × 78 cms., and was 188 cms. deep. It was covered by a single large stone, cemented down at the sides.

This grave, too, had been robbed. Two holes, in the southern end and in the southeast corner, had been cut through the frame beneath the capstone, and no objects or bones were found in the grave.

Along the western edge of the frame, with the head resting on the north-western corner, was found the skeleton of a young camel, with the legs chopped off (Fig. 10). There can be no doubt that this camel was a sacrifice, deposited at the time of the primary burial. The discovery of the animal teeth and bones by the northwest corner of the frame in tumulus 1 is thereby explained. There lay presumably a similar sacrificial beast there, which was disturbed by the excavation of the tomb-robbers.

Though there has never before been found any trace of camel sacrifices in association with graves within the Arab area, sacrifices of this nature are attested for the period immediately previous to the rise of Islam by a well-known poem, written by Hassan ibn Thabit in the beginning of the seventh century. As he rides his camel past the gravemound of a famous Pre-Islamic hero, he sings: "Were it not for my journey, and for the vastness of the desert, I would leave my camel here crawling on its hock-tendons"<sup>15</sup>).

These three tumuli reveal a previously unknown burial practice in Bahrain, belonging to the Iron Age. They bespeak also an extensive use of secondary burial in the period just before and just after the introduction of Islam towards the middle of the seventh century of our era.

On account of the repeated plundering of the graves it is impossible to say much about the burial customs. In none of the mounds was the least trace found of the body from the primary burial. The distinctive "frame-graves" are not yet known from any area other than Bahrain, and the custom of sacrifice of camels is only known from the poem mentioned above, the scene of which is set on the mainland of Arabia.

*T. G. Bibby.*

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#### NOTER

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<sup>2</sup>) Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society Vol. XII, no. 11 (januar 1890).  
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