



BALUCHISTAN II. ARCHAEOLOGY

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ii. Archaeology

The archeological record of Iranian Baluchistan, in the southeastern corner of Iran, is very limited. Although early travelers often described the region's antiquities, the first significant archeological research was done by Sir Marc Aurel Stein during the early 1930s. His efforts focused on the Bampūr valley, where he recorded numerous sites and conducted a few, limited excavations. Stein's research confirmed that Baluchistan had been inhabited during prehistoric times by groups believed to have cultural affiliations with those in western Iran. Until recently, Stein's research constituted the extent of archeological knowledge about Baluchistan.

In 1966 Beatrice de Cardi conducted limited excavations at [Bampūr](#) to clarify the region's prehistoric sequence. While limited in scope, these excavations revealed a sequence which remains the basic reference for the prehistory of Iranian Baluchistan. Gary W. Hume surveyed the Sarhad (Sarḥadd) plateau region in 1966-67 looking especially for Paleolithic sites and also discovered a few later prehistoric sites. The pottery from these sites was studied by Judith T. Marucheck who later conducted a systematic archeological survey of that region (see Miragliuolo, 1979) in 1975. The only other archeological research



completed to date was Maurizio Tosi's study of the Damin grave goods in 1970.

Baluchistan may have been inhabited first during the Pleistocene as proposed by Hume (1976), based on Paleolithic sites found in the Ladiz valley. The most important were three locations which yielded simple stone tools such as choppers, flakes, and flake tools. These tools stylistically resemble those associated with the Lower Paleolithic period in areas outside of Iran. Precise dating of these materials is debated, but the finds suggest a potential for other Paleolithic research in this region.

There is little other evidence of subsequent human settlement in Baluchistan until the late fourth millennium b.c. Based on her Bampūr excavations de Cardi (pp. 257-68) thought these early settlements, Periods I-IV, had close cultural affiliations with contemporary settlements in Kermān Province and that, as a group, they may have had ultimately some type of indirect cultural affiliation with developments occurring farther to the west. Using more recent data Tosi (1970) and Lamberg-Karlovsky (1972; Lamberg-Karlovsky and Tosi, 1973) have argued that the Bampūr data reflect an extension of basically indigenous cultural developments which occurred in Turkmenistan, eastern Iran, especially Šahr-e Sūkta, and southern Afghanistan. The number and size of these archeological sites which date between ca. 3200-2000 b.c. are very modest and appear to reflect the activities of village agriculturalists and pastoral nomads. At the same time, several scholars (Dales, 1977; Kohl, 1978; Lamberg-Karlovsky and Tosi, 1973; Potts, 1978) contend that these communities were also involved in extensive trade networks which linked such areas as Turkmenistan, Sīstān, Pakistani Baluchistan, the Persian Gulf, and the Indus valley. These same scholars, as well as de Cardi, feel that after 2500 b.c., Bampūr Periods V-VI, this area became increasingly involved with a Persian Gulf trading network linking Mesopotamia, southeastern Iran, Oman, Bahrain, and the Indus valley. Despite the possibility of involvement in such extensive trading networks, the extent and intensity of which may be debated (Shaffer, 1982), cultural developments in Iranian Baluchistan remained modest by comparison with surrounding regions.

Early in the second millennium b.c. many of these settlements were abandoned, suggesting a population decrease or, perhaps, a shift to increased pastoral nomadism. These changes are often attributed to the impact of the Indo-Aryan invasions and/or a long period of drought. During the first millennium b.c. and especially in the Parthian and Sasanian periods, the situation altered and there was a population increase suggested by a larger



number of archeological sites. One important factor in this increase was the introduction of *qanāt* irrigation which allowed the first major settlement of lowland plain areas. Consequently both agricultural and pastoral nomadic elements of the economy expanded. This expansion continued into the latter half of the first millennium a.d., resulting in the increasing use of ever more marginal agricultural lands and a decreasing ability of the region to meet subsistence and surplus production requirements. Population increases and competition over resources ultimately required stronger political controls reflected in the appearance of early fortifications. The problems of increasing population combined with a decreasing carrying capacity of the land, due to overgrazing and soil exhaustion, continued into the medieval period. Ultimately these insurmountable problems of ecological decline resulted in another widespread abandonment of the region until the Baluchis arrived in approximately the seventeenth century.

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