



BAN-E SORMA

BAN-e SORMA, a necropolis of the Early Bronze Age, excavated in 1967 by the Belgian Mission in Iran. It lies along the banks of the Laškān river, at 3.5 km from the village of Čavār in the district Īlām, province of Pošt-e Kūh, Īlām, western Luristan (Lorestān). This necropolis extends over a wide plateau divided by depressions into three zones: areas A, B, and C. The tombs are scattered, except in the southwest corner of area A, where a group of eleven tombs was discovered together. The funeral vaults are impressive for their size. Most measure from 8 to 16 m in length and are 1.70 to 3 m wide and 1.50 to 2.10 m deep. They were closed by enormous covering stone slabs. Pebbles were placed around each slab and the entire tomb was edged with solid counterweights. Inside, the walls of thick limestone ashlar are arranged in regular horizontal courses, but in such a way that the top opening is narrower than the bottom. These vault burials are family or collective sepulchers, containing several bodies, but only rare fragments of bone were preserved ([Plate V](#)).

The graves contained funerary furnishings, consisting mostly of pottery, metal objects, and engraved cylinder seals. Pottery included coarse unpainted and painted monochrome or polychrome ware. The polychrome ware is decorated with wide zoomorphic bands over the whole surface of the vessel, painted in brownish-black and reddish-orange on a buff ground. This pottery is related to the “Diyala Ware” from Mesopotamia. Metal objects are made of copper or bronze. The artisans used for this copper alloy, lead, antimony, and arsenic. Tin was not commonly used.



Among the metal objects there are tools and weapons (knives, daggers, spearheads, socketed spears, flat axes, socketed axes, chisels, awls), personal items (needles, pins, rings, bracelets, belt-buckles, tweezers, cosmetic implements), and vessels. Silver was frequent for hair spirals, earrings, and rings. Necklaces were made of beads from fossil opercles and dentalia and snail shells. Stones were also used: lapis-lazuli, azurite, diorite, alabaster, and obsidian. The cylinder seals, made of calcite or serpentine, are engraved with diagonal scenes of animal fights (caprids, lions, panthers, dragons, androcephalous bulls), often in the presence of personages, and mythical scenes representing the god in a boat with a prow in the form of the bust of another god.

By analogy with the funeral furnishing from the Old Elamite period at Susa IV (= Susa Dc-Dd) and with those from the Old Sumerian Period in Mesopotamia—Ur (Royal Tombs), Mari, Kish, Lagash, Khafajah, Tell Asmar—the collective tombs from Ban-e Sorma must be situated in the Early Dynastic III period about 2600-2400 B.C. Since written sources are lacking, it is difficult to determine which population occupied this necropolis. Most probably the tombs at Ban-e Sorma should be attributed to the Elamites. The graveyard at Ban-e Sorma (and others of the same kind, e.g., Qaḷ'a-ye Nešār, Dar-e Tanhā) are interesting in that they show that, from about 2600 b.c., the tribes from Pošt-e Kūh, Luristan, played an important part in the formation of the bronze civilization in Luristan.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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