



MALIĀN

MALIĀN (generally spelled Malyan; Toll-e Maliun in local dialect), an important archeological site in the Kor River basin in central Fārs, identified as ancient **Anshan**, the highland capital of **Elam**.

Maliān is located in the Beyzā' district about 50 km north-northwest of Shiraz at an elevation of about 1600 m above sea level. At nearly 200 ha, Maliān is the largest pre-Achaemenid settlement in Fārs and one of largest archeological sites in Iran (**FIGURE 1**). Remains of the site consist of a gently mounded area of about 130 ha extending to the west and the south, and a relatively flat area of about 70 ha with limited archeological remains, but dotted with a few smaller mounds to the east. These areas are encircled with remains of the ancient city wall. The highest point of the site, the area adjacent to Operation EDD (Carter, 1996) to the west, is about 10 m above plain level.

The first known reference to Maliān as an archeological site dates to the mid-19th century (Fasā'i, ed. Rastgār, II, p. 185). Fereydun Tavallali of the Archeological Service of Iran briefly tested the site in 1961. The site was recorded in 1968 by William Sumner during his survey of the Kor River basin (Sumner, 1972). Studies of fragmentary inscribed bricks found by Sumner on the site (Reiner, 1973), compared with those already in the Louvre (Lambert, 1972), established Maliān as Anshan, the highland capital of Elam (Hansman, 1972), therefore radically changing notions about the expanse and political geography of Elam (Vallat, 1980, 1993).

A University of Pennsylvania expedition directed by Sumner explored the site



from 1971 to 1978 (Sumner, 1973, 1974, 1976, 1985, 1988, 2003). This expedition carried out topographic, proton magnetometer, and probabilistic surface sampling surveys of portions of the site (Sumner, 1988, pp. 307-8), and conducted excavations in deposits of the Banesh phase at Operations ABC (Sumner, 2003), TUV (Nicholas, 1990) and BY8 (Sumner, 1985), Kaftari phase at Operations GHI (Nickerson, 1983), ABC, FX106, GGX98, and BY8, Qale/Middle Elamite phase at Operations EDD and BB33, as well as test excavations at a number of smaller areas (Sumner, 1988, p. 313). Fieldwork at Maliān was resumed in 1999 by the author (Abdi, 2001; Alden et. al., 2005).

Maliān was intermittently occupied from the Middle Neolithic to the early Islamic period (Sumner, 1988, pp. 313-18), when it was eventually reduced to the contemporary Maliān village.

Table 1. The Kur River Basin Sequence.

The site seems to have started out as a Neolithic hamlet, as evidenced by a handful of Jari sherds from surface surveys. Occupation seems to have expanded during the following Shamsabad and Bakun phases which, based on a considerable number of Bakun sherds in disturbed contexts at Operations EE16 and Z46, appears to have been near the center of the site. The nature of Lapui occupation at the site is unclear, as the only evidence for this phase is sherds from the surface and basal layers at Operation TTW1 (Abdi, 2001, p. 87), both in non-primary context.

By the Banesh phase (ca. 3300-2700 B.C.E), it appears that at least two distinct settlements coexisted at the site: one in Operation ABC and the other at Operation TUV. While the ABC occupation shows evidence for elite residence with a number of superimposed levels of monumental architecture with sumptuary material (Sumner, 2003), evidence from TUV shows a more domestic occupation involved in household-related and craft activities (Nicholas, 1990). Inference regarding social differentiation in various Banesh occupations finds further support in the faunal remains from operations ABC and TUV that show a marked difference in access to animal products (Zeder, 1991). Both areas have yielded Proto-Elamite tablets, seals and sealings (Stolper 1985) indicating Maliān's involvement in the extensive interregional network on the Iranian Plateau (Alden, 1982) that characterized the Proto-Elamite horizon (Abdi 2003). Evidence for social and economic differentiation, as well as a massive wall built around the site towards the end of the Banesh phase, have been interpreted as signs of an emerging political formation

(Zeder and Blackman 2003) integrating sedentary agriculturalists and nomadic pastoralist in the region (Sumner, 1986a). The outcome of this political formation is unclear, but it seems safe to assume that it was responsible for laying the foundation of the Elamite state.

Recent studies (Miller and Sumner, 2004; Alden et. al., 2005) indicate continuity from the Banesh to the Kaftari period. The re-emergence of Maliān as a major urban center in the highlands of Elam in the Kaftari phase (ca. 2200-1600 B.C.E) coincides with references to Anshan in Mesopotamian sources (Hansman, 1972, 1985). A large part of the site, and perhaps areas immediately outside the city wall to the west and southwest, may have been occupied during the Kaftari phase. In this period, Maliān was a bustling urban center of 20-30,000 people, with evidence for specialized craft activities (Nickerson, 1991) that serviced the entire surrounding region (Sumner, 1989), but, in the meantime, may have contributed to gradual deforestation of Maliān's hinterland (Miller, 1985). Excavations in several areas at the site have exposed Kaftari deposits (Nickerson, 1983), especially in Operation GHI, where excavations yielded substantial Kaftari material other than pottery, including several architectural levels, administrative texts in Sumerian, and seals and sealings.

Evidence for occupation at Maliān from ca. 1600 to 1300 B.C.E is scanty. Population at the site seems to have dropped to a small portion of the Kaftari city, but by late Qale/Middle Elamite phase (ca. 1200 B.C.E) Maliān appears to have once again regained an important place in Elamite affairs, as evidenced by the large building partially excavated in operation EDD (Carter, 1996) with administrative texts in Elamite concerned with transactions in various metals and other commodities (Stolper, 1984). It was apparently around this time that Hutelutuš-Inšušinak, one of the last rulers of the Šutrukid dynasty of the Middle Elamite period, sought refuge at Anshan after his defeat at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar I (r. ca. 1119–1098 BCE) (Foster, 1993, p. 302) and built a temple there, whose fragmentary inscribed bricks led to the identification of the site.

While there is some evidence for limited occupation at the EDD area from Middle to Neo-Elamite period, Maliān's decline in the centuries following the Middle Elamite period can be attributed to Elamite affairs in the lowlands, especially their preoccupation with Assyrians to the west, and the emerging power of nomadic Persians in the highlands of Fārs. By this time, Anshan may have become the seat of a polity that allied itself with lowland Elamites under



Humban-Menanu in the battle of Halule against Assyrians, suggesting that lowland Elamites could still exert some influence in the highlands (de Miroschedji, 1985, 1990; Waters, 2000).

From the mid-1st millennium onwards, Anshan/Maliān continued to live in the shadow of its former glories. The description by Cyrus II (see [CYRUS iii](#); r. ca. 558-530 BCE) of himself and his predecessors as kings of Anshan may refer to the region rather than the site. This inference is supported by a single reference in the Elamite version of the [Bisotun](#) inscription to Anshan, where it is identified as a non-specific location (as opposed to a specific site) in the land of Parsa (Grillot-Susini, Herrenschildt, and Malbrab-Labat, 1993, p. 31). Apart from a few references in Persepolis Fortification Tablets (Sumner, 1986b) dated to the early Achaemenid period, only a handful of sherds and a column base (Abdi, 2001, fig. 27) from Maliān can be dated to the Achaemenid period, suggesting that Maliān continued to decline in importance in favor of emerging imperial centers at Pasargadae and Persepolis.

While Maliān continued to be occupied in the Parthian and Sasanian periods, it was by then reduced to a diminishing provincial town, until all that was left was the small village of Maliān that stands on its ruins today.

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