

Field of Archaeology in Balochistan and its Importance on the Baloch History

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Abstract:

The land of Balochistan has been a frame of civilizations throughout the history. In the ancient times, the invading nations used this area as a passage through India and other parts of east and west. Balochistan has the oldest civilization like Mehrgarh, which is called to be the mother of civilizations of the Indo-Pak and the Iranian region. It is said, that the civilization of Mehrgarh gave birth the first human civilization throughout the world. Balochistan has more than 350 archaeological sites, a few has been discovered and the remaining sites are still awaiting. This paper illustrates the different archaeological sites of Balochistan and their prehistoric records.

Geography of Balochistan:

Balochistan is situated south-west of Pakistan extended a large area of 3, 47,190 sq. km, covering 44% of total territory of Pakistan but has smallest population. It has extensive plateau of terrain divided into basins with sufficient height and it's located at the northern latitudes between 24.30 and 32 degree while the longitude of 60 and 70 on east.¹ The land of Balochistan is divided into upper highland and lower highland. The upper highland known locally as Khorasan has as evaluation of about 12000ft., with valley floors about 5000ft., above sea level. The lower highland included Makran, Kharan and Chagi ranges in the west while Kithar, Pad and Suleiman ranges in the east.² Similarly Bolan Pass historically occupies an important position to connect lower Indus River with Balochistan and Afghanistan.³

There are three plains which included Kaachi Plain, Las bela plain and Dasht river plain. The North West territory of Balochistan is deserted with inland drainage which broke up into *Hamuns* while the lakes are generally dry.⁴

Balochistan possesses a very long coastal belt of 800km. However, no deep

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Field of Archaeology in Balochistan and its Importance on the Baloch History

seaport is there rather than small ports are there to facilitate the fishing operations carried out in coastal area of Balochistan. These ports are in Sonmiani, Ormara, Pasni, Gwader and Jiwani.⁵

Rivers:

The main rivers in Balochistan are *Bolan, Zhob, Nari, Pishin, Lora, Mula, Hub, Polari, Hingol, Rakshan, Kech, and Dasht. Gaj, Nari and Khah*, while *Zhob River* flows towards the northeast in Gomal River into Indus River. The central and western rivers drain toward southwest to Arabian Sea. Chagi, Panjgoor and Kharan streams drain into lake locally called *Hamun-e-Lora and Hamun-e-Mashkel*.⁶

Climate:

The climate changed as the topography varied from region to region. In plains and lower highland the summer is very hot while winter mild. In the upper highland winter is cold and summer temperature is relatively low.⁷ The total rainfall per annum in Balochistan is only 50 to 500mm.

Agriculture:

The irrigated land of Balochistan is only 1.2 million acres. The main crops in Balochistan are wheat, rice, jowar, mustard, rape seeds, grapes, apples, apricots, pomegranates, peaches, plum, tobacco, potatoes, orchards and onion, while Makran division is famous for excellent quality of dates production.⁸

Historical Background of Balochistan: An Introduction:

The earliest account of Baloch history referred in Arabic and Persian accounts that are *Burhan-i-Qatih, Tarikh-i-Al Rasool, Al Maluk and Shahnama*⁹, while Abdul Qasim Firdousi who compiled *Shahnama* in 1010A.D with 5000 to 6000 verses of epic poetry clearly mention the Iranian role on Balochistan.¹⁰ *Shahnama* discusses that the Iranian King Darius (522-485B.C) had conquered Balochistan around 450B.C and declared it as a province of Iranian empire.¹¹ *Shahnama* also mention that due to cruelty of king Baloch migrated to Makran from Kho-i-Alburz.¹²

The archaeological evidence and inscription clearly shows sign of great civilization on this territory and the history of ancient Balochistan go back to 8th millennium B.C. However the inscription found in Spinlingi in Sarawan is still be

decipher.¹³ The Greek historian wrote a lot on the history of Balochistan. They basically narrated the history of Alexander. The great conqueror Alexander while returning from India through Makran and Las Bela and suffered a lot in the rough and dry mountains of Balochistan and his dream to annex Balochistan remain a dream.¹⁴ From 140B.C to 130B.C Balochistan was under the Sakas followed by Nauersherwan (529-77) and became part of Sassanian Empire.¹⁵ So the Arab also started their expeditions in Balochistan (634-644A.D) after the conquest of Iran. However, the Arab did not make Balochistan as tributary state because the nomadic Baloch launched guerrilla war against the Arabs. After the end of tenth century A.D Balochistan came under the influence of Ghaznavids. Despite the different hostilities the first Baloch Confederacy emerged in 12 A.D century under Mir Jalal Hun and this confederacy continued till the British invasion on Indian sub-continent and to the inception of Pakistan. Moreover, Tugluq dynasty and Mongol continuously attacked on Balochistan but they were not able to bring these territories under their control.¹⁶

The Archaeological Activities in Balochistan:

The land of Balochistan has been cradle of civilizations for thousands of years. The strategic location of Balochistan is a gateway for the East and West. The ancient civilizations like Mesopotamia, Indus and Egyptian used this land for trading. This land give birth the world oldest civilization called Mehrgarh and this civilization is considered to be the first human settlement in the Sub-continent. The archaeological remains at Mehrgarh proved that the people of Balochistan became familiar about plant and animal domestication.¹⁷

The archaeological activities in Balochistan are divided into two main categories i-e before partition activities and post partition activities.

Before Partition Archeological Activities:

The archaeological activities in Balochistan were carried out before partition and the first survey was undertaken by British Officer called Major Moklar. He carried out survey in Makran region from 1875 to 1876.¹⁸ He was the first who discovered two important sites in Makran namely *Sutkagen kho* and *Sutkagen Dor* and from here he discovered the remaining of a great civilization in Balochistan. He also recorded a number of proto historic sites in Balochistan.¹⁹

After Major Moklar, Mr. Hargreaves (1924-1925) carried out survey in different areas of Balochistan and explored a graveyard near *Nal* in central

Field of Archaeology in Balochistan and its Importance on the Baloch History

Balochistan. He also excavated *Suhr Damb* near to this village and collected a number of decorated potteries²⁰ while the *Nal* grave culture clearly depicts an advance culture of Balochistan. This was a cemetery site and after excavation it exposes multiple skeletons including adults and Childs which are lying on left side of the adult. Along with dead bodies flax, axes, chisel and knives of copper is also founded there. The pottery of *Nal* characterized its importance which is pale or greenish-buff with designs executed in black, blue, red or yellow. A large number of bowls of terracotta also collected on which different design of fish and other animals are completely visible.²¹ They made beads from agate. The fire buff pottery consists of some wheel made are decorated with geometric design in black paints, red, blue, green, yellow pigment applied after firing. Some glazed steatite seal were also founded there.²²

Moreover, Major Moklar and Mr. Hargreaves were followed by the great Archaeologist and Explorer Aural Stein. Mirsky in his book *Aural Stein: Archaeological Explorer* discusses that from 1904 to 1905 Stein reluctantly acceded to Marshall's request that he must investigate a mound at a little place called *Nal* in Balochistan.²³ Therefore, he decided to reconnaissance of Balochistan from 1927 to 1928 and he published all his reports because Stein considered excavation without publication as destruction. Therefore, his pen started from 7am to 7pm.²⁴ Sir Stein published his findings into two books that are *An Archaeological Tour in Waziristan and Northern Balochistan* and *An Archaeological Tour in Gedrosia*.

Miss Matheson by profession she was a journalist, took a great interest in archaeology when she was staying at Chagi with political agent by near a prehistoric mound and it was identified Sir Stein.²⁵ From 1945 to 1961 she collected a number of potteries in Dera Bughti. Her great collection of pottery is still lying in the Archaeological Institute of London and all these potteries were studied by Pro. Dr Ahsan Ali. Miss De Cardi, Dr Rita Wright and Glover (department of Archaeology, College of William and Mary Williamsburg. VA, USA). She also carried out survey on different mound at Dera Bughti and due to her survey first time Togau came in world map. Her collection included an agate beads, sherds with peepul leaf and feathered plant motifs and dish stands from Philawagh at Dera Bughti. Black and red northern ware and some buff ware from Kourdan Damb. Flint cores, arrow heads, fragments of worn red sherds and also Amri-Nal pottery and a good collection of decorated bowls found at Bagh-i-

kumb. Some of these bowls taken by General Haya-ud-din while rests of them were presented to the Department of Archaeology and she also collected a figurine from Dawroo Tul.²⁶

The renowned archaeologist Mr. Stuart Piggott discovered a larger number of pre harrapan sites around Balochistan in 1944. However, Mr. Stuart studied different archaeological remains from Keechi bag and Damb Saddat and came into conclusion that this culture is indigenous and prehistoric.²⁷ Stuart further divided the prehistoric cultures into two categories namely buff and red war. The buff ware culture further sub divided into Quetta valley, Nal culture and Zhob culture.

Post Partition Archaeological Activities:

After the partition a number of foreign archaeological missions with close collaboration of the Department of Archaeology and Museum carried out reconnaissance Balochistan. A large number of pre historic sites have been discovered and investigated while the other sites and material found during before partition excavation and survey were restudied and checked.

British Expeditions to Kalat, 1948 and 1957:

The British Mission headed by Miss Beatrice de Cardi carried out extensive exploration and survey in Kalat with close collaboration with the Department of Archaeology. The Mission carried out survey and excavation into two seasons. In 1948, the exploration of Sarawan district North of Kalat was carried out with the aim to shed light on Quetta culture and its distribution with the surroundings.²⁸ While in the second season, the survey was carried out in Central Kalat near to Surab. It was founded that Kile Gul Muhammad culture was extended into Central Kalat which provided a culture sequence to the area. This Mission also carried out survey of Mula Pass to see how this region in ancient times bone of contention between the people of Indus and other cultures of the area.

This Mission selected two sites for excavations which are included Anjira and Siah damb. The result of excavation shows about continues and interlocked sequence of cultures.²⁹ Complete surveys from Mungachar to Kalat, Ornach valley, Chhappar and Ziarat were carried out and a large number of prehistoric sites have been discovered.

The American Museum of Natural History Mission in Balochistan:

The American Mission headed by Walter A. Fairservis, Jr, of the department of Anthropology of American Museum of Natural History with close collaboration of the department of Archeology carried out extensive archaeological explorations in Quetta, Zhob and Loralai in 1950-51 while at Las bela they carried out in 1959-60. The aim of this mission was to solve the chronological problem of pre-historic sites in Balochistan.

Quetta valley lies on the cross trade routes from Kalat, Kandahar, Zhob and Loralai. Before this survey only six sites were known about the valley³⁰ but after the survey thirteen sites were documented belonging to Chalcolithic period and seventeen other sites.³¹ Moreover, the surface collections from the different mound enhance the importance of Quetta valley.³² However, to get the approximation of the culture sequence of the site a deep sondage was examined. It shows that by some fourteen phases of human settlement. From above the virgin soil a pre-pottery horizon was discovered which was completely free from the pottery. While flint-flakes, polyhedral cores, grinding stones, bones of sheep, goat and cattle were discovered, which clearly reflects Neolithic period in Balochistan³³. Limited excavations were carried out at Kechi Beg and Karez sites and the Mission discovered fine decorated pottery with wide bands and motifs. The bands painted in black and occasionally red on buff.³⁴ The Pakistan's representative in mission Leslie Alcock in the mission finally carried out excavation at Damb Saddat and unearth a large mud brick platform surrounded by walled compound.³⁵ The Quetta Valley excavation explains the different phases of late pre-historic occupations culturally and chronologically. Quetta valley had a great resemblance with other culture of Balochistan showing an indigenous character. The excavation shows that there is no culture gap or break so a gradual evolution from primitive to a complex village system. This allows the historian and archaeologist to name it Baloch Civilization.

The Mission further moved to Zhob and Loralai and carried out extensive survey over there and produced additional archaeological evidences. The Loralai culture had a great resemblance with Baloch culture. The mission examined thirteen sites which are included with Sur Jangal, Darbarkot, Duki, and Ra na Ghundai and discovered twelve successive phases of settlements.³⁶ From Sur Jangal the mission discovered a considerable overlapping of potteries and abundance of goat and sheep bones which probably indicated that this was the

main source of economy.³⁷ The collections from the ceramics at Rana Ghandai help us to correlate the Ross sequence of culture. The investigation shows that site is parallel to Harrapan, Jhukar and post Jhukar.³⁸

Periano-Ghandai sites in Zhob are one of the most outstanding sites which show the occupation from pre-historic to Sassanians³⁹. Incinerary pot burial phase shows that the burial of disarticulated human bones and ashes in a rough vessel placed under the floor of houses. A female figurine called Zhob goddesses is also discovered.

The American mission undertook fieldwork in North Las Bela in Tahsil Welpat. Sir Aurel Stein made reconnaissance in this area in 1943 and documented a large number of sites and he excavated Niai Buthi. The mission reexamined these sites and discovered a number of black and red wares, toy car, graters, terracotta and cakes. This site shows great resemblance with Quetta Culture. The mission also reexamined Hab and Porali river drainage and discovered a number of ancient remnants and culture materials.

In 1951 renowned archaeologist Mr. A. J Ross visited Zhob and Loralai and carried out extensive survey and excavation at Dabarkot and Mughal Ghandai discovered a series of human settlement with great number of Archaeological remains. He determines the chronology on the bases of Typological comparisons and it was Ross who discovered female figurine and give it to the name of Zhob goddess.

The Peabody Museum Expedition to Balochistan in 1955:

The Peabody Museum of Harvard University USA, with collaboration of department of Archeology visited different sites in Balochistan. This mission was headed by Dr. Henry Field. The main aims and objective of this mission was the exploration and search of Stone Age culture and to record anthropometric and ethnological data and to establish their relation with those of South-Western Asia and India.⁴⁰ This mission visited twenty three sites in Balochistan and carried out surface collection which had great resemblance with Shahi Tump and this Mission also collected glazed sherds of Islamic period.⁴¹ While the collection from twenty three sites were further divided into two main culture groups that is Shahi Tump and Kulli Mehi. The Shahi Tump group of collection shows great uniformity in respect of paste, technique, shape of ornamentations while Kulli Mehi group of collection have further divided into two distinct types based upon style of decoration. This consists of pure geometric and geometric design

Field of Archaeology in Balochistan and its Importance on the Baloch History

combined with stylized animal and plants.⁴² The visited sites by this mission are: Shahi Tump, Tump, Miri fort, Nodiz, Kalat-i-damb, Nazrabad, Nasirabad, Thale damb (Hoshab mound-A), Thale damb (Hoshab mound-B), Surain damb, Kohna-Kalat, Besham-damb, Sraduk, Damb-i-dambi, Chiri damb, Sari damb, Zayak, Jangal, Shakar-Khwan damb, Ander-damb, Ghuram, Kapoto and Kapoto rock shelter.

The University Museum of Pennsylvania USA, Expedition to Makran in 1959-60:

The mission of USA was lead by the great Archeologist Dr. George F. Deals. The mission with close collaboration of department of Archaeology visited the whole coast line of Makran from Ras Malan to Jiwani. The aim of this mission was to study the ancient sea routes between Indus and Mesopotamia and Persian Gulf.⁴³ The visited two important sites included Sutkagan Dor on the bank of Dasht River and Sutkagan kho on the bank Shadi khor. They reexamined the evidences and discovered a number new pre-historic mound in Makran.⁴⁴ These two sites after clear examination show that they flourish along the Harappa and contemporary of Indus valley civilization. In Sutkagan Dor an explanatory trench shows three phases of occupation.⁴⁵ The first phase was characterized by stone structure, second phase marked by a floor of earth built on thick stone filling while the third phase was habitation phase represented by regular structure. Sutkagan kho have strong resemblance with Sutkagan Dor and at that time it was much nearer to the Sea and more accessible having the character ceramics. Deals also excavated at Bala khot (Balochistan) and the archaeological remains have resemblance with Harappa. Trading with Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia was the main sources of income. Bala khot is used be a sea port in ancient time and they know the art of fishing.

Indus Archaeological Mission from 1960-62:

J.M Casal carried out extensive excavation at Amri Sindh. When he started investigation of different phases then he came to know that such type of materials also found in Balochistan. So for it was a great achievement and they decided to move toward Balochistan. They explore Oranach Valley and Wadh in 1961-62 and they excavated Nindo damb and discovered a huge building structure along a worship place. The pottery has great resemblance with Iranian pottery.

Department of Archaeology through exploration branch undertook a systemic survey to the unexplored area of Pakistan. Superintendent of exploration branch and his assistance carried out exploration in Las Bela, Makran, South and Northern Balochistan. They explored Kachhi Plain and discovered a number of pre-historic sites. They also surveyed Pirak mound, Luni mound, Bolan Pass, Rindhi mound, drainage sites of Ispelinji mound, Sardar khel mound and Ziarat.

French Archaeological mission in Balochistan from 1974-85:

The French Archaeological Mission led by Dr. Jean-Francois Jarrige carried out eleventh season excavation in Mehrgarh Balochistan to established sequence from Neolithic time to the immediate aftermath of Harappa culture. After Carbon dating Mehrgarh became one of the oldest civilizations of the world with both domestication of animal and plants. The excavation of Mehrgarh established the chronology of South Asia.

Conclusion:

Balochistan has been cradle for early human settlement. After the excavation and exploration of the Balochistan paved way for further researches on the pre-historic sites of Balochistan. The excavations of Balochistan made it clear that this land had inhabitants from Mesolithic, Neolithic, historic, pre-historic and proto-historic times. The vast territory of Balochistan still has a number of historical and pre-historic sites to be discovered. Due to the lack of researches and excavations most of sites have illegally excavated by the smugglers and most of mounds were bulldozed by the people. The archacological remains symbolized a very and advance and rich culture and civilization from Balochistan.

Field of Archaeology in Balochistan and its Importance on the Baloch History

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