

## THE CULTURAL LEGACY OF BALOCH CIVILIZATION

*Archaeology*

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### ABSTRACT

*Balochistan is very rich in cultural Heritage as this land has been inhabited since Paleolithic times down to the late historic times. There are thousands of Prehistoric, Pro-to-historic, and historic archaeological sites scattered throughout Balochistan. A few of them have been excavated and others are remaining and there can be many more sites in Balochistan if surveys are conducted. The cultural heritage of Balochistan reflects the nomadic life of Baloch proving that they are indigenous people of Balochistan who brought a revolution with many new ideas such as agriculture, mud brick houses, domestication of animals, use of fire, introduction of pottery, clothing industry etc. This paper discusses about the cultural legacy of Baloch in Prehistoric times. as well as throws light on Balochistan through Chalcolithic Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age.*

### BALOCHISTAN THROUGH THE AGES

The land of Balochistan has been a cradle of civilizations throughout the history (Jamil 2013: 1-3), Mehrgarh as it is known as the oldest settlement in South Asia flourished in 8<sup>th</sup> millennium BC., and marked the beginning of Neolithic revolution in this land (Jarrige 1995: 12). Although this land is of harsh, rough and dry geographical nature; but still many cultures thrived, flourished and saw their downfall in this land. Today we have thousands of archaeological sites in Balochistan. Some of them were discovered by the great archaeologist. Moreover, Sir Aurel Stein was the pioneer of archaeological activities in Balochistan (Jamil 2010: 30-37). A few of them have been excavated and others are still not studied. The excavated sites are

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Mehrgarh, Nausharo, Pirak, in Kachi Plains, Dumb Sadat and Kili Gul Mohammad in Quetta Valley, Periano Gundai in Zhob, Rana Gundai in Loralai, Sohr Damb in Nal, Adam Buthi and Murda Sang in Las Bela and Miri Kalat and Shai Tump in Kech Valley, Makran (Jamil 2013: 1-20).

This cultural heritage of Balochistan gives us a very important clue about the history of Baloch as it reflects the rural and nomadic life of Baloch. The findings from these sites are very much similar to Baloch Culture proving that it is the indigenous culture of Balochistan. The most striking evidences are beads, tradition of *Saadh* making, pebble tools, and the depiction of fish motifs and Balochi Embroidery patterns on the potteries found throughout Balochistan. On the basis of prevailing traditions and the ones recently died or dying we can reconstruct the history of cultural development of Baloch who have been living in Balochistan since time immemorial.

The history of earth goes back to millenniums years old and similarly the cultural activities also begun millenniums year's age. Needless to say that every time human being refined his cultural by discovering new tools and in this way human being from barbarism developed to a civilized society where everyone was prosperous. Moreover, the scholars have divided this long time into three eras.

- a) Prehistoric Era
- b) Pro-to-historic Era
- c) Historic Era

This paper will only shed light on the cultural legacy of Baloch in Prehistoric era. The prehistoric cultural activities have been started two million years ago and continued until 2000 BC (Qazi 1998: 2). However, there are three more cultural phases in prehistory:

- a) Paleolithic – early stone age (approximately 100,000 - 10,000BC)
- b) Mesolithic – middle stone age (approximately 10,000 – 8,000 BC)
- c) Neolithic – new stone age (approximately 8,000 – 4000BC)

Balochistan has gone through all these phases; the cultural activities of each phase in Balochistan will be detailed.

## **BALUCHISTAN IN PALAEOOLITHIC AGE**

The word “Palaeolithic” is consisted of two words that is “Palaeo” and “Lithic”. Palaeo means “old” and lithic means “Stone”, which simply means “old stone age”. This period is called Stone Age because of the immense use

of stone that mankind executed for his betterment and needs. The man of this period made tools of stone to get his work done easily. The general period suggested for this period is two million BP until 10,000 BC. It has three more phases namely:

- a) Early or Lower Paleolithic
- b) Middle Paleolithic
- c) Late or Upper Paleolithic / advanced Paleolithic

So far the evidences of early or middle Paleolithic cultures have not been found in Balochistan, although such evidences have been discovered in the Soan Valley of Potohar region. Future researches are needed to build and find the evidences of early or middle Paleolithic activities in Balochistan as this land is very old. Furthermore, the evidences of cultural activities have been discovered in the late or advanced Palaeolithic period. The general period of this phase is considered is from 45,000 until 10,000 BP., (Qazi 1998: 2).

In this phase, man brought a remarkable development of skill and production of a variety of implements not only in stone but also in bone, antler, ivory and many of the men of this period were real artists, shaping and engraving bone, antler and mammoth ivory, and painting on the walls of rock-shelters and caves, realistic hunting scenes and other illustrations of their daily life (Kakar 2000: 2-3). So in this phase man started expressing his creative sense, which is reflected in the shape of engravings and paintings in various caves found in Balochistan. As Balochistan is full of mighty mountains, there are many rock-shelters and caves which contain paintings and engravings of Gravettian and Magdalenian times. It is usually supposed that Gravettian and Magdalenian were nomadic and that in rocky areas like Balochistan occupied the mouth of Cave and rock-shelters, during winter and followed the migrating herd of game during summer (Ibid).

Paleolithic settlements have also been found at Kot Mondai, Marri Area in eastern Balochistan where stone tools have been found. They belong to Acheullian Culture – an ancient primitive stage in human development. Some hand axes of Mousterian culture (100,000-40,000 BC.) have been at Khokar Kore, Lasbela region in the south eastern Balochistan in the upper Paleolithic period (40,000-12000 B.CE) which is known to us from the wonderful caves and rock-shelter paintings found in the Suleman range and its subsidiary ranges in the North-Eastern Balochistan (Jamil & Gul 2011: 57).

The wonderful achievement and development of this phase is that people lived in open areas during the earlier two phases, in this phase they learnt to shelter themselves in the caves. They became more creative as evidenced in the engravings and paintings featuring wild horses, cave bear, lion, panther

wild boar, human hands and hunting scenes similar to cave art in France and Cantabrian mountains. In France, cave art was practiced by around 25000 BC. The Gravettian are known to have occupied the Dordogne Valley in South Western France, by 22,000-18000 BC. During which the cave art underwent rapid Progress (Kakar 2000: 2-4). This is a general period of cave art in Balochistan, moreover paintings from caves in the Loralai region at Musakhel, have close affinity with the cave art of Altamira in Spain and are dated from BP to 12000 (Qazi 1998: 2). These are engravings and fresco paintings and the colors were obtained from the natural earth pigments, where besides, other elements, different zoomorphic figures are also depicted in two-dimensional method (Ibid).

### **BALUCHISTAN IN MESOLITHIC AGE**

This is the second phase of prehistory. The time period between Paleolithic and Neolithic is called Mesolithic. The word “Meso” means middle and “lithic” means stone which simply means Middle Stone Age. This cultural phase is of short period comparing with other two periods, as it extends from 10.000 BC until 8000 BC which means two millenniums. In this phase we don't see many cultural activities, except, a few evidences in the Zhob area which shows that the people occupied this land during this period. In Zhob District, some engravings of Magdalenian people in the rock-shelters have been found (Jamil & Gul 2011: 57). So there is huge gap in the middle of this cultural activity in Balochistan which open a new venue for further researches. Moreover, it can't be said that ancient people completely abandoned this land for millenniums and reoccupied it again in the 8<sup>th</sup> millennium BC. The next phase that Balochistan went through is Neolithic age which according to some scholars is named as ‘Neolithic Revolution’.

### **BALUCHISTAN IN NEOLITHIC AGE**

This is the last phase of prehistory known as Neolithic Era. The Neolithic age of Balochistan is expanded into a period of 6000 years i.e. 8<sup>th</sup> millennium - second millennium BC. In this period the ancient man made remarkable developments, they introduced so many new features that Golden Childe in 1950 termed the new Stone Age “Neolithic Revolution” because onward settled life was started (Qazi 1998: 10-12). So the new Stone Age is the beginning of settled life. It is also termed as village urban culture. In this regard, the site of Mehrgarh is the example where for the first time houses were constructed with burnt bricks and ceramic traditions made its entry. The potters introduced 3 different methods to prepare pots i.e. basket mark pottery, handmade pottery, and wheel made pottery. Clay figurines were replaced by the terracotta figurines, beads of shell; semiprecious stones like

lapis lazuli and turquoise were made. Burial tradition started the graves containing goods like stone tools, jewelry and pottery, the discovery of cotton seeds show the weaving or clothing industry, sickle blade was introduced indicating indirect evidence of agriculture, in this regard barley and wheat seeds are worth mentioning. Animals were for the first time domesticated, use of fire has been reported at Mehrgarh, it is known from the fireplaces containing pebble tool used for indirect heating (Jarrige 1995: 20-447).

There are many discoveries either reported at Mehrgarh or other sites of Balochistan which reflects the culture of Baloch. In this regard, Jonathon Mark Kenoyer stated that “from the grave of Mehrgarh a dentalium headband discovered and these types of headband with bead embroidery are still being used by Baloch women” (Jonathan 2012, during lecture at TIAC, QAU). Other Examples are pebble tools found in the fire places at Mehrgarh may have been used for baking Qurno and still this tradition of Qurno Baking is practiced by Baloch. The discovery of a net of *Cheelak* or *Saad* from Shahi Tump and mats have been regularly attested during the excavation in the form of imprints on soils or even preserved by carbonization as the piece of mat found together with the net (Besenval 2012: 17). These were made from *Nannorrhops ritchieana* or palm tree leaves so it is another tradition that Baloch have it from prehistoric times. In this tradition, even today Baloch use *Ritchieana* or palm leaves to make many things such as rope, mats, shoes, baskets, purse and much more. The prehistoric basket marked potteries have been made by the mould of basket mould of *ritchieana* or palm leaves, as it is evidenced by the marks of leaves on the potteries throughout Balochistan.

Moreover, there are so many discoveries which are resembled with Baloch Culture such as depiction of Balochi Embroidery Designs and fish motifs on the potteries. Not only this, there are many other similarities. However, it had opened a new venue of research for Baloch historian, archaeologists and anthropologists.

So Neolithic settlements first recorded at Mehrgarh and continued; furthermore we see many Neolithic settlements throughout Balochistan practicing the same Neolithic tradition started at Mehrgarh. The successors of people of Mehrgarh followed their forefathers or predecessors and this tradition continued so. Because of the same reason today Balochistan has a more profile Neolithic period beginning in the 8<sup>th</sup> millennium BC, down to the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC. And so far many important archaeological sites of this period have been found in the Kachi Plains, Quetta Valley, the Zhob Valley and Loralai. Important sites of this period include Mehrgarh, Killi Gul Muhammad, Baleli Mound, Musazai, Sur Jangal, Anjira and Rana Ghundai. Not many of the Neolithic Period sites in Balochistan except a few in the Quetta Valley and Kachi Plains have been scientifically excavated. The

remaining are still awaiting spade of the archaeologists. Mehrgarh has produced the most promising results covering the period from 8000 BC to 2800 B.C., (Jamil 2013: 21-127).

In Khuzdar District, some sites, Laghazard Mound, Zeela Kambrani Damb and Kohban have been found by Syed Shakir Ali and dated by him as 2700 – 1900 BC., (Shah 2002: 136). There are some sites in District Washuk i.e. Kohna camp (3000-2300 BC), Mammoi Damb (2800-2300 BC) Hotal Damb (2500-2200 BC), Hotal Damb-2 (3300-3000 BC), Kuragi Damb (2800-2500 BC), Pogi Damb (2600-2300 BC), Lidee mound/Jangazi Damb (2800-2300 BC) and Badrang Damb (3000-2600 BC) and some sites in district Panjgur i.e. Jai Damb ( 3000-2800), Thali Damb (2800-2200 BC) and Sarduk Damb (2500-2200 BC) (Ibid).

Besides, the Neolithic settlements in Balochistan, there are Neolithic caves in Las Bela dated to 5<sup>th</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC. In 1990s, the Italian Archaeological Mission discovered about 103 caves in the Las Bela region. These caves are assigned to the Neolithic phase and are dated to the 5<sup>th</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC. These caves comprise of two chambers, the inner and the outer chambers. The typical Neolithic period flint tools have been unearthed by the Italian Mission (Qazi 1998: 13).

However, the Paleolithic stage was the beginning of human cultural activities, whereas, the successors in the Mesolithic stage improved these cultural activities. After passing through a certain evolutionary process, these early cultural activities evolved into a revolutionary stage in Neolithic period. Furthermore, when this new phase of life pattern was elaborated, it was replaced by the most innovated stage, which is the beginning of civilized society. In this regard the site of Mehrgarh is considered one of the earliest village cultures of south Asia, dated to 8215 BC, while ,its last phase if dated to 2500 BC. It was the time when one of the most important civilizations known as Indus Valley civilizations had started about 2350 BC. Thus keeping in view the above account related to the Neolithic phase and its association with the civilized society, Mehrgarh proves the theory of indigenous cultural activities, which later on perhaps gave birth to the Indus Valley Culture (Ibid).

## **BALUCHISTAN IN CHALCOLITHIC AGE**

Chalcolithic age is that when stone tools were being use at the same time when bronze was introduced, so this is the time when the stone and bronze both were used in shaping tools and for other purposes. Period III of Kili Gul Muhammad in Quetta Valley represents the earliest phase of Chalcolithic culture of Balochistan (Kakar 1992: ) where as the later periods of Mehrgarh and Nausharo fall in the Chalcolithic time frame (Durrani &

Ihsan 1998: 16-17). So Balochistan entered the Chalcolithic Period around 5500 B.C.E. to 3500 B.C.E of which a large number of settlements emerged in Quetta Valley, Rana Ghundai, Sur Jangal (Lorali Valley), Mughal Ghundai and Periono Ghundai (Zhub Valley), Anjira and Siah Damb (Khuzdar Region and Mehrgarh (Kachi Plains) (Jamil 2013: 21-77).The Nindowari Damb in the Nindowari village of Tehsil Wadh, in the Southern Part of Kalat District, is a Chalcolithic period site. It was excavated by Mons. Jean-Marrie Casl in 1962 (Ibid).

Balochistan entered in the so called advanced Chalcolithic period or Phase around 4000 B.C.E at Mehrgarh (Periods IV and V). This advanced Chalcolithic phase in Balochistan is represented at various sites including Kechi Beg, Killi Gul Muhammad, Periodno Ghundai, Damb Saddat, Karez, Baleli, Faiz Muhammad, Mughal Ghundai, Kanozoai, Musazai, Musafirpur, Ismailzai, Mazghar, Rana Ghundai, Sur Jangal, Sawaran, Chinjane Dabar Kot, Anjira, Siah Dam, Tougue, Surab Damb, Khokar-Kot, Miri Kalat, Shahi Tump etc., (Jamil 2013: 21-127).

## **BALUCHISTAN IN BRONZE AGE**

The general period of Bronze Age in Balochistan is 3500-1800 B.C.E. This age is represented at many important archaeological sites including Mehrgarh. Of the important survey carried out during pre and post partition periods mainly confined to a limited area in Quetta Valley, Zhub Valley, Khuzdar District, Makran Region, Lasbela, Region, Kachi Plains (Bolan Valley), Turbat (Kech Valley), etc. while the remaining vast areas have not been explored (Ibid). The site of Lal Shah, Mehrgarh, which first period dates back roughly to the first half of the third millennium falls in the Bronze age time period (East and West).

After the Bronze Age we are wandering here and there in the search of solid evidences for the continuity of the sequence of events. We have splendid tombs and graves specially those of Chowkundi types in Bhawany, Pasni, Jiwani, Hindan and Bara Bagh and some Zoroastrian burial places at MusaKhel, Nag and Panjgur (Stein 1931: 1-100).

## **CONCLUSION**

The culture of Balochistan speaks itself on the origin of Baloch. These cultural findings show the indignity of Baloch culture which proves that Balochs are original inhabitants of this land, in fact, they are the indigenous people of this land living here for thousand years or since time immemorial. So this land of Baloch gave birth to many great cultures such as Mehrgarh – the first Neolithic culture of Pakistan and the earliest settlement of South Asia, witnessed many inventions such as introduction of agriculture,

pottery making, clothing industries, mud brick houses, use of fire, domestication of animals, bead making etc. which have been very useful for mankind and no doubt these are the cultural legacy of Baloch left to this world.



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