

AN ARCHÆOLOGICAL TOUR ALONG THE WAZIR- ISTAN BORDER

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AT the beginning of January 1927 I started on an archæological tour along the Waziristan border and through the whole length of Northern Baluchistan, which kept me fully occupied until the middle of April. My object was a systematic survey, accompanied where advisable by trial excavations, of such ancient sites in the border regions between India and Iran as are likely to throw light on the connection of the prehistoric civilization which the excavations at Mohenjo-daro and elsewhere in the lower Indus valley have revealed with corresponding cultures traced westwards in Persia and Mesopotamia.

The survey began with the examination of a series of conspicuous mounds echeloned along the eastern foot of the Waziristan hills from the vicinity of Draband to beyond Tank. Mr. E. Howell, C.S.I., late Resident in Waziristan, had first directed attention to them. They proved to be composed wholly of the accumulated débris layers of ancient settlements which in the course of occupation prolonged through ages had raised the top of those mounds to heights up to about 100 feet above the adjacent ground. Erosion facilitated by the great aridity of the climate has caused the surface of these mounds as well as of those subsequently surveyed in Baluchistan to be thickly covered with pottery remains from the culture strata embedded.

Among them fragments of decorated earthenware, painted, incised or ornamented in relief, were found in great abundance and variety of design. The painted pottery from these sites in colour treatment and in certain of its geometrical patterns shows a well-marked affinity to the painted pottery subsequently collected from sites of the "chalcolithic" period in Northern Baluchistan, and also to that discovered by me in 1916 at desert sites of the same period in Sistan. On the other hand, the incised and relief-decorated pieces by their motifs recall ceramic ware found at certain Sistan sites which can be assigned to historical times preceding Sasanian rule. Having regard to the upper and lower chronological limits thus indicated and taking also account of the fact that no painted pottery of the above kind was found at those Buddhist sites on the Indian North-West Frontier which can definitely be assigned to the Indo-Scythian period, the remains of those Draband and Tank mounds may be attributed to early historical times separating the latter period from that of the "chalcolithic" culture.

The very willing assistance of the political authorities permitted the extension of my survey to tribal territory in both Northern and Southern Waziristan, where I made interesting observations on the striking parallel which the fine military roads with their fortified camps, watch towers,

etc., recently constructed for the pacification of that troublesome border, present to the Roman *Limes* systems of the early Imperial times.

The remains of an ancient stronghold examined at Idak were proved by the evidence of coins and of a ruined Stupa to date from the Indo-Scythian period. Farther north, at Spinwam, there was found a mound formed by culture strata of approximately the same epoch as noted around Draband and Tank. Above the point where the Kurram river debouches from the hills a rapid survey was made near Shahidan of extensive remains marking a fortified site which by the evidence of its painted pottery can also be assigned to the last-named epoch.

Subsequently proceeding *viâ* Razmak and the outpost of Sarwekai, I made my way under the protection of tribal Wazir headmen to the Gumal river. Remains of forts visited in the Spin plain proved to belong to late historical times. The whole area now comprised in Waziristan, barren as it is, presents a distinct interest to the student of the ancient geography of India. Its chief rivers, the Kurram and Gumal, as well as the latter's chief affluent, the Zhob, are mentioned in the famous "River Hymn" of the Rigveda under their ancient Sanskrit names of *Krumu*, *Gomati*, and *Yavyavati*. This makes it appear very probable that this region had for some length of time been in the occupation of Aryan tribes before they descended from their hills to the conquest of the Indus Valley and the Punjab plains.

The description which Hsüan-tsang, the great Chinese Buddhist pilgrim of the seventh century A.D., has left us of the territory of *Chichiang-na*, corresponding to the present Waziristan and the *Qiqin* of early historians, clearly shows that in his time too, centuries before the advent of Pathan tribes, this territory "under separate local chiefs but without a supreme ruler" and "abounding in sheep and excellent horses" had already a reputation not unlike its present one.

Moving up the Zhob valley, in Baluchistan territory, I found a series of ancient mounds awaiting exploration in the vicinity of Fort Sandeman, the headquarters of the Zhob Agency. Among them *Periano-ghundai*, the "Witches' Mound," is the most conspicuous, rising to fully 70 feet above the adjacent river-bed. Trial excavations carried out here proved that the débris deposits of ancient habitations composing the mound belong for the most part, if not entirely, to the "chalcolithic" period. The abundant remains of painted pottery from this site, whether exposed on the eroded slopes or excavated, are, like most of the plain earthenware too, of a superior well-levigated clay and wheel-made. The painted pieces show almost exclusively patterns executed in black over a dark terracotta ground colour. The motifs composing the painted patterns, mostly geometrical, are remarkably varied. Throughout they strikingly recall the motifs prevailing in the prehistoric pottery I discovered at desert sites of Sistan during my third Central Asian expedition. Many of these motifs are found also in the prehistoric pottery of Anau in

Transcaspia, and can similarly be paralleled from pre-Sumerian strata of certain Mesopotamian sites.

The trial excavations made at different points of the mound laid bare remains of habitations built mainly with walls of stamped clay or sun-dried bricks over rough stone foundations. Among the finds made there the numerous cinerary urns with ashes and bone fragments from cremated human bodies claim special interest. They acquaint us with the funeral customs of the period. A considerable number of smaller painted jars and cups found within them serve to show the shapes of vessels used by the living. Terracotta figurines of animals display distinct artistic skill, while the comparative frequency with which a hooded female bust of peculiar shape recurs here as well as at other "chalcolithic" sites explored suggests that the representation of some deity is intended. Finds of stone "blades" and arrowheads were made throughout in the course of the trial excavations, and their association with fragments of copper implements and small ornaments, etc., of bone and stone permits us definitely to assign the painted ceramic ware of this important site to the "chalcolithic" period of prehistoric civilization.

Painted pottery of exactly the same type was plentifully found also at two smaller mounds in this neighbourhood, those of *Kaudani* and *Moghul-ghundai*. Finds of worked stones and of bronze fragments make it quite certain that at both mounds occupation goes back to the "chalcolithic" period. Close to Moghul-ghundai an extensive cemetery was discovered with interesting remains dating from historical times. Here the hillside was found studded with many cairns of rough stones, each containing a few small pieces of calcined bones, fragments of coarse plain earthenware, and occasionally small personal relics such as iron arrowheads, knives, bronze rings, a silver bangle, etc. The relief decoration found on one small pot and the figures engraved on one seal ring prove that these curious cairns cannot be older than the early centuries of our era.

After surveying several small sites where occupation during the "chalcolithic" or early historical period was indicated by pottery débris, I then moved south-east into the Loralai Agency. Among a number of old mounds and other remains in the Bori Tahsil the once very large mound of *Rana-ghundai* deserves mention. Among the plentiful painted pottery covering its slopes or embedded in its "culture strata" a good deal of fine "chalcolithic" ware was found, besides pieces of coarser fabric pointing to continued or renewed occupation perhaps during early historical times.

Definite evidence of such prolonged occupation at different periods, from prehistoric down to historical times, was obtained in the course of the excavations carried out at the great mound near *Dabar-kot*. It rises like an isolated hill in the middle of the open Thal plain to a height of no less than 113 feet, and measures nearly a mile in circumference at its foot.

The great mass of painted pottery found on the slopes and excavated at lower levels displays unmistakable characteristics of the "chalcolithic" type, and finds of cinerary urns, worked stones, and small bronze objects date from the same period. The discovery in the same layers of a well-constructed drain built with burnt bricks indicates the comparatively advanced stage of civilization reached. Successive strata full of charred remains point to great conflagrations which had at intervals overtaken the prehistoric settlement. Long after its complete abandonment convenient positions on the mound had again been taken up for dwellings during pre-Muhammadan times.

Simultaneously with the trial excavations at the great Dabar-kot mound it became possible completely to clear the remains of a ruined Buddhist Stupa or relic tower discovered on a rocky hillock some 4 miles away at the entrance of the Thal plain. Its relic deposit with small gold-set jewels, pearls, beads, etc., was found undisturbed. The surviving Græco-Buddhist carvings of the base and numerous pieces of pottery jars inscribed in Indian script and language proved that this sanctuary, the first Buddhist ruin discovered in Baluchistan, belongs to the Kushan period.

At Sur-jangal in the same valley a very interesting small settlement of prehistoric times was discovered near the dry river-bed descending from Sanjawi. The cuttings made through the low mound there yielded not only abundance of ceramic ware of the "chalcolithic" type, but also a large number of stone implements such as flint blades and arrowheads. From the great quantity of flint cores, chips, etc., found there it may be concluded that the manufacture of these stone implements was being carried on for generations in this locality, the river-bed close by supplying the raw materials.

After visiting several small sites of later historical times in the hills about the Zhob river's headwaters, I subsequently surveyed numerous ruined mounds in the Pishin basin. They attest the economic importance which this large and potentially fertile tract must have claimed at all times, and which also accounts for its mention in the earliest Zoroastrian scriptures among the chief territories of ancient Iran. The painted pottery and other relics collected at those mounds indicate that most of them, though built up at first by débris deposits of prehistoric settlements, continued to be occupied during historical times. At the Sarakala mound, crowned by the walls of a ruined fort, I was specially interested to note the plentiful occurrence of ceramic ware decorated with ribbings such as my explorations in Sistan had shown to be particularly associated with remains of the Sasanian period. Thus here, too, there was evidence of that close cultural connection with Iran which geographical factors have imposed upon those westernmost border lands of India since the earliest times. My tour came to its close by the middle of April with the examination of a series of mounds towards Quetta, similar to those of Pishin.