



## Southeastern Baluchistan until the Early 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium BCE

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Southeastern Baluchistan remained archaeologically rather unexplored until in 1996 the Joint German-Pakistani Archaeological Mission conducted surveys in this region. The results, including Balakot, are presented in brief in this chapter.

### Environment

The region encompasses the administrative districts of Las Bela and Wadh and belongs to the Kalat and Karachi divisions. Its boundaries are geographically formed in the north by the Mula, in the west by the Hingol River, which also is the boundary to Makran and the Hala Mountains, and in the east by the Kirthar Mountains (Figs. 3.11; 13). The southern part of southeastern Baluchistan is marked by the depression which forms the Porali Trough. Similar to the Kachhi Plain, the lowland of Las Bela represents a broad alluvial plain of triangular outline that extends far into the interior. It reaches its maximum east-west width of c. 170 km at the coast, while the north-south axis is c. 130 km long and bordered by mountains and the sea (Fig. 3.17).<sup>1</sup>

The Porali River, with its widely branched drainage system, is the most important permanent watercourse. It is not only fed by permanent springs, but also by numerous seasonal springs on its lower course. The Kakkhar Kaur and the Kud Rivers are its major tributaries in the north (Fig. 8.1).



Fig. 8.1  
Dried river bed  
north of Kanrach

Geophysical and geomorphological surveys have shown that in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> millennia BCE the coastline in this area ran up to 8 km farther inland.<sup>2</sup> The level of the plain has risen about 6 m in height throughout the past 5000 to 6000 years through the deposit of silt, sediments and gravel.<sup>3</sup> The slope is quite minimal; for example Bela, located c. 90 km inland, lies at only 88 m amsl. Thus, the transitions between the surrounding mountains and the plain are more gradual than in the hinterland with its narrow valleys.

The area is characterised by the presence of perennial, water-bearing river valleys, whose numerous tributaries drain the mountains. The c. 60 km long and 8 km to 12 km wide Kanrach Valley, deeply dissected by the Kanrach River in the north, is

1 See also Chapter 3.

2 Snead / Erickson 1977; Meadow 1979.

3 Dales 1974.



Fig. 8.2  
Kanrach Valley,  
Pab Range



Fig. 8.3  
Landscape  
north of Bela

the narrowest of the valleys (Fig. 8.2). It is marked by the presence of extremely coarse gravel, which is indicative of the great intensity of its water masses. Old river terraces, sediments located at high levels and, last but not least, the extensive dam structures illustrate the decisive changes in the hydraulic system that have occurred there during the past 2000 years. The Windar, one of the larger rivers, originates in the Kanrach Valley and flows in the south through the Mor Mountains and into the Khurkera Plain, where Balakot is located. Small surface areas used for cultivation are present only in the valley's centre, along the Kanrach River. A watershed towards the Windar River is present at a recent breach of the Kanrach River near Duddar, located at the foot of the site of Bakkar Buthi and its dam (Figs. B3.4a; b), here the river continues to the west into the Las Bela Plain (where it is called th Kharari River).

Further north, the Hub Valley leading to Khuzdar, with its tributaries Bahlol, Loi and Saruna, is not as barren as the Kanrach Valley. The slight gradient and the less intensive flow as far as north of Kotiro have fostered alluvial deposits and soil formation. The rivers named above are all perennial and have large source areas, where notable masses of water collect during the rainy seasons. Hence, the most fertile zones of the region lie in these valleys.

As soon as north of Bela the level rises and the surface becomes more structured, either to the gently rolling Piedmont area of the Mor Range in the east, towards the Hala Range in the west, or to the fissured highlands of Jhalawan in the north, the appearance of the landscape changes (Fig. 8.3). Although the gravel is finer and the appearance thus more gentle, these zones are devoid of sites, but for a couple of very large platform house sites north of Bela (Fig. 3.15)<sup>4</sup> It was thus a surprise to discover that the number of sites in the dry and barren intermontane valleys was much higher in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE than today in the plain which is now much more appalling and looks much more pleasant and fertile.

4 See Chapters 3 and 13.



Fig. 8.4  
View of  
Niai Buthi

### Settlement History

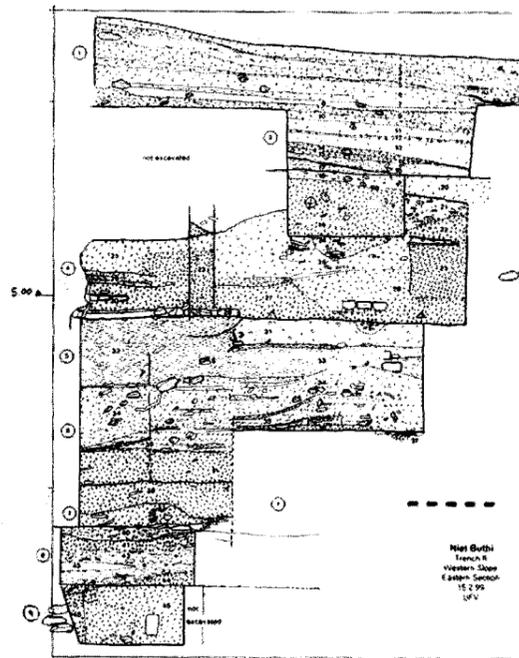
In the described area three major sites and their settlement chambers are located: Balakot at the mouth of the Kanrach Valley, Niai Buthi northeast of Bela and Murda Sang in the upper Kanrach Valley. At a distance from Balakot of 90 km and 70 km respectively, they can be reached by foot in 3 to 4 days. Niai Buthi is the more impressive of the settlements, which like Balakot also formed a mound (Fig. 8.4), but while Niai Buthi was part of a small group of coeval settlements, Balakot was not. Murda Sang is a flat settlement of less than 2 m depth that stretches over 25 ha and to which fields and single structures found over a greater area of 10 ha can be assigned.

In Welpat, Niai Buthi is the only site among ten or perhaps eleven sites dated to the late 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE that has been closely investigated north of the town of Bela. Three further places, two of which are settlements, were settled certainly during the time of Niai Buthi Period I, that is, in the late 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE. One site, Muridani (B18) is a tell, while the other one is a flat, horizontally spread settlement. All of these sites lie within a radius of 15 km from Niai Buthi. The lowest layers in Niai Buthi can be correlated with the upper layers in Adam Buthi, described in Chapter 6. Soon afterwards, other sites were founded, amongst them Balakot. Around 2900 BCE a total of five settlements were inhabited in the lowland of Las Bela, which altogether covered an area of no more than 20 ha.



Fig. 8.5a  
Niai Buthi,  
Trench II, section

Fig. 8.5b  
Niai Buthi,  
drawing of  
the section



### Niai Buthi

Niai Buthi is the largest and most important settlement mound in Las Bela. It is located to the east of Bela on the Kulri Nai, a tributary of the Porali River, and on the edge of a fertile cultivated plain. The hill itself measures 130 m x 100 m and is a good 13 m high. The east and west slopes have been cut by agricultural activities and roads. The profiles display a complex succession of stone and

mud brick architecture. The first excavation in Niai Buthi was conducted by Sir A. Stein (1943) shortly before his death. Most of the results remained unpublished; some information is provided in an article by R. McCown, who worked on the pottery.<sup>5</sup>

### Sir A. Stein and W. Fairservis

During his survey in Las Bela, W. Fairservis also visited Niai Buthi.<sup>6</sup> Judging from his brief description, he cleaned two of Stein's old profiles on the west slope and a new slope profile somewhat farther north (Figs. 8.5a; b).<sup>7</sup> His observations served as the basis for subdividing the sequence into two periods, I and II, whereby the upper Period II is constituted by two building levels (A and B).

In Stein's trenches, all of which fall into Period II, Fairservis likewise found two building levels. Both phases are connected by a uniform pottery, which is assigned to the Kulli complex. Fairservis assumed a continuous habitation on the mound, as he could not recognise any breaks in the stratigraphy and because the pottery displayed overlappings between the uppermost layer of Period I and that of Period II (Fig. 8.6).

He also came to the result, that a Nal settlement (Fig. 8.7) was present in Period I and a Kulli settlement in Period II: "Between and amid are the pottery types which were first identified by Stein at the site of Kulli, ... The earlier phases of the Kulli (Niai Buthi I) are related to the ceramic corpus familiar in the last phases of pre-Harappan occupation of such sites in the Indus area (as Ghazi Shah Ib, Amri ID-IIA), and in Baluchistan in the upper layers (Areas D, F and upper layers of A) of the mound of Sohr Damb, Nal. This sequence to this point is parallel to that of the northern sites, and indeed the identical picture emerges in the study of sites in Kolwa, Jhau, Drakalo, Wadh, and the Ornach."<sup>8</sup>

5 Cp. details in Franke-Vogt et al. 1998; Franke-Vogt 1998.  
6 Fairservis 1975, 189–195 Fig. 53, Map 15.  
7 Fairservis 1975, 192.  
8 Fairservis 1975, 192.



Fig. 8.6  
Niai Buthi,  
Trench II-2, bracket  
and other wares



Fig. 8.7  
Niai Buthi,  
polychrome  
Nal pottery  
from the surface



Fig. 8.8  
Niai Buthi,  
Trench I,  
north section



Fig. 8.9  
Niai Buthi, area B–C,  
cleaned section  
(<sup>14</sup>C sampled)

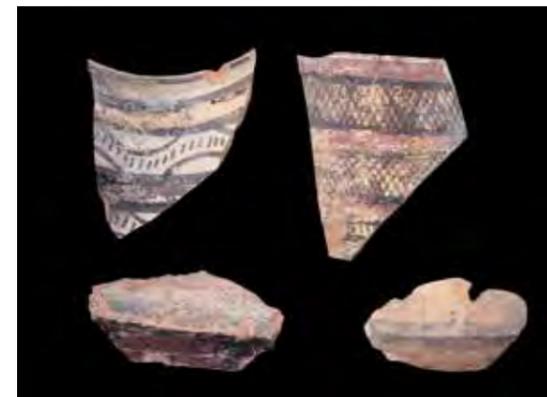


Fig. 8.10  
Niai Buthi,  
Trench Ib-0, late  
4<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE  
pottery with  
white pigment



Fig. 8.11  
Niai Buthi,  
Trench Ib-0,  
late 4<sup>th</sup> mill. BCE  
pottery with  
Togau D pattern

### Recent Research

During a four-week excavation campaign to Niai Buthi in 1999, the Joint German-Pakistani Archaeological Mission to Kalat laid two trenches on the site. One trench (Tr. II) is located on the western slope, approximately at the height of Fairservis' trench, where the stratigraphic succession was to be studied anew (Fig. 8.5). The second trench (Tr. I) lies in the east, where the northern profile

of an older trench was cleaned extensively over a length of 6.5 m; there is no description of this profile in Fairservis' report (Fig. 8.8). This trench encompassed the layers from +8.0 m to +1.4 m. In contrast to Fairservis' assumption, virgin soil was not reached in any of the trenches at the height of the plain.

The oldest pottery came to light in Trench I, Part C, and on the surface in the northern part of the tell (Figs. 8.9–12). As in the upper layers in

Fig. 8.12  
Niai Buthi, Area B,  
Kili Ghul Mohammad  
and Togau B pottery



Fig. 8.13  
Niai Buthi, Area B,  
surface, Faiz  
Mohammad Grey  
Ware potsherd



Fig. 8.14  
Niai Buthi,  
detail of hearth  
in Area B

Fig. 8.15  
Niai Buthi,  
Trench II, polychrome  
Nal pottery  
with bosses



Adam Buthi (see above), it can be dated to the Kili Ghul Mohammad III phase. Togau B, Kechi Beg Polychrome, Kechi Beg and Kechi Beg white-on-dark slip pottery was associated with the compact mud brick architecture and the living surface. Togau C sherds were recovered there and in the overlying layers. Monochrome Nal pottery and a few early Kulli sherds were discovered in stone architecture under a mud brick platform at the western end of the trench. Later pottery that can be linked to Niai Buthi II is present only in layers of debris. Polychrome Nal pottery was not found, which in view of the surface finds found in a wall farther south is surely a purely coincidental context. A Faiz Mohammad Grey Ware sherd was discovered in the older excavation debris at the western end of the trench, the only one of this type that has been found in the region until now (Fig. 8.13). Together with the Quetta sherds that were already collected in 1995 and the Quetta pottery from Balakot, these finds are a considerable augmentation of the distribution of this pottery group.

Trench II resulted in a sequence, which essentially falls into the Nal settlement period, the phase that is only poorly attested in Trench I. The context is completely different, for here was a surface, where apparently food-preparation took place. Aside from remains of gravel floors and eroded and collapsed mud bricks, the only find contexts were hearths and rubbish with an abundance of ash, bones and pottery (Fig. 8.14). The nine phases identified in the trench show that from the earliest layers upwards polychrome Nal pottery existed next to monochrome Nal types, together with coarse domestic pottery and black-slipped pottery (Figs. 8.7; 15–17). While monochrome pottery continued to Phase II-3, polychrome pottery was not found after Phase II-6. Zoomorphic motifs, among these bull depictions, increased greatly in Phase II-7 and then decreased after II-4. Bracket Ware is present from II-6 and upwards (Fig. 8.6). This design develops after II-2 into a variant that is typical in the later Kulli settlement. Likewise, characteristic Kulli bowls with a reddish brown slip and also



Fig. 8.16  
Niai Buthi,  
Trench II,  
monochrome  
Nal pottery with  
loop design

Fig. 8.17  
Niai Buthi,  
Trench II, jar with  
wavy pattern

Fig. 8.18  
Niai Buthi, Trench II,  
black-slipped bowl  
with graffito

Fig. 8.19  
Niai Buthi, Trench II,  
sherd of  
a chlorite vessel  
with whirl motif

combed decoration appear for the first time in II-2. Noteworthy are the presence of a black-slipped sherd with graffito and a rim fragment of a small chlorite beaker with a whirl-motif, well attested in the repertoire of vessels that were traded from Iran to Mesopotamia (Trench II, Levels 8 and 9. Figs. 8.18; 19).

With the sequence from late Kili Ghul Mohammad to late Kulli time, Niai Buthi is the settlement with the longest period of habitation in the entire region. The comparative evidence is complemented by radiocarbon dates from the lower and middle layers of Trench II, which compare to Balakot IA-IC (see below). The dates are rather late; for the lower levels they read cal. 2920 to 2880 BCE, and for the middle strata cal. 2860–2810/2700–2570 and 2880–2850/2700–2570 BCE.<sup>9</sup>

The second mound in the vicinity to be discussed is Balakot.

9 Loc. 8. Bln-5202, loc. 5 Bln-5192, (Bln-5191).

## Balakot

Balakot is a small site (180 m x 144 m: 2.6 ha) on the Khurkera flood plain in Las Bela, today located at a distance of about 12 km from the Arabian Sea. Discovered by R. Raikes, it was excavated between 1973 and 1976 by G. F. Dales, and is thus, despite its small size, of crucial importance. The mound rises up to 9.75 m above the plain and cultural deposits continue down to a depth of 5.85 m below plain level (Figs. 8.20; 21). They attest to two main occupations dated to the Early Harappan (I) and Harappan Period (II).

Period I comprises 6.5 m thick deposits, subdivided into 11 phases above virgin soil. In the deep sounding, the lower levels of the Harappan occupation (Period II) were eroded, but 5 m thick Harappan deposits with ten occupation levels were exposed on the 'High Mound'. These two areas are stratigraphically not connected, but culturally linked through the lowermost Harappan levels.