



<https://publications.dainst.org>

iDAI.publications

DIGITALE PUBLIKATIONEN DES  
DEUTSCHEN ARCHÄOLOGISCHEN INSTITUTS

Das ist eine digitale Ausgabe von / This is a digital edition of

Besenal, Roland – Marcon, Vincent – Buquet, Cécile – Mutin, Benjamin

## **Shahi-Tump: Results of the Last Field-Seasons (2001–2003).**

in: Franke-Vogt, Ute – Weisshaar, H.-J (Hrsg.), South Asian archaeology 2003: proceedings of the Seventeenth International Conference of the European Association of South Asian Archaeologists, 7–11 July 2003, Bonn 49–56.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34780/mvc3-3u6b>

**Herausgebende Institution / Publisher:**  
Deutsches Archäologisches Institut

**Copyright (Digital Edition) © 2022 Deutsches Archäologisches Institut**  
Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Zentrale, Podbielskiallee 69–71, 14195 Berlin, Tel: +49 30 187711-0  
Email: [info@dainst.de](mailto:info@dainst.de) | Web: <https://www.dainst.org>

**Nutzungsbedingungen:** Mit dem Herunterladen erkennen Sie die Nutzungsbedingungen (<https://publications.dainst.org/terms-of-use>) von iDAI.publications an. Sofern in dem Dokument nichts anderes ausdrücklich vermerkt ist, gelten folgende Nutzungsbedingungen: Die Nutzung der Inhalte ist ausschließlich privaten Nutzerinnen / Nutzern für den eigenen wissenschaftlichen und sonstigen privaten Gebrauch gestattet. Sämtliche Texte, Bilder und sonstige Inhalte in diesem Dokument unterliegen dem Schutz des Urheberrechts gemäß dem Urheberrechtsgesetz der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Die Inhalte können von Ihnen nur dann genutzt und vervielfältigt werden, wenn Ihnen dies im Einzelfall durch den Rechteinhaber oder die Schrankenregelungen des Urheberrechts gestattet ist. Jede Art der Nutzung zu gewerblichen Zwecken ist untersagt. Zu den Möglichkeiten einer Lizenzierung von Nutzungsrechten wenden Sie sich bitte direkt an die verantwortlichen Herausgeberinnen/Herausgeber der entsprechenden Publikationsorgane oder an die Online-Redaktion des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts ([info@dainst.de](mailto:info@dainst.de)). Etwaige davon abweichende Lizenzbedingungen sind im Abbildungsnachweis vermerkt.

**Terms of use:** By downloading you accept the terms of use (<https://publications.dainst.org/terms-of-use>) of iDAI.publications. Unless otherwise stated in the document, the following terms of use are applicable: All materials including texts, articles, images and other content contained in this document are subject to the German copyright. The contents are for personal use only and may only be reproduced or made accessible to third parties if you have gained permission from the copyright owner. Any form of commercial use is expressly prohibited. When seeking the granting of licenses of use or permission to reproduce any kind of material please contact the responsible editors of the publications or contact the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut ([info@dainst.de](mailto:info@dainst.de)). Any deviating terms of use are indicated in the credits.

## Shahi-Tump: Results of the Last Field-Seasons (2001–2003)

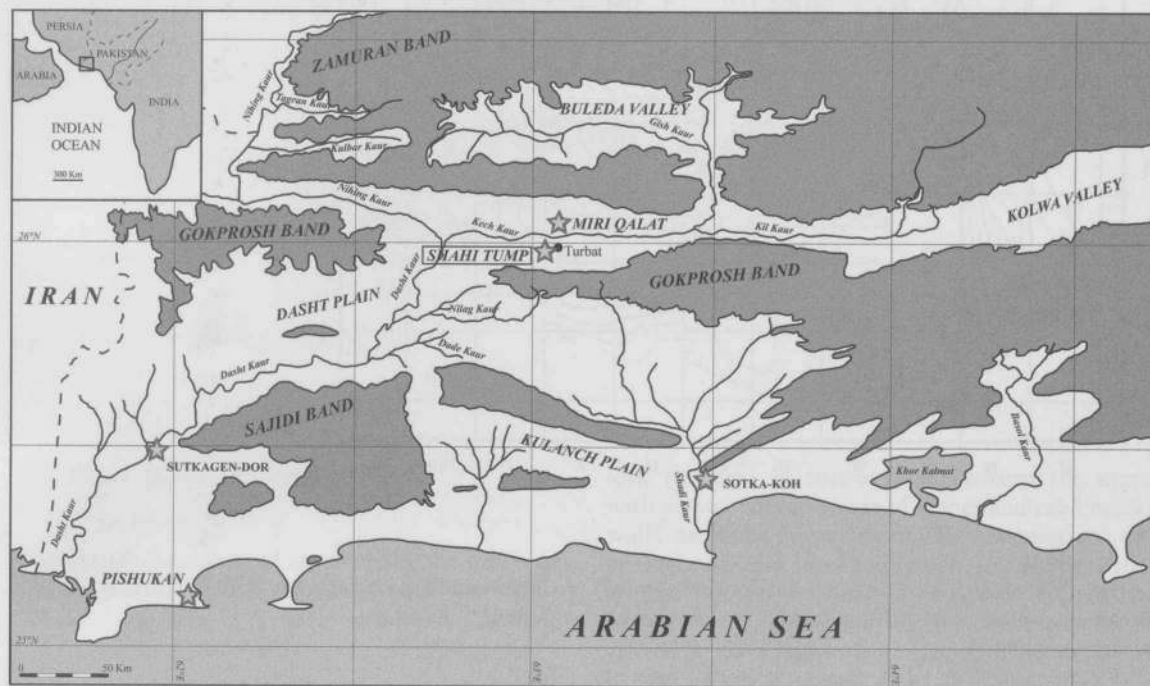


Fig. 1. Map of Makran, with localisation of Shahi-Tump.

The site of Shahi-Tump is located in Makran, southern Pakistani Balochistan, near the town of Turbat in the Kech valley (fig. 1). The French Archaeological Mission in Makran has excavated this site since 1997. In the chronology of the protohistorical settlement of Makran, the site of Shahi-Tump is relevant to three main periods, called "IIIa", "II" and "I" (Besenval 1994, 2000, in press a, in press b).

At the top of the mound (Trench II, fig. 2), an important graveyard, which belongs to the so-called Period IIIa has been excavated during the previous field-seasons. This period is dated to the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC (3200–2800 BC). Except for one burial, which was found this year in Trench IV, the complete study of this period was carried out

in 2001, on the three areas excavated: Trenches I, II and III.

Thus, the main tasks for the last field-seasons (2001–2003) were specifically the study of periods II and I. Period II begins in the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC (4000–3400 BC). Only few evidences of this period have been recognized in Makran for the moment: at Shahi-Tump, Miri Qalat and Sar-i Damb. Nevertheless at Shahi-Tump, as it will be explained below, a series of funeral and architectural levels was already observed providing well-defined pottery assemblage. Period I, on the contrary, is yet very vaguely defined. It relates to the most ancient levels dug up in only a small area at Miri Qalat. These levels are characterized by the lack of pottery and by some circular structures found in Trench I at Shahi-Tump. It is yet an issue



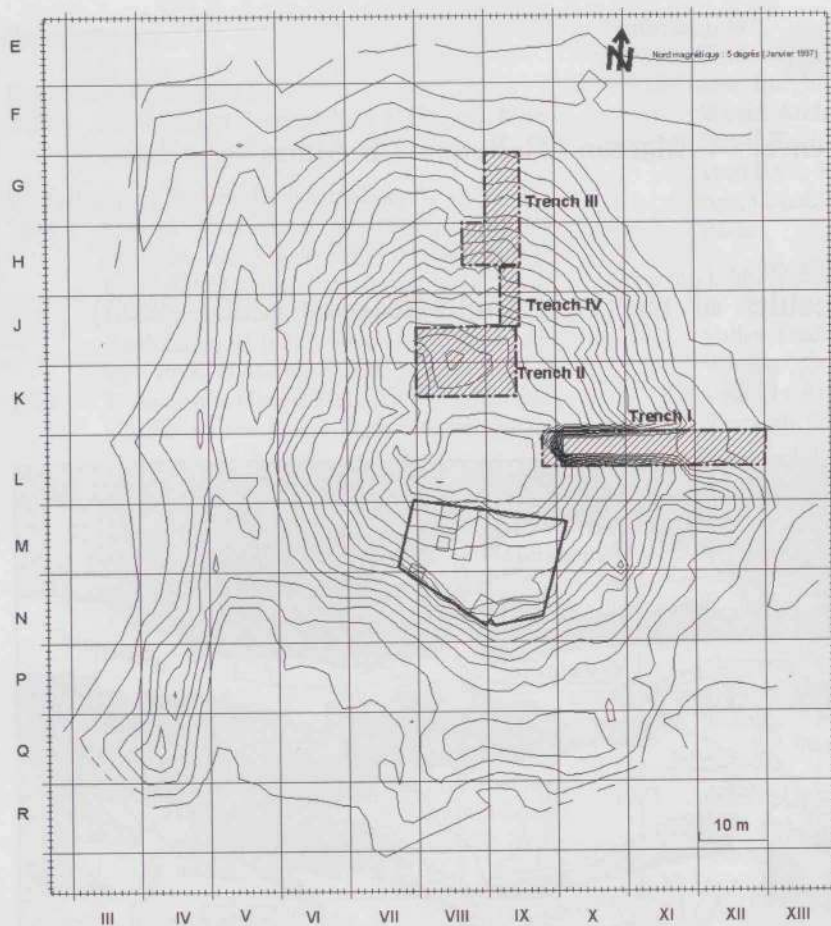


Fig. 2. The site of Shahi-Tump, localisation of the trenches.

to fix this period into the whole chronology of Makran, but it may belong to the 5<sup>th</sup> or the 6<sup>th</sup> millennium BC.

Concerning Period II, more precisely, one of our main objectives was to study the internal configuration of its various levels. It means, first of all, the study of the important upper levels of architecture found in Trench II, then, the study of the more ancient levels with graves and architecture excavated at a lower altitude in Trench III. A new trench was opened in 2003 (Trench IV). It links Trenches II and III, and has allowed us both to extend the excavation of the different levels of Period II and to get an important South-Northerly cross-section of the site (fig. 2).

The results will be presented below by excavation areas, from the top of the site to the deepest levels reached.

#### TRENCH II

This area is located at the top of the site (fig. 2). Below the graveyard of Period IIIa, two architectural levels define two separate stages of Period II. We will not emphasis on the upper one, which was already discussed elsewhere (Besenval, in press b),

only some of its features will be recalled in this paper.

#### *The upper phase of Period II*

A general map of the Upper Phase could be prepared although the basal levels and many structures were damaged by the numerous subsequent burials. However, as most of the biggest domestic structures are still there, it has allowed us to identify several rooms and corridors (fig. 3).

The architectural features of this phase are mainly characterized by the presence of imposing pillars and walls made of stones set in loam mortar. Remains of mud bricks were found on some of them. The fact that they were partially deepened leads us to assume that they acted as foundations. The study of the architectural structures has shown that they were rebuilt on the remains of an earlier burnt and collapsed building. The dismantling of one of the most massive pillars has also demonstrated that burnt building material was sometimes reused in their construction. The collapse, which covers almost the entire surface of Trench II, is due to a fire that affected the lower phase. Just before the reconstruction activities of the upper phase, a phase of desertion was observed.





Fig. 3. Trench II, the Upper Phase of Period II.

### The lower phase of Period II

#### The collapse

Underneath the removed upper parts, the layers of the collapse seemed to be undisturbed and its structure can be divided into three main levels. The first one on the top is characterized by significant quantities of fallen burnt mud bricks, as well as elements like vegetal imprints in clay, interpreted as roofing materials. The second one is a layer of burnt sediment with a lot of charcoal and some well-preserved wooden beams. The number of fallen burnt mud bricks decreased at that level, but the elements of roofing are still present. The third one, just near the ground level, consists of a layer of small stones lying in burnt sediment with charcoal, bones and pottery. This layer looks like the result of a flood or a leaching effect.

The good preservation of the collapse will certainly allow us to define more precisely the sequence of the fire. The large amount of charcoal and wooden beams will probably provide information on the environment and good samples for radiocarbon dating.

#### The ground level

Underneath the collapse, the plan of the burnt architecture shows a different layout of rooms and corridors than the upper phase (fig. 4). Neverthe-

less, the type of construction remains the same, with massive pillars made of stones and mud bricks walls on stone foundations. We also noticed the presence of mud bricks pillars, a new element that we had not seen in earlier layers, and the presence of a terrace made with a mud brick pavement, affixed onto a stone foundation, located in the northern part of the excavation.

The different areas are characterized by the presence of fireplaces: different chimneys as well as numerous kinds of ovens. The artefacts have mostly been found in the bottom layer of the collapse, which seems to have destructed the floors. This level has provided some interesting shapes and decorations of pottery from Period II; several awls made of bone, some clay figurines, beads and stone bowls have been identified.

#### TRENCH IV (fig. 5)

This trench, located between Trench II and Trench III (fig. 2), was opened during the 2003 field-season in order to connect the levels of these two areas and to establish a second major stratigraphical axis. As expected, we found the same sequence as observed in Trench II: a grave of Period IIIa located just below the top of the site, then a level with stone architecture, and, at the end, a level with burnt collapse. Those two lower levels belong to Period II.





Fig. 4. Trench II, the Lower Phase of Period II.

#### *Level with stone architecture of Period II*

Just under the grave of Period IIIa, at the top of the site, two imposing stonewalls were found. They have different heights, but their orientations are the same and both of them have been reinforced with large pilasters. Two phases of construction have been identified for both of them; they have been built as a terraced garden and were filled with burnt sediment.

#### *The burnt layer of Period II*

A layer full of charcoal and heated *daub* remains showing vegetal imprints underneath this architectural level leads us to conclude that a huge fire has destroyed this place. In this level, stonewalls with an orientation different from the upper ones have been found. The excavation is still in progress and the bottom of this level has not been reached yet.

#### TRENCH III

The specific place of Trench III in the northern slope of the mound (fig. 2) has allowed us to study the most ancient levels of Period II. Here, we have found no evidence of the upper architectural levels described for Trench II.

#### *The lower level*

The Period II graveyard appeared below a first occupation made with stonewalls. But, beneath

some burials we found the foundations of two buildings, organized around an oven. The most ancient one shows several proportions and phases of use. The oven indicates at least three different phases of fireplaces that correspond to an intense activity in quite a short time. Pottery found dates it to Period II. The second building was built after the abandonment of the first one. The dimensions of the trench did not allow us to go further with the study.

Because of the stratigraphical position of those structures and the small quantity of material found in those layers (almost no faunal remains nor pottery), we wonder what is the function of these buildings.

#### *The graveyard*

We found evidence of a Period II graveyard only on the northern slope, through the different sections of Trench III. Nevertheless, some isolated burials found in Trench I may be dated to Period II. During the last three field seasons, the excavation of 23 burials allowed us to deduce both the boundaries and the evolution of the graveyard for the Period II. We observed some superpositions and disturbances between the pits. The positions of the skeletons are mostly classical: lying on side, with upper and lower limbs flexed. The corpse position seems to be mainly defined according to cardinal points. The graveyard initially covered almost the whole eastern half of Trench III. The relationship between these most ancient graves of Period II and



the buildings mentioned above remains unclear. If both of these constructions are more ancient than that part of the cemetery, we can imagine that some parts of the structures were still visible when the first graves were dug. They may have defined some limits for the graveyard. After their desertion, the funeral area extended further to the west, covering the entire surface of the trench.

#### *Sequence of occupation*

It seems that we have completed the excavation of the cemetery in this part of the site. We have reached some levels that show collapsed mud brick walls, sometime burnt and molten with burnt sediment (fig. 6) that may still belong to Period II. The relationship between all the layers reflects also the general sequence of occupation: habitat/desertion/cemetery/desertion/new habitat.

#### TRENCH I

Sir Aurel Stein excavated this trench in 1927. When we began the work, the pre-existing trench allowed us to work on two places to complete the eastern cross-section of the site (fig. 7), and to excavate the deepest level of the site, near the centre of the mound. Material from Period I mainly consists of faunal remains (worked or not), flints and worked stones. But the main characteristic is the total lack of pottery.

#### *The later protohistorical disturbance*

One of the most relevant elements is the recognition of a big pit above two wells, the three of them dating to Period IV and dug through the ancient levels. These features were not identified in 1927 (Stein 1931, 88–103) and are responsible for the late and wrong dating of the site.

#### *The quadrangular buildings of Period I*

Two large quadrangular stone buildings were excavated: they consist of imposing square pillars interconnected by walls. Different construction stages were identified. The quadrangular pillars located in the corners and in the middle of the walls were built first. Then, the ground level of the inside of the building was paved with small-sized stones roughly ten centimetres thick. And lastly, the walls were built.

#### *The hut-basements of Period I (fig. 8)*

Underneath these quadrangular buildings, the deepest and most ancient level excavated inside this trench settled directly on the virgin soil. This level is very different from the upper ones: three circular structures have been found. A border effect characterized two of them and can be interpreted as hut



Fig. 5. Trench IV.

basements. Inside, a ground level is visible, marked by burnt sediment, traces of ash, charcoal, and ochre. Within the huts, the archaeological remains are mostly animal bones, whereas the outside yielded mainly flints.

The third structure is a pit of about 1 m width and 40 cm depth. The edge is made of stones, inside



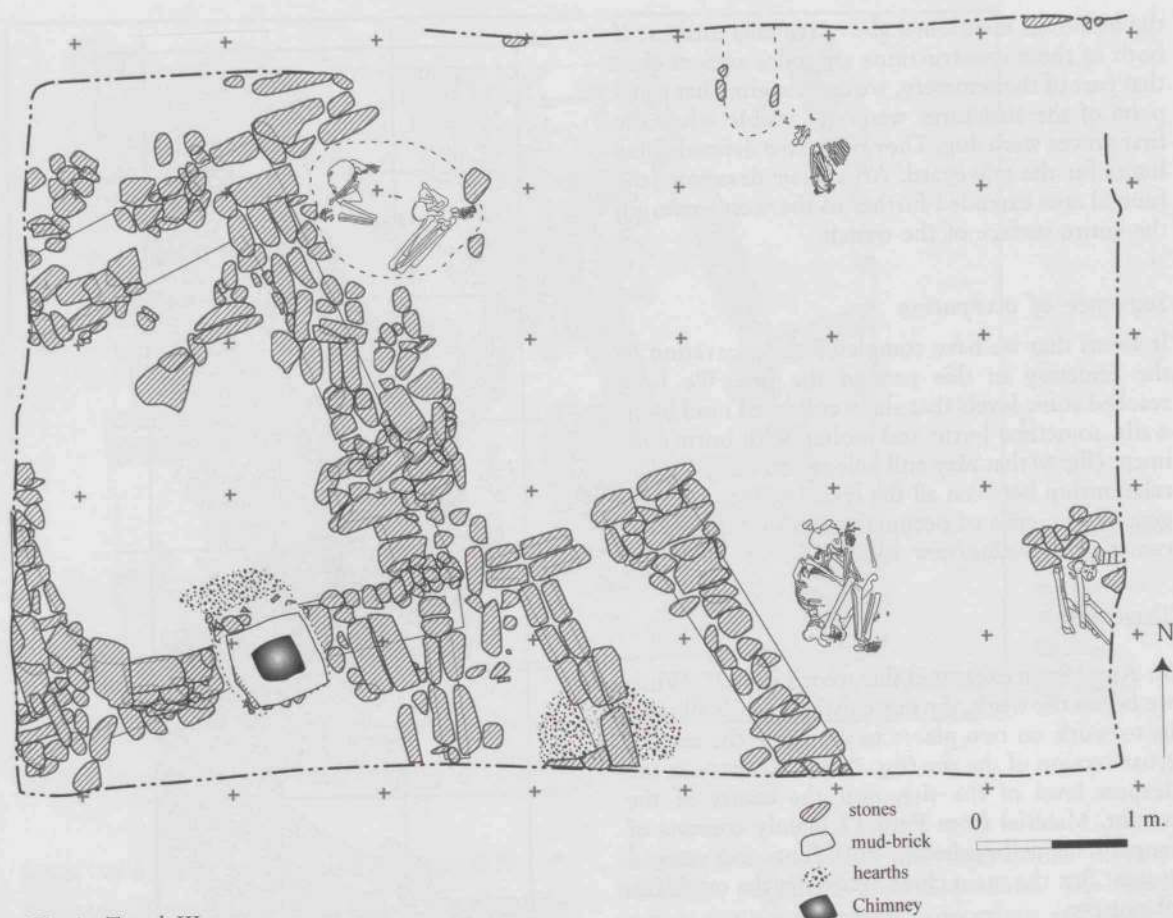


Fig. 6. Trench III.

we found a lot of charcoal, ashes and burnt soil. The pit contained huge stones.

The archaeological remains collected in this level look quite different from what we have ever seen in Shahi-Tump. The flints are smaller and the assemblage looks like a microlithic one, the worked bones are also shorter and more massive.

#### Paleobotanic analysis

The first analysis of the Period II paleobotanic remains has been performed by A. Shanshen Henry under the direction of M. Tengberg. Concerning levels excavated before 2002, many samples from Trench II and I have been studied. A geographical comparison in the one hand between Miri Qalat and Shahi-Tump and a chronological one on the other have been instigated.

The scale of the sample assortment appears to be similar at both sides in the Kech Valley. The main subsistence of these populations seems to have been cereal crops (wheat and barley), *Fabaceae* and gathered fruit like the dwarf palm (*Nannorrhops ritchieana*), the date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera*), and the jujube tree. We can notice a real evolution through chronology: as the proportion of cereal crops increases, a real selection of varieties appears. This

continuity and the progression testify the beginning of agriculture in Shahi-Tump through Periods II and III. On the contrary, the wild specimens of other plants observed are decreasing. Barley is also becoming more and more prevalent, maybe because it is sometime resistant to harsh environmental conditions.

Samples collected in the hut-basements locus described in Trench I, show a botanical spectrum different from the upper levels, including those observed into the quadrangular buildings. For the oldest part of the mound, wild plants were the more numerous, specifically some kinds of *Fabaceae*, type *Astragalus*, *Trifolium* and *Medicago*. If cereal crops are also represented (not all the varieties in the other levels were studied yet), it is in a lower proportion, and more wheat than barley was observed. These preliminary conclusions mixed with archeological observations reveal a real originality of the oldest settlement attested in Makran.

#### CONCLUSION: OBJECTIVES FOR THE NEXT FIELD-SEASONS

For the next field-seasons, we will continue to study mostly Period II and its diversity of phases; it means that for Trenches II and IV, we will need



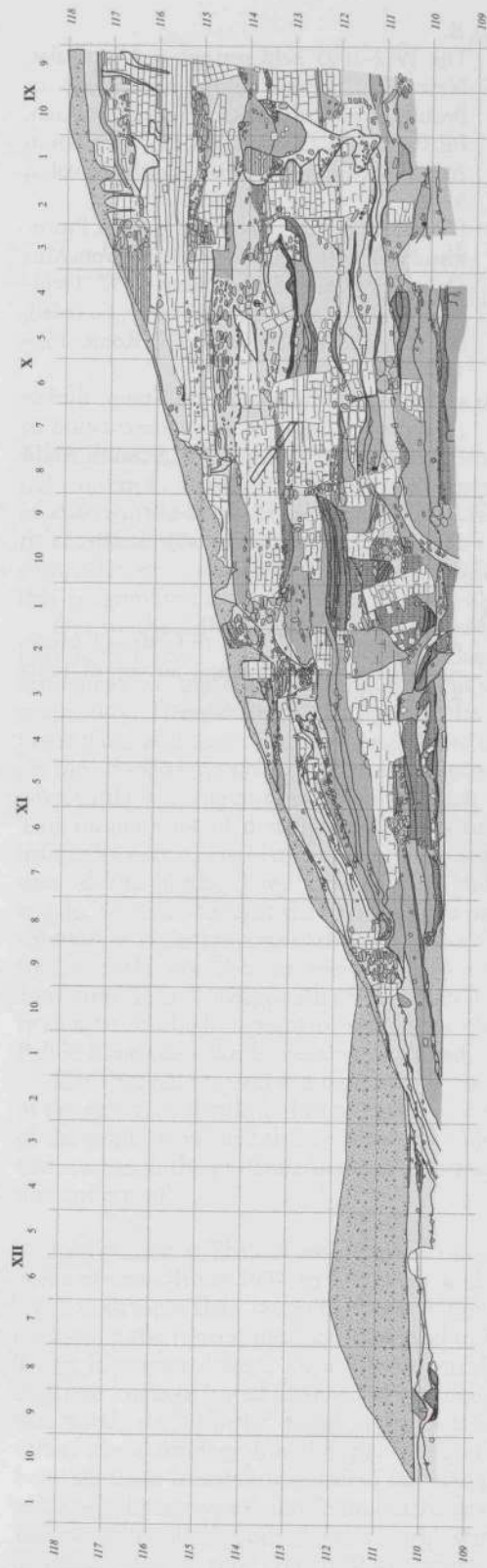


Fig. 7. Trench I, general Cross-section.

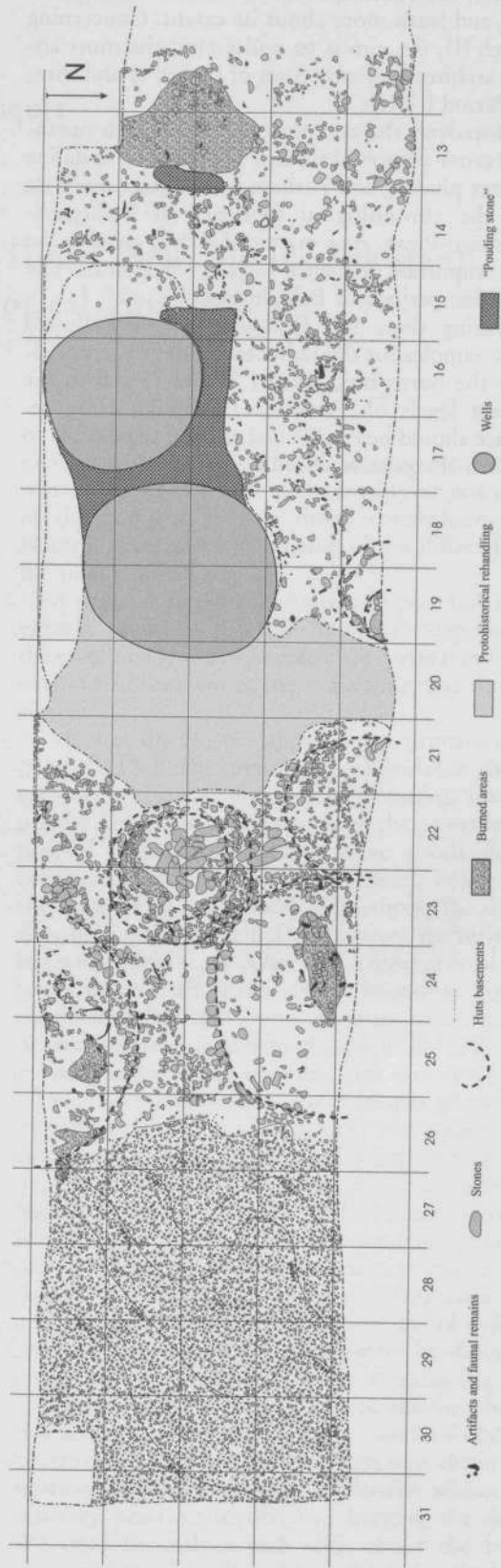


Fig. 8. Trench I, the huts-basements.



to reach the contemporaneous levels of the graveyard, and learn more about its extent. Concerning Trench III, the aim is to understand the most ancient architectural structures of Period II and then, the Period I levels.

Moreover, the completion of the south-northward cross-section of the site will allow us to define a better phasing and perhaps to integrate our data into the chronological sequence of Mehrgarh-Nausharo-Pirak. As a matter of fact, it gives us the most important sequence for the Chalcolithic and Neolithic periods of Balochistan.

During these last field-seasons, we collected many samples for the radiocarbon dating, especially in the burnt buildings of Trench II and in the deepest levels of Trench I. The radiocarbon sequence should be established as soon as possible to confirm the relative chronology.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Besenval, R.  
 1994 The 1992–1993 field-seasons at Miri Qalat. New contributions to the chronology of Protohistoric settlement in Pakistani Makran. In: Parpola, A./Koskikallio, P. (eds.), *South Asian Archaeology 1993*. Helsinki, vol. I, 81–91.  
 2000 New Data for the chronology of the Protohistory of Kech-Makran (Pakistan) from Miri Qalat 1996 and Shahi-Tump 1997 Field-Seasons. In: Taddei, M./de Marco, G. (eds.), *South Asian Archaeology 1997*. Rome, 161–187.  
 in press a Excavation of the Shahi-Tump Burials (Makran/Pakistan). A short presentation of the results. In: Raven, E. (ed.), *South Asian Archaeology 1999*. Leiden.  
 in press b Chronology of Protohistoric Kech-Makran. In: Jarrige, C. (ed.), *South Asian Archaeology 2001*. Paris.
- Stein, A.  
 1931 An Archaeological Tour to Gedrosia. *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India* No. 43, Calcutta.