P-ISSN: 2709-6254	Journal of Development and Social Sciences	Jul-Sep 2022, Vol. 3, No. 3
O-ISSN:2709-6262	http://dx.doi.org/10.47205/jdss.2022(3-III)76	[809-820]

Journal of Development and Social Sciences
www.jdss.org.pk

RESEARCH PAPER

Historical Study of Makran: From the view point of the Modern Archeologists

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ABSTRACT

The recent excavations at Miri Kalat, Turbat, Mehrgarh, Kachi plain, Naal, and different prehistoric mounds scattered around in various parts of Balochistan provide a wealth of data concerning the prehistoric period of proto-inhabitants of this region. This paper reviews recently published archaeological papers, monographs, and proceedings, along with archives on Baluchistan's antiquity. It is revealed from these findings that in antiquity, Balochistan evolved from autonomous and indigenous cultural societies to become part and parcel of world civilizations due to trading and religious interaction and intersocietal interaction. Cultural developments in Balochistan during the fourth and third millennia B.C. connected this region with Harappan or Indus Valley civilization and Mesopotamia. However, recent research has questioned the interpretation of historical events as explained by previous chronologists and instead emphasized different analytical frameworks and suggested that historical developments in Balochistan are the result of processes not manipulated by outside forces.

KEYWORDS Harappa, Indus Civilization, Mesopotamia, Mehrgarh, Miri Kalat, Protohistoric Balochistan

Introduction

The great civilizations of Indus, Mesopotamia, and Persia have conventionally provided the basis for our understanding of the ancient history of these regions. However, during the 4th quarter of the last century, archaeologists and historians alike have considered the borderland areas in search of evidence of the rise and fall and the relationship of these scattered areas with the centers of these great civilizations. Since the discoveries were made in Mesopotamia and neighboring regions, it was believed that the cradle of civilization was found in the alluvial basin of the Euphrates and the Tigris (Winckelman, 2000). However, in the twenties of the last century, discoveries made in the Indus or Harappan Civilization put forward the idea of the cradle of civilization from Mesopotamia to the Indus (Marshall, 1931; Wheeler, 1953; Mackay, 1948; Piggott, 1950). On the one hand, the discoveries made in the Indus Civilization resolved the cultural and trade links between Indus and Sumer, but also exposed the lack of archaeological evidence supporting this theory. The early archaeologists who were regressively involved in discoveries after discoveries in the Indus region understood to consolidate their "linkage theory" they need scientific evidence of the complex cultural connection between these two centers in antiquity. It is one of the main reasons European archaeologists, after the Second World War, paid attention to Balochistan after discovering local Neolithic and Chalcolithic cultures in different areas of this province (Winckelman 2000). These primordial settlements scattered across Balochistan are considered local precursors of the Indus culture.

Literature Review

The chronological sequencing of prehistoric settlements in Balochistan

Based on utilities of tools by primitive human settlements are divided into different archaeological periods, such as the Paleolithic (hunting-gathering) and Neolithic (food production). Based on carbon dating, the approximate dates of the Paleolithic range from 70,000-9000 BP (before the present time), and the Neolithic range from 9000 to 8000 BP and later (Kenoyer & Meadow, 2004). The early settlers in Balochistan were hunter and gatherers; however, later on when they domesticated different wild plants and animals. The beginning of plant and animal domestication is also the precursor of the initial settling down of these primitive people to a particular area. The Mehrgarh, in the Kachi plain of Balochistan, was assumed that was a first human settlement from where the Neolithic period (9000 BP) started (Kenoyer and Meadow 2004). It is suggested that staple grains and animals (wild sheep and goat) in Balochistan were brought from Western Asia, primarily from Northern Afghanistan, during the Middle Paleolithic and the Upper Paleolithic periods (30,000-15000 BP) (Shaffer, 1978).

The results from excavations conducted by French Archaeological Mission at Mehrgarh showed different protohistoric periods, from early settling down and establishing domestication of plants and animals to the rise and fall of the Indus Civilization. The excavations at Mehrgarh were conducted under the direction of Jean-Francois Jarrige from 1974 to 1986 (Jarrige *et al.* 1995) and again from 1996 to 2000 (Jarrige, 2000). Based on stratification and carbon dating, the archaeological site of Mehrgarh is divided into different protohistoric periods. The deepest strata are classified as Period I-II A, where French archaeologists excavated numerous burial remains. John Lukacs carefully studied the dental shape of these early burials at the University of Oregon, and based on the morphological structure of teeth, he concluded that the early settlers of Mehrgarh were indigenous people of this region and did not move into the region from Western Asia during the Neolithic period (Lukacs, 1989). At this stage, the evidence from dental remains of inhabitants of Mehrgarh was associated with the Asian gene pool (Lukacs 1989). However, during the later Chalcolithic period (Mehrgarh Period III), dental remains showed a strong resemblance with the people from Western Asia (Lukacs, 1989). From dental remains, it is, therefore, concluded that during the Neolithic period, the Asian-origin indigenous population settled and was involved in an extensive agrarian society; however, later on, due to expansion in trade, communication, and other forms of interaction, the human population from Western Asian cultures were also settled in this area during 5000 - 4000 BC (Kenoyer & Meadow, 2004).

History of archaeological surveys in Makran

Before the extensive archaeological survey undertaken by the French and Italian Mission in Makran, most of the previous work done in this region was based on preliminary works. Major Mockler was the first European who 1875, reported evidence of archaeological remains in Makran coastal areas (Sutkagen-Dor, Jiwani, Dambah Koh, Gati) (Mockler 1877, 1879). Later, in January-February, Aural Stein conducted an archaeological survey in Makran (Kech and Nihang Rivers valley, lower Dasht valley, and Gwadar areas) (Stein, 1931). After independence, American anthropologist H. Field and Pakistani archaeologist F.A. Khan visited Makran in 1955 (Field, 1959). In 1960, another American archaeologist, George Dales, along with Cuyler Young and Rafique Mughal, visited coastal Makran, particularly at the ruins of Sutkagen Dor and discovered a new Harappan outpost at Sotka-Koh near Pasni (Dales, 1962a, b).

Material and Methods

This study is based on a qualitative methodology where the researcher has used the previous literature narratively and researches a conclusion about the problem of the study based on the inductive reasoning method.

Discussion

General Chronology of Makran

Based on pottery assemblage collected during the preliminary survey of the area, the French and Italian teams identified four main periods of settlements (Besenval and Sanlaville, 1990).

Dasht Period

The pottery assemblage of this period mainly connected with south-eastern Iran (Bampur, Shahr-i-Sokhta, period III) and the Gulf area of the 3rd millennium BC. The Dasht period again subdivided into three categories:

1. Red ware with painted decoration (large bowls, pots, canisters).

2. Fine grey painted ware of Emir Gray (bowl, small and large) and small pots.

3. Coarse ware: (basket ware)

Besides pottery, during the survey, copper seals have also been found at the Karkak, Tang, and Gurg Sechi areas of Dasht Valley (Besenval & Sanlaville 1990).

Shahi-Tump Period

The period was named after the protohistoric archaeological site, Shahi Tump, near Turbat, excavated by A. Stein. During the initial survey of this mound, the date was problematic, and Besenval and Sanlaville (1990) were not certain and traditionally attributed to the 1st half of the second millennium BC. In successive pages of this paper, however, the recent findings will be discussed. The settlements and cemeteries in this period have been found in the Dasht area, including Imdad Ali and Chakar Bazar. The pottery assemblages are as follows:

1. Black-on grey ware: including bowls (small and large), goblets, footed goblets, and pots.

2. Red and grey globular jars with black decoration: open bowls.

3. Red fine ware with black decoration: open bowls.

4. Red fine ware with black decoration and white filling, bowls.

5. Coarse ware (basket ware) (Besenval & Sanlaville 1990).

Zangian Period

The Zangian Period was represented by huge cemeteries of cairns on the rocky places of the valley, while the inhabitants resided near the river. The painted pottery discovered from cemeteries and settlements belongs to the "Londo-ware" dated from the 2nd century B.C. to the 2-3rd cent. A.D. In 1885, Major Mockler found these sites which were later excavated by Stein (1931). The areas in Makran include Dambani Koh, Jiwani, and Zangian (Besenval & Sanlaville, 1990). The exact dating of "Londo ware" is also confusing; hence, the French and Italian archaeologists had no firm chronological data for this important cultural period (Besenval & Sanlaville, 1990).

Islamic Period

The earliest occupation during the Islamic period in Makran has been identified on small, eroded sites of Mir Kahur, Djebel Damb, and Machuki (Besenval and Sanlaville, 1990). The classic pottery types discovered in these areas belonged to the 10th-13th century AD (Besenval and Sanlaville, 1990). Most of the pottery was glazed, moulded ware associated with local pottery.

Miri Kalat, (Kech, Makran)

The site comprises Pre-Harappan deposits over 20 meters thick, which have been used as a foundation building of a castle (Kalat) during the late Islamic Period (Besenval 1994). Due to anthropogenic interference, the ancient site's periphery suffered badly, particularly during the late Islamic period when this mound was used to build a fortified Kalat. According to Besenval (1994), during the Harappan Period, the Protohistoric settlement of Miri Kalat shifted to the eastern part of the site, which still exists underneath the late Islamic buildings and traces. Before going into details about Miri Kalat, it is important to mention the history of archaeological surveys and the existence of Protohistoric cultures in Makran.

The protohistoric settlement at Miri Kalat is subdivided into periods I, II, II, and IV (Besenval, 1994).

Period I: The beginnings of the settlement at Miri Kalat (Fifth millennium BC?)

To determine the early settlement at Miri, the French and Italian Archaeological Mission in Makran have worked on two lower levels of soundings III (levels V-VI), which rest on virgin soil (Besenval 1994). Level V is represented by a large stone wall discovered during the 1992 field season at Miri Kalat. No interesting materials were discovered at this level except a collection of flints. Later, the Mission also excavated Level VI below Level V and found an associated grave covered with flat river stones (Besenval 1994).

Period II: ("Miri Period" first half of the fourth millennium)

During the 1990 field season, Mission discovered Period II when working in sounding III, levels III, and IV (Besenval, 1994). Subsequently, in 1992, another sounding IV was also open relevant to Period II. The specific area for sounding was chosen because of the absence of erosion and Islamic encroachment, so archaeologists reached the deposits of the fourth millennium almost directly (Besenval, 1994).

The following patterns were found on associated pottery:

1. Shallow bowls with an internal painted lattice pattern layout in four quarters,

2. high goblets with various vertical decorations,

3. pots with averted rims,

4. small jars,

5. large globular jars,

6. basket-ware made through coiling (Besenval & Marquis, 1993).

Some of these potteries are also marked with ancient graffiti, most probably from the artisans who made them: "tool-marks on the body of the vessel, repair holes, and ring bases shaped with a tool" (Besenval, 1994). Grey ware pottery, which was discovered in Period II, Miri Kalat, showed a resemblance to the Shahi-Tump assemblage.

The material stuff which was discovered in Period II, Miri Kalat included:

--flat terracotta bangles with a matted print on the internal face (Besenval and Marquis 1993)

--oval shaped terracotta sling stones (Besenval, 1994)

--terracotta ring lamps (Besenval & Marquis 1993)

--large shell bangles

--stone vessels (Besenval, 1994)

The pottery manufacturing and decoration pattern during Period II, Miri Kalat is similar to archaeological sites excavated in southeastern Iran, particularly Tape Yahya V, level A-B, with Tal-i-Iblis, II/III, and with a few sherds of Chah Husaini (Besenval, 1994). The radiocarbon dating for levels III-IV of sounding III and IV showed around the first half of the fourth millennium (Besenval, 1994).

Period III A

(Second half of the fourth—beginning of the third millennium BC.)

It was the thickest part of the site (thickness; 10 to 15 cm) and situated in the western part. The French Mission started the Sounding IX in 1993, intending to obtain stratigraphic data. On the surrounding area of the mound, Mission Digs sounding III, with two levels (I and II), discovered an enormous amount of pottery assemblage, which was similar to Togau C-D, Nal monochrome and polychrome Anjira ware, Black and white on red ware, and Shahi-Tump ware (Besenval & Marquis, 1993). The findings obtained from this section of Miri Kalat also placed this site as a junction between West and East (Mundigak III, Shahr-i-Sokhta I, Tape Yahya IV C., Anjira) (Besenval & Marquis 1993).

Period III B

(First half/middle of the third millennium BC.)

This period is, to some extent, the golden era of Makran in antiquity when important settlements were scattered all across Makran, particularly on the Dasht plain. The pottery assemblage discovered during this period at Miri Kalat is similar to Bampur (Iranian Makran) I-IV, Mundigak IV, and also with Nausharo IC (Besenval, 1994). During the field season of 1993, the French and Italian Archaeological Mission at Miri Kalat, Turbat, started working on sounding I in the eastern part of the mound and reached level VI. The materials obtained from different strata ranged from lower virgin soil to the first Harappan occupation level. These strata were embedded with rubbish and 50 cm thick. The potteries belonged to the Dasht - Bampur assemblage and are categorized into three different groups:

(a) Fine ware orange-red to brown with painted and ridged decoration that included:

(i) large bowl,

(ii) pots and jars,

(iii) flat-bottomed dishes.

(b) The second categories are included grey ware that included:

(i) Grey ware with black painted decoration (Bampur assemblage)

(ii) emir grey ware, bowl, canister, and small pot,

(iii) incised grey ware.

(c) the third group belonged to potteries which were Orange-red ware and were associated with the Dasht-Bampur assemblage and included:

(i) shallow bowls with 'radial' fondle-polished decoration and painted with different motifs (horn, hatched waves)

(ii) bowls (red or grey) with adornment loop embellishment under the internal face of the rim (Besenval 1994).

The potteries were also decorated with zoomorphic such as Fish and birds, as well as vegetal such as papal (*Ficus religiosa)*, tulip, palm tree (*Phoenix dactylefera*), etc. (Besenval 1994), based on the pottery assemblage of Period III B, Besenval (1994) concluded that they seemed to be transitional between the Dasht and Kulli cultures.

Period IV: Harappan/local culture

(Second half of the third millennium BC.)

For this purpose sounding, I have undertaken by French Mission at Miri Kalat to determine the relationship between Makran and Harappan cultures. Two separate operations have been conducted to resolve the issue of Harappan's presence at Miri Kalat.

(i) the western sounding,

(ii) the eastern sounding (a house with a kitchen and a bathroom of the Harappan period discovered in this sounding (Besenval, 1994).

The Harappan period during Period IV at Miri Kalat is connected with Nausharo in Kachi plain. The assumption is based upon (a) the pottery assemblage, which is represented by the Mature Harappan assemblage, and (b) objects: such as seals, a comb, weights, toys, and beads, which are widespread items excavated in Indus Civilization (Besenval, 1994). Moreover, the painted and incised grey ware were also discovered during this period, representing the Dasht/Bampur of Period III B and Kulli pottery. The pottery assemblage during the Harappan period also provided some interesting results which showed the amalgamation of two different extreme cultures at the same time, for instance, the presence of a typical Harappan jar decorated with caprid (ibex) animals which represent the Iranian Balochi culture. Similarly, the presence of numerous fishbone at Period IV levels at Miri Kalat indicated the relationship of this area with coastal Harappan sites of Sotka Koh and Sutkagen - Dor (Besenval, 1994). Moreover, during the preliminary survey taken by the French Mission in Makran, also discovered a huge Fishermen community in the Prahag area near Pasni, which showed a fish preparation workshop of the Harappan period, which might be connected with the Miri Kalat Period IV (Besenval, 1994).

Shahi-Tump (Kech, Makran)

The Shahi-Tump is located in the Turbat area of Kech district, Makran (for chronological details, see Appendix I). The Shahi-Tump culture represented a Chalcolithic period in Makran. The French Archaeological Mission started excavation at this mound in 1997. Chronologically, the Shahi-Tump culture is subdivided into three main periods, i.e., IIIA, II, and I (Besenval 1994, 2000). In 1928, A. Stein was the first person to excavate the Shahi-Tump mound, and the trench of that survey was still seen at the bottom of the mound (Stein, 1931). However, the second trench (Trench II), dug by the French Mission at the top of the mound where an important graveyard of Period IIIA has been excavated (Besenval *et al*. 2005). Based on the carbon dating of materials excavated from this period, it is dated to the end of the 4th and the beginning of the 3rd millennium BC (3200-2800 BC.) (Besenval *et al*., 2005). In 2003, three different trenches, I, II, and III, were excavated. Period I and II

dating is estimated to begin in the first half of the 4th millennium BC (4000-3400 BC). Period I is similar to Miri Kalat and vaguely defined by the French Mission, although it is one of the most ancient levels dug up in a small section at Miri Kalat (Besenval *et al*. 2005).

Trench II

Situated at the top of the site and based upon the two architectural levels, Period II is separated into two distinct stages.

The upper phase of Period II

Although in the course of history, due to numerous subsequent burials, many structures were damaged, the Mission identified several rooms and corridors in this section. The main architectural features of this section are composed of impressive pillars and walls assembled of stones set in loam mortar (Besenval *et al*. 2005). In the foundations of these buildings, mud bricks were also used beside stones. From the remains of the architectural structures, it is postulated that they were rebuilt on the remains of an earlier incinerated and dilapidated building. It is evident from the structure, one of the most massive pillars, in which burnt building materials were reused (Besenval *et al*. 2005). The fire was the main reason for the destruction of buildings in the upper phase of Period II. However, the reasons for such destruction are unknown.

The lower phase of Period II

This phase is again subdivided into two parts:

The collapse

The layers of collapse are divided into three main levels. The first level comprises fallen mud bricks and clay materials embedded in plant straws used as roofing materials (Besenval *et al*. 2005). The second level comprises burnt materials with charcoal and some well-preserved wooden beams. The third one, found at the ground level, is composed of small stones embedded in burnt sediment with charcoal, bones, and pottery. The destruction of the settlement by fire is evident. However, the final results regarding the collapse are still in the publication process because, going through the available resources, the authors of this publication could not find new evidence.

The ground level

Different layouts of rooms and corridors were discovered underneath the collapse of the French Mission (Besenval *et al*. 2005). The building materials were similar to the collapse and included massive pillars made of stones and mud bricks walls on stone foundations. Interestingly, for the first time, the presence of mud bricks pillars was also noticed at this layer. Besides, a terrace made of mud brick pavement with a stone foundation was also located on the northern part of this level. Moreover, fireplaces, chimneys, and kinds of ovens were also excavated in this section. The materials discovered at this level included peculiarly shaped pottery from Period II, several tools made of bone, clay figurines, beads, and stone bowls (Besenval *et al*. 2005).

Trench IV

During the field season of 2003, another Trench IV, located between Trench II and Trench III, was also used to determine the connectivity between the levels of these two areas (Besenval *et al*. 2005). However, in Trench IV, the Mission found the same sequence as observed in Trench II (Besenval *et al*. 2005). For instance, a grave of Period IIIA with a level of burnt collapse. Both lower levels belong to Period II. Period II, at Trench IV, was structurally subdivided by Besenval *et al*. (2005) into the following categories:

Level with the stone architecture of Period II

Two striking stonewalls with different heights but similar orientations discovered underneath the grave belonged to Period IIIA on the upper strata of the mound. These structures were fortified with large pilasters. According to Besenval *et al*. (2005), these structures built in two phases have been used as terraced gardens and were embedded with burnt materials.

The burnt layer of Period II

Due to heaps of charcoal and other burnt materials beneath the architectural structure at this level, the Mission concluded that a massive fire had wrecked this place (Besenval *et al*., 2005).

Trench III

Trench III on the northern slope of the mound belonged to one of the most ancient levels of Period II of Shahi-Tump Culture. The building's upper levels, which were evident on Trench II, did not show any traces on Trench III.

The lower level of Trench III

On the lower level of Trench III, a graveyard belonging to Period II it appeared underneath a first occupation at Shahi-Tump culture, made with stonewalls (Besenval *et al*., 2005). Underneath these burials, the French Mission found the base of two buildings built around a fireplace. It is apparent from these structures that they were used during several occupational periods during Phase II. It is also reported that after the desertion of the first one, the second building was built in the same place (Besenval *et al*., 2005). Unfortunately, almost no animals or pottery were found in those layers; therefore, it is hard to be certain about the function of these buildings (Besenval *et al*., 2005).

The Graveyard of Trench III

In different sections of Trench III, a graveyard had been found which belonged to Period II. The French Archaeological Mission at Shahi-Tump reported excavating 23 burials from the site (Besenval *et al*., 2005). The burial orientation of the skeletons was also unique; for instance, they were lying on their side, with bent upper and lower limbs (Fig. 6). The graveyard area occupied most of the eastern half of Trench III (Besenval *et al*., 2005). The Trench III was a complex of collapsed mud brick walls, burnt and embedded with burnt sediment with an occupation that included habitation/abandonment/graveyard/desertion/reoccupation of the area in the course of protohistoric time of Period II (Besenval *et al*., 2005).

Fig 1 A burial from Trench III, Shahi-Tump Period II (Source: French Archaeological Mission at Shahi-Tump 2007).

Trench I

The Trench I was excavated by Sir Aural Stein in 1927 during his archaeological tour of Makran (Stein 1931). The French Mission reexamined this Trench again during a recent survey and completed the eastern cross-section of the site. The materials found in this trench consist of faunal remains, flint, and worked stones and belonged to Period I; however, no pottery was found in this trench (Besenval *et al*., 2005). One of the most striking features of this level is the size of materials compared with other levels; for instance, the flints are smaller, and the assemblage looks like a microlithic in form similar feature is also found in worked bones which are also shorter (Besenval *et al*., 2005).

The Paleobotanic Analysis

The palaeobotany has always excited the archaeologist because the floristic composition in antiquity helps in understanding the way of living and dependence of protohistoric inhabitants on specific crops. Therefore, the French Mission at Shahi-Tump also analyzed the samples obtained from Trench II for paleobotanical purposes. Interestingly both Miri Kalat and Shahi-Tump showed similarities in floristic composition. The staple of these protohistoric inhabitants was composed of cereal crops (wheat and barley), pulses such as *Vicia faba* (Bankilik), or any other leguminous plant. The main fruiting plants were *Nannorrhops ritchieana* (Pesh), *Phoenix dactilyfera* (date palm), and *Ziziphus jujuba* (Ber) (Besenval *et al*., 2005). There was a gradual increase in the number and selection of different cereal crops in protohistoric inhabitants of Shahi-Tump culture, which also testified that an agrarian society emerged through Periods II and III (Besenval *et al*., 2005).

The Burial Practices at Shahi-Tump Culture

During the recent excavations at Shahi-Tump, the French Mission concluded that during different phases of occupation in antiquity, this settlement was sporadically abandoned and used as a burial ground (Buquet, 2005). Later on, these graveyards were also abandoned, and new walls for residential purposes were established on top of existing graves. The French Mission at Shahi-Tump worked for seven uninterrupted field seasons from 1997 to 2003 (Buquet, 2005). Two different kinds of burial patterns were observed at Shahi-Tump, i.e., the primary and the secondary burial types. The differences between these

two burial types were cultural and ceremonial (Buquet, 2005). The dead body is managed in a unique ceremony in primary burial.

Primary Burial Type

Individual Primary Burial Type

The French Mission at Shahi-Tump observed 71% (128 individuals) of burials belonged to individual primary burial types. The dead were placed in a west-to-east position in their graves, with skill lying in the west (Buquet, 2005). Within the primary burial type, this orientation represented 76% of the skeleton compared with east-to-west, which showed only 3%. Similarly, north-to-south and south-to-north showed 11% and 7% of the total, respectively (Buquet, 2005). Both forelimbs and hind limbs were bent, similar to the fetus's position in the womb. In some cases, the legs were forcibly bent because, according to Buquet (2005), the heel touched the pelvis, a sign of external compression. The binding garbs were sometimes used to wrap the limbs lightly.

Conclusion

Besides burial, one case of cremation was also observed at Shahi-Tump cemetery during the field season of 2000. The bones were burnt in situ in this primary burial chamber because the surrounding area contained burnt sediment. The body was laid on its back in an east-t-west position. No burial materials were found in this grave (Buquet, 2005).

The multiple burials represent 17% (26 individuals) of the total primary burials. In these cases, mostly two individuals were buried together. For example, in one burial chamber, a male adult lying on his back, with a west-to-east position, and at the feet of this individual lay a child between 2 ½ to 3 years. The child's position is similar to the adult one (Buquet, 2005). Similarly, during the field season of 2000, one of the burials excavated contained 11 skeletons of adults and children. These skeletons were organized to indicate that special care was taken during burial (Buquet, 2005). The presence of many individuals in a single burial chamber also indicated that "the population had to manage a lot of deceased people in a short time"(Buquet, 2005).

During the Shahi-Tump cemetery surveys by French Mission, they recognized ten secondary graves resulting from "an intentional and pre-defined action, which is an integrated part of the funeral process" (Buquet, 2005). In the secondary burial chambers, the local inhabitants seem to regard death not uniquely " but from a culturally and practically distinct perspective" (Buquet, 2005).

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