

CHAPTER IV IN THE BAMPŪR BASIN

SECTION I—PREHISTORIC REMAINS OF BAMPŪR

THE four marches of February 22nd–25th, covering an aggregate of about 75 miles, which brought us from Fanūch to the Bampūr river, had little of general and nothing of archaeological interest to offer. The first led up the course of the stream which waters Fanūch and provides moisture higher up for an ample growth of scrub, and then took us across the low watershed which here, at an elevation of about 2,900 feet, divides the drainage towards the Arabian Sea from that of the Bampūr basin. Beyond it, for the remaining 60 miles, the whole of the route led over a gently sloping desert glacis of stony detritus and gravel. Water was to be found only in wells or springs within the larger torrent beds, ordinarily dry, which descend from the hills of Lāshār and Chāmp and are reached by floods after heavy rain.

At Maskhūtān, the first stage, a *qanāt* provides irrigation for the fields of some fifty households; but only some mat-huts of Balūch nomads were met at the stages of Marra and Balūchān-chāh. Here and there low ridges and hillocks of decomposed rock crop out from the glacis to break the monotony of this wide belt of waste. Dreary as were its aspects, it brought back to me memories of happy Central-Asian travels, and the dunes of coarse sand near the broad depression of Giskuk, crossed on the last march to the river, helped to strengthen those impressions. Farther away to the east a belt of heavy sand approaches the river towards Bampūr and Fahreh (or Īrān-shahr, to give its latest official name), and thus adds another typical feature to the general character of the great drainageless basin.

Just before we arrived at the bank of the Bampūr river, near the village of Saiyyidābād, a colony laid out by Saiyyid Khān, Sirdār Ḥusain Khān's father, on the evening of February 25th a dust storm and some drops heralded the approach of rain, the first for fully a year. So we were glad to gain the right bank to pitch our camp, and thus to escape the risk of being cut off from Bampūr by a subsequent flood which might render the river unfordable for days or even a week or two. At the time the river-bed, fully 200 yards wide, held water only in a shallow channel about 30 yards across, while a small canal near the left bank absorbed the rest of the drainage.