

On the following morning a short march of only 5 miles brought us to Bampūr, the traditional 'capital' of Persian Balūchistān, marked from afar by its conspicuous, if half-ruined, fort rising high above the riverine belt. The track followed led along the edge of the dunes which fringe this belt on the north. It thus skirted the area of cultivation which extends without a break from a couple of miles below our crossing-place right up to Bampūr and beyond. Careless as the cultivation of this area is, yet plentiful irrigation from the river makes its rich alluvial soil troublesome ground for camels. The width of cultivated ground along the right bank of the river steadily increases to a maximum of about a mile and a half at the fort of Bampūr. Beyond the fort, cultivation extends for another 14 miles to near Īrān-shahr or Fahreh, though much neglected in places where the ground is covered by a jungle growth of trees and scrub. On the left bank of the river from Īrān-shahr downwards no cultivation is found at the present day until the narrow tract below Saiyyidābād, to be described later, is reached. To the extensive but also poorly tilled stretches of cultivation towards the hills to the north and north-east of Fahreh I shall have occasion to refer later on.

This rapid survey of the agricultural resources of Bampūr and its neighbourhood will suffice to illustrate the conditions which have made this tract at the head of the Bampūr basin the economic and political centre of Persian Balūchistān all through historical times. Nowhere else in this wide, but for the most part desolate, region is to be found ground affording to an equal extent potential resources for a settled population. All European travellers who have passed through Bampūr since Captain W. P. Grant's and Sir Henry Pottinger's visits in 1809-10 have had occasion to note the sad state of neglect into which cultivation has here fallen, and also the possibilities which the favourable conditions of fertile alluvial soil and water for irrigation offer for recovery under a stable and judicious system of government.

The impressions received during our short stay at Bampūr were apt to bring home all the vicissitudes this centre of Persian Balūchistān had suffered for a long time during alternating periods of oppressive rule from Kermān and practical independence, coupled with much insecurity under rapacious local chiefs. Rising high on what probably is a natural mound overlain by the debris of ages was to be seen the fort of the Bampūr chiefs (Fig. 33), a conspicuous landmark from afar. It consists of a crumbling pile of mud-built towers and casemates at one end (Fig. 31), and of equally decayed barrack-like structures lining an outer lower enclosure at the other end (see Plan 10). Apart from a couple of rooms above the single gateway, occupied by a small Persian guard, scarcely any of the tumble-down quarters looked safe for occupation.