

The Burnt City & Beyond

3500 – 2000 B.C.

One of the oldest cities discovered in Iran is *Shahr Sookhteh* — the “Burnt City” in Sistan and Baluchistan, Eastern Iran. It is called *Sookhteh* because it was destroyed by fire three times. This city is 5,000 years old, and the people who lived there in ancient times grew crops, made pottery, wove beautiful coloured fabrics and invented interesting board games. The city is known for having made history’s first artificial eye. Neither the origin of nor the language spoken by the people in this city is known. However, unique inscriptions and signs exist, indicating that they had taken the first steps in inventing writing.



Above: The oldest textile fragments discovered in Iran are from the Burnt City. This dyed, knitted fragment was probably made with a simple bronze knitting needle that was discovered nearby.

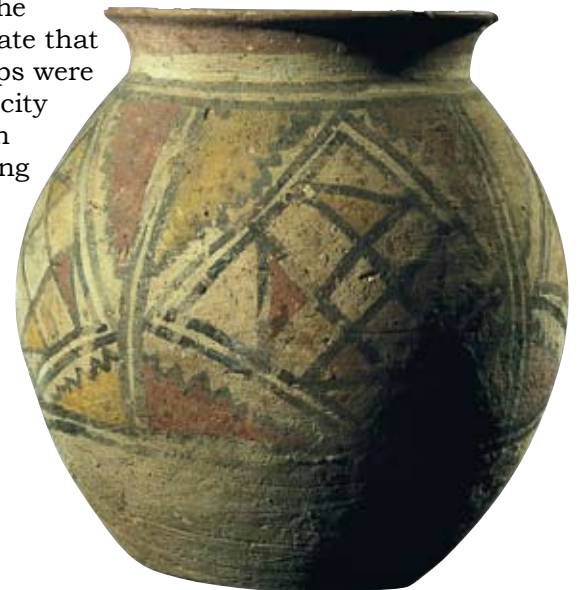


Shaft-hole
axe head with
zoomorphic decoration.
(2400 – 1350 B.C.)

This gilded eyeball was attached to the remains of a 5,000 year-old skull. The capillaries show traces of gold, while the tomb suggests that a high-ranking female, very likely a priestess, was inside.



Excavations in the Burnt City indicate that pottery workshops were held outside the city to avoid pollution caused by burning furnaces.



The Bronze Age is referred to a time when bronze was used extensively to make tools, weapons, and other decorative items. In Iran, it started in the 4th millennium B.C. The earliest examples are from Susa and Luristan. Bronze Object from Luristan (2000 B.C.)



Above: Accounting tokens were used for trade and to help clerks keep records of goods and materials. 5 terracotta accounting tokens or calculi, Susa, Iran. (ca. 3300-3000 B.C.)

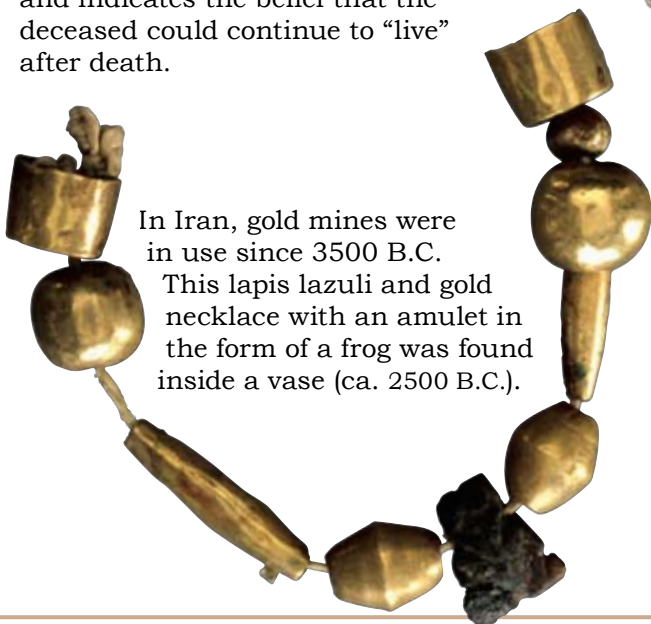


Right: Trade was extensive and to ease trade, a standardized system of weights was developed to carry out commerce. Weights in the form of a frog and the head of a bear, Susa. (2000 B.C.)



Above: This game board, depicting a snake, is the oldest one discovered in Iran. It was buried in a tomb and indicates the belief that the deceased could continue to "live" after death.

Below: Goat's head rhyton used for drinks during rituals and ceremonies (ca. 3200 - 2100 B.C. ceramic, Azerbaijan)



In Iran, gold mines were in use since 3500 B.C. This lapis lazuli and gold necklace with an amulet in the form of a frog was found inside a vase (ca. 2500 B.C.).



Mortars were used for mixing various ingredients and herbs. This small marble mortar was discovered near Damghan. It is estimated to be from 3400 B.C.