Chapter 11

TYPOLOGICAL COMPARISON OF THE IRON OBJECTS FROM IRAN,
ESPECIALLY SIALK; AND FROM THE EARLY IRON AGE IN INDIA

A comparison of the tool types from Iran (figs. 13, 14) and India (figs. 15, 16) in the early days of iron in both the countries, would indicate some obvious parallels. Though it is not yet possible firmly to establish an evolational link between the two regions, it is clear that their links are close enough to lead to such a possibility. At Agha Bvlar and Chagoulla Derre the iron objects, (fig. 13) mostly weapons of war, show a different tradition from that obtaining in Sialk V or Sialk VI, (fig. 14) though the two groups are not very far removed from each other in point of time. The tools at Agha Bvlar consist of daggers (fig. 13A, Nos. 1-3) axes (fig. 13A, No. 3) chisels (fig. 13A, No. 4) and spear-heads (fig. 13A, No. 5) horse-bits (fig. 13A, No. 11). The daggers follow the earlier tradition of bronze tools with a long narrow tongue with median groove, springing from a hilted edd. The axe (fig. 13A, No. 3) has a splayed cutting edge, and a barrel-shaped transverse socket for the grip. The chisel (fig. 13A, No. 4) has a broad, slightly splayed working end and tanged end for hafting into a handle. The
spear-head (fig. 13A, No. 5) is almond or leaf-shaped with a socketed hollow stem.

At Chagoulla Derre the spear-heads (fig. 13A, Nos. 6-7) are longish and conical, usually with a median rib and hollow socketed stems for fixing to a shaft. The daggers (fig. 13A, Nos. 8-13) have diverse handles made of bronze, which are riveted at the broader end. That iron objects were preferred for their greater effectiveness is clearly indicated by the blades being made of iron in preference to ones of bronze, while the less functional part was made of bronze. The continued adherence to the hybrid form was possibly more as a matter of habit and sentimental inability to part with an ancient relic than pure considerations of utility. At Sialk the hybrid combination has disappeared, obviously for reasons of a wastefully lengthier process of manufacture involved in it. A complete piece of tool could be produced with greater convenience and quicker than a composite tool, especially as bronze started losing ground as the functional metal and began to have more of decorative utility at the stage. At any rate, its inferiority to iron in striking power was recognized. While the spear-heads was easy to emulate, it had become obsolete to produce hybrid daggers and hence wisely discarded. The riveted joint was also a possible source of weakness, regardless of the offchance of the handles loosening themselves in course of time at the point of junction.
The simpler forms of Sialk V, A, or VI, B, (fig. 4) consisting, as they did, of arrow-heads, spear-heads, daggers, sickles and the horse-bits show indeed greater affinity with the tool types in the Painted Grey Ware levels and the succeeding levels of the Northern Black Polished Ware and even of the megaliths themselves, to a certain extent. The ensemble itself, to begin with, is apparently larger than that obtaining in the contemporary levels of Chagoula Derré or Agha Emlar, and are indicative of increasingly larger applications of the new metal.

A comparison of Sialk (fig. 4) objects with those from the cairn-burials (fig. 4) also suggests a family affinity. The simple forms of the spear-heads or arrow-heads point to the simple needs of the folks. But the trilobate barbed arrow-head (fig. 4, No. 4) from Moghul Ghundai points to an advancement beyond the rudimentary stage. Such forms, as stated earlier, had parallels in Afghanistan and points to its possible source or direction of inspiration. Segmented or barbed arrow-heads occur in the megaliths as well, and lend support to the interconnection between them and the cairn-burials.

The occurrence of a broken sword blade of iron with a bronze fastening at the hilt at Zangian is another link with Iran and helps to give the story of the inferred interconnection between the two away.

It is abundantly clear, however, that the tool forms of the copper-hoard assemblage (fig. 10) did
not influence the Iron Age equipment. There is hardly any typological connection between the two, conceding that the 'copper-hoards' had preceded in emergence the iron objects. The tools of possible western affinity (fig. II, Nos. 5-7) did not impart any of its verve or form to the Iron Age either.

The few copper tools found in early occupational levels in Indian stratigraphy, including a thin leaf-shaped arrow-head in Hastinapura, do not represent or indicate a basically different typological bias.

The source of the forms of tools evolved in iron have, therefore, to be looked for elsewhere. They may have grown locally in response to the environment, or they followed the tool forms with which they had already been familiar. After all the Aryan invaders forced their way through the most virile part of the subcontinent with efficient armour of their own with which the displacement of the once mighty Harappans would have been impossible. The close connection between the Sialk tool forms and those of the early Iron Age in India points almost to an irresistible inference which has indeed the semblance of probability. As to the disappearance of the remains of the tools themselves, another new and interesting evidence has come recently to light. The views of Wheeler that iron objects
were comparatively much better preserved in the deliberately and carefully closed and sealed megalithic tombs than those left to themselves without plan or design have already been quoted. Recently M.K. Ghosh, a former Member of the last Parliament in India and a metal enthusiast, analyzed a few pieces of iron objects from the well-preserved megaliths of Sanur, and reported that the composition was free from metallic iron. Obviously it had disappeared in the course of the disintegration that had set in, defying the protective condition of its preservation. The comparative absence or paucity of any tools to reckon with in the hollow interregnum, between the discomfiture of the Harappans and the heyday of the Aryans may possibly be similarly accounted for. While too much cannot and must not indeed be built upon the basis of a negative evidence, the phenomenon is considerably striking and a pointer. All this would lend further support to the idea of Aryan introduction of iron in India.

An objection that can be raised in this context is why the Sialk VI ceramics did not influence or impose itself on the Aryans. The question has been anticipated and answered before. A people on the trek en masse can scarcely be expected to carry their paraphernalia of pots and pans for obvious reasons. Nevertheless, they would surely have carried at least some vessels to transport water. But it was not difficult for them to pick up pottery and its
traditions in the new lands where they moved in or settled. In this connection the role of the Shaitump pottery has already been mentioned. The Painted Grey Ware ceramic, which has been associated with the Aryans was a ceramic of high quality and also painted limited it was in a variety of designs. Though its use was no less attractive than the pottery of Sialk. In this context it may also be stated that though the Rigveda mentions vessels it does not specifically mention any earthen pots or the potter, which may probably mean that they did not have in their midst any pottery though it can scarcely be reasoned that they had no pottery or did not know ceramics. This would make it easier to explain their adoption of somebody else's pottery especially as a people on the march can scarcely make their own.

The Atharveveda (4, 17, 4), however, mentions unburnt earthen vessels alongside burnt vessels, which are called ēma and nilalohita, respectively. Zimmer\textsuperscript{581} translates nilalohita as dark-red. It is interesting to note that while the bulk of the day-to-day pottery associated with the \textit{de luxe} Painted Grey Ware is red, there is a variety that has been described by Lal as brownish-red, which fits Zimmer's description and follows the former's shapes and is also similarly painted. The word \textit{nīla} can also be translated as blue and together...
with *lohita* may refer to the light bluish bias of the Painted Grey Ware and to its brownish-red companion at once.