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## The Middle Holocene mangrove shellfish gatherers of Las Bela coast (Balochistan, Pakistan): new AMS dates from Lake Siranda shell middens

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### Introduction

In the early 1970s, Professor A.R. Khan of Karachi University conducted the first geoarchaeological survey of the coast of Las Bela (Khan 1979a). The results (Khan 1979b) suggested that the coastal areas of Las Bela and southern Sindh have great archaeological potential because of their geographical location and morphological characteristics, as is also reported in the chronicles of the Classical authors, especially Arrian (see for example McCrindle 1879). In 2011, a joint programme of archaeological surveys was initiated by the universities of Ca' Foscari (Venice) and Balochistan (Quetta). Its principal scope was to locate prehistoric shell middens along the shores of Lake Siranda, to AMS-date samples of mangrove gastropods from any new sites, to contribute to the study of the Neolithic peopling of the region and their eventual seafaring along the northern coast of the Arabian Sea and, finally, to interpret the geomorphological variations that took place in the territory of Las Bela since the start of the Holocene.