

# Defining Core and Buffer Zones in Northwestern Estuaries of the Persian Gulf: A Historical Review of Human-Sea Interaction Over the Last Millennium

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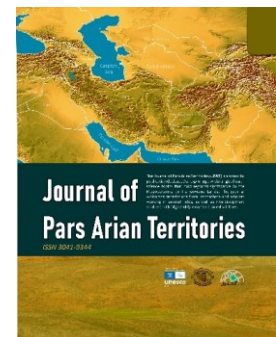
## Abstract

The estuaries of Bandar-e Mahshahr are a crucial and influential natural phenomenon in the environmental geography of southern Khuzestan province and the northwest of the Persian Gulf. Over thousands of years, these estuaries have shaped the settlement patterns in this region. In Khuzestan province, 85 small and large estuaries have been identified, with Khor Musa being the main mouth of the region and the connection between the Persian Gulf's waters and the coastal areas. In recent years, there has been an increased emphasis on protecting cultural heritage areas in Iran, particularly through the cultural inventory registration of ancient sites. To determine the core zone, researchers typically use criteria such as the highest winter waves, highest astronomical tide limit, and highest water mark. Based on field findings and satellite images, it is clear that the structural and maritime conditions of the estuaries were the primary factor in the region's prosperity. As such, it is essential to adopt necessary criteria to protect this valuable geological-archaeological and cultural heritage. This study aims to determine the core and buffer zones of the Bandar-e Mahshahr estuaries. To achieve this goal, archaeological investigations were conducted using a survey method, which identified 42 sites. The comparative assessment of cultural findings from these sites dates them to the Paleolithic to the Pahlavi periods. The results show that the residents of Bandar-e Mahshahr have been able to adapt to this area by recognizing and utilizing environmental capacities and local technologies, overcoming limitations and natural obstacles. While this does not imply a complete subordination of culture to the environment, it has undoubtedly acted as a stimulus that has improved the living and welfare status of the region's residents.

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