The Bampur Valley: A New Chronological Development

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Abstract

The study of history gives one access less directly but often no less vividly- to hundreds of years of recorded time. But it is only archaeology, in particular prehistoric archaeology, that opens up the almost unimaginable vistas of thousands and even a few millions of years of past human existence (Renfrew & Bahn, 2001: 117). The stratigraphical sequence at Tepe Bampur, which has been divided into six periods, was firstly studied by De Cardi in 1966 (Lamberg-Karlovsky & Schmandt-Besserat, 1977: 114). Her chronology is mostly based on pottery classification compared with other sites in Iran (Tosi, 1970a: 12), demonstrating similarity over the whole sequence. According to de Cardi's chronology, the Tepe Bampur sequence begins with the mid-third millennium BC and ends in the early centuries of the second millennium BC (Tosi, 1974a: 31). The present paper aims to re-examine the comparative chronology of Tepe Bampur and present a new comparative chronology for the third millennium BC settlements in the Bampur Valley for the first time. This study is mostly based upon the first systematic survey at Tepe Bampur and a non-probabilistic survey in the Bampur Valley during July 2002 (Mortazavi 2004: 147). These surveys are the first systematic and non-probabilistic surveys of the Valley since the time of Stein and has provided important information concerning the settlement patterns and the chronology of the third millennium BC sites. This paper represents the first systematic study of the Bampur Valley in the Iranian Baluchistan during the third and second millennia BC. This study also pilots the first application and review of concepts of settlement patterns and comparative chronology of the Valley based upon the ceramic typology using a combination of published data and new data recovered during fieldwork in 2002 and a survey in 2005.

Introduction

To understand the importance of chronology in the studies of past events, it is interesting to refer to Wheeler's idea. according to which "dating/ chronology are the backbone of archaeology, but not the whole skeleton" (Wheeler, 1972). An individual experiences a lifetime of perhaps 70 years or so and through the memories of his or her parents and

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grandparents he may also indirectly experience earlier periods of time, back over one or two generations. But in order to study the past it is not, rather surprisingly, always essential to know precisely how long ago a particular period or event occurred (Renfrew & Bahn, 2001: 117).

Ceramic typology is an important method for studying chronology of sites, especially prehistoric sites. De Cardi believed that the Bampur pottery studies were of significance, because they not only enabled her to estimate the comparative chronology of Tepe Bampur but also allowed archaeologists to demonstrate cultural relations between the region of Persian Baluchistan and the bordering countries of Afghanistan and Pakistan during the third millennium BC. She stated that there were also relationships between Bampur and the Persian Gulf region (De Cardi, 1970: 237). It has been argued that this relationship may also be seen with the other sites in southeast Iran such as Tepe Yahya and Shahr-i-Sokhta during the third millennium BC (Lamberg-Karlovsky & Schmandt-Besserat, 1977; Lamberg-Karlovsky, 1969; Tosi, 1970b; Tosi, 1974b; Meadows, 1973). De Cardi believed that the pottery of the first four periods introduced a new collection- Bampur I-IV, which was substituted by a mixed culture in period V, from which period VI developed (De Cardi, 1967: 35).

Location of the third millennium BC settlements in the Bampur Valley

The Bampur Valley is situated in the Iranian Baluchistan linking the Iranian Plateau settlements with those in the Indus Valley (Shaffer, 1986: 63). The valley, which links Central Iran to Pakistan, is a natural highway (Tosi, 1974a: 30; De Cardi, 1970: 239). This highway was connected to the west along the Bampur Valley, which drains into the marshy Jaz Murian Basin. Prehistoric settlements along the Bampur River were connected to the west through Chah-Hussaini and the Jaz Murian Basin (Tosi, 1974a: 30). The valley is located at the east end of the Jaz Murian Basin and the survey zone is some 120 km from the basin. The valley, which is surrounded by the Karvandar (Birk) mountains in the north, and the Hamont and Ahouran mountains to the south, is very narrow in the vicinity of Damin (about 1-3 km wide) (Abdollah-Garoosi, 1995: 9). It gradually widens to about 20-30 km to the west until it joins the Jaz Murian Basin. The Bampur River, which originates in the Karvandar Mountains, flows southwards to Damin and Iranshahr, and finally westward to Bampur and after 120 km feeds into the basin itself (Seyed Sajjadi, 1995: 132). Cultivated regions are situated in the middle and upper reaches of the Bampur River, particularly around Iranshahr. Here, the river is absorbed into porous detrital deposits, and re-appears irregularly as springs and seepages lower down the valley in the direction of Bampur (Fisher, 1968: 109). When Stein visited the area, the Bampur River flowed from Iranshahr to Chah Hussaini in the west before being absorbed (Stein, 1937: 105). It is very notable that during the fresh survey in July 2002, the river was entirely dry due to drought conditions from Iranshahr westwards (Mortazavi, 2004: 149). As *qanats* are frequently used to tap this water source, particularly as surface flow presents some curious and intractable features (Fisher, 1968: 109); it is more likely to assume that today the cultivated area around Iranshahr and Bampur mostly depend on the qanats rather than the river. When Stein visited the Bampur

Valley, he noted that the cultivated area extended from three km north of Iranshahr right up to Bampur and beyond. The width of the cultivated area along the right bank of the river gradually increases to a maximum of about 2.5 km at the fort of Bampur. Beyond the fort, this area expands for another 22.5 km close to Iranshahr (Stein, 1937: 105).

Site	Location	GPS Reading		Distance of the Bampur River (km)	Size	
		Longitude & Latitude	Elevation (m)		Extent (mm)	Height (mm)
Tepe Bampur	In the city of Bampur, 15 km west of Iranshahr	N 27° 12' 01.5" E 060° 26' 39.3"	570	2.5 North bank	350 x 320	570
Damin	25 km north of Iranshar, 40 km northwest of Bampur	N 27° 24' 49.9" E 060° 49' 16.2"	740	1 West bank	Destroyed	Destroyed
Khurab	15 km southwest of Iranshahr, 10 km southeast of Bampur	N 27° 10' 54.6" E 060° 33' 41.0"	566	1 South bank	100 x150	Low level
Surab	7 km southwest of Iranshar, 15 km southeast of Bampur	N 27° 10' 18.3" E 060° 41' 45.2"	580	1 North bank	200 x 250	Low level
Pir-e-Konar	5 km west of Bampur, 20 km west of Iranshahr	N 27° 11' 51.5" E 060° 21' 08.6"	511	3 North bank	100 x 100	Low level
Tump-e-Kapalak (Pir-e-Konar)	5 km west of Bampur, 20 km west of Iranshahr	N 27° 11' 50.3" E 060° 21' 33.8	515	3 North bank	200 x 150	Low level
Damk-e-Jangi (Pir-e-Konar)	5 km west of Bampur, 20 km west of Iranshahr	N 27° 12' 19.6" E 060° 21' 47.2"	519	3 North bank	100 x 100	Low level
Damk-e-jeni (Pir-e-Konar)	5 km west of Bampur, 20 km west of Iranshahr	N 27° 11' 55.6" E 060° 21' 47.7	522	3 North bank	150 x150	Low level
Tump-e-Kapalak (Pir-e-Konar)	10 km southwest of Bampur	N 27° 10' 22.9" E 060° 17' 14.7"	540	1 South bank	50 x 100	4
Tump-e-Lali (Jafar Abaad)	10 km southwest of Bampur	N 27° 10' 01.8" E 060° 17' 29.9	541	1 South Bank	50 x 50	3
Chil Tratok	8 km west of Bampur	N 27° 09' 30.1" E 060° 16' 08.9"	539	2 North Bank	50 x 50	2
Tump-e-Kapalak (Behesht Abaad)	20 km southwest of Bampur	N 27° 08' 51.8" E 060° 14' 02.8	534	1.5 South Bank	100 x 100	Low level
Tump-e-Kapalak (Chah Hosaini)	25 km southwest of Bampur	N 27° 12' 31.7" E 060° 09' 27.4"	533	0.5 North bank	150 x 150	5

Contact to the east was along the Bampur River via Iranshahr, where the main route passes the Karwandar River north towards Vasht and alternative routes pass through either side of Kuh-i-Cheheltan, a semi-active volcano, and connect to the main routes to Pakistan, Sistan and northern Iran. One route, which passes through the mountains surrounding the valley to the east of Iranshahr connects to Magas and thence by a choice of tracks to Saravan and the broad but deeply split Mashkel Valley. This route crosses the Pakistan border near Kuhak and via Panjgur, into the Rakhshan Valley, which provides access to central Kalat. Another route to Pakistan cuts through the mountains southeast of Iranshahr on its way to Sarbaz and crosses the frontier near Mand and links the prehistoric site of Shahi Tump to the Kechi Valley, one of the main highways through the Makran. There is a desert to the south of the Bampur River and a road crosses the desert to Gwargusht, a small oasis, (through the desert). South of this oasis three roads meet the more circuitous route from Bampur via Qasimabad to Champ, and thence to the Dasht River in Pakistan (De Cardi, 1970: 239-240). With these important routes the third millennium BC settlements in the Bampur Valley acted as a link between the Indus Valley in the east and the Iranian Plateau to the west. During the 2002 survey, 13 third millennium BC sites were discovered in this valley (Table 1) (Mortazavi, 2004: 151-159). These sites were located along the Bampur River within a distance of 55km, between Damin and Chah Hussaini. With the exception of Tepe Bampur which was surveyed systematically, the other 12 sites were surveyed adopting a non-probabilistic strategy. These sites are Damin, Khurab, Surab, Pir-e-Konar, Tump-e-Kapalak-e-Pir-e-Konar, Damk-e-Jangi-e-Pir-e-Konar, Damk-e-Jeni-e-Pir-e-Konar, Tump-e-Kapalak-e-Jafar Abaad, Tump-e-Lali-e-Jafar Abaad, Chil Tratok, Tump-e-Kapalak-e-Behesht Abaad, Tump-e-Kapalak-e-Chah Hussaini (Mortazavi, 2004: 151-159). Sites were defined on the basis of the presence of a structure, feature or ceramic scatters of 10 sherds or more per square meter.

The chronology of the Bampur Valley

As outlined, the aim of this paper is to re-examine the comparative chronology of Tepe Bampur and present a new comparative chronology for the third millennium BC settlements in the Bampur Valley based on the systematic survey at Tepe Bampur and non-probabilistic survey in the Bampur Valley (Mortazavi, 2004: 151-159). According to Meadow's ceramic classification there are many similarities between the black-on-cream and red slipped wares of Tepe Yahya period VA and those found at Bampur I-II (Meadow, 1973). The newest chronology of Tepe Yahya shows that period VA is dated between 3600-3300 BC (Table 2) (Beale, 1986: 11). Therefore, based on the Yahya evidence, a starting date during the middle of the fourth millennium BC may be identified for Bampur I-II, while De cardi has suggested the middle of the third millennium BC (De Cardi, 1970; Tosi, 1970a). It has been suggested that the first two periods of Bampur are contemporary with Mundigak III, since its wares are comparable with those found in Namazga III and Kara Tepe a deposit with a C^{14} date of 2750220 BC (De Cardi, 1970: 260). Therefore, as the radiocarbon dating of Tepe Yahya (Beale, 1986: 11) is most recent it is more reliable than the date from Mundigak. The middle of the fourth millennium BC may be assumed for period I and II of Tepe Bampur (Table 3).

Periods	Date (BC)
VA	3600-3300
Gap	3300-2850
IVc	2850-2750
Gap	2750-2400
IVb	2400-1800
IVa	1700-1400

Table 2: C^{14} Dating of Tepe Yahya (After: Wight Beale 1986: 11).

Periods	Date (BC)
I-II	3600-2850
II-III	2850-2400
IV-VI	2400-1800

Table 3: Tepe Bampur comparative dating

Black geometric designs on red, buff, or reduced gray ware of Bampur II-III also offer a similarity with those found at Yahya IVc (Meadow, 1973: 195). According to the C^{14} dating, period IVc of Tepe Yahya is dated in the third quarter of the fourth millennium BC (Meadow, 1973: 195). There is another C^{14} date for Yahya IVc between 2850-2750 BC (Table 2) (Beale, 1986: 11). Therefore, with these comparisons, there are two different dates for Bampur II-III, the first of which shows the third quarter of the fourth millennium BC and the second dating is in the first quarter of the third millennium BC. Although Meadow stated that the first quarter of the of the third millennium BC seems too late for the Yahya IVc assemblage, it has been suggested that there is a gap between 3300-2850 BC in Tepe Yahya (Table 2) (Beale, 1986: 11). Therefore, if the first date is accepted for the Bampur periods II-III, a gap may be assumed between 3300 and 2850 BC. However, there is no evidence in the Bampur sequence of a gap between the mentioned dates. Thus, the second dating, which is the first quarter of the third millennium BC, is more reliable for Bampur II-III, because it is also the newest C^{14} dating of Tepe Yahya. Evidence of Bampur period II is seen in both periods V and IVc of Tepe Yahya. Therefore, it may be assumed that, although, there is a gap between period V and IVc of Tepe Yahya, period II of Tepe Bampur survived during 3300 and 2850 BC (Table 3).

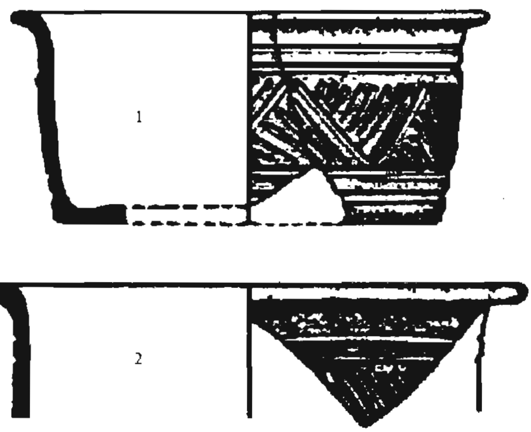

Fig 1: Periods IV-VI, Tepe Bampur, incised wares (After: De Cardi 1970: 323), Scale: Approximately 1/4

Indeed, pottery of periods III and IV of Bampur can be seen in a small proportion of the pottery of early IVb of Tepe Yahya. A few sherds found in later IVb lenses are similar to the Bampur IV and V materials. Large red storage jars bearing sloppily painted black decoration vaguely reminiscent of Bampur occur in Yahya IVb (Meadow, 1973: 196). According to C^{14} determinations, the date of the second half of the third millennium BC has been estimated for Yahya IVb (Beale, 1986: 11). Meadow has also compared the incised steatites in Yahya IVb, with those of Mesopotamia dated to Early Dynastic II and Early Dynastic III. He has linked this technique with the same technique on ceramics found at Bampur IV-VI and Shahr-i-Sokhta IV. Although he has stated that these techniques have been seen at Shahi Tump, which also yielded pottery of Bampur period IV and V (Meadow, 1973: 196); craftsmen of Tepe Bampur also experienced technology of incised wares production during period IV-VI (Fig. 1: Nos. 1, 2). Tosi stated that the Bampur V-VI ceramics from the Yahya IVb strata exhibit intermediate aspects, a sign of the fairly constant links between the two centres (Tosi, 1974c: 33). Therefore, according to this comparison and radiocarbon determination for period IVb of Tepe Yahya, which dated between 2400 and 1800 BC (Table 2), it may be assumed that Bampur IV-VI was occupied during the middle of the third and the early of the second millennium BC. As evidence of period III of Tepe Bampur were seen both in periods IVc and early of IVb (Meadow, 1973: 196), thus it may be inferred that period III of Tepe Bampur survived during (2750-2400) (Table 2) in Tepe Yahya. With this argument, period IV-VI of Tepe Bampur can be dated between 2400-1800 BC (Table 3).

Excavations on the island of Bahrain have uncovered a seal impression similar to a stamped seal tablet in the Yale Babylonian collection. The Yale impression is dated to the tenth year of Gungunum, king of Larsa, in southern Babylon-that is 1923 BC (Lamberg-Karlovsky, 1969: 163). The Bahrain seal was found in a 'Barbar culture' level, partially contemporary with the Umm an-Nar culture of Oman, which can in turn be paralleled at Bampur V with the incised gray ware (hut pot) motifs (Lamberg-Karlovsky, 1969: 163). The general evidence, thus, points to a date c. 1900 BC for the terminus of the Bampur sequence (De Cardi 1970: 237), and for the date of the Khurab shaft-hole pickaxe (Lamberg-Karlovsky, 1969: 164). Although De Cardi believed that the Bampur sequence extended from the second quarter of the third millennium BC to 1900 BC (De Cardi, 1970: 237), by the above comparisons it becomes clear that the site was occupied between 3600-1800 BC (Table 3).

The latest C^{14} sequence for Tepe Yahya was estimated by Wight Beal in 1986 (Table 2) accompanied by dating by fission tracks for Shahr-i-Sokhta sequence by Nishimura, Sasajima, Tokieda and Tosi in 1983 (Table 4). Bovington, Mahdavi and Massoumi have compared these two sites according to the radiocarbon dating (Bovington et al. 1983: 349-355), as shown in Table 5. The comparative chronology between Tepe Yahya and Shahr-i-Sokhta according to tables 2 and 4 has been shown in Table 6. According to Table 6 and comparison between Tepe Yahya and Tepe Bampur, as stated above, Table 7 could be drawn. This table compares C^{14} dating of Tepe Yahya and fission track dating of Shahr-i-Sokhta together with Tepe Bampur, which was compared with Tepe Yahya in previous paragraphs.

Periods	Date (BC)
IV	2200-1800
III	2400-2200
II	2700-2400
I	3200-2700

Table 4: Fission tracks dating of Shahr-i-Sokhta (After: Nishimura et al.1983: 347).

Tepe Yahya	Shahr-i-Sokhta
IVA	IV
IVB	III
Gap	II
IVC	I

Table 5: Comparative radiocarbon dating between Tepe Yahya and Shahr-i-Sokhta (After: Bovington et al. 1983:354).

Tepe Yahya	Shahr-i-Sokhta
IVB	IV
Gap	III
IVC	II
Gap	I

Table 6: Comparative chronology between Tepe Yahya and Shahr-i-Sokhta

Tepe Bampur	Tepe Yahya	Shahr-i-Sokhta
IV-VI	IVB	
		III
II-III	Gap	
	IVC	I
I-II	Gap	
	V A	

Table 7: Comparative dating between Tepe Yahya and Shahr-i-Sokhta with Tepe Bampur

The similarity between Tepe Bampur period I-IV and those sites to the west of Bampur area (in Iran) including Tepe Yahya, Tal-i-Iblis IV, Sialk III, Tepe Nurabad, Susa A, Bakun A, Khafajah and Hissar I, may be seen in the ceramic assemblages (De Cardi 1970 258 259). According to De Cardi's view, the end of the Bampur IV period corresponds to a complete breakdown in relations between Bampur and its neighbours (De Cardi 1968). The forms and decorations derived from Sistan also disappeared (Tosi 1974a: 33); it may be due to the collapse of Shahr-i-Sokhta. Period IV of Shahr-i-Sokhta, the latest period of this site is contemporary with period V-VI of Tepe Bampur (Kawal et al 1983: 336). It may be assumed that the later periods of V-VI incorporate new trade influences. As has been stated, De Cardi indicated the appearance of a new group of people at the end of period IV and early of period V. The majority of evidence demonstrates relationships between Bampur and sites in Afghanistan and Pakistan such as Mundigak, Mehi, Amri, Sutkagen-dor and Kulli from the end of period IV and early in period V (De Cardi 1968: 144). It seems that these relationships did not continue due to an international crisis in the foreign trade, which caused the collapse of the Indus and southeast Iran around 1900 BC (Tainter 1988: 48; Tosi 1974c: 20).

Although the significant halt in ceramic tradition may be seen in the phase 1 of the period V at Tepe Bampur (De Cardi 1970: 247), the site survived until the end of period VI around 1800 BC. The most important events which happened in the Bampur Valley during the period VI, are the reduction of population, a lack of water (Fisher 1968: 109) and the disappearance of long-distance trade (Ratnagar 2002: 146).

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to re-examine the comparative chronology of Tepe Bampur and present a new comparative chronology for Tepe Bampur and sites in its hinterland during the third millennium BC. The evidence provided by the survey is based upon ceramics, not full cultural assemblages. Although period I of Tepe Bampur is the earliest period recognized in De Cardi's excavation, it may not be the oldest period at Bampur (De Cardi, 1970: 243). As all the potteries of the Bampur I were wheel-made, it is possible that the techniques of period I have survived from an earlier ceramic tradition associated with a settlement lying beneath the fortress mound (De Cardi, 1968: 140). Therefore, it seems necessary to suggest that new excavation may find an older period at Bampur. All periods that were identified at Tepe Bampur by De Cardi in 1966 (De Cardi, 1967) were testified in this survey through the ceramic studies. The ceramic samples collected from 12 sites in the Bampur Valley showed that 4 sites were occupied during period I. The number of sites increased rapidly from 4 in period I to 6 in period II. There was a gradual increase in the number of sites in the hinterland in period III (7 sites) whilst Period IV yielded the highest number of sites in the Bampur Valley. All the sites which were surveyed during the present fieldwork (12 sites), suggest the existence of period IV in the Bampur region. This increase in the size and population can also be seen in Shahr-i-Sokhta III (Tosi, 1975: 142), which was contemporary with Bampur IV. It may be assumed that in period IV Tepe Bampur as a central site experienced increased complexity with craft specialization leading to increased industrial output and an elite class. Consequently long-distance trade, which is evident in the ceramic assemblage comparable with those of the sites in Sistan, west and north of Iran, the Indus Valley and Mesopotamia, increased the complexity and centrality of this site during period IV. It has been argued that merchants have passed through Baluchistan traveling both to and from the Indus Valley during the third millennium BC (Lamberg-Karlovsky, 1973: 286). After period IV, there was a gradual decrease in the number of sites, which were estimated to be 11 sites in period V and 10 sites in period VI. Although De Cardi believed that this reduction was a result of an invasion in the late of period IV (De Cardi, 1970: 295) it could have been due to the new trade influences. If it were an invasion, the reduction in the number of sites would have been more rapid and significant. Moreover, no evidence was found to show destruction of civic buildings, unusual burial or massacre in this period.

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