



BAMPUR IA. PREHISTORIC SITE (CONTINUED)

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Since Beatrice de Cardi's excavations at Bampur in 1966 (de Cardi, 1968; idem, 1970) no new work has taken place there. Nevertheless, objects recovered at Bampur in the 1960s can now be better dated and understood, thanks to discoveries in recent years at sites in Central Asia, the Indo-Iranian borderlands, and southeastern Arabia.

The most distinctive ceramic classes attested at Bampur were the fine black-on-gray ware and the incised gray ware found in the Y and Z soundings. As de Cardi and others noted, similar ceramics had been found in 3rd millennium BCE graves at Umm an-Nar (Omm-al-Nār) in the emirate of Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates) and, in a context dated to the late 3rd or early 2nd millennium BCE (ca. 2200-1800 BCE), in a period IV house at Shahr-i Sokhta (Šahr-e Suḵta; BAMPUR i.). Subsequent analyses of black-on-gray ware and incised gray ware from sites in the Oman peninsula have confirmed that all of the analyzed material of this type found on Arabian sites (e.g., Umm an-Nar, Hili, Shimal (Šemāl), 'Amlā, Bāt, Maysar) was manufactured in the Indo-Iranian borderlands (Méry, pp. 201-17).

Because the chronology of Bampur was disputed in the late 1960s and early



1970s, with some scholars favoring a ‘high’ chronology beginning in the mid-4th and ending in the mid-3rd millennium BCE, and others favoring a ‘low’ chronology extending from the mid-3rd to the very early 2nd millennium BCE (summarized in Potts, 2003, pp. 1-3), the Omani sites are important for dating purposes, particularly since several of them provide calibrated radiocarbon dates. Very similar sets of dates, clustering between 2100 and 2000 BCE., come from both Tell Abraç (Potts, 2003) and Asimah (al-‘Āsema) (Görsdorf and Vogt; cf. Vogt). On the other hand, the evidence from Al-Sufouh (al-Şofuḥ) in Dubai suggests that black-on-gray ware was already reaching coastal sites in the Oman peninsula several centuries earlier, around 2450-2300 BCE (Benton, pp. 170-75). This is consistent with the presence of black-on-gray ware in graves on Umm an-Nar island (Frifelt, pp. 125-26), which must be several centuries older than Tell Abraç. In this regard, however, it is also important to note that the closest parallels between Bampur and Tell Abraç appear in sherds from Bampur IV-V contexts (Potts, 2003, p. 8), whereas the black-on-gray ware vessels from sites like Al Sufouh and Umm an-Nar probably represent earlier material coeval with the older levels at Bampur (I-III). Bampur VI, on the other hand, must consequently post-date 2000 BCE, judging by the Tell Abraç evidence, thus confirming de Cardi’s original chronology (Potts, 2003, p. 9). A re-analysis of the ceramic and chlorite evidence from Tepe Yahya (Tappe Yaḥyā) (Potts, 2001, pp. 195-207), moreover, confirms the lower date for Bampur favored by de Cardi.

A copper-bronze, compartmented stamp seal (de Cardi, 1970, p. 328 and figs. 47.15 and 51), found together with pottery assigned to period IV2-3, was compared by de Cardi with broadly similar finds from Mundigak (Mondigak), Tepe Hissar (Tappe Heşār), Anau ([Anaw](#)), and Namazga (Namāzgāh). The seal can now be confidently assigned to the Murghabo-Bactrian group or Bactrian Margiana Archaeological Complex (BMAC). Based on the presence of pear-shaped ceramic beakers in the same context, Sousanne Baghestani has suggested that the Bampur seal should be dated to about 2400-2200/2100 BCE (Baghestani, p. 47). In spite of this, the Bampur seal, which depicts ‘a water fowl floating on the waves’ (de Cardi, 1970, p. 328), has no exact parallel amongst the hundreds of Murghabo-Bactrian seals published to date (Sarianidi; Winkelmann).

What was originally described as a ‘sickle-shaped pendant is in fact the ceramic handle of a small, hole-mouth ceramic vessel. When complete, such handles have two holes near the base (on the Bampur example has a single,



broken hole is extant), and the entire handle strongly resembles the raised tail of a scorpion. Precise parallels are known at Tepe Yahya (Lamberg-Karlovsky, 1972, fig. 3K) and in the unstratified Jiroft collection (Majidzadeh, p. 159). All are made of a similar looking, fine orange-red ware.

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