



CERAMICS VI. URUK, PROTO- ELAMITE, AND EARLY BRONZE AGE IN SOUTHERN PERSIA

CERAMICS

vi. Uruk, Proto-Elamite, and Early Bronze Age in Southern Persia

The ceramics discussed here represent local production in Fārs province from approximately 4000 to 1600 B.C.E., divided into four chronological groups: Lapui (Lapūī) ware (ca. 4000-3500 B.C.E.), Banesh (Baneš) ware (ca. 3500-2800 B.C.E.), Jalyan (Jaliān) ware (ca. 2800-2400 B.C.E.?), and Kaftarī ware (ca. 2200-1600 B.C.E.). Extensive documentation for these chronological subdivisions, as well as stylistic parallels from other regions, can be found in several recent publications (Amiet; Carter, 1984; Voigt and Dyson), and these aspects will not be discussed in this article.

Lapui ware (Figure 23). Lapui ware is an unpainted red ware, traditionally called Bakun (Bakūn) AV ware because it was first reported from disturbed upper levels at Tal-e Bakun A (Langsdorff and McCown, pp. 32-33). The name Lapui, assigned to avoid confusion with the well-known Bakun painted ware, comes from that of a village in the Zargan (Zarqān) district near a concentration of Lapui sites (Sumner, 1988). Lapui ware is known mainly from surface assemblages in the Kor river basin, but similar ceramics have been



excavated at Tepe Yahya (Yaḥyā) in Kermān (periods VI-V; Beale, pp. 55-58). Close parallels in body, surface treatment, and form appear in Acropole 1 at Susa, in levels 24-25, that is, earlier than the classic Uruk ceramics, which appear in levels 17-22 (Le Brun, pp. 183-87; the exact dating of these levels is still in doubt).

Lapui ware occurs in both fine and coarse varieties, which are commonly found together in surface assemblages. The fine ware consists of a well-washed buff or red paste with frequent lime inclusions. It is handmade and generally fired to a uniform red or buff through the core. The surface is smoothed or roughly burnished, and a red slip has usually been applied to the vessels made of buff paste. Forms include beakers, open bowls, low-necked pots, and hole-mouth jars. Rims are simple or slightly pinched, straight or everted. Bases are usually flat, though occasionally flared ring bases do occur. Small numbers of sherds decorated with simple black-painted motifs occur at several Lapui sites. Incised potter's marks are known but very rare.

Lapui common ware consists of a red paste tempered with rather coarse black grit. It is not as well fired as the fine ware, and frequently the sherds reveal an unoxidized gray core. The common ware breaks with a rough, crumbly edge, compared to the sharp smooth breaks of fine ware. The slipped surface is often crazed or pitted. The common-ware forms are similar to those of the fine ware, except that hole-mouth jars are less frequent; low pedestal bases and beakers with "s" profiles are, however, more frequent. Horizontal and vertical scraping or lighter burnish marks appear on both fine and common ware.

The identification of several production sites in the Kor river basin indicates that Lapui ware was produced by specialized craftsmen for distribution to other settlements in the valley (Sumner, 1988).

Banesh ware (Figure 24). Banesh ware was first recognized in survey collections (Sumner, 1972, pp. 42-44) and has since been found in excavated strata at the type site near the village of Baneš (Alden, 1979, p. 190) and in several areas at Tal-e Malyan (Maliān; Nicholas, 1989; Sumner, 1974; idem, 1976; idem, 1985). General stylistic parallels have been found at Susa: in Acropole 1, levels 16-14A (Le Brun, pp. 192-205), and in Ville Royale I, levels 13-18 (Carter, 1980, pp. 13-21). Similar ceramics have also been found in the [Baḳtīārī mountains](#) (Zagarell, pp. 43-51), at Yahya in period IVC (Lamberg-Karlovsky, pp. 30-34), and possibly at other sites in Fārs (Stein, pp. 208-10).



The Banesh ceramic assemblage is composed of a coarse straw-tempered buff ware, “Banesh ST ware,” and a grit-tempered ware, “Banesh GT ware.” Banesh ST ware is a handmade low-fired utility ware that occurs in four predominant forms. One of them is the well-known bevel-rimmed bowl, which also occurs, though not often, in the Lapui assemblage. The Banesh tray is a hand-formed flat-bottomed tray up to 60 cm in diameter, with low sides ca. 5 cm high, and a simple or folded rim; it can be round, oval, teardrop-shaped, or approximately rectangular in plan, and the base retains the rough surface of the ground on which it rested while the tray was being formed. Some examples have pouring lips. The third common form is a tall goblet with a heavy, sometimes solid, flat string-cut base that may either have straight flaring sides or taper to a neck. The rim may be rounded, thickened, flattened, or pinched. Far less common than these three forms are small, crude, flaring bowls, with holes pierced in their flat bases. Finally, there are a few rare forms, including rainspouts. Banesh ST ware is not sturdy and is underrepresented in most surface assemblages, except at production sites, which have high-density pottery dumps (Alden, 1979, pp. 102-03). It has been demonstrated by means of trace-element analysis that this ware is made of local alluvial clays (Blackman, pp. 16, 17).

Banesh GT ware is quite variable; the temper includes fine, though more frequently medium-to-coarse, black, red, or white grit. Vessels have smooth or slightly rough surfaces and are sometimes slipped or partially slipped above the shoulder in a variety of colors, though a thin white wash over the entire body is more usual. These vessels may be decorated with geometric motifs, including bands and triangles, painted in maroon, brown, or black; the decoration is normally confined to the areas above the carinations on bowls and above the shoulders on pots and jars. Examples of incised, impressed, and relief decoration are also found. Forms include various open bowls with simple, pinched, club (i.e., thickened and rounded like a club), or incised rims; straight, curved, or carinated profiles; and flat bases. Closed forms range from small-necked pots to large storage jars, often with carinated shoulders, folded rims, and flat bases. Nose lugs, sometimes bent, and both open and closed spouts are common. Banesh GT ware was produced on the wheel by specialists using good-quality clay from deposits found near the production villages along the valley’s edge (Blackman, pp. 17-19). It has been demonstrated that these products were transported to a centrally located market for further distribution (Alden, 1982, pp. 83-100).



A few relatively rare forms, like mica-tempered and burnished red plates, huge painted storage jars, and fine relief-decorated barrel-shaped vessels, are known only from excavations at Malyan (Sumner, 1974, fig. 3; 1976, fig. 9).

Jalyan ware. Jalyan ware is an elaborately painted straw- or grit-tempered ware known from stone chamber tombs at Tepe Jalyan, 150 km southeast of Shiraz (de Miroschedji, pp. 22-37). It is the only ceramic assemblage in Fārs that can be assigned to the mid-3rd millennium and is stylistically related to material from habitation strata at nearby Tal-a Zohak (Zāḥḥāk) and possibly to early Kaftari ceramics (see below), but it must be emphasized that no closely related sherds are known from other habitation mounds in Fasā, Dārāb, or other districts in Fārs. Stylistic parallels for Jalyan ware are also found in the Susa IVA assemblage (Carter, p. 136).

Kaftari ware (Figure 25). The Kaftari assemblage was first described by Louis Vanden Berghe (pp. 402, 403) and has since been excavated in several seasons at Malyan (Sumner, 1974; idem, 1976; Nickerson, 1983).

The designation “Kaftari ware” is a convenient term for two distinct but typologically limited wares in the assemblage. Generic stylistic parallels are found in the Shimashki levels at Susa, particularly Susa VB and later (see Carter, 1984, fig. 25). The first, Kaftari buff ware, has a smooth surface and a slightly grainy texture with fine straw temper; it is fired to an even buff color through the core. There is a variant that has been fired to a rosy buff, and some vessels have a somewhat denser surface, either slipped or self-slipped. This ware occurs in both plain and painted varieties. There are large unpainted storage jars with heavy club rims and multiple ridges above the shoulder, as well as smaller storage jars with elongated oval profiles rising from flat or rounded bases, with a variety of everted rims. The only other common plain buff-ware forms are small bowls and miniature pots. Painted decoration occurs on tall, vertical-sided cups and on pots ranging from small examples, which are numerous, to less common large storage vessels with capacities up to 5 gallons (19 liters). These vessels usually have simple, expanded, or flattened everted rims and ring, disk, or flat bases. Painted bowls occur relatively seldom. The usual decorative arrangement begins below the rim, where solid bands alternate with bands of such patterns as meanders, superimposed meanders, reversing triangles, wide cross hatching, and occasionally a row of birds or a leafy garland. Below the shoulder the pattern is typically divided by freely drawn vertical stripes into panels filled with arrangements of checkerboards, diamonds, tree branches, leaves, and an



astonishing variety of bird motifs, from awkwardly drawn fat birds to highly stylized bird's heads. An amusing, but diagnostic, attribute of the Kaftari birds is that they invariably face left. All these designs are painted in black or brown in a rather flowing freehand style; polychrome designs, in black and red paint on a light slipped band, occur very rarely.

The second ware, Kaftari red-slipped ware, has a fine buff or brown grit-tempered body coated with a smooth, deep-red slip. It occurs in both a plain and a painted variety, most frequently in the form of small open bowls with simple everted rims, incurved rims, rare carinations, and flat or disk bases. Plain red-slipped ware bowls are occasionally burnished. This ware also occurs occasionally in small pots and a type of convex-based basin similar in shape to the copper cooking pots traditionally used to prepare rice in Persia. The designs on painted red-slipped ware are usually in black and confined to bands and meanders positioned a few centimeters below the rim. Pots are rare and are painted with patterns similar to those on Kaftari buff ware but are usually less complex and restricted to smaller segments of the vessel surfaces. A specialized form found in this ware is a round, flat water flask with shoulder stripes and target patterns on both sides.

Burnished gray ware occurs very infrequently in Kaftari strata at Malyan but in contexts that ensure that it is not intrusive. The only forms known are small bowls with simple straight or everted rims. The body often has horizontal ridges, and some sherds have drill-cut target patterns, often with white paste filling. This ware was probably imported, possibly from Mesopotamia (Carter, 1984, p. 152).

A coarse, gray cooking ware, though rare in surface collections, is found in Banesh, Kaftari, and Qaleh (Qal'a; see viii, below) strata at Malyan. The paste, rather crumbly and poorly fired, is dark gray, black, or brown with a coarse white angular quartz temper. Forms include a globular pot with a simple everted rim and a flat or rounded base and loop handles. The surface is sometimes lightly burnished, and the shoulder may be decorated with a row of slanting tick marks on a relief band.



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