



CERAMICS VII. THE BRONZE AGE IN NORTHWESTERN, WESTERN, AND SOUTHWESTERN PERSIA

CERAMICS

vii. The Bronze Age in Northwestern, Western, and Southwestern Persia

Northwestern Persia. There were two major ceramic traditions in northwestern Persia during the 3rd millennium B.C.E. Throughout the entire period Early Transcaucasian II-III flourished around the northern half of the Lake Urmia basin, for example, in Yanik Early Bronze I-II, Haftavan (Haftavān) VIII-VII, and Geoy (Gök) K.2-3 (Burney, 1961; idem, 1962; idem, 1964; idem, 1975, p. 157; Summers; Burton-Brown), and down along the eastern shore (Tala'i). In the early centuries it also extended south along the eastern face of the Zagros chain into central western Persia as far as the Hamadān plain and the Kangāvar valley (Godin [Gowdīn] IV: Young, 1966; idem, 1969; Swiny; Young and Levine; Levine and Young; Henrickson, 1989, pp. 90-99), north into the Soviet Union, and west as far as the Keban region of Turkey (Burney and Lang, pp. 64-73; Sagona). Characteristic Early Transcaucasian ware is dark-gray to black, handmade, and highly burnished.



Vessel shapes are simple, primarily shouldered cups and jars, conical bowls, and beakers with concave profiles. Decoration occurred only in phase II and consisted of panels or strips of geometric patterns excised and filled with white. A poorly smoothed coarse buff ware also occurred (Burney, 1961; idem, 1962; idem, 1964; Burton-Brown; cf. Henrickson, 1989, pp. 100-06).

In the southern Urmia basin (Ošnū-Soldūz valley), on the other hand, after an apparent hiatus in ceramic manufacture (see ii, above) Painted Orange Ware appeared in the second half of the 3rd millennium, contemporary with Hasanlu (Ḥasanlū) VII. The southern limit of its distribution remains uncertain but lay west of the territory where Early Transcaucasian II-III predominated (Swiny; Voigt and Dyson; Tala'i; Edwards, 1986). The assemblage is documented only from small soundings, a few graves, and surveys (Dyson and Pigott; Voigt and Dyson; Pecorella and Salvini). It is a thin, grit-tempered ware, buff to orange in color, sometimes with geometric or bird motifs in black paint. Characteristic shapes include globular jars with carinated shoulders, short necks, and everted rims and shallow carinated bowls (Dyson, 1967; idem, *CAH*³ II/1; Voigt and Dyson). Both vessel forms and decoration suggest affinities with the contemporary assemblage from Godin III/6-5 in the Kangāvar valley in central western Persia (see below).

In the first half of the 2nd millennium there were again two distinct ceramic traditions in northwestern Persia, associated respectively with Haftavan VIB, found around the northern half of Lake Urmia (Edwards, 1986), and with Hasanlu VI in the Ošnū-Soldūz area south of Lake Urmia. Haftavan VIB, or Urmia, ware (Edwards, 1981; idem, 1983) has also been excavated in Geoy C-D (Burton-Brown) and at Bastam (**Bestām**; Edwards, 1986). It can be classified in two phases, early (found as far north as the Araxes [Aras] region and the Transcaucasus) and late (extending only as far as the southern course of the Araxes; Edwards, 1981; idem, 1986). Early VIB assemblage is a direct or indirect development from the Transcaucasian tradition, in the same geographical area, while Late VI, a more diverse, developed, assemblage, shows much weaker Transcaucasian influence. The basic vessel forms (beakers, globular jars, plates, and carinated and rounded bowls) differ in only minor ways between phases, which are most clearly differentiated in the painted decoration. Early VIB ware is red with black paint; the primary motifs are triangles and lozenges variously subdivided and filled. Late VIB decoration tends toward polychrome (red, black, orange, cream) with great variability in the repertoire of motifs, even at a single site. Intricate geometric designs and



naturalistic human figures, animals, and birds predominate (Edwards, 1981; idem, 1983).

The Hasanlu VI assemblage, excavated only at **Dinkha (Denḳā) Tepe** (Hamlin; Stein), was an intrusive phenomenon unrelated to the earlier Painted Orange Ware of Hasanlu VII. It is related instead to the Khabur (Ḳābūr) ware of northern Iraq and Syria (1900-1600 B.C.E.) and may represent the easternmost extension of Old Assyrian trade contacts (Hamlin). The characteristic grit-tempered buff ware is painted with bands of primarily geometric motifs in monochrome. Common vessel forms include globular jars with everted rims, shallow bowls, and disk- or button-based goblets (Hamlin). Buff and gray plain wares comprise the rest of the assemblage.

Central Western Persia. In the early 3rd millennium, there was a shifting mosaic of ceramic traditions in central western Persia. In some western Zagros valleys single sites from the late 4th millennium, contemporary with the terminal Chalcolithic assemblages (= Godin V; see iv, above), have yielded assemblages typical of late Uruk sites in Mesopotamia (Goff, 1971; idem, 1976, pl. VIII/c-d; Weiss and Young; Levine, 1976; Levine and Young; Howell). In the westernmost Zagros valleys (Pošt-e Kūh), where all excavated Bronze Age material comes from tombs, large megalithic tombs of the early 3rd millennium (Vanden Berghe, 1968; idem, 1970a; idem, 1970b; idem, 1973a; idem, 1973b; idem, 1979b; Haerinek; Carter, 1987) have yielded polychrome painted wares, apparently imitations of Diyala and Hamrin (Ḥamrīn) Scarlet Ware. They consist mainly of ridged ovoid jars painted with panels and bands of naturalistic and geometric motifs; such wares are rare in the highland valleys of Māhīdašt (Levine and Young, 1987, fig. 260) and Rūmešgān (Pope, 1936). From the Māhīdašt region the distinctive Maran (Marān) red-slipped assemblage and a similar gray-slipped ware are dated to the second quarter of the 3rd millennium on the basis of parallels to Godin III/6. Both are handmade and grit-tempered. There are only four major vessel shapes: hemispherical bowls, carinated cups, globular pots with everted rims, and large globular jars with inset conical rims (Henrickson, 1987, fig. 34).

The valleys of central Luristan have yielded little evidence from the early third millennium, whereas the northeastern valleys represent the southernmost distribution of Early Transcaucasian II-III (= Godin IV) wares (see above), which marked the end of both local Chalcolithic and late Uruk assemblages there (Henrickson, 1989). Phase IV at Godin is dated to within the first third of the 3rd millennium (ca. 3000-2600 b.c.; Henrickson, 1986b; idem, 1987b; idem,



1989) based on parallels to Azarbaijan and on dates for the preceding and subsequent occupations at Godin.

From ca. 2500 B.C.E. until the third quarter of the 2nd millennium and the transition to the Iron Age, the circumstances of which remain obscure (see x, below), monochrome painted buff ware associated with Godin III dominated the entire central western region. The Bronze Age material excavated at the site (Young, 1969; idem and Levine; Henrickson, 1984; idem, 1986b; idem, 1987b) provides the type sequence for the region, replacing the shorter sequence based solely on pottery from graves excavated at Tepe Giyan (Gīān) IV-II and other sites (Contenau and Ghirshman; Dyson, *CAH*³ II/1; cf. Henrickson, 1983-84; idem, 1987a). The origins of the Godin tradition, though unclear, may lie in earlier polychrome assemblages on the piedmont (see above). Seven major phases have been defined: Godin III/6-4 and 2-1, with an interpolated phase after III/2. The first three, Godin III/6-4, are dated ca. 2600-1900 B.C.E. and are attested throughout central western Persia, from the piedmont valleys in the southwest to southern Kurdistan in the north (the Māhīdašt, Şaḥna, and Kangāvar valleys and the Hamadān plain) and the outer Zagros valleys in the east (Hamadān, Malāyer, Nehāvand, and Borūjerd; Henrickson, 1986b): Excavations at Baba Jan (*Bābā Jān Tepe*; Goff, 1976), Tepe Guran (Gūrān; Thrane, 1964; idem, 1968; Meldgaard et al.), and sites in the Rūmešgān valley (Schmidt et al.) and Pošt-e Kūh (Haerinck, 1987), as well as surveys of varying intensity (Stein; Goff, 1966; idem, 1971; Young, 1966; Swiny; Levine; Howell; Haerinck; Henrickson, 1986b; idem, 1989), have made it possible to trace regional distributions through time.

Painted buff ware is characteristic of the entire span of Godin III. Carinated pots and jars in a wide range of sizes and proportions are the most typical vessel form, though the shapes change gradually from phase to phase. They were made by potters using various methods of hand forming; a turntable was used for finishing. Only small vessels were thrown on a true potter's wheel (Henrickson, 1986a; idem, 1989; idem, 1990). The painted decoration is arranged in superimposed horizontal bands from the neck to below the carinated shoulder. The main band of decoration rests on the carination and may contain naturalistic, abstract, or geometric motifs, which tended to become more linear over time (Henrickson, 1984; idem, 1986a; idem, 1986b; idem, 1987b). Local variability in style of decoration is itself variable from phase to phase. Other buff-ware shapes include bowls with carinated and curving profiles, beakers, and large ovoid storage jars with applied cable



decoration. The proportion of painted ware in the assemblage declined from approximately 60 percent in Godin III/6 to 30 percent in Godin III/4 and 8 percent in Godin III/2 (Henrickson, 1987b, fig. 2; idem, 1989). Godin III wares are closely related to the contemporary monochrome-painted buff tradition of Susa D (IV) in Susiana (Henrickson, 1987b; cf. Carter, 1980).

Each phase is also characterized by small quantities of colored plain wares. In Godin III/6-5 a burnished handmade gray-black ware, apparently partly derived from Godin IV, was used in the northeastern valleys for shallow carinated bowls, round-bottomed tankards, and beakers with concave profiles (Henrickson, 1989). Red-slipped ware, apparently evolved from the gray-black ware, appeared in Godin III/5 and became common (27 percent of the total assemblage) in Godin III/4. It is handmade from a relatively coarse paste, smoothed, and self-slipped; characteristic shapes include simple bowls and other forms (e.g., carinated pots and jars and beakers) comparable to those in the buff ware (Henrickson, 1987b; idem, 1989). A plain, poorly finished buff coarse-grit ware, in contrast to the painted buff ware probably produced domestically, was used for large hole-mouth storage jars and cooking pots. In the mid-3rd millennium limited amounts of typical Godin III/6 painted buff ware jars were deposited in tombs in Pošt-e Kūh (Vanden Berghe, 1970a; idem, 1970b; idem, 1972, pls. IX-X; Henrickson, 1986b, table 2). The associated plain wares are not connected typologically with the contemporary Godin III assemblage, however. Beginning in the Akkadian period (ca. 2300 B.C.E.), pottery in the Pošt-e Kūh was essentially Mesopotamian in character, with no links to Godin III (Vanden Berghe, 1972; Haerinck).

In Godin III/2 (after ca. 1900 B.C.E.) bag-shaped vessels with shoulder ridges replaced the earlier carinated forms; painted decoration was concentrated around the shoulder ridges. Other monochrome-painted buff-ware vessel forms include tripods (with shallow hemispherical bowls or deep carinated bodies with concave sides) and conical bowls with everted rims. Although most painted vessels are of buff ware, some are red-slipped, in proportions that vary from valley to valley. Painted decoration consists essentially of bands of straight and wavy lines. The declining proportion of painted wares in the assemblage continued; 87 percent of the assemblage consisted of undecorated buff coarse ware, roughly hand-formed in simple vessels with curvilinear profiles. A minor gray ware, which had first appeared in Godin III/4, became more common (1-2 percent of the assemblage). Typical vessel types include bowls with thickened grooved rims, simple jars, tankards, and “istakans”



(shaped like modern tea glasses, or *estakāns*). Some shapes are paralleled in contemporary Elamite gray wares from Susiana (Carter, 1971; idem, 1981; Henrickson, 1987b; see viii, below). Occasional pattern-burnished decoration, however, suggests possible connections with northeastern Persia (cf. Tepe Hissar [Ḥeṣār], Henrickson, 1987b; see i, above, ix, below).

In Godin III/1 the painted and gray wares disappeared, leaving only crudely formed coarse buff ware. Such earlier vessel forms as the jar with shoulder ridge continued. This phase is dated on the basis of a single radiocarbon date to early in the third quarter of the 2nd millennium, contemporary with the earliest Iron I assemblages in northwestern Persia. In 1600-1400 B.C.E. the closely related Godin post-III/2 (= Giyan II; Contenau and Ghirshman) assemblage appeared throughout much of the region, where it continued to develop through the 3rd quarter of the millennium. Despite its stratigraphic position between Godin III/2 and III/1, the relation of this phase to the Godin III tradition remains unclear due to its limited geographical distribution and typological scope. It has been found only in graves and consists primarily of monochrome-painted goblets with carinated or curvilinear profiles and bowls with sinuous profiles and disk bases. Most of the painted decoration consists of simple bands, but on some goblets the bands are composed of panels or metopes containing cross hatching or naturalistic motifs (Henricksen, 1987b). Typological analysis of grave groups from Tepe Giyan suggests gradual assimilation through the later 2nd millennium of both Iron I vessel forms from northwestern Persia and Elamite forms from Susiana (Henrickson, 1983-84). The transition to the Iron Age in the central western region seems to have been quite variable in different valleys and to have involved considerable mingling of ceramic traditions, in contrast to the dramatic break that occurred in the northwest.

In the mid-2nd millennium B.C.E. a polychrome-painted buff-ware assemblage appeared on the Qazvīn plain. It is characterized by geometric motifs painted in dark-brown paint over cream slip applied to the shoulders of red-slipped and burnished vessels. The type first came to light in commercial excavations; subsequent controlled excavation at Sagzabad (Saqqezābād) has improved definition of the assemblage (Shahmirzadi; Negahban; Dyson, *CAH*³ II/1).

Southwestern Persia. At the beginning of the 3rd millennium polychrome ware was made in the piedmont valleys of northern Susiana (Gautier and Lampre; Wright; Carter, 1987; Haerinck). At Susa itself finds of such material have been rare and stratigraphically uncertain (Carter, 1987; Steve and Gasche; Le



Breton). The basic sequence for Susiana (Steve and Gasche; Gasche; Carter, 1980; cf. Wright) comes from Susa. Late Susa III (Proto-Elamite) simple banded wares gradually disappeared in the 3rd millennium. By ca. 2600 B.C.E. Susa IVA monochrome-painted buff ware (Le Breton's Susa D) had appeared. It is closely comparable in shape, style of decoration, and repertoire of motifs to contemporary highland pottery of Godin III/6 (Henrickson, 1987b). Characteristic shapes include carinated pots and jars, bowls, and beakers (Carter, 1980; cf. Steve and Gasche). The frequency of painted ware declined through Susa IVA. In the following Susa IVB phase (ca. 2400-2100 B.C.E.) Mesopotamian vessel forms replaced earlier local types.

Figure 26. Bronze Age ceramics of central western Persia. 1-3: Godin V (late Uruk). 4-6: Godin IV (early Trans-caucasian II-II), burnished gray ware. 7-13: Godin III/6, painted buff (7-10) and gray-black (11-13) wares. 14-16: Godin III/5, painted buff ware. 17-19: Godin III/4, painted buff (17) and red-slipped (18-19) wares.

Figure 27. Bronze Age pottery of central western and northwestern Persia. 1-6: Godin III/2, painted buff (1-3), buff coarse (4-5), and gray (6) wares. 7-9: Godin post-III/2, painted buff ware. 10-12: Godin III/1, buff coarse ware. 13-14: Hasanlu VII Painted Orange Ware (adapted from Dyson, *Survey of Persian Art XIV*, p. 2957, fig. 1027). 15: Hasanlu VI (Khabur) ware (adapted from Hamlin, pi. XIIb). 16-18: Haftavan VIB ware (adapted from Edwards, 1981, figs. 16.18, 7.3, 10.1).

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