



## TEPE YAHYA

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**TEPE YAHYA** (Tappe Yaḥyā), archeological site in the Soḡun valley (lat 28°20'N, long 56°52'E), Kerman province, ca. 220 km south of Kerman and 130 km north of the Straits of Hormuz. The site is a mound (*tepe*), 19.8 m. high, 187 m. in diameter at the base, and was discovered in 1967 by a survey team from Harvard University under the direction of C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky (Lamberg-Karlovsky, 1970, pp. 1-5; Negahban). Tepe Yahya was occupied, with interruptions, from the late Neolithic (ca. 5500 BCE) to the early Sasanian (300 CE) period. To date, the 6th through 3rd millennium BCE levels have been fully published, whereas those dating to the later periods are still under study. Thus, the sequence of occupation that follows (after Thornton et al., pp. 1452-3; Potts, 2001, pp. 195-207; Beale, 1986, p. 11) remains tentative, particularly for periods IVA through I:

Period VII	5500–4500 BCE
Period VI-VC	4500–3600 BCE
Period VA-B	3600–3200 BCE
Period IVC2	3100–2800 BCE
Period IVB6-1	2400–2000 BCE
Period IVA	1800–1400 BCE
III	800–500 BCE
II	500–275 BCE
I	200 BCE–300 CE

Following an initial sounding in 1967, six full seasons of excavations were



conducted at Tepe Yahya (1968-71, 1973, 1975) and the site continues to provide the only long stratigraphic sequence in all of southeastern Persia.

Period VII is represented by four sub-phases (D-A). The best-preserved architecture dates to VIIB and VIIA and consists of multi-room dwellings and storage rooms of a cell-like nature, often covering an area less than 2 square meters. These are built of molded, thumb-impressed mud bricks, generally measuring 36 x 15/16 x 9/10 cm (Beale, 1986, p. 111). Generally similar dwellings appear in periods VI and V (particularly VC). Periods VIB and VIA are also characterized by several noteworthy features, including areas of paving, a retaining wall, and large quantities of stone-and-shard rubble fill. Small quantities of exotic foreign materials, including Anatolian obsidian, turquoise, lapis lazuli and mother-of-pearl, appear in the early levels at Tepe Yahya (Beale, 1973), as does a single shard of Mesopotamian 'Obayd-type pottery (Kamilli and Lamberg-Karlovsky, pp. 53-54), suggesting long-distance contacts in the 6th and 5th millennia BCE. The faunal assemblage during the early periods is dominated by domesticated sheep, goat, and cattle remains (Meadow, 1986, Fig. 3.3).

In the ceramic industry, unpainted, chaff-tempered coarse-ware gradually gives way to a variety of painted types (Soğun Bichrome, Soğun Red-painted Ware, Black-on-Buff Ware), some of which find both specific and generic parallels further west at sites like Tell-e Eblis and Tell-e Bākun (Beale, 1986, pp. 39-89), in the nearby Rud-e Gošk drainage (Prickett, Figs., III.1-5) and to the east at sites like Chah Husseinī (Šāh-Ḥosaynī) (Lamberg-Karlovsky and Schmandt-Besserat, pp. 130-3). The early chaff-tempered ware is particularly interesting because larger vessels were put together by employing a hitherto undocumented technique known as "sequential slab construction" (Vandiver). Period IV consists of three quite distinct phases. The earliest, Period IVC, is dominated by a large building complex in which foreign objects, including Susa III/Proto-Elamite-type economic texts (Damerow and Englund), Jamdat Nasr-like polychrome pottery and bevel-rim bowls (Potts, 2001), and cylinder seals and sealings with close parallels at Susa, Tell-e Malyān and Kafāja (Pittman) were found. The layout of the IVC building employs a standard unit of measurement found in temples VII and VI at Eridu (Tell Abu Šahrayn) in Iraq and at Ḥabuba Kabira in Syria during the late 4th millennium BCE (Beale and Carter).

The Period IVB levels consist of several rooms, the earliest of which (the "Persian Gulf" room) contained pottery with parallels throughout the Indo-



Iranian borderlands and the Persian Gulf region: fine black-on-orange, storage jars with meandering, plastic snake decoration or raised ridges, black-on-greyware (Potts, 2003, pp. 3-6), along with a stone stamp seal of Persian-Gulf type (Potts, 2001, Fig. 4.6). Soft-stone (chlorite) bowls, many with figurative decoration (snakes, zebu bull, date-palms, “hut-pot”) or patterns which replicate basketry (e.g. mat-weave, imbricate) were manufactured at the site, as demonstrated by the discovery of large amounts of débitage, semi-finished pieces, and finished (if often fragmentary) vessels (Kohl, 1974; 2001; Lamberg-Karlovsky, 1988). A later style of carved chlorite bowl, characterized by zigzag decoration beneath the rim and occasional saw-tooth decoration on the surface of the rim, found at Tepe Yahya in late 3rd and early 2nd millennium contexts, may also have been manufactured at the site (Potts, 2003). Cylinder seals from period IVB (and IVA) display iconography with close parallels at Šāhdād (Pittman, 2001). Finally, period IVA consists of several levels of well-preserved architecture but relatively few ceramic parallels that link it with other parts of Persia.

Period III, the main Iron Age occupation at the site, is dominated by two large, mud-brick platforms (Lamberg-Karlovsky and Magee, 1999). Ceramics from the later levels show some Achaemenid characteristics, while stone vessels find parallels in the Oman peninsula. Period II ceramics include carinated vessels with Hellenistic overtones and period I yielded an incised shard (Lamberg-Karlovsky, 1970, Fig. 3m) with a fragmentary Middle Persian inscription that reads *-Jtkn P* (Frye, 1970) and is likely to date to ca. 300 CE. There is no Islamic occupation on the mound.

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