

ANALYSIS OF THE CONDITION OF THE SHAHR-DRAZ SITE IN THE DAMAN RIVER BASIN BASED ON POTTERY FINDINGS FROM SURFACE SURVEY AND SOUNDING TO DETERMINE THE CORE ZONE

Mohammad KEIKHA¹✉, Sahar BAKHTIARI², Yasaman NASIRIPOUR³, Sepideh BAKHTIARI⁴

¹ PhD Student in Archaeology, (mohammad.keikha1367@gmail.com)

² Archaeology Department, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran.

³ Postdoctoral Researcher in Archaeology.

⁴ Archaeology Department, Faculty of Art and Architecture, University Of Mazandaran, Iran.

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Abstract: The Shahr-Draz site is located in Southeast Iran in the Daman River basin in the center of the Shahr-Draz village of Iranshahr County in the center of Sistan and Baluchistan Province. The Bampur River basin is one of the important ancient areas in the Baluchistan region. Bampur River is formed by the joining of small rivers such as Karvandar and Daman and many other small branches and flows in the east-west direction. Daman and Bampur Rivers were the center of the formation of significant sites in the Bronze Age, which played an essential role in the formation of human communities. The Daman River basin has been a communication corridor between the north, center, and south of Baluchistan. To protect the Shahr-Draz site, the first author was commissioned by the General Directorate of Cultural Heritage of Sistan and Baluchistan Province to conduct a field survey and sounding to determine the core zone and propose the buffer zone for this site in the summer and fall of 2020, which lasted 45 days. During this period, the site was carefully surveyed step-by-step, and 14 trenches with 1 × 1 m dimensions were dug in different directions. During the project, 112 potsherds were identified, registered, and studied. The present research aims to study the found pottery from this site and compare it with other simultaneous sites in neighboring areas. This work has been done with the purpose of a comprehensive understanding of the condition of this site and the extent of its cultural interactions to realize the cultural dynamics of the region. In this research, two methods of documentary and field research have been used. The results show that the Shahr-Draz site with an area of about 35 hectares in the Daman River basin had cultural continuity during the Bronze Age and the pottery of this site has the most similarities with the pottery of the ancient sites of Bampur and the Pakistan region. In addition, based on the typology of pottery, it seems that in the Bronze Age, the Daman River basin had not only extensive regional and extra-regional relations, but was also one of the important communication routes and the connecting point between the sites of Central Baluchistan and the sites of Soghan Valley, Makran, Sistan, and Baluchistan of Pakistan.

Keywords: Shahr-Draz site, Baluchistan, the Daman River basin, Bronze Age, Pottery, Comparative typology.

چکیده: محوطه شهردراز در جنوب شرقی ایران در حوضه رودخانه دامن در مرکز روستای شهردراز، شهرستان ایرانشهر در مرکز استان سیستان و بلوچستان قرار دارد. حوضه رودخانه بمپور یکی از مناطق مهم باستانی در منطقه بلوچستان است. رودخانه بمپور از بهم پیوستن رودخانه‌های کوچکی چون کارواندر و دامن و بسیاری از شاخه‌های کوچک دیگر تشکیل شده و در جهت شرقی - غربی جریان دارد. رودخانه‌های دامن و بمپور مرکز شکل‌گیری مکان‌های مهمی در عصر مفرغ بودند که نقش اساسی در شکل‌گیری جوامع انسانی داشتند. حوضه رودخانه دامن یک کریدور ارتباطی بین شمال، مرکز و جنوب بلوچستان بوده است. برای حفاظت از محوطه شهردراز، اولین نویسنده از سوی اداره کل میراث فرهنگی استان سیستان و بلوچستان مأموریت یافت تا در این محوطه بررسی میدانی و گمانه‌زنی برای تعیین عرصه و پیشنهاد حریم انجام دهد. این پروژه در پاییز و زمستان سال ۱۳۹۹ به مدت ۴۵ روز انجام شد. در این مدت محوطه به صورت گام به گام مورد بررسی دقیق قرار گرفت و ۱۴ ترانشه به ابعاد ۱×۱ متر در جهات مختلف حفر شد. در این پروژه ۱۱۲ قطعه سفال شناسایی، ثبت و مطالعه شد. پژوهش حاضر با هدف بررسی سفال‌های کشف شده از این محوطه و مقایسه آن با سایر محوطه‌های همزمان در مناطق همجوار و به منظور شناخت همه جانبه از وضعیت این محوطه و میزان تعاملات فرهنگی آن برای تحقق پویایی فرهنگی منطقه انجام شد. در این تحقیق از دو روش اسنادی و میدانی استفاده شده است. نتایج نشان می‌دهد که محوطه شهردراز با وسعتی در حدود ۳۵ هکتار در حوضه رودخانه دامن در عصر مفرغ تداوم فرهنگی داشته و سفال‌های این محوطه بیشترین شباهت را با سفال‌های محوطه‌های باستانی بمپور و پاکستان دارد. علاوه بر این، بر اساس گونه‌شناسی سفال، به نظر می‌رسد، در عصر مفرغ، حوضه رودخانه دامن نه تنها روابط گسترده منطقه‌ای و فرامنطقه‌ای داشته، بلکه یکی از راه‌های ارتباطی مهم و نقطه اتصال بین محوطه‌های بلوچستان مرکزی و محوطه‌های دره سوغان، مکران، سیستان و بلوچستان پاکستان بوده است.

کلیدواژه: محوطه شهردراز، بلوچستان، حوضه رودخانه دامن، عصر مفرغ، سفال، گونه‌شناسی مقایسه‌ای.

I. Introduction

One of the goals of archaeological field research is to determine the status of the core zone of ancient sites concerning natural complications and human effects for protection, chronology, and determination of their intra-regional or inter-regional cultural interactions.

One of the most significant cultural areas in the southeast of Iran is the Daman River basin in Sistan and Baluchistan Province. This river is located about 5 km south of Iranshahr County and about 3 km west of the village and the ancient site of Shahr-Draz, at geographical coordinates 27112100N, 60434620E (Fig.

1). Daman River and Valley with north-south direction, which covers about 40 km², is of great importance in the archaeological studies of the Baluchistan region. The Daman River basin contains a collection of ancient monuments, of which little systematic and coherent information has been published so far. This area has long been a suitable place for the formation of human settlements. Archaeological surveys and excavations in one of the sites in this area, named Shahr-Draz, indicate that it was inhabited during the Bronze Age (Stein, 1937:

115). Recent archaeological research in the Daman River basin has made it possible to study these cultural features. This research aims to obtain a clear state of the structure and dimensions of the Shahr-Draz site in this cultural area. Furthermore, based on the study of the pottery found from the surface survey of the site, an attempt has been made to suggest the relative chronology of the site and to explain the cultural interactions of this part of Baluchistan with a comparative study of cultural materials.

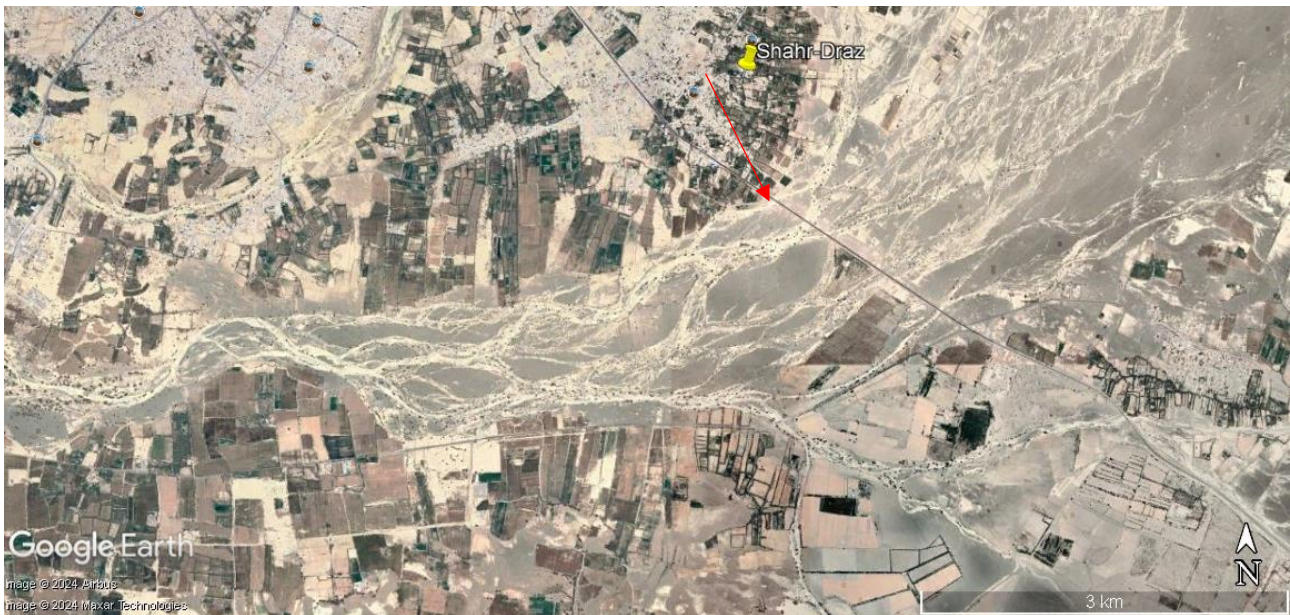


Figure 1: Location of the Shahr-Draz site concerning the Daman River (Google Earth, 2023).

II. The Topographical Condition of the Shahr-Draz Site

The Shahr-Draz archaeological site is located in the southeast of Iranshahr County and about 800 m east of Daman River. This ancient site is located in the village of the same name in the form of two separate low mounds. Mound A with coordinates 27112100N, 60434620E, an area of nearly 35 hectares, and a height of about 70 cm from the ground is located in the center of the Shahr-Draz village. Mound B with coordinates 27119070N, 60436520E, an area of about 1 hectare and a height of about 20 cm above the ground is located in the north of the village (Fig. 2) (Keikha, 2020: 20). The distribution of cultural materials is different on the mound A. Most of the pottery is scattered in the central

and southern parts of this mound, and as we move towards the west, east, and north, the distribution of pottery decreases due to the extensive construction of the villagers. Unfortunately, the southern, eastern, and southeastern parts of this mound have been seriously damaged because it is used as a cemetery. The distribution of cultural materials in different parts of the mound B is also different. The high density of pottery is in the central and eastern parts of this mound, and as we move towards the west, south, and north, the distribution of pottery decreases drastically due to construction activities. The eastern parts of this mound have been also destroyed because it is used as a cemetery. Parts of the south of this mound have also been destroyed because of the residential constructions and an alley called Hafez 23 (Keikha, 2020: 80).

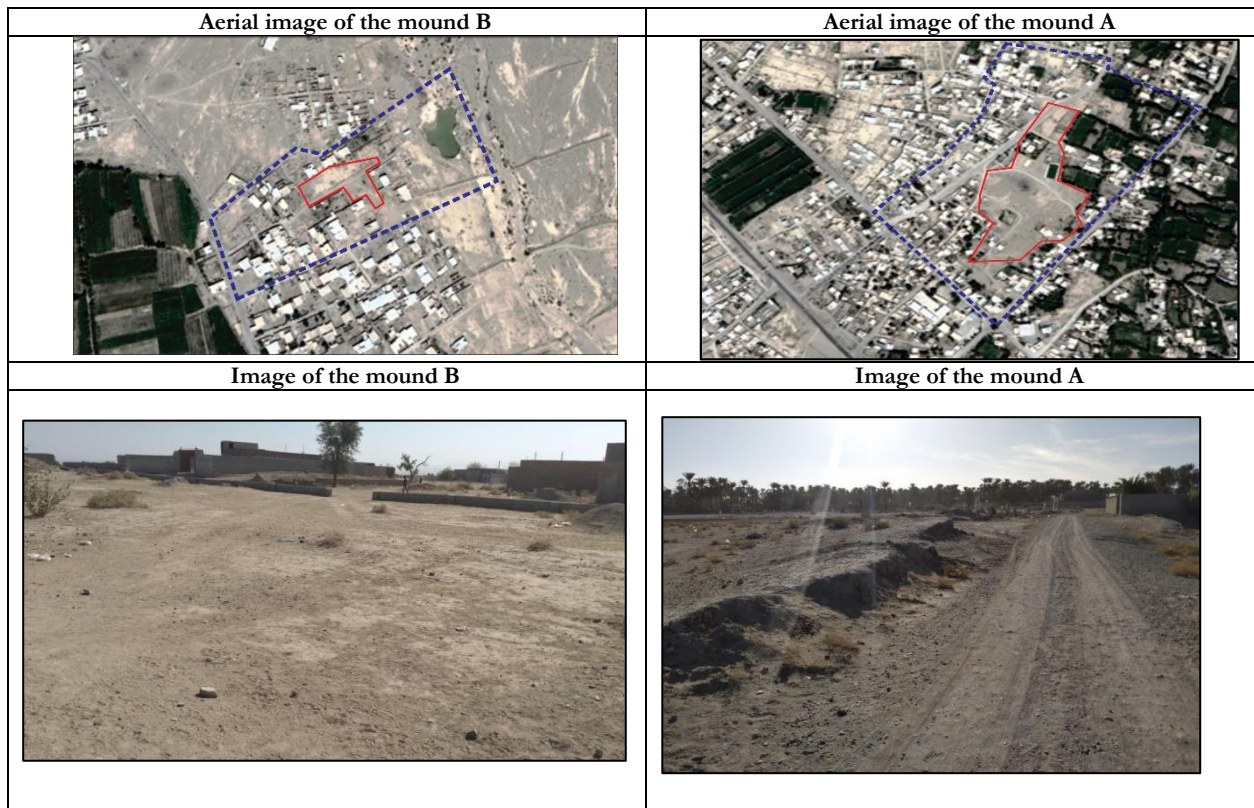


Figure 2: Images of the mounds A and B of the Shahr-Draz site (authors, 2020).

III. Archaeological Research at the Shahr-Draz Site

The fieldwork of the archaeological team at the Shahr-Draz site was conducted in two stages: (a)

surveying the site, and (b) sounding. Before sounding to determine the core zone of the site, the research team found it necessary to survey the surface and around the Shahr-Draz site in an area of 4 km² (Fig. 3).



Figure 3: Surface survey of the site (Keikha, 2020: 5).

This was important in several ways: (1) determining the extent of the distribution of surface archaeological artifacts of the site (2) investigating the density of cultural materials in different parts of the site (3) checking the cultural periods of the site (4) the amount and type of destructions that took place In the site (5) specifying the natural complications and human effects on the surface and around the area (6) choosing the right place to excavate test trenches to determine the core zone and propose the buffer zone of the site. To achieve this goal, a team of 4 archaeologists conducted a survey on this site for 7 days. This survey showed that the Shahr-Draz site has two separate mounds, one in the central part and the other in the northern part of the Shahr-Draz village. Destructions of these two mounds can be identified in several parts: The expansion of residential houses in the village and the establishment of the village cemetery on the core zone of the site, the construction and widening of the alleys and streets of the Shahr-Draz village, construction of non-profit buildings such as the village health center, the village administration, the mosque, and the school in different parts of the core zone and the buffer zone of the site. Unfortunately, a large part of the Shahr-Draz site has been destroyed. During the surface survey of the site, a

number of archaeological findings (potsherds, stone vessel fragments, stone and bronze beads, and a bronze arrowhead) were collected from different parts by random sampling method. Then the archaeology team chose the location of the trenches and excavated them to identify the core zone of the site based on surface and non-surface artifacts. In this research project, 9 trenches measuring 1 x 1 m were excavated around the mound A and 5 trenches measuring 1 x 1 m around the mound B. In some places due to existing restrictions such as communication roads, residential houses, agricultural fields, and some sections created by natural or human factors, the location of the trenches was chosen at distances of about 120 m and in some places at distances of about 60 m. These trenches were excavated at a suitable distance from the last distribution of surface cultural materials. At first, the geographical coordinates of each trench were recorded and from all its angles were photographed. It should be noted that the excavations were conducted using a contextual method. No cultural data was obtained from any of the trenches. In this way, the core zone of the Shahr-Draz site was determined. The names of the trenches TSHA and TSHB were abbreviated for "trench Shahr-Draz mound A/B" (Fig. 4, Tables 1 and 2).

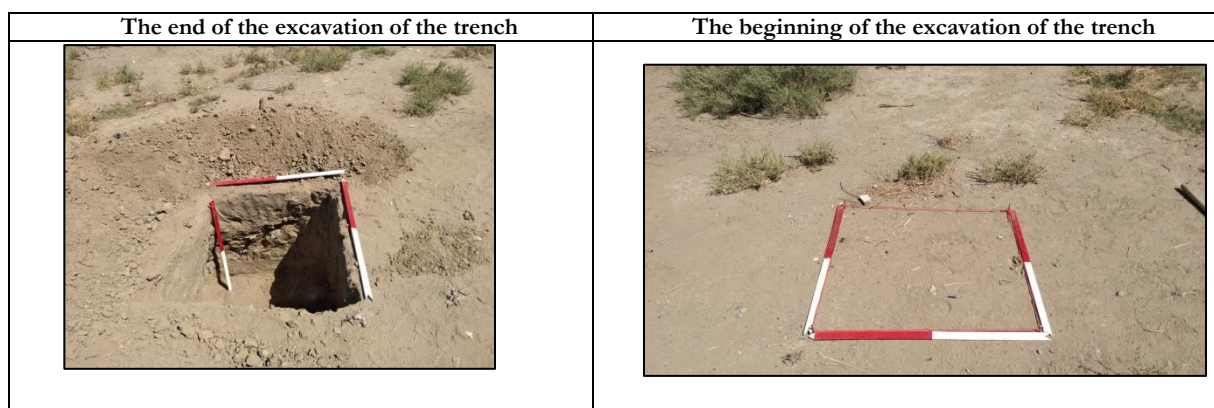


Figure 4: An Example of the excavation of experimental trenches to determine the core zone of the Shahr-Draz site; Trench TSHA4 (Keikha, 2020: 111-112).

Table 1: Geographical coordinates of trenches excavated in the mound A core zone (Keikha, 2020: 98-99).

Trench	Latitude (N)	Longitude (E)
TSHA1	27112100	60434620
TSHA2	27111750	60434550
TSHA3	27111030	60434530
TSHA4	27111050	60435370
TSHA5	27111630	60435890
TSHA6	2711638	60435899
TSHA7	27113190	60435870
TSHA8	27113280	60435450
TSHA9	27112460	60435030

Table 2: Geographical coordinates of trenches excavated in the mound B core zone (Keikha, 2020: 98-99).

Trench	Latitude (N)	Longitude (E)
TSHB1	27118950	60436300
TSHB2	27119070	60436520
TSHB3	27119190	60436810
TSHB4	27118890	60436910
TSHB5	27118720	60436370

IV. Archaeological Findings of the Shahr-Draz Site

During the step-by-step surface survey of the site and sounding to determine the core zone and propose the buffer zone of the site, 112 potsherds were found and recorded. In the following, statistical studies and comparative typology are described in two sections.

V. Statistical Study of Pottery Samples

Based on the study of 112 potsherds found in the Shahr-Draz site, there are 4 types of pieces, including incomplete pottery, rim, body, and base. The rim of

pottery with 73 pieces (65%) is the most type and the incomplete pottery with 1 piece (1%) is the least. 27 pieces (24%) belong to the pottery body and 11 pieces (10%) belong to the pottery base (Fig. 5). There are 110 wheel-made potsherds and only 2 handmade potsherds, which indicates the wide use of the pottery wheel in the Shahr-Draz site. Besides, most of the pottery in this collection had sufficient firing. Sufficient firing of pottery indicates the progress of pottery kilns in this area during the Bronze Age. The main chamotte of the pottery was of mineral type consisting of fine gravel and sand, and there was no evidence of plant chamotte among the pottery samples.

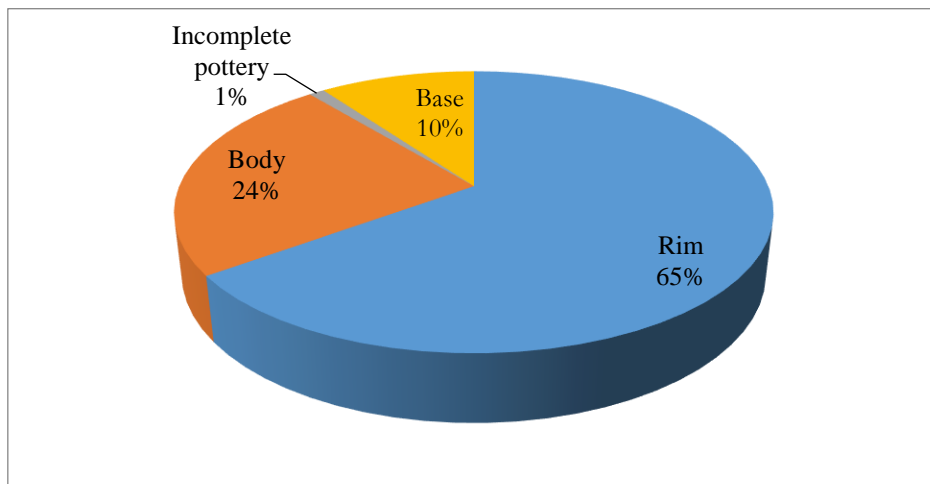


Figure 5: Statistical study of samples based on the type of potsherd (Authors, 2022).

VI. Statistical Study of Samples Based on the Type of Form

The pieces of pottery found from the Shahr-Draz site are divided into 5 different types in terms of form, which are: bowls, cups, pots, jars, and plates. The bowl form with the number of 31 pieces (42%) was the most type of form and the plate form with the number of 1

piece (1%) was the least. The form of the pot included 22 pieces (30%), the jar with 5 pieces (7%), and the cup with 15 pieces (20%). It should be noted that there were 38 pieces, including the body and the base, and the form of these potteries could not be identified. Therefore, a statistical study of the form typology was carried out based on 74 pieces of rims that could be used to identify the form of pottery (Fig. 6).

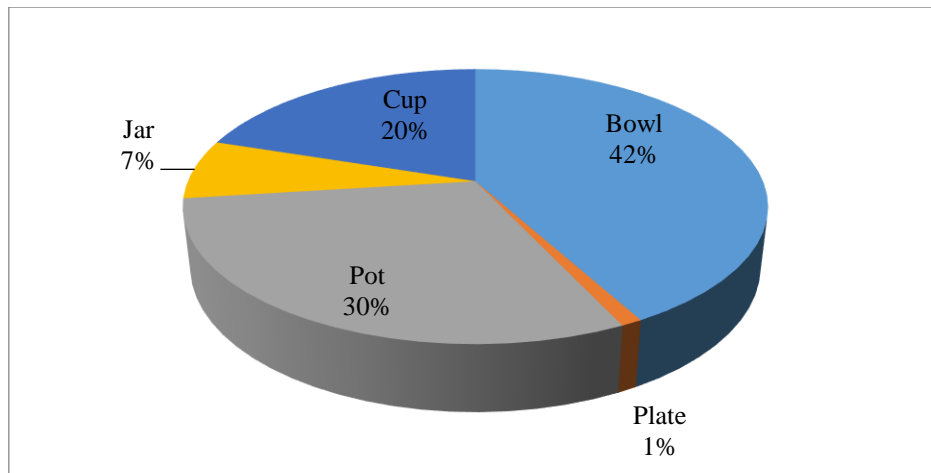


Figure 6: Statistical study of pottery samples based on the form typology (Authors, 2022).

VII. Statistical Study of Pottery Samples Based on the Type of Decoration

Studying the pottery of the Shahr-Draz site shows that 76 potsherds are decorated and 36 are undecorated. Decorations of pottery are divided into 5 types, which are painting, carved patterns, burnished patterns, added patterns, and paintings along with added patterns. Painting decoration with 48 pieces (63%) is the largest number of pottery decorations and painting along with

added patterns with 5 pieces (6%) is the least. Carved patterns include 8 pieces (11%), burnished patterns 8 pieces (11%), and the added patterns 7 pieces (9%) (Fig. 7). Most motifs are geometric, which occupy most of the pottery decorated with paintings and carved patterns. There are 66 geometric motifs (87%) and 2 animal-geometric motifs (3%). Besides, 8 pieces (10%) of decorated pottery are of the burnished pattern type, which was not considered as a motif (Fig. 8). Black, red, and brown colors have been used to color the motifs.

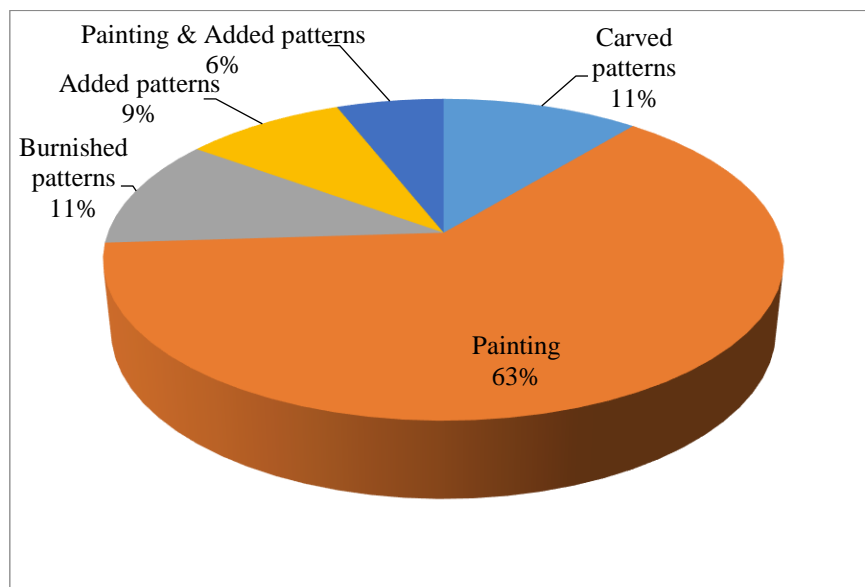


Figure 7: Statistical study of pottery samples based on the type of decoration (Authors, 2022).

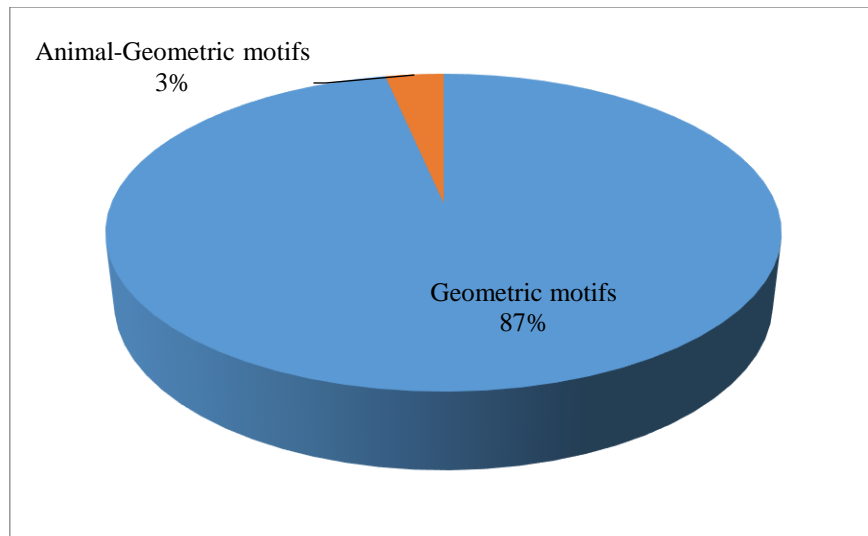


Figure 8: Statistical study of pottery samples based on the type of motif (Authors, 2022).

VIII. Statistical Study of Samples in Terms of Fineness

These pottery are divided into 3 classes in terms of fineness, which are: fine (1-3 cm), medium (4-7 cm), and

rough (8 cm and more). Pieces with medium fineness are the most with 91 pieces (81%) and fine pieces with 10 pieces (9%) are the least number. Rough pieces also include 11 pieces (10%) (Fig. 9).

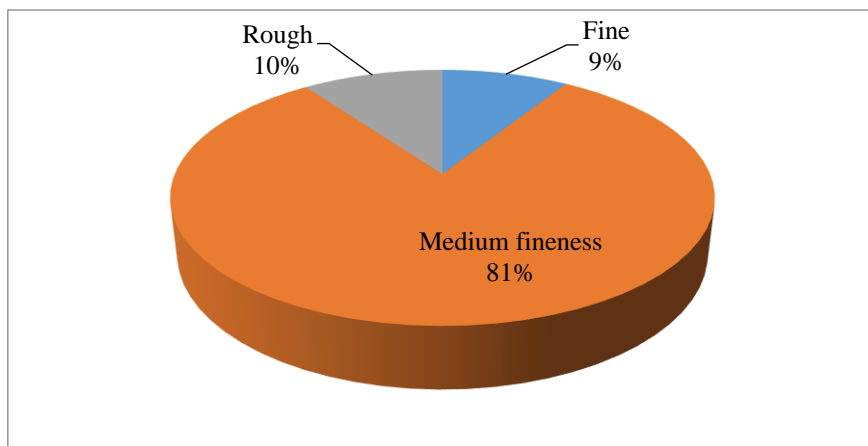


Figure 9: Statistical study of the samples in terms of pottery fineness (authors, 2022).

IX. Statistical Study of the Samples Based on the Pottery Paste Color

In the study collection, there are 4 colors of pottery paste: pale brown, red brownish, red, and gray. The red

brownish paste is the most with 77 pieces (69%) and the red paste is the least number with 9 pieces (8%). Further, there are 16 pieces (14%) with gray paste and 10 pieces (9%) with pale brown paste (Fig. 10).

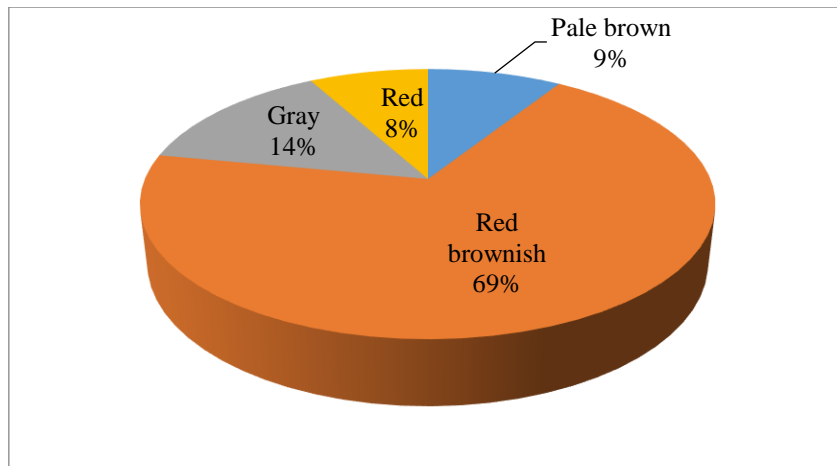


Figure 10: Statistical study of the samples based on the pottery paste color (authors, 2020).

X. Statistical Study of Samples Based on the Pottery Firing

In the studied pottery collection, 105 pieces (94%) have sufficient or appropriate firing and only 7 pieces

(6%) have insufficient firing. Therefore, the majority of pottery has sufficient firing, which indicates the use of kilns with proper thermal control (Fig. 11).

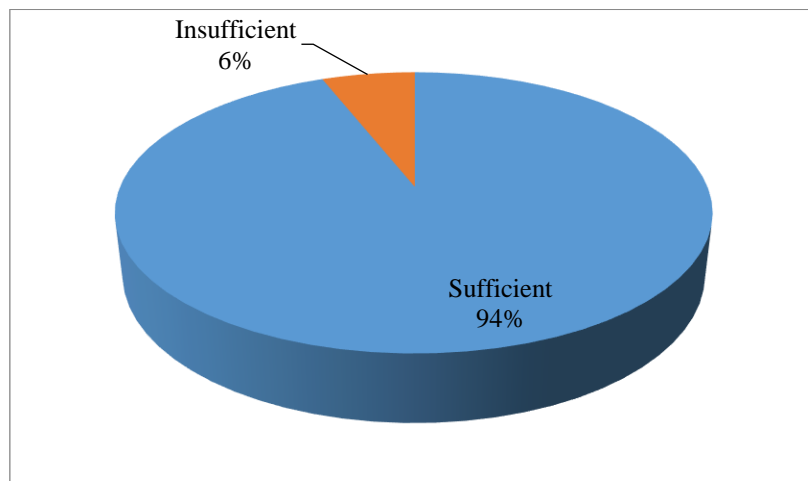


Figure 11: Statistical study of samples based on the quality of pottery firing (authors, 2022).

XI. Typological Comparisons of Pottery

This comparative study was done with the two purposes of determining the chronology of settlement and the cultural relations of this region with the neighboring regions. Since the Daman River basin and Iranshahr County in the center of the Baluchistan region of Iran are located near and adjacent to regions such as Pakistan, Makran, Sistan, and Afghanistan, comparisons have been made with the pottery of these regions:

a) Sistan plain sites in Iran: Shahr-i sokhta, Tepe Dasht, Rudbiaban mounds, Gratziani, Tepe Sadeq, and Tepe Taleb Khan 1 and 2;

b) Baluchistan sites in Iran: Bampur, South Makran sites, Dambigan, Khorab, and Daman;

c) Afghanistan sites: Gardanrig and Mundigak;

d) Miri Kalat site in Pakistan;

e) Tepe Yahya in Kerman.

For the typological comparison of pottery, two common indicators have been considered, that is, pottery form (according to the rim and base) and decorations. This study was carried out on undecorated pottery based on evaluation criteria, in the order of priority: rim, base, handle, and pottery form, and on decorated pottery based on the type of decoration and the type of motifs (Fig. 12, Plates 1, 2, 3). It is obvious that the priority is to compare with the pottery found in the excavated sites, and then the pottery found in archaeological surveys.

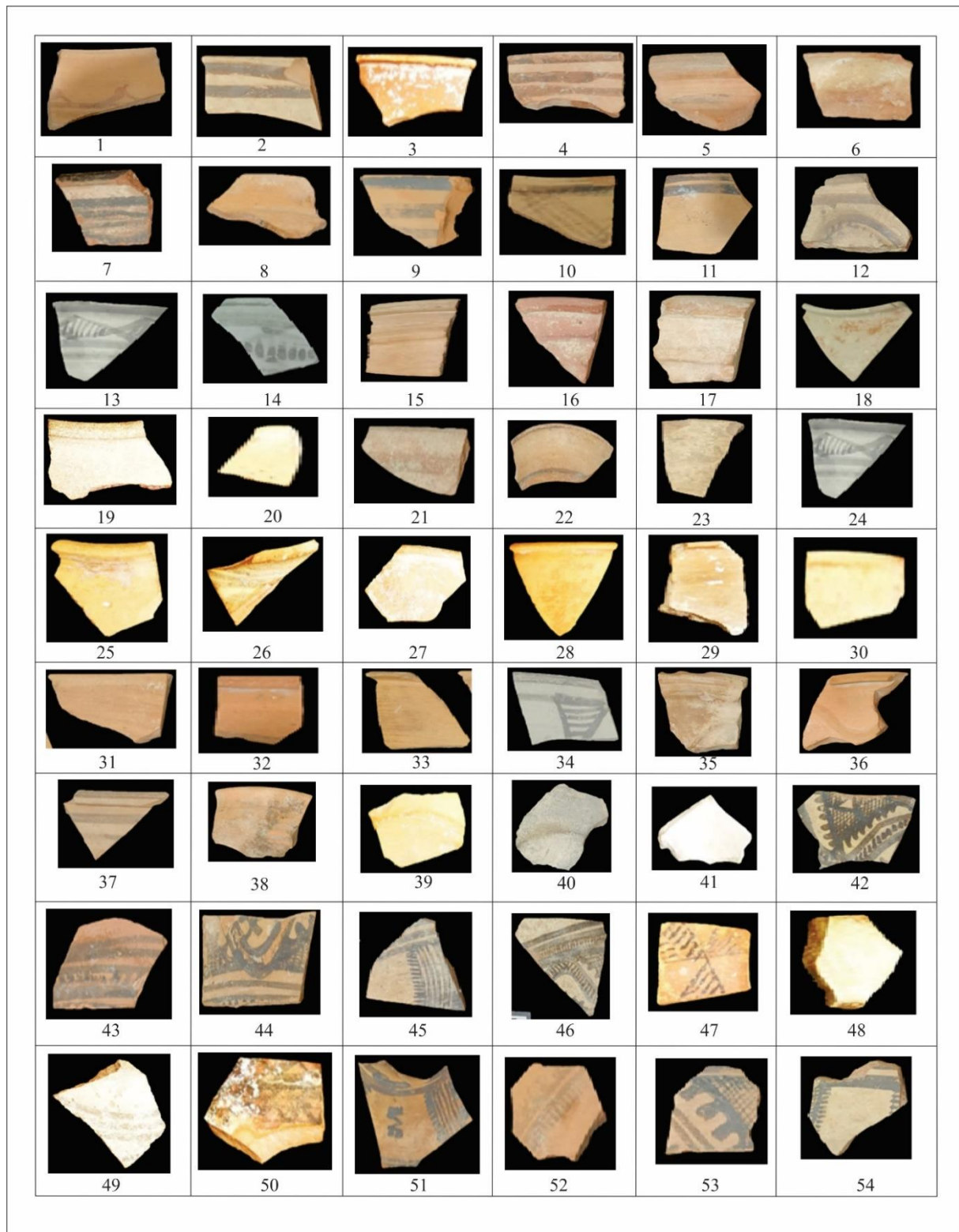


Figure 12: The indicative pottery samples of the Shahr-Draz site (Authors, 2022).

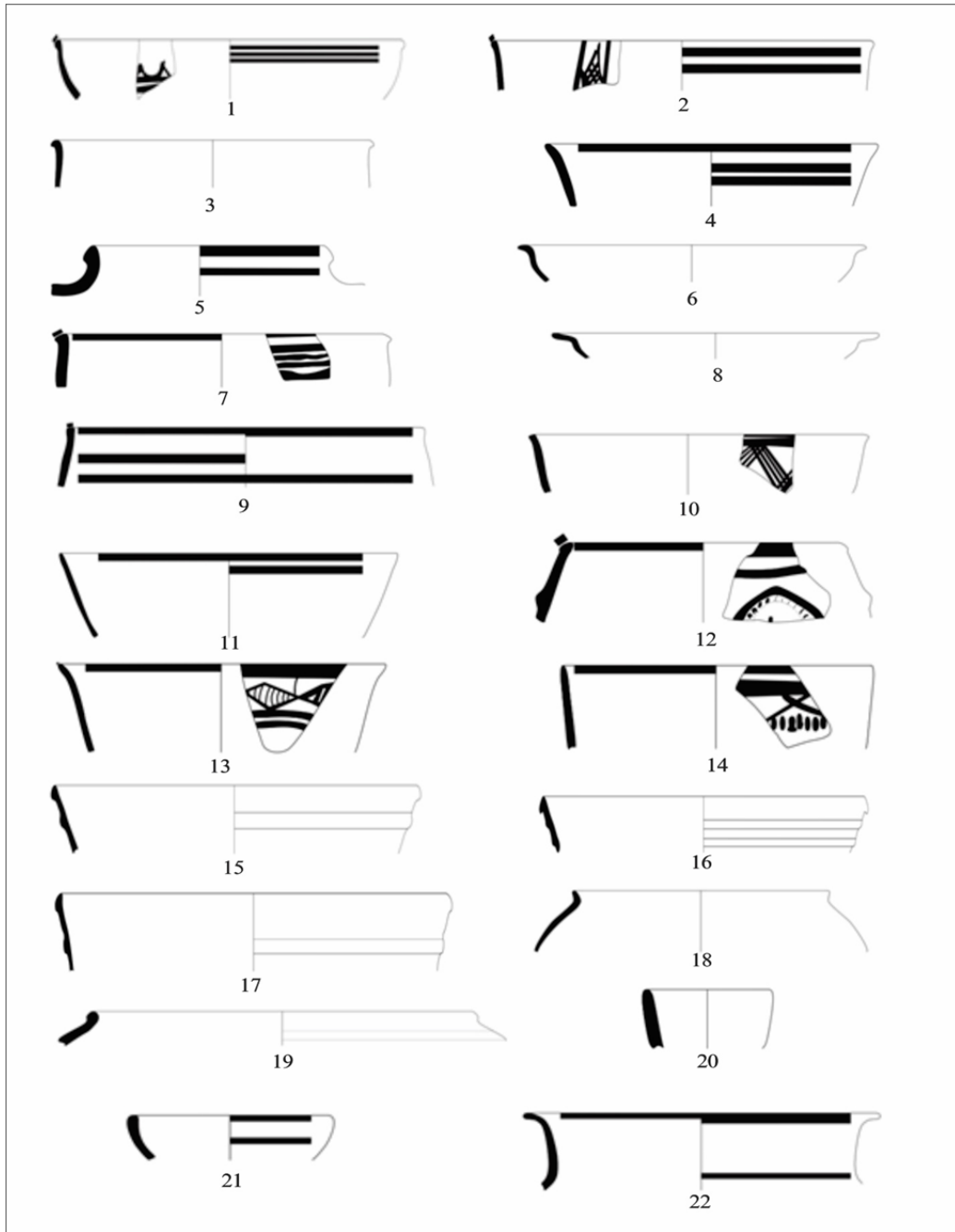


Plate 1: Designs of the indicative pottery samples of the Shahr-Draz site; Samples 1-22 (Authors, 2022).

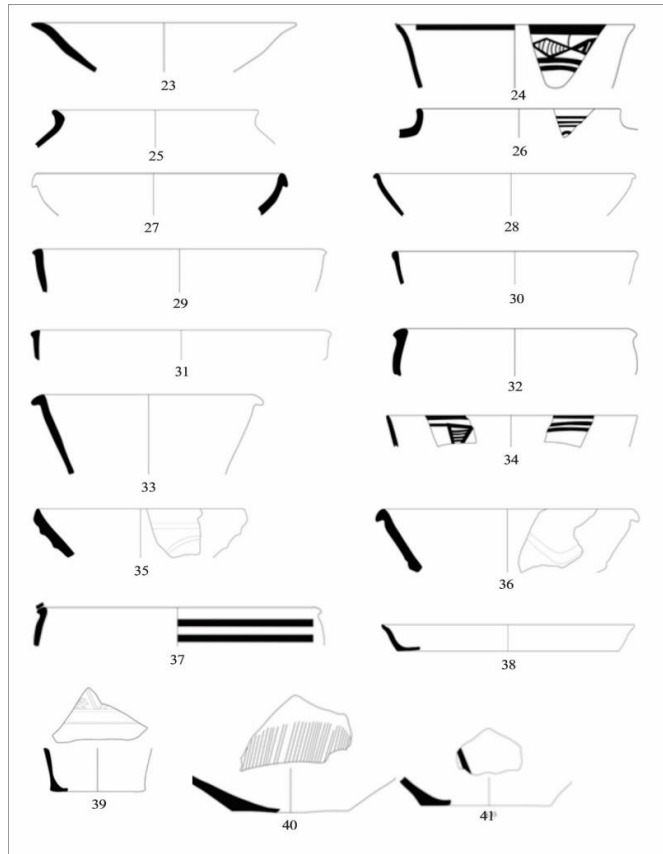


Plate 2: Designs of the indicative pottery samples of the Shahr-Draz site; Samples 23-41 (Authors, 2022).

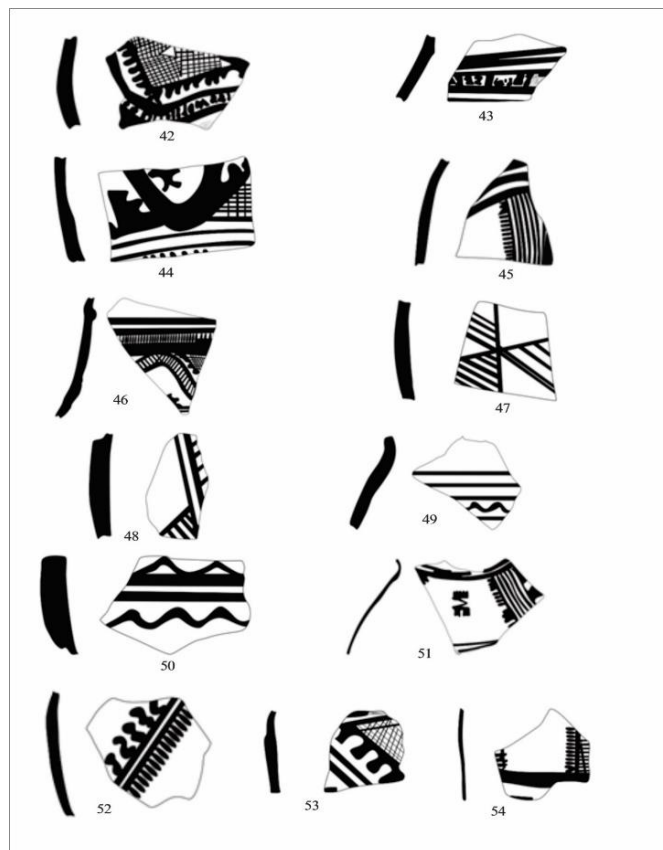


Plate 3: Designs of the indicative pottery samples of the Shahr-Draz site; Samples 42-54 (Authors, 2022).

Based on the comparative study of the pottery, the Shahr-Draz site was continuously inhabited during the 4th and the 3rd millennia BC, i.e. the Bronze Age of the region. In addition, the pottery of the Shahr-Draz site in the Daman River basin is similar to those of Shahr-i sokhta II (Vidale & Salvatori, 1997: figs. 104-105, figs. 198-199; P. 126, fig. 192, No. I; Salvatori & Vidale, 1978: 102, fig. 116, No. I), Shahr-i sokhta III (Salvatori & Vidale, 1978: 150, fig. 200, No. 7), Shahr-i sokhta IV (Tosi & Lamberg-Karlovsky, 1973, fig. 63, No.2), and Tepe Dasht (Shurestani, 2010: Table 7-3-4) in Sistan, Iran; Mundigak (Shaffer, 1978: 135, fig. 3.30, No.8), Mundigak IV1 (Shaffer, 1978: 130, Fig. 3.25, No. 8), Mundigak IV2 (Shaffer, 1978, P. 133, Fig. 3.28), and Gardanrig (Fairservis, 1961, P. 113, No. 111) in Afghanistan; Bampur I and II (Seyed Sajjadi, 2008: fig. 1-7; DeCardi, 1970: fig. 8), Bampur II (DeCardi, 1970: 280, fig. 18, No. 59, P. 285, fig. 21, No. 104, P. 298, fig. 30, No. I), Bampur III (DeCardi, 1970: fig. 22), Bampur IV (DeCardi, 1970: fig. 8, fig. 24, fig. 29, fig. 31, P. 296, fig. 29, No. 284, P. 298, fig. 30, No. I), Bampur I-IV (Besenval, 1997: fig. 27-28; DeCardi, 1970: 298, fig. 43, No. 264), Bampur V (DeCardi, 1967: fig. 35), Bampur VI (DeCardi, 1970: 317, fig. 43, No. 446; Seyed Sajjadi, 2004: Fig. 8), the Sarbaz River basin, Tepe Keshari (Moradi, 2010: Fig. 7-4-2-138 b), the Sarbaz River basin, Tepe Dekali (Moradi, 2010: Fig. 3-5-3, Plan 14), Khorab (Stein, 1937: P1XXXII), Damin (Tosi, 1974, fig. 20-30; Tosi, 1970: 40, fig. 23, No.e), the Dambigan site in Qasr Qand County (Jozi, 2018: 94) and South Makran (Shirazi & Dahmardeh, 2016: 90) in Baluchistan, Iran; Tepe Yahya IVb1 (Lamberg-Karlovsky et al., 2001: 173, fig. 6.12, No. I), Tepe Yahya IVb2 (Lamberg-Karlovsky et al., 2001: 157, fig. 5.18, No. E), Tepe Yahya IVb6 (Lamberg-Karlovsky et al., 2001: 98, fig. 3.18, No. O), and Yahya IVc (Lamberg-Karlovsky, 1970: fig. 24) in Kerman; Lal Shah (Biscione, 1987: 398, fig. 5, No. B), Miri Kalat IIIc (Didier, 2007: fig.9), and Kach Makran IIIb (Didier, 2007: 23, fig. 7, No. 3) in Pakistan.

XII. Conclusion

In this research, an attempt was made to provide a comprehensive insight into the Shahr-Draz site located in the Daman River basin, Iranshahr County, Baluchistan region of Iran. Then based on the pottery findings obtained from field surveys and excavations, the chronology of the site, and regional and extra-regional connections are to be evaluated. This research

was conducted based on archaeological field studies of this site in the summer and fall of 2020 and documentary studies. The Shahr-Draz site is located in the center and north of the Shahr-Draz village in the form of two relatively low mounds, separated from each other. The area of mound A is about 35 hectares and the area of mound B is about 1 hectare. It is necessary to mention that large parts of mound A have been severely destroyed based on the modern structures created by the residents of the Shahr-Draz village. In the second part of the research, the total pottery findings obtained from the surface survey and sounding to determine the core zone and propose the buffer zone of the Shahr-Draz site were 112 pieces, and all these pottery were subjected to statistical studies based on the type of piece, form, decoration, etc. The clay of all pottery is reinforced with sand particles. Some of the pottery is also decorated with geometric and animal motifs. 54 pieces of pottery were subjected to a typological comparative study, and it was found that the Shahr-Draz site was inhabited in all six periods of Bampur I-VI, i.e. during the fourth and third millennia BC. Further, the results indicated that the economic and cultural interactions between the Daman River basin and neighboring regions such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Makran, and Kerman have been almost continuous. These connections can be seen in the pottery art of the Shahr-Draz site with the neighboring regions during the Bronze Age. The typological comparisons of the pottery clearly show the similarity of the pottery of Shahr-Draz with that of the neighboring regions, especially the Bampur River basin. The great cultural connections between the Daman River basin and the Bampur River basin can be seen from the similarity of the pottery of the Shahr-Draz site with the sites of Bampur and the Khorab cemetery. In addition, the comparison of some pottery with that of Tepe Yahya sheds light on the connection of Shahr-Draz with Kerman and its western neighbors in the Bronze Age. The pottery comparable to that of the Sistan region (Iran and Afghanistan) also shows that the Shahr-Draz site was not only connected with the neighboring regions but also with the northern and eastern regions and beyond, with the lands of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Indus Valley. There has been communication. At the same time, these cultural and artistic similarities confirm the existence of a wide cultural and communication network throughout this region during the Bronze Age.

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