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Charpeh Ware: Introducing a Type of Dichrome Pottery on the Western Bank of Sefidrud, Gilan, Iran

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Abstract

The Sefidrud valley in Rudbar is host to a wealth of ancient mounds, cemeteries and settlements of varying sizes. Survey programs between 2006–2016 recorded and revisited 45 sites, most notable among them being Charpeh, a major site on the west bank of the Sefidrud. In the present study, the pottery sample from the site was classified as three distinct pottery types: red pottery (red-slipped), red and dark dichrome pottery (Charpeh Ware), and gray pottery. In the sample considered here, the second type (Charpeh Ware) was represented by 10 specimens (out of the total of 23 such surface finds) from the site of Charpeh and 7 instances from the excavated assemblage from Sharef. These examples were compared with dichrome and monochrome materials excavated from the Iron Age contexts of Rudbar, notably at Pilaghaleh of Marlik and Jamshidabad. The sample mainly consisted of polished pieces, dominated by rim sherds. Technical characteristics of the dichrome Charpeh ware and its comparison to the assemblages from the surrounding areas suggested it to be a distinctive type whose publication would contribute to the Iron Age pottery chronology of Gilan in general. Thus, the ceramics were categorized into six classes before examining their characteristics in terms of paste, temper, decoration, and form. Petrographic analyses on the dichrome pieces proved their manufacture from local soil sources. The dichromatic appearance of this ware was presumably meant to serve as decoration, and the high frequency of the material at Charpeh suggested the site a potential manufacturing center for the ware.

Keywords: Charpeh ware, Dichrom pottery, Iron age, Sefidrud valley, Rudbar.

ArticleType: Research Article

Introduction

Iranian Iron Age was initially divided into 3 discrete period of Iron I, Iron II, and Iron III, spanning 1500 BCE to 500 BCE. To this original chronological scheme, L. Levine would later introduce a fourth component, the Iron IV, which covered the Achaemenid and the early Parthian period (Tala'i 2007: 55). Due to the high iron content of the regional sedimentary soil and the red slip applied by the potters, ceramic assemblages deriving from excavations and surface surveys of the Iron Age sites in Gilan are dominated by red pottery, with the second largest category in quantity being gray pottery. Related pieces come in a variety of utilitarian, ritual, and singular or composite anthropo-/zoomorphic forms. Introducing a new type (di-chrome ware) can mark a milestone in the regional Iron Age pottery chronology.

Through long experimentations and application of enough heat, early potters managed to transform the natural clay into a solid material that has survived in archaeological record since the Neolithic era. Having bequeathed ceramic artifacts from the Late Bronze to the Islamic period, potters of Gilan were no exception in going through all those advances, and the Charpeh ware introduced here could be

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related to this same process. While the ancient caves in Gilan such as Darband, Malahan, Yershalman, Kakrud, and Hasht Dari have failed to yield any prehistoric pottery preceding the late Bronze, more thorough and systematic investigations might provide such evidence, which would facilitate the identification of regional prehistoric ceramics. Although its natural geography and rugged terrain imposed serious limitations on long-distance interactions and trade, pottery comparisons evince contacts with several centers and regions such as Sialk, Gheytariyeh, Germi, Ardabil and Lurestan.

The clay objects from the regional sites indicate contacts with neighboring communities, further evidence for which comes from the parallels in various vessel types and decorations.

State of the Question

Apart from a surface survey carried out as part of the first author (Ali Kazemi)'s master thesis "Archaeological Study and Survey of Parthian Remains and Sites in the Sefidrud Valley of Rudbar County" in 2010, the present study draws on the reports of several domestic and joint international teams that worked in the region in the 2000s.

Of the total of 45 sites Ali Kazemi identified over the area extending between Imamzadeh Hashem and the village of Aliabad in Rudbar, 19 contained materials diagnostic of the Iron Age and the Parthian period associated with those spanning as early as the late second millennium B.C. to the Islamic times. As it is true with many archaeological studies where pottery plays the first and foremost role in chronological determination especially from the Neolithic period onwards, the present work builds on surface pottery, which represents the best choice in pinpointing the approximate date and nature of the sites. In addition to the distinct dichromic pottery, Charpeh has produced an array of different ware types. These types will also be examined and explicated alongside presenting and exploring the attributes of the new type and comparing it to assemblages from across the Sefidrud valley.

Objectives and Importance of the Research

The main objective is to ascertain, study and present a yet little known type of dichrome[1] ware from the Iron Age Rudbar, Gilan. The publication of the ware may enhance the regional Iron Age ceramic chronology, and its comparative analysis may be of some help to future excavations.

Questions and Hypotheses

1. Is this dichrome ware a disparate type native to the Sefidrud Valley? When did it emerge?
2. Where did it originate, and was the dichromatic appearance intended as decoration?
3. Does the ware occurs simply among the surface scatters or it is also present in archaeological record?
4. Can it be considered as a transitional type between the red and gray wares, or vice versa?

Research Methods

The study builds on both library and field research. Apart from documenting in photographs and recording the precise location of Charpeh using GPS, a descriptive report was prepared, a sketch of its precise location was made, and the collected ceramics where documented in photographs and tabular descriptions for later studies. The pottery from the site was classified by surface color into the three categories of red, dichrome, and gray before their specifications such as temper, decoration and form were characterized. Finally came a typology and comparison of the dichrome ware. Sketching and plotting the location of ancient sites on 1:25000 maps along with aerial imagery were done using Microsoft Word and Photoshop solutions.

And, given the importance of the documentation of the dichrome Charpeh ware in archaeological deposits, the seven instances of such pieces that have been recovered from the test trenches opened as part of the project for demarcating the buffer zone of the Iron Age site of Sharef have been published.

Research History

The archaeological site of Charpeh was first identified in the course of the survey by a joint Iranian-Japanese team, who reported from it materials that spanned in date the pre-Islamic period to the Islamic times (Tadahiko *et al.* 2004: 19). A

[1]Unlike the commonly known bichrome ceramics typically defined by decorations painted in two different colors, the particular pottery type designated and introduced as "dichrome" here is characterized by different colors of the exterior and interior surfaces on a single vessel. Thus, the term dichrome is an intentional choice to distinguish this disparate pottery from well-known bichrome categories.

year later, B. Hamrang visited the site as part of his reconnaissance survey of Rudbar County, dating it to the historical and Islamic periods (Hamrang 2006: 9). Revising the site in 2010 as part of the investigation of the Parthian sites in the Sefidrud valley, the recorded material was described as dating from the Iron Age to the Parthian period (Kazemi 2010: 269).

Geographic Location of Charpeh

Among the known sites in northern Rostamabad and northeastern Rudbar, Charpeh stands out for its open-air character and the presence of three ceramic types, most notably the Charpeh ware. Situated at N = 36-55-2.39 and E = 049-29-4.32, the site is 3 km north of Rostamabad, 18 km northeast of Rudbar, 1 km northeast of Koker, 1 km east of Imamzadeh Taher, and 1 km south of Gazkul. It lies 2.5 km from the Tehran-Rasht transit road, and a steep dirt road connects it to Nourabad of Shamam (Figure. 1; Kazemi 2010: 295).

The site has a flat, fertile surface, and enjoys a favorable foothill climate. A further notable feature is its proximity to the three ancient sites: the Iron I site of Jamshidabad to the north, the Parthian and 1st millennium B.C. site of Shamam (Kandan) to the west, and the cemetery and settlement site of Tepe Kaluraz to the south (Figure. 2). Charpeh is flanked on the south and west by an ancient cemetery now heavily damaged by clandestine diggings (Figure. 3.a).

Open-Air Site of Charpeh

The site is distinguished from the aforementioned neighboring cemeteries by its open-air character and diversified surface pottery. Its surface is currently used for dry farming, horticulture and livestock raising. In fact, the use of this uneven terrace for several different purposes have played a role in the severe disruption and disturbance of its surface archaeological evidence (Figure. 4).

Charpeh obtained its water from three springs that rise to the south, southwest and southeast within 200 to 600 m of the site. They have obviously persisted from hoary antiquity until the present as their sunken canals and recharge basins indicate. Scattered over the site are calcareous soils and small and large stones. Regarding the location of the site, this part of the flat and semi-flat terraces were possibly deemed the most favorable by local semi-nomadic peoples to locate their winter camps. A fact distinguishing Charpeh from the remaining

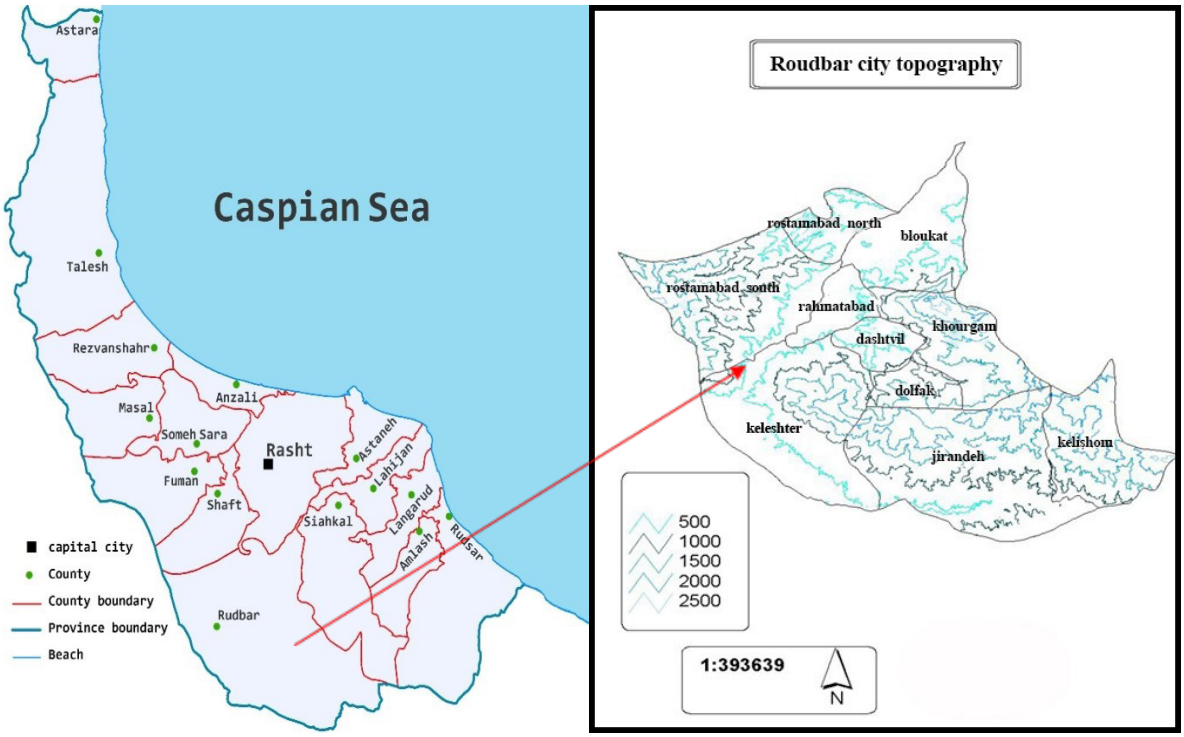


Figure. 1: *Maps showing the counties of Gilan Province (left) and the districts and rural districts of Rudbar County (right) (Kazemi et al. 2010: 44)*

sites in the western and eastern Sefidrud valley is the existence of 3 pottery types dating to the Iron Age, with notable distributions of the dichrome and gray varieties.

Ceramics

The sample considered here, which consists of 3 distinct types, is similar to other assemblages in some respects while utterly differs from them in others (Figure. 3b). The available Iron Age materials in Rudbar deriving from such sites as Kaluraz, Sharef and Juban occur generally in red, brown, light brown or black surface color, with the assemblages predominated by polished and slipped red pottery either simple or bearing undulating patterns, rope appliqués and incised patterns.

While in the entire sample from Charpeh are seen attributes specific in several respects, the Charpeh pottery marks outstanding peculiarities.

Pottery Classification by Surface Color

Red Pottery (Red-slipped)

Related pieces are generally wheel-made of buff clay with mineral temper associated with fine lime particles. A thick coating of red slip was typically applied to both surfaces. Surface is usually polished and glossy, and the rim is out-turned. Parallels occur in Parthian assemblages from northern Iran (Haerinck 1997: 171–175; Fahimi 2002: 122). It closely resembles the pottery at other Iron Age and historical sites surveyed by the authors, among them being Sharef 1, Filideh, and Nahreposht of Jukin. Yet, the paste and temper at Charpeh are much finer. Regarding the surface color, the potter probably applied ashes on parts of the vessel before placing it in the kiln, thus adding patches of pale or dark brown to the otherwise dull surface, though red still remained as the dominant color. Indeed, it is also quite possible that the color variation is instead an upshot of the fluctuating burnishing or polishing pressure.

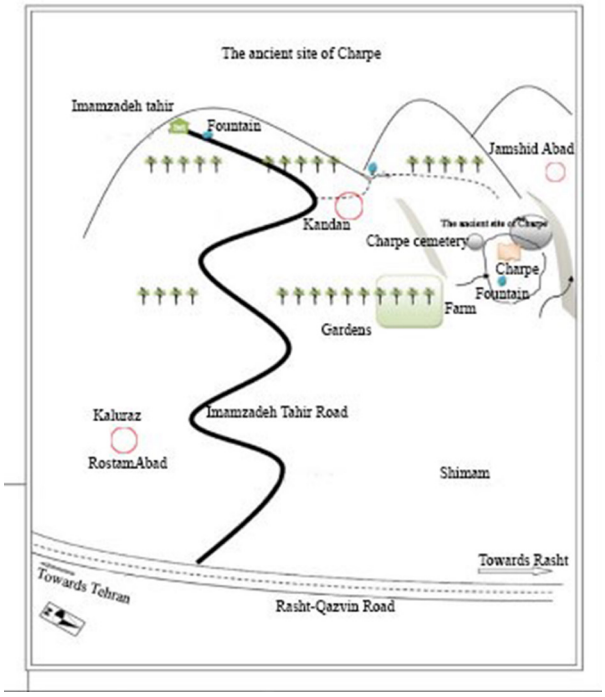


Figure. 2: *Sketch map showing location of Charpeh (Kazemi et al. 2010: 284)*

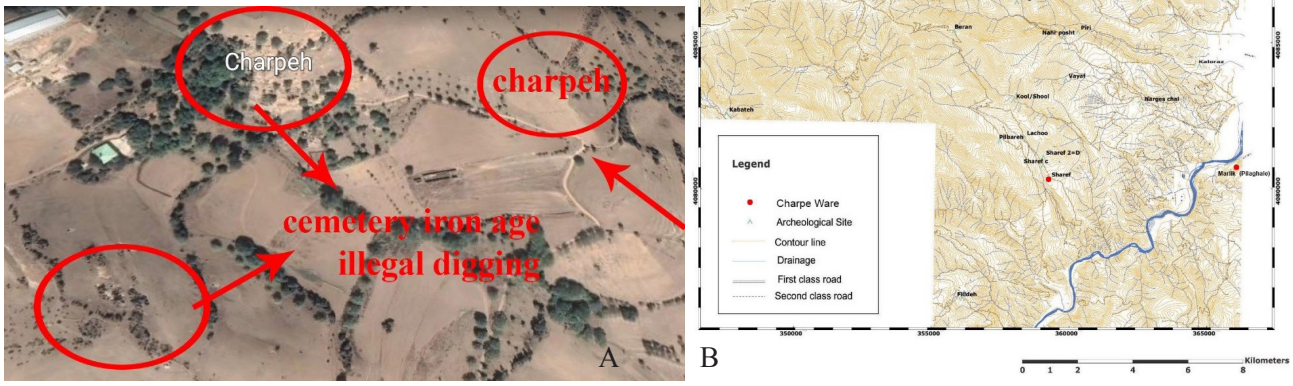


Figure. 3: *a) Aerial photo of Charpeh (After: Google earth, depicted on 5 June 2010); b) Topographic map showing the distribution of sites with Charpeh Ware*



Figure. 4: *General view of the archaeological site of Charpeh, view from south (Kazemi et al. 2010: 283)*

Red and Dark Dichrome Pottery (Charpeh Ware) This wheel-made pottery is made of pale brown clay containing a fine temper. An interesting point is the bicolor nature of the vessels in that one surface (usually the exterior) bears a thick red slip while the other is coated in a dark gray slip. Both surfaces are highly polished and glossy. Once this rare ware was identified, attempts were made to spot related pieces across the Sefidrud valley to determine its distribution both in quantity and quality, resulting in the identification of a few sites in both western and eastern valley. The material tends to be fine and display a hard, consistent fabric (Kazemi 2010: 297). It may safely be tagged as Charpeh Ware given its abundance at this site. Such pieces are characterized by slightly flaring upright lips. Similar lip forms in the Parthian assemblages from northern Iran such as Shahpir (Haerinck 1997: 174) indicate the persistence of the lip type.

Identical material, both in form and dichrome surfaces, have been recovered, occasionally in abundance, by excavations across the valley, a fact that has facilitated and substantiated the dating of this ware to a great extent. In particular, large quantities of similar material was recorded in the course of excavations aimed at demarcating the buffer zone of the Iron I cemeteries of Jamshidabad (Fallahian 2006: 132 and 115; p. 94, Figs. 195–196, drawing 3: 20, catalog table 3-4, rows 3, 5, 7; p. 99, catalog 3-4, rows 19, 22; p. 101, catalog 3-4, rows 17 and 19; p. 87, catalog number 3-4, row 1; p. 105, catalog number 3-4, rows 14, 19, 20; p. 106, catalog number 3-4, row 2). The pottery would further come up in the excavations effected to define the buffer zone of Sharef (Bagherian 2014: surface finds no. 1; T.T1, no. 2; T.T2, no. 3; T.T3, no. 4; T.T5, nos. 5, 7; T.T7, no. 6), and during the stratigraphic excavations at Pilaghaleh of Marlik (Bagherian 2011: nos. 023, 024, 097). (In the test excavations at all these three sites, the first author was present as a team member).

In his 1961 excavation at Pilaghaleh, Negahban had recovered examples of this pottery in Trench M, Levels 1 to 12. Furthermore, in a paper dealing with the typology of Iron Age ceramics from Pilaghaleh, this ware is categorized as a type of red and gray pottery, "where either gray or red alternated as the predominant surface color, or each of the two colors appeared on different surfaces of a single vessel" (Naghshineh 2011: 76). The author postulates that it was as an accidental variation in color, caused by uneven firing (2011: 76).

Now, in view of these comparisons from the Iron Age contexts of Pilaghaleh, Sharef and Jamshidabad, how we should date Charpeh Ware? If we see it as a pottery tradition having its roots in prehistoric period, two hypotheses will then arise:

A) It developed out of earlier pottery traditions and earlier experiences.

B) As an ingenious invention, it emerged utterly independently, and would later decline and gradually change into a monotone pottery coated in thick red slip, examples of which abound throughout Rudbar.

Yet, given the association of this ware type with gray and red wares in the Iron I deposits at Jamshidabad, Kaluraz, Shahran, Sharef and Marlik, a third, albeit less plausible, hypothesis might also spring to mind: The potter had first managed to achieve a gray interior on a traditionally red pottery. Fascinated by this attainment, he had then sought to repeat the same color for the exterior through manipulating firing temperature and reduction timing.

While the latter seems rather improbable, the point of and the reason for posing the above hypotheses is how and why the interior was made into dark and gray (smudged and occasionally black-slipped), while the exterior was either red or coated in a thick red slip.

Thus, one may logically assume that the dichrome ware was an upshot of the reduction process when smoke and carbon increased within the kiln, resulting in the darkened color, or using technical terms, in the conversion of ferric (red) to ferrous (black) oxide to obtain more oxygen. Then presumably a second firing followed after a false coating of clay or mixture of clay and minerals or perhaps ash was applied to the exterior, so that only the interior would turn gray. Once removed from the kiln, this extra coating was taken away and both surfaces were then polished.

So, based on the above discussions and given its fine and sturdy structure, Charpeh Ware was probably a particular favorite of local potters, who, having already passed the trial and error stage, made use of this technique unequivocally for decoration purposes to add a flavor to the traditional, commonplace red or gray ceramics that typified Gilan and Rudbar in the second and first millennia B.C. Hence, it perhaps marked a great artistic achievement at the time. Based on available publications, this dichrome ware remains unattested in Gilan or any other parts of Iran as of present.

Large amounts of sherds belonging to this ware are scattered over the surface of Charpeh, but only 10 pieces are introduced as part of the sample considered here. Discovery of a lid fragment and a handmade body fragment in two red and black colors (Figure. 5a: 13; Figure. 5b: 9) leaves no doubt about the local expertise in the use of the technique and, to some extent, also about its application for decorative purposes. This also applies to other examined ceramics, where the vessels are divided between two exactly equal black and brick red surfaces.

In some cases, one surface bears a dark (generally black) slip that was certainly an intentional application. This observation rules out to a great extent the accidence hypothesis, suggesting that the dichrome ware represented a decorative technique or the involved vessels were there to serve a particular purpose. Thanks to its high gloss and polish, the fragments in this ware have a shiny appearance and show up quite clearly. The recorded pieces include rim, body and base fragments, and spouts or other such attachments were lacking (Figure. 5a,b; Figure. 6a, b; Figure. 7; Figure. 8; table 1). Apart the surface material from the site of Charpeh, seven excavated related pieces from Sharef are also published here.

Gray Pottery

Occurrence of gray ceramics at Charpeh is particularly important as the material is totally absent from the Sefidrud valley apart from Kaluraz (Jalaliyeh) and the smudged and polished material at Sharef 1 and Dogamiyan (which generally served cooking or burial purposes). In the eastern valley (as far as the survey coverage extended) no gray pottery was recorded except for a few localities such as Marlik, Pilaghaleh and Shahran.

Gray ware occurs at Kaluraz (about 5 km from Charpeh) in the form of animal figurines and wheeled animals bearing multiple connected vessels and pulling chariots, and is attested at Marlik (10 km from Charpeh) by generally burnished pateras, bowls, spouted jars, zebus, and multiple connected vessels (Neghaban 1999). At other sites like "Amlash," Dilaman, Amarlou, Tomajan and Pirkuh, it was used for human and animal figurines (Tohidi 1999: 147–48). The Iron Age contexts at Ghalekuti of Eshkavar, Ghalekuti of Dilaman, and Ghiasabad Cemetery have produced ceramics in gray surface color (table. 2).

At Jamshidabad, gray pottery accounted for about 36% of the total assemblage, while the number is 82% for Sialk A, 80% for Khorvin, 40% for Hasanlu, 71% for Dinkha, 23% for Giyan, and 20% for Haftavan (Fallahian 2003: 221). Hence, Jamshidabad lies almost in the middle of the frequency spectrum for this pottery. This relative abundance implies the possible manufacturing of gray pottery at places lying close to this cemetery, Kaluraz and even Marlik. As stated above, the



Figure. 5: *a) Charpeh: Interior of the Iron Age ceramics; b) Charpeh: Exterior of the Iron Age ceramics*

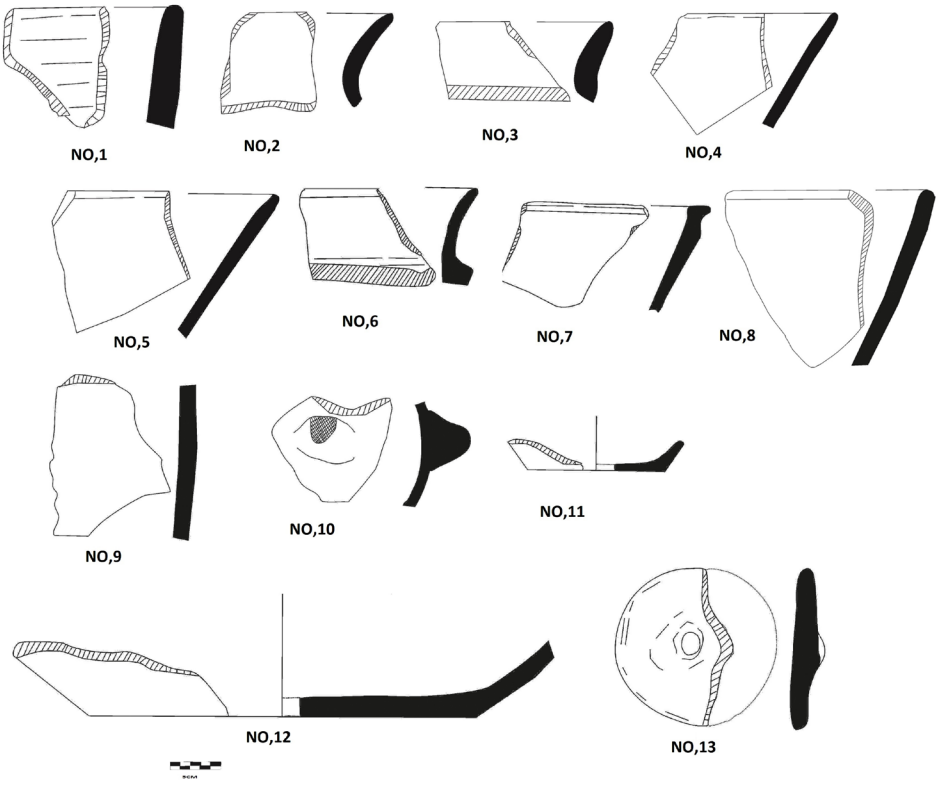


Figure. 6: *Drawings of the sherds in Figure. 5*



Figure. 7: *Charpeh: Iron Age and other historical ceramics*

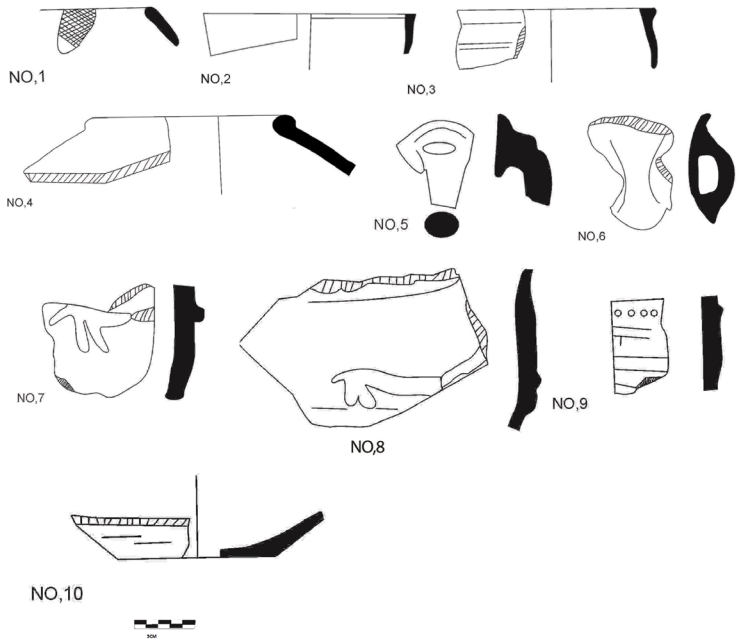


Figure. 8: *Drawings of sherds in Figure. 7 (Kazemi et al. 2010: 287)*

Table. 1: *Specifications of the pottery from Charpeh*

No.	Firing	Piece type	Temper	Int. color	Ext. color	Comparanda	Illust. of comparanda
1	adequate	lip	fine grit with medium black and white sand	red	black	Naghshineh 2010: p. 85, drawing 2, fig. 17	
						Fallahian 2006: p. 153, drawing 3: 127	
2	adequate	lip	fine grit with medium black and white sand	black	red	Naghshineh 2010: p. 85, drawing 2, fig. 16	
						Fallahian 2006: p. 152, drawing 3: 122	
3	adequate	lip	fine grit with medium black and white sand and white calcareous particles	black	red	Fallahian 2006: pl. 152, drawing 3: 126	
						Bagherian 2011, Pilaghaleh, no. 109	-
						Naghshineh 2010: drawing 1, no. 15	
4	adequate	lip	fine mineral	black	brownish	Bagherian 2011: Pilaghaleh no. 147	
						Bagherian 2011: Pilaghaleh no. 147	-
						Naghshineh 2010: p. 85, drawing 2, no. 27	
5	adequate	lip	fine mineral	black	brownish	Fallahian 2006: p. 140, drawings 3: 64; 3: 49	
						Bagherian 2011: Pilaghaleh no. 147	-
						Naghshineh 2010: p. 85, drawing 2, fig. 28	-
6	adequate	lip	grit with white and black medium sand	black	red	Fallahian 2006: p. 152, drawing 3: 126	
						Bagherian 2011: Pilaghaleh no. 109	-
						Naghshineh 2010: p. 85, drawing 2, fig. 17	
7	adequate	lip	sand with white calcareous particles	pale gray	pale gray (horizontal fluting beneath the rim)	Fallahian 2006: p. 152, drawing 3: 123	
						Naghshineh 2010: p. 86, drawing 3, no. 36	
8	adequate	lip	sand	black	black	Fallahian 2006: pp. 144, 146, 154, drawings 3: 83; 3: 95; 3: 137	-
						Naghshineh 2010: p. 85, drawing 2: no. 27	
9	adequate	lip	grit with white and dark particles	black	red-dark (dichrome)	Fallahian 2006: p. 137, drawing 3: 53	
						Bagherian 2011: Pilaghaleh no. 097	
10	adequate	footed base	sand	black	brick red	Fakkahian 2006: pp. 148–149, drawings 3: 109; 3: 11	
11	adequate	base	sand	black	red	Fallahian 2006: p. 125, drawing 2: 4	
						Naghshineh 2010: p. 84, drawing 1, no. 11	
12	poor	base	sand	black	dark	Naghshineh 2010: p. 84, drawing 1, no. 11	
						Fallahian 2006: drawing 3: 44, drawing 1	-
13	adequate	lid	-	dichrome decoration	dichrome decoration	Bagherian 2011: pl. 097	

Table. 2: *Specifications of the pottery from Charpeh*

No.	Piece type	paste color	Temper	Slip	Int. color	Ext. color	Manufacture	Firing	Decoration	Comparanda	Illust. of comparanda
1	Rim	Gray	Fine mineral	Thick slip	Black	Black	Wheel-made	adequate	geometric (lozenge)	Haerinck 1997: p. 178, fig. 27, no. 10	
										Naghshineh 2010: p. 86, drawing 3, no. 37	
										Fallahian 2006: p. 132, drawing 3: 28	
2	Rim	Gray	Fine mineral	Clay	pale brown	pale brown	Wheel-made	poor	plain	Fallahian 2006: p. 144, drawing 3: 83	
										Fallahian 2006: p. 139, drawing 3: 63	
3	Rim	pale brick red	Mineral: black and red medium sand, lime particles	Thick slip	Dark red	Dark red	Wheel-made	adequate	plain	Naghshineh 2010: p. 86, drawing 3, no. 26	
										Fallahian 2006: p. 136, drawing 3: 46	
4	Rim	Pale brown	Fine mineral	Clay	Pale brown	Pale brown	Wheel-made	adequate	plain	Fallahian 2006: p. 140, drawing 3: 65; p. 146: drawing 3: 92	
											
5	Handle	brick red	Fine mineral	Clay	brick red	brick red	handmade	adequate	incised	Naghshineh 2010: p. 85, drawing 2, no. 28	
										Fallahian 2006: p. 53, drawing 3: 131	 Fallahian  Tadahiko
										Tadahiko et al, 2002, p. 39, fig 55	
6	Handle	Gray	Mineral: lime, medium sand	Clay	-	pale red	handmade	poor	plain	Naghshineh 2010: p. 85, drawing 2, fig. 17	
										Fallahian 2006: p. 142, drawing 3: 78	
7	Body	Gray	Mineral: medium sand, lime	Clay	brick red	pale red	Wheel-made	poor	Applied zoomorphic (dog)	Fallahian 2006: p. 147, drawing 3: 102	
8	Body	Gray	Mineral: medium sand, lime	Clay	brick red	brown	Wheel-made	poor	Applied zoomorphic (dog)	Fallahian 2006: p. 147, drawing 3: 102	
9	Body	Gray	Fine mineral	Clay	Pale brick red	light red	Wheel-made	poor	applique	Fahimi 2002:p. 125, fig. 2; Fallahian 2006: p. 140, drawing 3: 67	 Fallahian
										Kleiss-1970: p. 165, abb. 27; Tadahiko et al. 2002: fig. 50	 Kleiss  keall
										Keall, 1981: pp. 40–54	
10	Base	brick red	Fine mineral and lime particles	Clay	Pale brick red	light red	handmade	poor	plain	Haerinck 1997: fig. 27, no. 3	
										Naghshineh 2010: p. 84, drawing 1, no. 11	
										Fallahian 2006, p. 136, drawing 3: 44	

surface surveys on both sides of the Sefidrud valley failed to attest gray pottery at this frequency and diversity at any other locality, and Charpeh contains almost the largest assemblage of this type. Here, such vessels are often adequately fired and robust. Lips tend to be upright. Some black-slipped examples are present (Figure. 9).

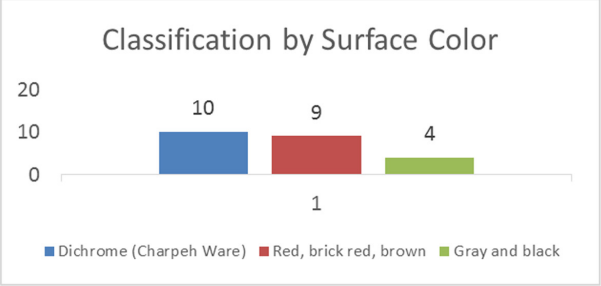


Figure. 9: *Charpeh: Pottery frequency in the studied sample by surface color*

Pottery Classification by Technical Characteristics

Fabric and Temper

Tempering materials are generally fine minerals, including fine grits, and medium and fine sand. Firing is adequate, and an even and robust texture is seen in both cross-section and surface. Petrographic analyses revealed holes in the clay matrix, which may have resulted from firing.

Results of Petrographic Observation

At the request of the rudbar Cultural Heritage Office (Ali Kazemi), the results of the petrographic test of "Zamin Riz Kavan" Co. for microscopic analysis of two pieces of pottery from the Iron Age site Charpeh were performed as follows.

Constituents: Three types of inclusions were detected: igneous (pyroxene, feldspar and quartz), sedimentary (bioclastic carbonate components and igneous rock components), and secondary minerals (iron or possibly pyrite).

Texture: Inclusions are characterized by poor roundness and sorting, and low textural and compositional maturity. The matrix is fine-grained with the grains scattered through it.

Description: Presence of large amounts of inclusions prone to weathering, and their angularity and poor sorting bespeak extraction of the clay from nearby sources. Clay matrix contains voids probably from the firing process. Figures 10 and 11 illustrate the analyzed specimens before and after cutting.

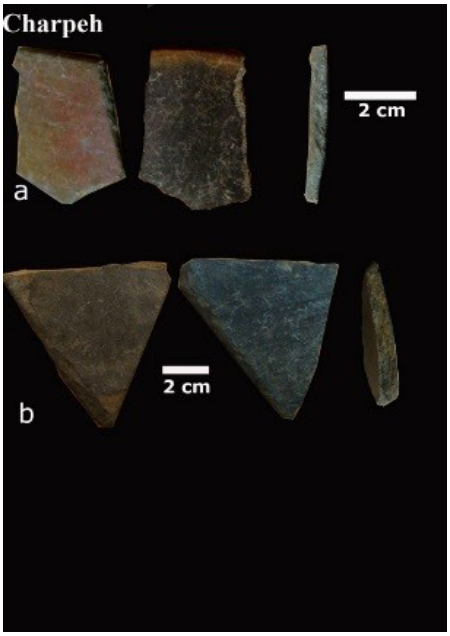


Figure. 10: *Charpeh: Petrographic samples (fragments "a" and "b") in Charpeh Ware before cutting*

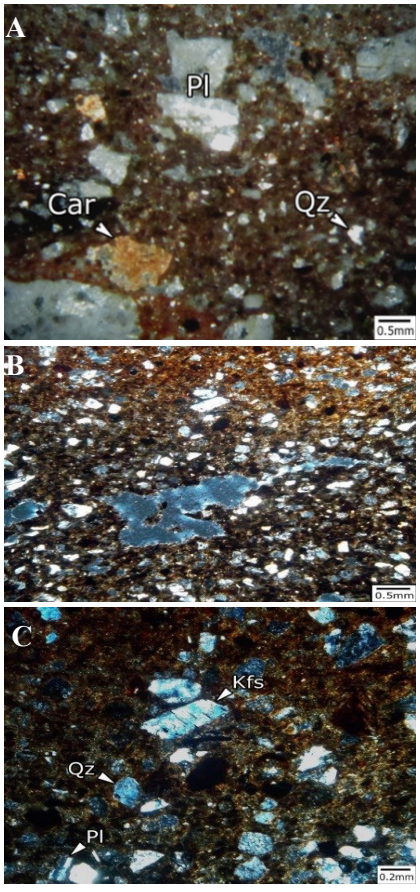


Figure. 11: *Micrographs of the sample in Charpeh Ware: a) Fragment "a" containing poorly sorted plagioclase, carbonate and fine quartz. b) Fragment "b" showing inclusions distribution across the clay matrix, c) A closer view of the thin-section showing the alkaline feldspar, quartz and plazioclase inclusions scattered through the fine-grained matrix.*

Decoration

While being quite rare in the assemblage from Charpeh, the following decorations were identified:
1. Incised, applied ropes (in small numbers), and applied zoomorphic motifs (2 example), and
2. Polished red slip applied to both exterior and interior surfaces.

Incised rope appliques were only attested by 3 instances. They often occur in the Iron I contexts at Jamshidabad (Fallahian 2006: p. 140, drawing 3.67) and Pilaghaleh of Marlik (Bagherian 2011: no. 155) as well as the Parthian assemblages from the region (Fahimi 2002: 120). While the motif was in use since the Bronze through the Iron Age and even the Islamic centuries, in this region it is more often found at the Iron and Parthian sites. Thus it is close resembles the Parthian material from Filideh (Fahimi 2002: 125, pl. 1: 1, 5) and from other centers such as Dogamian (Kazemi 2010: 199–220), Jalalieh (Khalatbari 2008: 257, pl. 10), Qal'eh-i Yazdigird (Keall and Keall 1981) and Turang Tepe (Lecomte 1987), and often find strong parallels at Bisotun (Kleiss 1970). Presence of two applied animal motifs akin to dogs might indicate potter's particular care to the decoration of pottery at Charpeh, as decoration is typically rare in Gilan. These applied motifs resemble those in the Iron deposits at Jamshidabad (Fallahian 1385: p. 140, drawing 102.3). As stated earlier, the vessels in all 3 pottery types at Charpeh are generally polished and show a smooth, shiny surface (Figure. 5a, b; Figure. 7: 1, 2, 3), thus resembling the materials from Marlik, Pilaghaleh, Jamshidabad, Kaluraz, and Sharef.

The red slip on Charpeh pieces is thick, reaching about 0.5 mm. The types that are slipped on both surfaces are elegant and strikingly colored, contrasting those from Filideh where the slip is restricted simply to a single part of the vessel such as the rim (see Fahimi 2004: figs. 43, 44, 53). In this respect, the Charpeh material finds strong parallels at Dogamian, Jalalieh, and Sharef 1. The examples of gray pottery are polished and have smoothed surfaces. In one case, a black slip was applied to a bright gray vessel. A fine incised design was attested as geometric, lozenge, motif (Table. 2; Figure. 12; Kazemi 2010: 268).

Profile

The 3 pottery types recorded at Charpeh share certain similarities. In general, rims show the widest

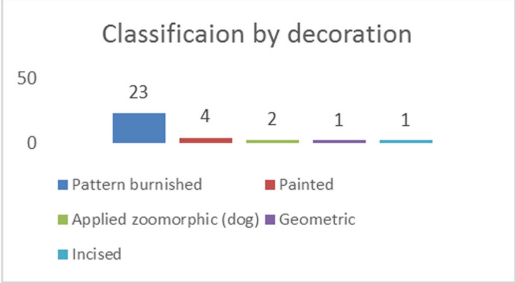


Figure. 12: *Charpeh: Pottery frequency in the studied sample by decoration*

variations, though it is perceptible only upon close examination.

In all types, upright lips predominate. Yet, flared forms or those associated with a horizontal fluting also occur. Both upright and flaring types joined the body at a slight angle. Charpeh lips closely resemble those on the Iron Age pottery of Jamshidabad (Fallahian 2006: 119), Pilaghaleh of Marlik (Naghshineh 2011: 84, Drawing 1: nos. 15, 16, 17), and Talesh (Khalatbari 2004: 73, pl. 42). A precise date is rather difficult to ascertain for this rather generic type. It frequently occurs in the Iron Age and also early Parthian assemblages (Haerinck 1997: 175).

Base, with only 2 or 3 attestations, is a rather poorly represented piece type in the entire surface assemblage from Charpeh (Kazemi 2010: 267). A very intriguing instance is the red-slipped footed base in black clay (Figure. 13: 10), which is paralleled by the Iron I material of Jamshidabad (Fallahian 2006: 116, figs. 206, 207, 208).

Again attested by simply 2 instances, the angled handles were attached on the body (Kazemi 2010: 268).

Generally speaking, the available piece types at Charpeh are mostly indicative of large vessels alongside a couple of medium and smaller forms (Figure. 13).

Typology of Pottery from Charpeh

Jars

The typology offered here rests on rim, base, handle, body, and lid fragments as well as decorations as no examples of whole vessels occur in the collected assemblage.

Jars have long upright, slightly flaring lips and relatively narrow openings. Related forms occur

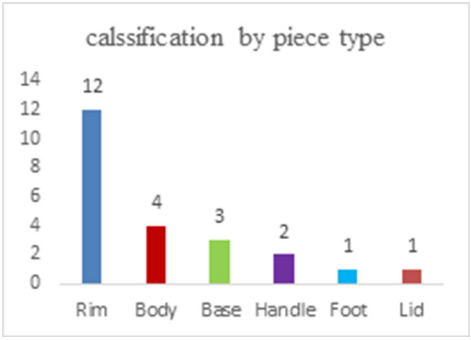


Figure. 13: *Charpeh : Pottery frequency in the studied sample by piece type*

in two smaller and larger varieties, and are wheel-made and fairly robust. Such fragments generally consist of the rim and its carinated transition to the body. Jars are often of the dichrome Charpeh Ware type, and are unattested in the remaining pottery types (Figure. 5: 1, 2, 3, 6; Figure. 6). Related forms occur at Jamshidabad (Fallahian 2003: p. 230, no. 9; p. 236, fig. 5), Ghalekuti (Fukai *et al.*1965: pl. LIX: 2), Marlik (Negahban 1996, fig. 20: 525–526) and Pilaghaleh (Naghshineh 2010: 84–85, Drawing 1: 15; Drawing 16: 2, 17).

Bowl

Lip in this formal type joins the body with a slight angle. In the vessels in gray pottery, which are larger in diameter, the body gets narrower as it approaches the lip. Quite contrarily, in the examples in the dichrome ware the lip is finer than the body, which extends down towards the base at a slightly more angle. Despite their slight flaring, these bowls are categorized as forms with upright lips.

The pieces generally display a smooth, polished and glossy surface. A black instance bears lozenge patterns and a black slip (Figure. 5a, b: 4, 5, 6; Figure. 6; Figure. 7: 1; Figure. 8). Lozenges find parallels in the Iron Age contexts of Rudbar at Jamshidabad (Fallahian 2006: 115, fig. 195: 7), Pilaghaleh (Naghshineh 2010: 86, Drawing 3: 37; Bagherian 2011: nos. 007, 009, 100). The lip type occurs at Pilaghaleh (Naghshineh 2010: 85, Drawing 2: 27–28; Bagherian 2011: nos. 001, 009, 010, 012, 036, 108), and Marlik (Negahban 1996: pl. 116: 633; fig. 25: 572, 573, 575). While no spout fragment is available, these vessels are closely comparable in from and lip type to the spouted vessels of Pilaghaleh and Marian of Talesh (Naghshineh 2010: 85, Drawing 2: 29; Khalatbari 2004: p. 82, pl. 1 and 3 top; p. 83: no. 10 bottom).

Fluted Bowls

Only 2 pieces of such bowls is represented by rim pieces that also preserve parts of the body. These bowls are distinguished by a horizontal fluting beneath the slightly flaring lip. The pieces show adequate firing and are medium in size (Figure. 5 a, b: 7; Figure. 6, Figure. 7: 3; Figure. 8). Purportedly, such vessels were recovered in the course of Bagherian's sounding and Negahban's excavation at the Iron Age site of Pilaghaleh (see Naghshineh 2010: 86, Drawing 3: 35–37). At Pilaghaleh, pattern burnishing is quite evident (Bagherian 2011: no. 097).

Open Plates

Defined by base pieces, this formal type had originally quite wide mouths. The base-body transition was marked by a sharp carination at almost 180 degrees. Examples of such bases occur in all 3 pottery types at Charpeh. Firing is adequate, and the bases are of enough sturdiness (Figure. 5a, b: 11, 12; Figure. 6; Figure. 7; Figure. 8: 10). Related forms have been reported from Pilaghaleh of Marlik, Jamshidabad and other localities (Naghshineh 2010: Drawing 2, p. 85, no. 11; Bagherian 2011: 100–118; Egami et al 1965: pl. LII: 25; Negahban 1996: fig. 29, pl. 114: 618–622; Fallahian 2003: p. 230, no. 9; p. 236, Fig. 9; Fallahian 2006: 148, Drawing 3: 111).

Footed Pitchers

The type, which typically come in tripod form, is represented in the whole assemblage by a single example in dichrome Charpeh ware. The adequately fired piece bears a pattern burnished decoration. Such pitchers are common in the Parthian period as well as the Iron Age. The known examples usually have slender handles, thin lips, a narrow mouth, and an elongated neck. Through a carination giving it a carafe-like appearance, the body joins the flat and occasionally rounded base, where it ends in three, 2 or 3 cm long, projecting feet (Figure. 5 a, b: 10; Figure. 6). A notable Iron Age site with this type is Jamshidabad (Fallahian 2006: p. 116, figs. 206, 207, 208: 32, Drawings 3.109, 3.110, 3.113).

Pithoi

The exact original form is unknown, and only a rim and a body fragment are available, which point to a pithos form. The lip is thick and flares

out from body, so that it can be used as a handle for carrying the vessel. The angular body forms a sphere (Figure. 7: 4; Figure. 8). The single attested instance at Charpeh compares with forms at the Iron Age Jamshidabad (Fallahian 2006: p. 146, drawing 3.92, figs. 206–207; p. 116, no. 33, fig. 202: 6, drawing 3.65, fig. 209: 8, drawing 3.119, p. 151), and is similar to the pithoi from Pilaghaleh of Marlik (Naghshineh 2010: drawing 2, pp. 85, nos. 18–20).

Sounding at Sharef

As an excavated site yielding an indispensable in situ assemblage of the Charpeh Ware, an outline of the sounding work at Sharef, attended by the first author as a team member, is given below.

Dominating the valley and river of Savara, the archaeological mound of Sharef is 7 km away from the heights of Luyeh Neighborhood and 10 km NW of the city of Rudbar next to fertile lands, at N=36-51-28 and E=049-25-16.9, at an elevation above sea level of 760 m. Around the mound occur simple inhumation and megalithic burials, and the layers on top of the mound show evidence of firing and ash (Figures. 14, 15, 16). The site was identified by the joint team of Iran and Japan in 2002 (Nokandeh and Fahimi 2002: 36), and was revisited by the present authors in 2010 (Kazemi 2010: 95). In 2014, the buffer zone of the mound was determined by M Bagherian (with the first author as a team member) through opening eight 2 x 2 m test trenches (Bagherian, unpublished)(Figures. 17, 18, 19, 20). The fieldwork recorded stones used as part of grave structure, lithic tools, and dichrome pottery (Figures. 21, 22; Table. 3).



Figure. 14: *General view of Sharef, view from south*



Figure. 15: *Aerial image of Sharef*
(After: Google earth, depicted on 5 June 2010))

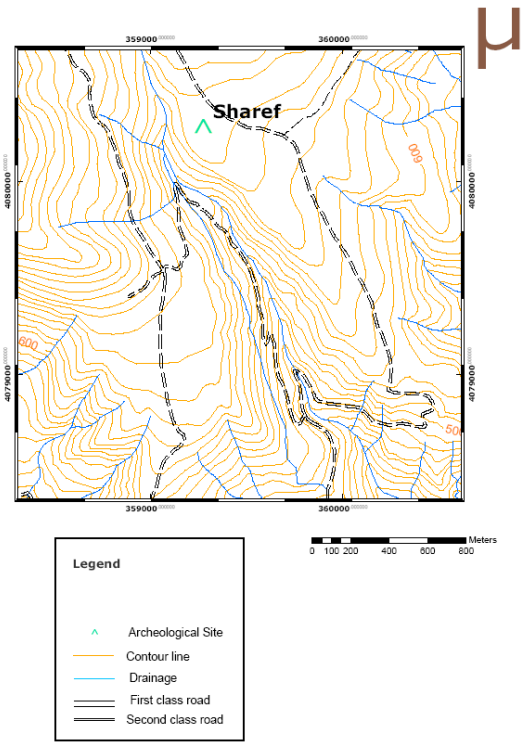


Figure. 16: *Location of the cemetery of Sharef and the nearby features on a 1:25000 map*



Figure. 17: *Sharef: Test Trench 1*

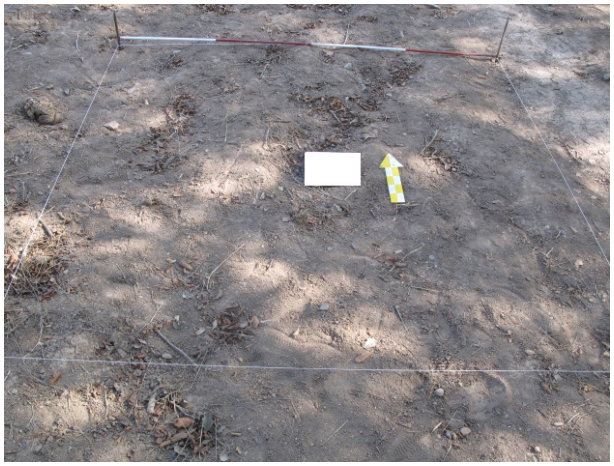


Figure. 18: *Sharef: Test Trench 2*



Figure. 19: *Sharef: Test Trench 5*



Figure. 20: *Sharef: Test Trench 7*



Figure. 21: *Sharef: Interior of the sherds in Charpeh ware*



Figure. 22: *Exterior of the sherds in Charpeh ware*

Table. 3: *Specifications of the pottery from Sharef*

No.	Findspot	Depth (cm)	Piece type	Firing	Decoration	Temper	Color		Manufacture	Comparanda	Illustration
							Ext.	Int.			
1	Surface	-	Handle	Adequate	Polished	grit, coarse sand	Red	Black	Wheelmade (body)	Fallahian 2066: p. 153, drawing 3.131	
2	T.T1	60	Base	Adequate	Polished	Fine mineral, lime particles	Red and brick red	Dark black	Wheelmade	Herein: FIG. 5 a, b: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 13 (dichrome ware); Naghshineh 2010: p. 87, drawing 4: nos. 42, 43	
3	T.T2	80	Rim	Adequate	Polished	Fine grit	Red with a dark patch	Black	Wheelmade	Naghshineh 2010: 85, drawing 2, figs. 27, 28	
4	T.T3	60	Body	Adequate	Polished	Fine grit	brown	Black	Wheelmade	Herein, FIG. 5a,b: 6, 8; FIG. 7: 3 (polished finish)	
5	T.T5	50	Body	Adequate	Ext. polished black slip	Mineral, coarse sand	Black	Light brown	Wheelmade	Herein: FIG. 5a, b: 1, 2, 3, 11, 13 (dichrome ware)	
6	T.T7	30	Lip/ handle	Adequate	Polished	grit, lime particles	Light brown	Black	Wheelmade	Naghshineh 2010: 80, drawing 1, fig. 15, drawing 2, fig. 17 (Jamshidabad); Fallahian 2003: p. 230, no. 6, p. 236, fig. 5; Herein: FIG. 5: 1, 2, 3, 6	
7	T.T5	50	Body/ traces of handle	Adequate	Ext. red slip	Find and coarse sand	Red	Gray	Wheelmade	Herein: FIG. 7: 3; FIG. 5a, b: 6, 8 (polished finis); Naghshineh 2010: 85, drawing 2, fig. 27	

Conclusions

The most intriguing point about Charpeh Ware is its bichromatic nature, so that one surface (usually exterior) of the vessel is dark red, while the other boasts a thorough dark gray color. Charpeh Ware material is generally wheel-made, and both surfaces are highly polished and shiny. On account of its higher quality and abundance at Charpeh, the ware may be reasonably designated as Charpeh Ware. The dichromatism on such vessels probably resulted from a reduction process in the kiln, and the technique in all probability was intentionally applied for decorative purposes, to spice up products traditionally dominated by monotone red or gray pottery that typified Gilan in the Iron Age. Indeed, the introduction of this specific ware type is not merely based on surface scatters as dichrome ceramics have been also recovered by excavations in the Sefidrud valley(The presence of the author in them) at the three Iron I sites of Jamshidabad, Pilaghaleh (1960s and 2000s), and Sharef of Luyeh. Since these excavated finds correlate substantially with the surface material from Charpeh in both dichromatism and chronology, the Charpeh type ware and this pottery type in general cannot date earlier than the Iron I. The mentioned sites have produced simple inhumation, cairn, stone-chamber (Marlik), and megalithic burials, which typify the region in the Iron Age, and compare with some graves at Charpeh. Pottery kilns still remain unattested by excavation all over the Sefidrud valley. Ongoing annual agricultural activities have severely disturbed the archaeological deposits at the site, rendering it difficult to make any reliable remark. While existing limitations precluded any sounding operation at Cherpeh, the available data show that the ceramics from this site supersede the assemblages from the cited excavated sites, particularly those associated with Charpeh Ware, both in quantity and quality. This observation might provide a tentative basis for the assumption that the site of Charpeh was the possible production center for this ware type, a working hypothesis that needs to be verified by future excavations. As the typological classification revealed the prevalence of storage vessels, the dichromatism exhibited by this ware type might be attributed to the special functions the related vessels served—storing liquids or distinct types of liquids, or other items. Alternately, its peculiar appearance was probably intended as a sort of decoration for the following reasons: 1) the available black and red pieces match exactly in number; 2) the interior is dark or black (though evidently not smoke-blackened or smudged); and 3) a black slip occurs on the interior in a few cases.

Due to the higher quality and innovative nature of the dichrome ware, at first several hypotheses were advanced, postulating that this ware had inspired other ware types such as those with both surfaces either in red or, more particularly, in gray. In particular, our speculation was that the potter, having already attained the favored dichrome technology, decided to extend the gray color over the other surface of the vessel as well. However, our pursuit has not yet produced any convincing results to substantiate this hypothesis. Petrographic analyses showed that the vessels were manufactured from clays deriving from local sources. To conclude, our observations demonstrate that Charpeh Ware represents a type of local dichromatically adorned pottery from the Iron I period on the of Sefidrud valley.

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