

Emulation at the edge of empire: the adoption of non-local vessel forms in the NWFP, Pakistan during the mid-late 1st millennium BC

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Abstract

This paper discusses banqueting as a social activity during and immediately after the period that Achaemenid kings controlled certain parts of northwest Pakistan in the mid-late 1st millennium BC. It has previously been argued that there is little clear material evidence for Achaemenid control over its far eastern provinces, but we argue here that a number of distinctive ceramic vessel forms, which originate in the Achaemenid heartland, are used during and after the period of Achaemenid control. We contend that this reflects the emulation of Achaemenid elite behaviour by local South Asian elites, which in turn may have led to the emulation of the same practices by local non-elites.

I. Emulation and Empire

Material culture and the behaviour that dictates its use change for various reasons. In situations where hierarchy is a component of social order, symbolic or ritual behaviour that serves to assert authority and maintain social structure can play an important role. Within such a hierarchy, people of lower social standing who seek to improve their relative status may seek to emulate such behaviour to further advance their social position (e.g. Miller 1982). In imperial contexts, the elites of a dominated region may seek to emulate the practices of those who rule them with a view to enhancing their own prestige or emphasising political affinity (e.g. Ohnersongen 2006). The encouragement of this by the imperial centre serves to further control by spreading familiarity with the culture of those who seek to ensure the perseverance of power.

Between c.530 and 330 BC, parts of South Asia lay within the eastern part of the Achaemenid Empire. Unlike areas further to the west, there is very little evidence for the existence of an imperial presence in these regions during and immediately after the period of Achaemenid dominance (Magee et al. 2005; also Vogelsang 1992). Exceptions to this are clay skeuomorphs of drinking vessels such as the tulip bowl and later also the rhyton, which typically appear in precious metals in the Achaemenid heartland and in other areas of the empire. In

Achaemenid royal visual culture, and in some contextual palace deposits, both vessel forms are related to ritual banqueting and feasting

If, on the one hand, the presumed Achaemenid function of these vessels can be transposed to the South Asian social landscape, their presence may be indicative of the emulation of Achaemenid elite behaviour by locals. On the other hand, these regions have the distinction of being the most distant component of an overarching empire, and thus the need to interact with a local socio-economic and political milieu that was independent of the imperial context was also important (Petrie and Magee 2007). In this paper, we examine these potentially divergent social and political contexts for emulation and in doing so illuminate what is unique about the Achaemenid horizon in South Asia.

II. The archaeology of the 1st millennium BC in northwest South Asia

The limited amount of information that we have from excavations and surveys shows that during the late 2nd and early 1st millennium BC, there was notable regionalism in material culture in the areas that comprised the borderlands between South and Central Asia (Magee et al. 2005; Magee and Petrie in press). Two regions that

are located relatively close together, yet which display the use of distinctive assemblages during this period, are the Peshawar Valley and its surrounding areas and the Bannu Basin, which lies over 100 kms to the south. Each of these regions was also dominated by at least one large and probably urban site: the Bala Hisar at Charsadda and the Hathial and Bhir mounds at Taxila in the former, and the Area B mounds at Akra in the latter (Figure 1). This evidence for substantial settlements marked by the use of regionally distinct ceramic assemblages may well indicate the existence of socio-economic and political boundaries in northwest South Asia during the early Iron Age (Magee and Petrie in press). It also

suggests that social structures capable of producing large centres, and presumably of supporting elites, were in place centuries before the annexation of the region by the Achaemenid Empire in the late 6th century BC.

To explore the impact of Achaemenid ceramic forms in these regions it is necessary to first detail the pre-Achaemenid material culture sequence for each region. For this, the periodisation for the Bala Hisar at Charsadda outlined by Dittman (1984: Table 5) will be employed in conjunction with the absolute dates from the most recent excavations (Coningham and Batt 2007; also Young 2003).

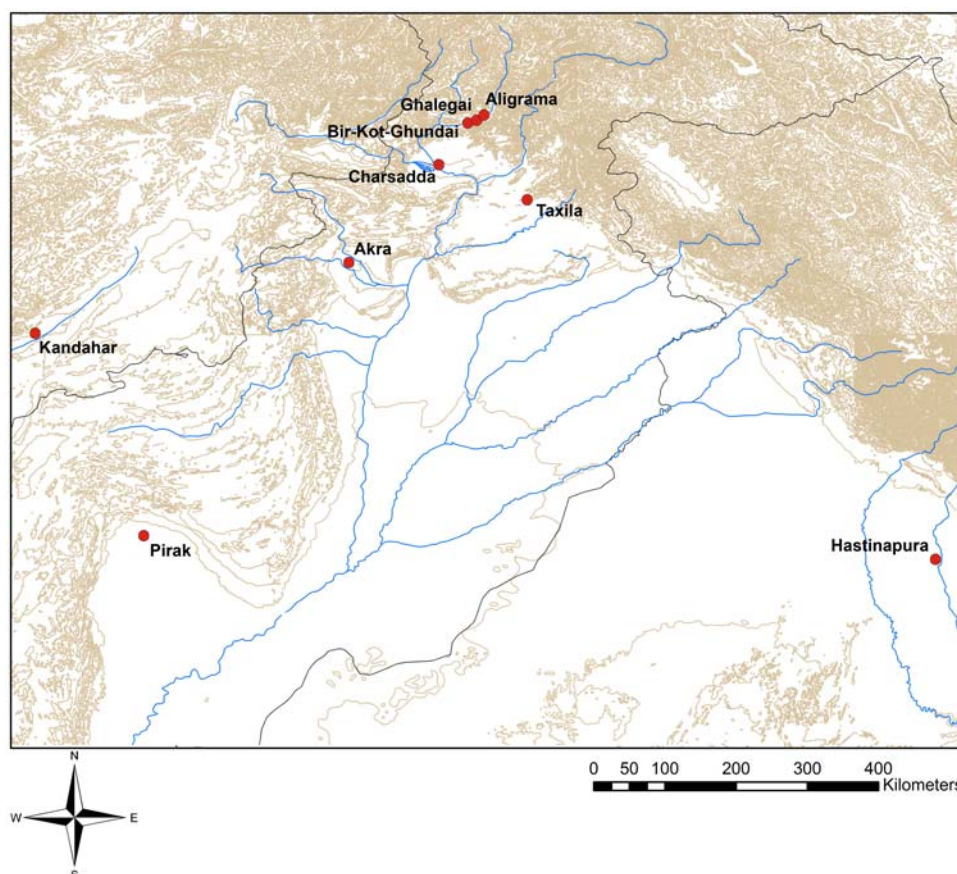


Figure 1. Map showing the location of the major archaeological sites discussed in the text.

II.1. The early levels at the Bala Hisar – Charsadda

The distinctive ceramic assemblage being used in the Peshawar Valley and surrounding areas during the later 2nd and early 1st millennia BC is typified by vessel

forms with a distinctive red burnished surface and registers of low ridges, wavy lines and/or rippled rims. This assemblage is best known from the excavations at the Bala Hisar at Charsadda (Ch. I levels 51a-39; Wheeler 1962: 37-40, 46-54, Figs. 11-18;

Ali, T. et al. 1998; Coningham et al. 2007a: 99-149). Similar material has also been observed at the nearby cemetery at Zarif Karuna (Khan, G.M. 1973), on the Hathial mound at Taxila (Allchin 1982, 1995: 127; Khan, G.M. 1983; Dani 1986: 37-38, Figs. 13, 52), and at contemporaneous settlements and cemeteries in and around the Swat Valley (Period V), including sites in Chitral and Dir (Stacul 1966a, 1966b, 1967, 1969, 1979, 1980, 1987, 1993; Dani 1967; Salvatori 1975; Stacul and Tusa 1977; Tusa 1979; Müller-Karpe 1983; Vinogradova 2001; Ali et al. 2002; Ali and Zahir 2005; Ali et al. 2005). There has been considerable debate about the relative and absolute chronological placement of this assemblage. The recent absolute dating of early deposits at the Bala Hisar at Charsadda (Period II - Coningham and Batt 2007: 93-98; also Young 2003: 39; Coningham 2004: 8-9) has provided clear confirmation of previous suppositions that the site was first occupied around 1400 BC (Phase IA; Dittman 1984: 159, 172; Vogelsang 1992: 250-252; contra Vogelsang 1988: 106), which fits with the chronology for the similar material from the Swat Valley (Swat V; Stacul and Tusa 1977; Stacul 1979; Tusa 1979: Fig. 3; also Vinogradova 2001; contra Müller-Karpe 1983: 76).

Subsequent to this initial phase, Vogelsang (1988: 110-111) has identified a period of what he refers to as 'Indic' influence in Ch. I levels 38-33 at the Bala Hisar, which is marked by the appearance of upright sided open bowls in grey and red ware¹ and

¹ Coningham et al. (2007a: 109, 2007b: 262; also Coningham and Batt 2007: 95) have suggested that Vogelsang's 'Indic' influence is also indicated by the appearance of carinated bowls (citing Vogelsang 1988: 111; 1992: 246). However, Vogelsang (1988: 106-107) does not clearly specify this form as an indicator of 'Indic' influence, rather he suggest that this form was not actually used throughout the sequence, as originally suggested by Wheeler (1962: 40), and argues that Wheeler's interpretation of the chronology of both carinated and open bowls is based on an incorrect interpretation of the stratigraphy in Ch. III and its relationship to Ch. I. For Vogelsang, the key vessel form is the open bowl in grey ware, which is

corresponds to Dittman's (1984: Table 5) Phase IB. This form occur together with burnished red ware vessels decorated with grooves that appear to be derived from the earlier Phase IA forms decorated with ridges (Dittman 1984: 164; also Vogelsang 1988: 104). Therefore, while some Phase IB ceramic forms at Charsadda display an 'Indic' influence, the assemblage as a whole is local character and shows some signs of indigenous evolution from that of Phase IA in both form and decoration. Vogelsang (1988: 112) proposes that the 'Indic' influence took place in the second quarter of the 1st millennium BC (750-500 BC) at the Bala Hisar, which appears to correlate to Period IIC-IID of the chronology based on the new excavations (Coningham and Batt 2007: 95-97; also Young 2003: 39; Coningham 2004: 8-9)².

referred to as being a component of the "much more urban and widely diffused Gangetic character" of the relevant levels (Vogelsang 1988: 107-108; citing Allchin and Allchin 1982: 323), and which he uses to define the relationship between the dynamics at the Bhir mound and the Bala Hisar. This idea about the 'Indic' character of certain vessels is reiterated by Allchin (1995: 131; also Allchin and Allchin 1982: 323), who emphasised that grey ware and black ware shallow *thali* and deeper *vati* bowl forms are 'noticeably Gangetic in character'. Carinated vessels are not mentioned. The choice of phrasing in Vogelsang's paper makes it very difficult to establish precisely which vessel forms he regards as being a part of this Gangetic/'Indic' character, and which forms he is using for comparative chronology.

² The precise chronological relationship between the new sequence from Charsadda (Coningham and Batt 2007) and that proposed by Vogelsang (1988) is not entirely clear. Vogelsang (1988: 104) posits a period of 'Indic' influence, which is followed after some time by the appearance of tulip bowls, which have a wide distribution in Western Asia. Period IIC in Trench Ch. VIII of the new excavations yielded a single example of the shallow flat-bottomed dish identified as part of the 'Indic' tradition, and it is noted that this is in an early context (Coningham and Batt 2007: 95). The shallow flat-bottomed dishes in Period IID occur together with fragments of what are identified as tulip bowls, which are described as being 'Aegaeic' (Coningham and Batt 2007: 96-97; also Coningham et al. 2007b: 262). As such, with the exception of the one sherd from Period IIC, the proposed 'Indic' influence appears to have

Recent excavations on the Bhir mound at Taxila have revealed grooved bowl forms (Bahadar Khan et al. 2002: 74-75) that are akin to the vessels from Bala Hisar Ch. I levels 38-34 (Phase IB; Petrie et al. in prep). These fragments appear to immediately precede, but may still be related to, the earliest occupation on the Bhir mound identified during previous excavations (Stratum I; Sharif 1969; also Marshall 1951), which Vogelsang (1988: 107) has argued also shows an 'Indic' influence due to the presence of open bowl forms in grey ware and also NBP ware³.

II.2. The early levels in Area B - Akra

From the beginning of the 1st millennium BC and possibly earlier, a markedly different ceramic assemblage was being used in the Bannu basin south of the Peshawar Valley. The most distinctive components of this assemblage are hand-made vessels with either distinctive black-on-red surface decoration, or a simple red slip. These have been characterised as *Bannu-Black-on-Red-Ware*. This ware is thus far known only from the sites of Ter Kala Dheri (Khan et al. 2000a: 85-91) and the Area B mounds at Akra, where it has been referred to as Assemblage 2 on the basis of excavations on the Lohra mound (Khan et al. 2000a: 107-108, 2000b: 106-107, 109, Figs. 2-3, 7-8, Pl. 2; Magee et al. 2005: 725-727, Fig. 17-19)⁴. The ware

occurred simultaneously with the 'Aegaeic' influence on the basis of the new excavations. This is markedly different to the evidence from Wheeler's Ch. I trench.

³ It is notable that in the Bala Hisar sequence, upright sided open bowls in grey ware appear in Ch. I layers 38-34, but NBP ware does not appear until Ch. I layers 21-20.

⁴ Kenoyer (2006: 87) has claimed that the excavations at Ter Kala Dheri and Akra have provided radiocarbon dates that push the chronology for NBP ware at Taxila and Charsadda to as early as 900 BC, citing Khan et al. (2000). Magee et al. (2005: 726) noted that a number of black slipped sherds were discovered in Assemblage 2 deposits, but this was a tentative suggestion and should not be used as clear evidence for re-dating NBP ware. The published radiocarbon dates from Ter Kala Dheri and Akra

dominates the cultural assemblage from both sites and only two fragments of the distinctive burnished red ware vessels described above as common in Bala Hisar Ch. I levels 51a-39 are known from this horizon (Khan et al. 2000b: Fig. 7). The presence of these two vessel fragments suggests that any contact and/or trade between these two basins, which were later to become adjacent Achaemenid provinces, was very limited.

II.3. Transforming assemblages in the mid-late 1st millennium BC

The distinctive ceramic assemblages being used at the Bala Hisar at Charsadda and the Area B mounds at Akra appear to have persisted for many centuries. However, at some point in the mid-late 1st millennium BC, there was a clear transformation in the ceramic assemblages at both sites⁵. Several vessel forms disappear from both, and a number of common vessel forms are introduced, including several distinctive shapes that have excellent parallels at sites throughout Iran. These include the s-carinated rim bowl, bowls with offset vertical rim and the tulip bowl (Khan et al. 2000a, 2000b; Magee et al. 2005: 37-43; Magee and Petrie in press). At Akra, this new assemblage has been referred to as Assemblage 1 on the basis of the stratigraphy on the Lohra mound (Khan et al. 2000a: 104-106, 2000b: 106-107; Magee et al. 2005: 723-725). At Charsadda,

date the *Bannu-Black-on-Red-Ware* ceramic assemblage, described here as Assemblage 2, which has no direct chronological connection to NBP ware, and no NBP sherds are mentioned in Khan et al. (2000a). The black slipped sherds seen at Akra are likely to be akin to the black slipped sherds found on the Bhir mound at Taxila, which Allchin (1995: 131) has described as a locally made imitation of NBP ware.

⁵ This shift is also evident on the Bhir mound at Taxila between Strata II and III (Sharif 1969: 14, Figs. 12-19; Vogelsang 1988: 107-108), the latter stratum being marked by the first appearance of tulip bowls (Sharif 1969: Fig. 19.1) and other distinctive Achaemenid vessel forms such as the bowl with offset vertical rim (Sharif 1969: Fig. 17.5-6).

Dittman (1984: Tables 3 and 5) was able to differentiate two separate phases in this shift - Phase IIA and IIB. Khan et al. (2000b; Figs. 4-5) have previously described these forms as being 'Iranian inspired'. In contrast, Coningham et al. (2007b: 262) have argued that the carinated forms reflect an 'Indic' flavour, while the tulip bowls represent a western or 'Aegaic' flavour⁶. It is argued here that the tulip bowl in particular is a very distinctive Achaemenid and therefore Iranian form (also Petrie et al. in prep). While the new vessels are primarily utilitarian forms, the tulip bowl has distinctive functions in Achaemenid contexts where precious metal versions were used on the royal table for ritual banqueting, feasting and/or drinking (Simpson 2005; also Moorey 1980, 1985).

III. The Tulip Bowl and its chronology

The tulip bowl is in many ways the quintessential Achaemenid vessel form. It is best known from the iconic examples in gold and silver currently in museum collections that are allegedly from various locations in Iran, Central Asia, Turkey and Syria (Simpson 2005). Ceramic examples of this form are known from capital cities, palaces and villages in the heartland of the empire

⁶ Interestingly the tulip bowl has not been attested in 1st millennium BC contexts at Aligrama (Stacul and Tusa 1977; contra Coningham et al. 2007b: 262), and they also seem to be absent from Bir-Kot-Ghundai, Balambat (Dittman 1984: 172-4), and sites like Pirak and Dur Khan in Baluchistan (see Magee and Petrie in press). Vessels with a similar form have been recovered from Phase II contexts at Hastinapura (Lal 1954-1955: 23, 49, Fig. 13 Type XXXVII), and although the form looks akin to the tulip bowl in the published illustration (Coningham and Batt 2007a: 96), this type is described as having an incurved rim, which is not at all characteristic of the early tulip bowls, and indicates that they might in fact be two separate forms. Wheeler (1962: 40) initially argued that the carinated bowl appeared in the earliest levels at the Bala Hisar, which presents a strongly local ceramic assemblage, so the suggestion that the carinated bowl is either an 'Indic' or an 'Iranian inspired' form is not unproblematic and this issue will be discussed in some detail elsewhere (Petrie et al. in prep).

such as Pasargadae (Stronach 1978, Pl. 106.1-13; also Simpson 2005: 120, Cat. No. 116), Persepolis (Schmidt 1957, Pl. 67.3, 72.1, 89.8; also Sumner 1986, Fig. III2.A-J), Susa (Miroschedji et al 1987, Fig. 7.7), Tal-i Ghazir (Carter 1994: Fig. 14.3), Qaleh Kali (Tappeh Servan/Jinjun; Potts et al. 2007: 297), Tol-e Spid (Petrie et al. 2006: Fig. 4.93, TS 439, 495) and Tol-e Nurabad (Weeks et al. 2006: Fig. 3.188). Clay tulip bowls have also been found in Achaemenid period contexts at regional centres in other parts of Iran such as Tepe Yahya (Magee 2004: Fig. 4.30, 5.37), and Afghanistan such as Dahan-e Gulaman (Scerrato 1966). Examples are also known from important regional centres well outside of the Achaemenid heartland, from Sardis in western Turkey (Dusinberre 1999, 2003: 172-193) to the Shahr-i Kohna mound at Kandahar in Afghanistan, where it appears in various forms from the first phase of occupation at the site (Epochs I & II, Genres 11 & 35; Helms 1997: Figs. 55-57, 89; also Fleming 1996: 368, Fig. 269).

The chronological placement of the tulip bowl in South Asian contexts has been of some dispute (Wheeler 1962: 40; Dittman 1984: 189-191; Vogelsang 1988: 14; Coningham et al. 2007a: 106). Tulip bowls appeared in three of Wheeler's trenches at the Bala Hisar, but it was only in Ch. I (Layers 28-22) that they were well stratified in relation to earlier and later vessel forms. Their relative placement and Wheeler's (1962: 40) assumption that the site was founded in the Achaemenid period led him to argue that they have a chronological span of c.300-100 BC. This is the same span he proposed for layers 23-20, which was attributed to the Mauryan and Indo-Greek periods, based on the appearance of a change in brick size in Ch. I layer 23 and the combination of NBP Ware, Lotus Bowls and 'Baroque Ladies' in Ch. I layers 21-20 (Wheeler 1962: 41-46). However, tulip bowls first appear in Ch.I layer 28, five layers before the purported Mauryan influence first seen in layer 23. Therefore, following Wheeler's own dating scheme the tulip bowl form should also be a pre-

Mauryan vessel, i.e. it should first appear in the mid or late Achaemenid period.

In his reassessment of Wheeler's chronology, Dittman (1984: 189, Fig. 11) noted that the earliest tulip bowls recovered from Ch. I, which appear in his Phase IIB (Ch. I layers 28-25), are shallow in form, and therefore argued that they are most akin to the 'Late Achaemenid (and later) form', based on the similarity between the examples from the Bala Hisar and those from Late and Post-Achaemenid levels at Pasargadae. This suggests a date range beginning in the 4th century BC⁷. Tulip bowls appear alongside lotus bowls in Dittman's Phases IIC (Ch. I layers 24-22), which he suggests dated to the time of Alexander and the Early Mauryans, i.e. the late 4th and early 3rd centuries BC (Dittman 1962: 191). Vogelsang (1988: 104) has however argued that Dittman's tulip bowl chronology is untenable because tulip bowls are found together with lotus bowls and baroque ladies at the Bala Hisar, and lotus bowls and baroque ladies are both found in Indo-Greek levels at Shaikhan Dheri. He thus argues that tulip bowls in South Asia must date to the Indo-Greek period (Vogelsang 1988: 104). However, this dismissal of Dittman's dating is far from conclusive, and based on Vogelsang's own reasoning, the tulip bowl must date prior to the 2nd century BC foundation of Shaikhan Dheri as it occurs in the Bala Hisar sequence prior to the appearance of both lotus bowls and baroque ladies. In fact, with tulip bowls first appearing in Ch. I layer 28, a full 2 metres lower and six layers earlier in the sequence than lotus bowls, there is a strong possibility that this form did in fact first appear in the Late Achaemenid period, as suggested by Dittman⁸. It also should be

remembered that on the basis of the evidence from Shaikhan Dheri, the lotus' stamped into the base of bowls continue to be appear in the Kushan period, so the stamped lotus does not appear to be a particularly sensitive chronological indicator (Petrie et al. in preparation).

In Wheelers Ch.I deep sounding at the Bala Hisar, tulip bowls were recovered from Layers 28-22 and they also appeared in Well E (Ch. IV) and in Ch. V (Figure 2; Wheeler 1962; Dittman 1984: Table 5; Petrie et al. in prep). There does appear to be some development in the vessel form through time, such that the earliest types are relatively shallow (Phase IIB-IIC), while some of the later examples are much deeper (Phases IIC-III A; Dittman 1984: 189-191). The very latest examples (Phase IV) clearly have a different morphology, with either sharply out flared lips or flattened bases.

⁷ It is also notable that deep tulip bowls are also seen in Ch. I layers 19 and 18.

⁸ Coningham et al. (2007: 106) have erroneously suggested that Dittman (1984) noted similarities between tulip bowls and pre-Achaemenid Cream Bowls, but in fact it was Vogelsang (1988: 104) who made this connection. Coningham et al. (2007: 106) also suggest that Vogelsang (1988) favours a post-Achaemenid date for the tulip bowl as it appears at Shaikhan Dheri, but Vogelsang (1988: 104) actually argues this on the basis of the fact

that lotus bowls were found at Shaikhan Dheri. Only small flat bottomed vessels with a rounded carination were found in the Greek levels at Shaikhan Dheri (Dani 1967: Fig. 16.2-3), and these have parallels to the later tulip bowls from Bala Hisar Ch. I level 24 (Phase IIC; Wheeler 1962: Fig. 24.171), which appear together with lotus bowls and thus presumably have a 3rd century BC or later date.

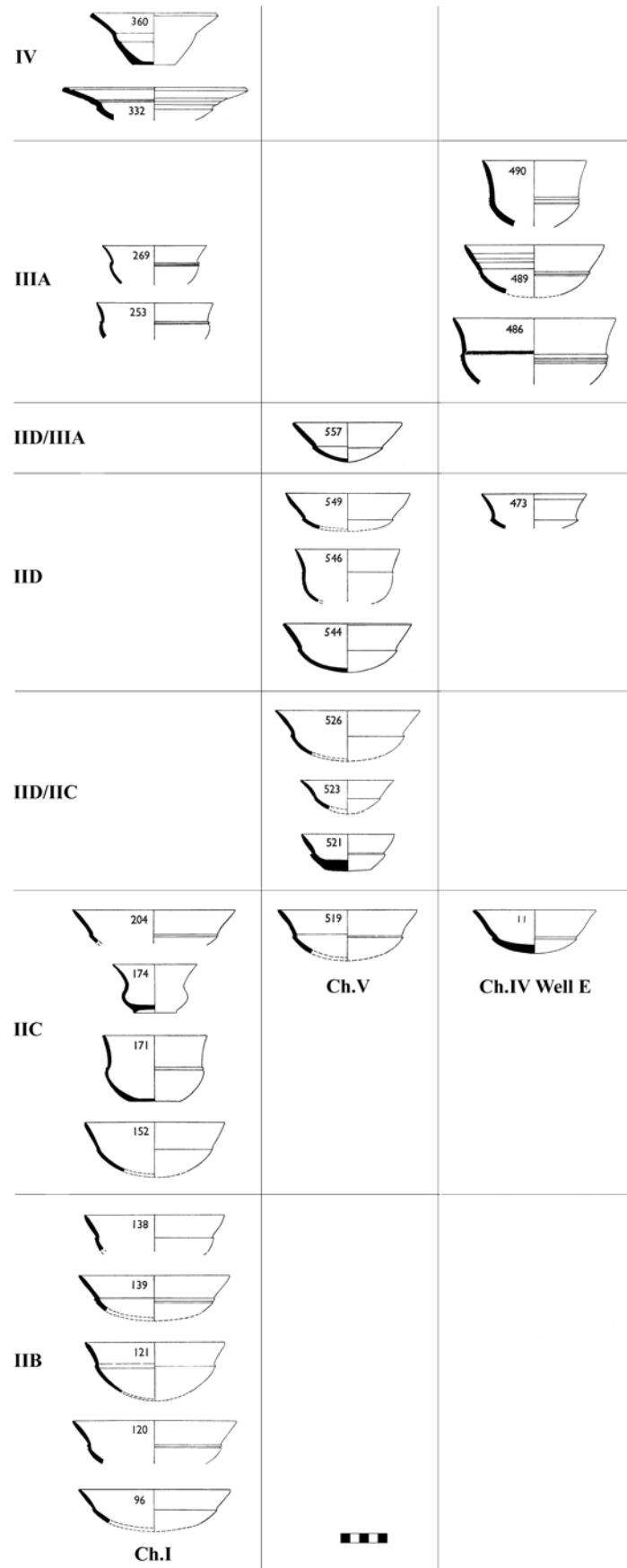


Figure 2. Tulip bowls from Wheeler's excavation at the Bala Hisar at Charsadda (adapted from Wheeler 1962: Figs. 21-50).

The most recent excavations at the Bala Hisar recovered a number of vessels from Periods IID and III that have been described as tulip bowls (Figure 3: Coningham et al. 2007a: 106, Fig. 8.6). One of these was found stratified in a Period III level that has been absolute dated to c. 770-410 BC, while those from Period IID should be earlier (Coningham et al. 2007a: 106). Several examples were also recovered from Period V deposits, and were presumably re-deposited⁹.

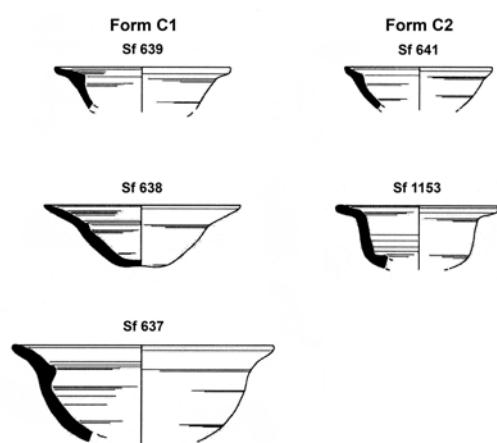


Figure 3. Tulip bowls from the recent excavations at the Bala Hisar at Charsadda (adapted from Coningham et al. 2007a: Fig. 8.6).

The tulip bowls that have been recovered from Akra include both deep and shallow variants (Figure 4; also Magee et al. 2005: Fig. 16. C-D). If Dittman's chronological reasoning is followed, then the presence of these forms suggests that Akra may have been occupied during both the Middle and Late Achaemenid periods. This is also seemingly confirmed by the presence in the

same levels of bowls with off-set rim, which have been dated from 600-300 BC (see Magee et al. 2005: 724), and painted s-carinated rim bowls, whose form and decoration have been dated to the Early Achaemenid period (Dittman 1984: 189, also Fig. 10.3). Several examples of tulip bowls with finger impressed gudroons were also found at Akra (Figure 4; also Khan et al. 2000b: Fig. 4, 2005: Fig. 16.c). These are clearly imitations of the gudroons visible on some of the most iconic examples of metal vessels (e.g. Simpson 2005: Cat. Nos. 97, 100-105). Gudrooned vessels also occur in clay at Pasargadae (Stronach 1978: Pl. 106.11; Simpson 2005: Cat. No. 116) and Tol-e Spid (Petrie et al. 2006: Fig. 4.95, TS 439), in the Persian heartland. The examples from Akra are the only known examples from South Asia.

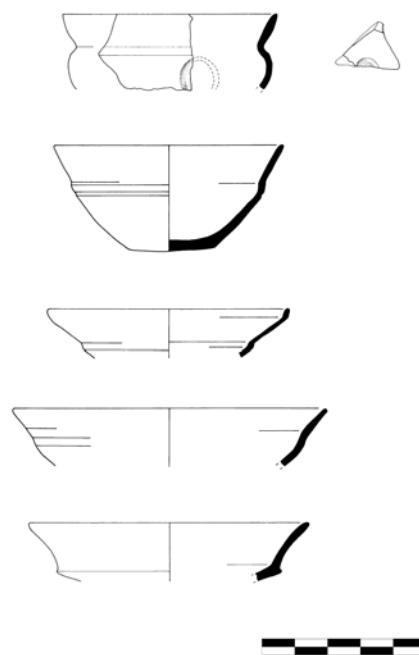


Figure 4. Tulip bowls from the Lohra mound at Akra.

The evidence from Kandahar, Tepe Yahya and Dahan-e Ghulaman, suggest that the tulip bowl was certainly present in the eastern Iranian and Afghan provinces of the Achaemenid Empire from the Late Achaemenid period (contra Vogelsang 1988: 104). It is therefore not implausible that tulip

⁹ A comparison of the tulip bowl forms from the most recent excavations at the Bala Hisar (Figure 3; Coningham et al. 2007a: Fig. 8.6) with those illustrated by Wheeler (Figure 2), those seen at Akra (Figure 4), and those from other sites in Iran and Afghanistan suggests that most of the vessels from the recent excavations are not tulip bowls *sensus stricto*. Other than Form C1 Sf 638, all but one of the tulip bowls that are illustrated appears to have carinations different to those seen on typical tulip bowls. This has implications for the chronology of the 'Aegaeic' flavour presented by Coningham et al. (2007b: 286).

bowls came into common usage at Charsadda and Akra during the later Achaemenid period and then continued to be used during the Mauryan and in variant forms the Indo-Greek periods (Magee et al. 2005; Magee and Petrie in press; Petrie et al. in prep)¹⁰.

IV. Clay rhyta at Aziz Dheri and Shaikhan Dheri

Recent excavations at Aziz Dheri (Khan and Khan this issue) and a reanalysis of published and unpublished material from Shaikhan Dheri have shown that what appear to be clay versions of highly distinctive Persian rhyta began to appear at certain sites in the last century of the 1st millennium BC or the early centuries of the 1st millennium AD. The use of animal headed spouted vessels for pouring wine into small shallow cups is a quintessentially 'Persian' cultural trait through the period of the Achaemenid Empire that continues being used for some time afterwards. Hoffman (1961; also Miller 1993; Moorey 1985) suggested that the practice was introduced into Greece after Athenian soldiers plundered the Achaemenid *royal* camp after the Battle of Plataea in 479 BC. Even after its introduction into Greece, the practise was still identified as a 'marker' of Persian behaviour in Athenian visual culture, particularly red figure pot illustration. Zournatzi (2000) has noted the role that metal rhyta played in promoting Achaemenid royal interests in Thrace even if, as she notes, rhyta do not appear in the Apadana reliefs of Persepolis. The fact that what appear to be clay versions of rhyta occur in Indo-Greek or Indo-Parthian levels at sites in the NWFP implies that the complex period of fusion when the Indo-Greek and/or Scytho-Parthian kings came to dominate this part of South Asia may also have witnessed the dispersal of more elite

drinking practices that may have initially had a Persian origin, but which arrived under the guise of Indo-Greek and/or Scytho-Parthian expansion. There are certainly other Hellenic inspired changes to South Asian ceramic assemblage in these periods, including the appearance of fish plates and other characteristic forms. A putative Indo-Parthian date for these rhyta is perhaps reinforced by the discovery of what has been described as a 'clumsy' metal rhyton (Jettmar 1979: 923, 1991: Fig. 14) at Imit by Sir M. Aurel Stein (1944: 15-16) together with some cauldrons that show close similarities to Saka or Scytho-Parthian forms. The appearance of the rhyton in the Scytho-Parthian period in northwest South Asia potentially represents two separate stages of emulation, one through time from the Achaemenids to the Parthians and one through space from the Parthians in Iran to South Asia elites.

The site of Aziz Dheri is dominated by a sequence of Kushan period and later occupation that has been the focus of recent excavations lead by one of the authors (Khan and Khan this issue). The rhyta described here come from levels that have been described as pre-Kushan (Figures 5-6). It is not precisely clear how early these deposits are, but it is perhaps most likely that they will be Indo-Greek or Scytho-Parthian in date (Khan and Khan this issue). Although they have not been widely discussed, similar vessels were also recovered from Indo-Greek levels at Shaikhan Dheri (Figures 7-8), two of which are published here for the first time. The published example from the site was described as a hollow torch in the original report (Dani 1967: Fig. 17.21).

¹⁰ Tulip bowls like those seen in Bala Hisar Ch. I layers 28-22 were not recovered at Shaikhan Dheri, although derivative forms were attested (Dani 1965-1966: Figs. 10, 16). The tulip bowls forms from Ch. IV, Well E remain an anomaly (see Petrie et al. in preparation).



Figure 5. Clay rhyton 1 from Aziz Dheri (photograph by M.N. Khan)



Figure 6. Clay rhyton 2 from Aziz Dheri (photograph by M.N. Khan)



Figure 7. Clay rhyton from Shaikhan Dheri (photograph by M.N. Khan)



Figure 8. Clay rhyton from Shaikhan Dheri (photograph by M.N. Khan)

V. Emulation in the periphery

Achaemenid and Classical historical records indicate that the northwest of modern Pakistan was incorporated into the Achaemenid Empire at some point during the late 6th century BC (Vogelsang 1992; Magee et al. 2005: 711-714; Petrie and Magee 2007: 4-8). However, there are no well-dated archaeological contexts that can be specifically correlated to this event (Magee et al. 2005: 711-718; Magee and Petrie in press), and there are no clear indications of an Achaemenid presence in South Asian literature (Petrie and Magee 2007: 8; after Raychaudhuri 1953; Witzel 1980; Dani 1986). Attempts to identify categories of artefacts that might serve as evidence for an actual Achaemenid presence or even influence have tended to focus on the presence or absence of coinage (Allchin 1995: 131), Aramaic (Allchin 1995: 132-

133) and/or architectural influence (reviewed by Chakrabarti 1997: 190-191), yet such data provides little insight into indigenous responses to imperial control strategies (Magee et al. 2005: 717). For instance, Allchin (1995: 130; also Vogelsang 1992: 254) has previously argued that ‘there is little or no evidence of anything that can be identified as specifically Achaemenid’ at Charsadda, and that the only evidence at Taxila are silver bar punchmarked coins. Such a scenario might easily be taken to indicate that Achaemenid control was weak, yet the direct imposition of imperial culture and practices is only one strategy of imperial control amongst a wide spectrum of possible approaches (e.g. D’Altroy 1992; Earle and D’Altroy 1989; Morrison 2001; Sinopoli 1994).

In contrast to this scattered evidence, tulip bowls appear at all the major north western urban centres during the middle of the 1st millennium BC - Akra, Taxila and Charsadda. Their undoubted Iranian origin and their appearance at a time of political engagement with the Achaemenid Empire suggests that tulip bowls are a concrete manifestation of the impact of the Empire in north western South Asia. How this impact was negotiated within existing social and political structures in South Asia is difficult to ascertain (Petrie and Magee 2007). There has been some previous discussion of the significance of the appearance of tulip bowls at sites at the western limit of the Achaemenid Empire, and Dussinberre (1999: 101, 2003: 172-193) has suggested that the adoption of clay versions of the tulip bowl in regions that lie outside of the Persian heartland may be indicative of the emulation of elite banqueting habits by non-elite individuals. Such behaviour does not, however, appear to be limited to individuals outside of the Persian heartland, as demonstrated by the discovery of such vessels at both regional royal (e.g. Qaleh Kali; Potts et al. 2007: 297) and village sites (e.g. Tol-e Spid; Petrie et al. 2006: 4.93, TS 439, 495; Tol-e Nurabad; Weeks et al. 2006: Fig. 3.188) in the heart of Fars. It is perhaps no surprise that the clearest evidence for the emulation of elite behaviour by non-elites comes from either the Persian heartland or the region around Sardis, which is the westernmost Achaemenid royal capital. Both are contexts where non-elites are likely to have come into contact with elites using such vessels, so Dussinberre's model is certainly appropriate for both cases.

This model is however unlikely to be directly applicable to South Asia. These eastern regions show very little evidence of an Achaemenid royal or even administrative presence, so it would be very unlikely for non-elites to begin emulating behaviour that they did not encounter directly. Rather, it is far more likely that South Asian elites who had some cause to interact with the Achaemenid heartland would have been the first to emulate Persian practices. As such, at

least in the east, it is possible that the initial appearance of ceramic tulip bowls may represent shifting behaviours in those elites (including merchants) who benefited from the increased trade and inter-regional interaction that appears to characterise South Asia at this time. Thus we are not speaking of local kings who are seeking to construct their own *apadana*, but rather individuals who are emulating Achaemenid culinary and drinking practices.

One of us (Magee 2004: 80) has proposed that the presence of the tulip bowl form may be one of the few indicators of a legitimising strategy critical to the emergence and maintenance of empire. If this is so, then the widespread appearance of the tulip bowl across the empire may be due to the Achaemenid's fostering an emulation of their habits amongst local elites. Similarly, rather than witnessing a legitimising strategy being imposed from the centre, the deliberate emulation of elite banqueting habits might actually be a step by local elites towards legitimising and maintaining their own local authority. Once these habits become common among local elites, they are then more likely to have been emulated by local non-elites, leading to a far more pervasive use of these vessel forms, at least in regional centres. As such, the emulation of tulip bowls in South Asia is likely to have been a two stage process.

A more nuanced approach that decontextualizes social behaviour from the myriad of local and foreign input is critical if we are to more fully understand how ancient empires worked. The tulip bowl and a small number of other vessel forms provide strong indications that there was a very specific pattern of interaction and emulation between the inhabitants of the South Asian provinces and the core of the Achaemenid Empire during the Late Achaemenid period. Once this pattern began, it appears to have continued into the post-Achaemenid Mauryan period, during which time the emulated vessel forms appear to have been subverted, absorbed and modified in accordance with the local ceramic

developmental trajectory. It is however impossible to escape the fact that much of this is speculative and the full resolution of these chronological relationships and the behaviours that have been discussed here will only be ascertained by renewed excavations at key sites like the Bala Hisar at Charsadda.

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