



Original Paper

A Reappraisal of the Chronology of the Chalcolithic Period in SE Iran: Absolute and Relative Chronology of Tepe Dehno and Tepe East Dehno, Shahdad



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Abstract

Archaeologically, eastern Iran is poorly known compared to the other regions of Iranian Plateau. Hence, there are many unanswered questions regarding the prehistoric chronological table of this region. The present knowledge of prehistoric cultures and chronology of Southeastern Iran is mostly through based on the 1960s archaeological excavations. In particular, the common chronology of the Chalcolithic period in SE Iran is exclusively based on the dates from old excavations at two sites of Tepe Yahya in Soghun valley and Tal-I Iblis in Bardsir plain. Due to the exciting discovery of major Bronze Age urban centers in southeastern Iran, such as Shahr-e Sokhte, Shahdad and Konar Sandal (Jiroft), most scholarly attention has been given to the 3rd millennium BC. As a result, the cultures preceding and posterior the Bronze Age have been often neglected. Recent project of Dasht-e Lut resulted in new information on the chronology of the prehistory of SE Iran. This paper is intended to expose 10 radiocarbon data from recent excavations at two prehistoric sites on the west of Lut desert, Shahdad area in Kerman province. Recent excavations at Tepe Dehno and Tepe East Dehno in Shahdad plain have revealed levels dating back a period from the early 5th to early 3rd millennium BCE based on ¹⁴C absolute dates. Tepe Dehno is a large site located about one kilometer from the east of the Bronze Age urban site of Shahdad. It is a shallow large mound, surrounded by several small solitaire mounds. It is founded on the top of a natural hill. The site is approximately 20 hectares in extent and rises 8 m above the level of the surrounding land. In term of occupational sequence, excavation at Tepe Dehno established three main occupation periods so far which they are labeled from the oldest to the youngest Dehno I-III. These periods were distinguished based on ceramic evidence and absolute dates. Dehno I period as the earliest occupation corresponds to late fifth millennium BC (4250-4000 B.C) was identified in trench IV. The second period was documented through excavations at trenches I & II; Dehno II period is related to mid to late fourth millennium BC (3700-3300 BC), known as Aliabad (Iblis IV) culture. Dehno III period (3200-2900/2800 BC) is a hitherto unknown period that came from 2 charcoal samples from Trench III. Tepe East Dehno is a prehistoric site located 700m east of the site of Tepe Dehno. Two radiocarbon dates from this trench indicate that the occupation of Tepe East Dehno falls into the first half of the fifth millennium. In this paper, based on both new absolute dates and comparative relative chronology, I attempted to appraise critically the chronology of the Chalcolithic period of SE Iran and finally an updated chronological table of the period was presented. A total of 10 radiocarbon charcoal samples from the mentioned excavated sites were analyzed using Accelerator Mass Spectrometer (AMS) method. Radiocarbon determinations from the excavated sites have provided this opportunity to revise the prehistoric

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chronology of South-East Iran. Evidence illustrated that the old chronology of Southeastern Iran needs a principal revision.

Keywords: Southeastern Iran, Shahdad, ¹⁴C Dating, AMS, Chronological Table.

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