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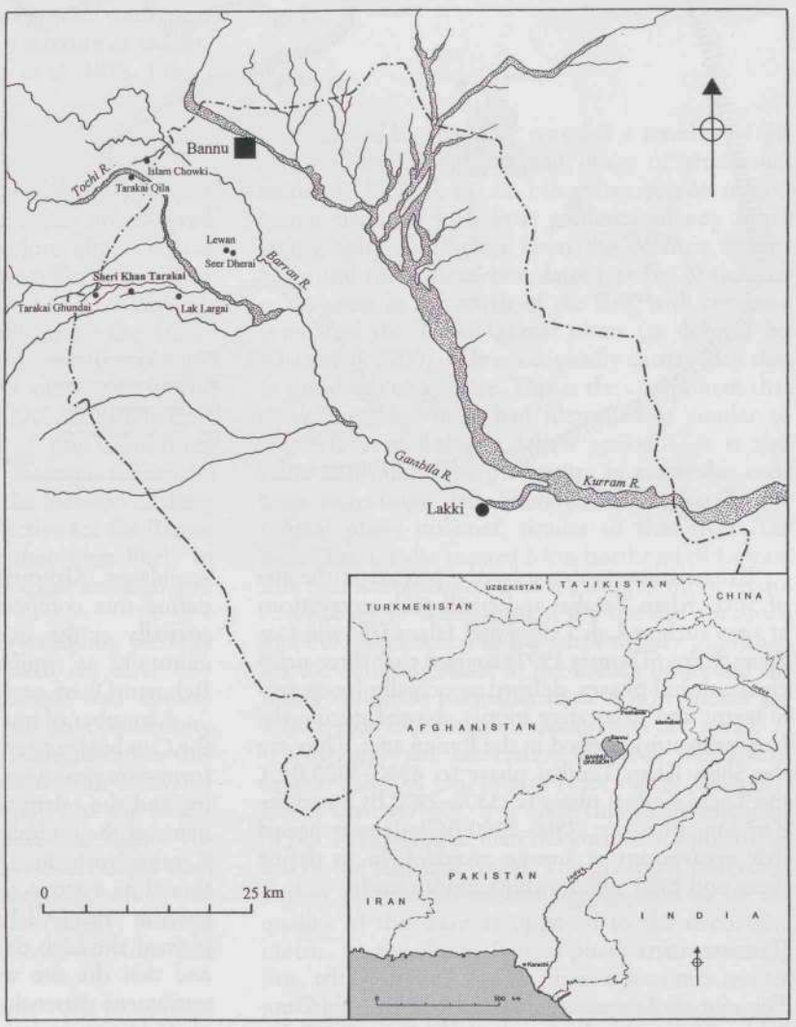

Fig. 1. Fourth to third millennium sites in the Bannu area.

Introduction

The Bannu Archaeological Project (BAP) has been reconstructing past settlement and subsistence patterns in Bannu Division, North-West Frontier Province, Pakistan since 1985. As part of the research strategy of the project the later prehistoric site of Lewan, located approximately 15 km southwest of Bannu city (see fig. 1), was excavated in 2000 and 2001.

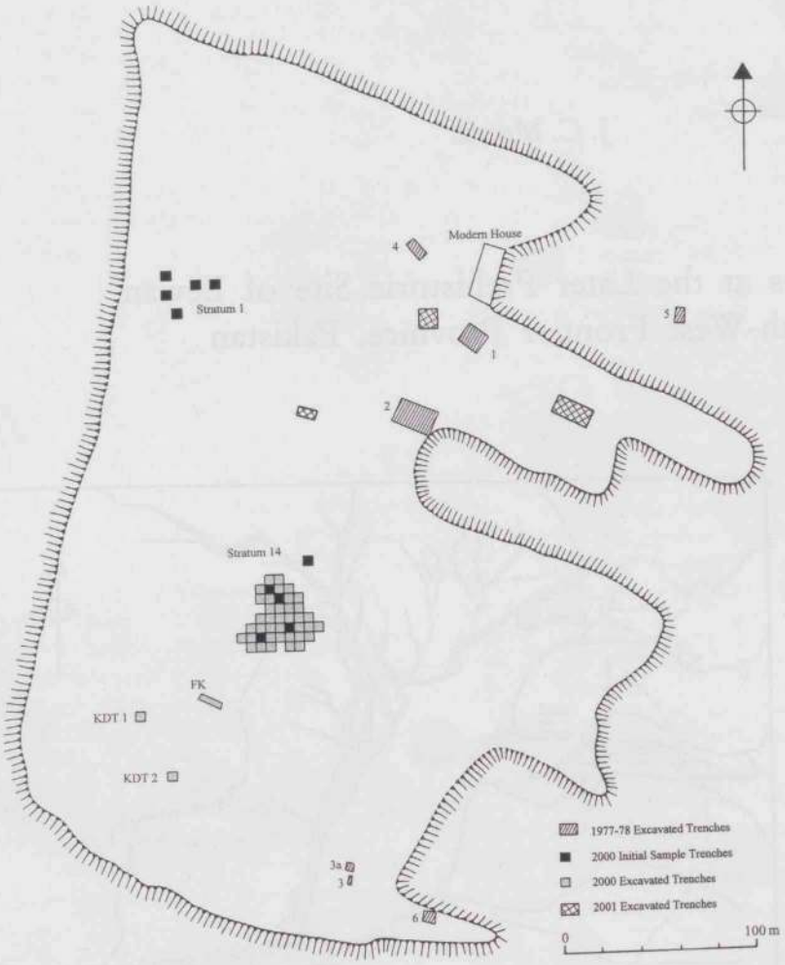

Fig. 2. Excavated areas at Lewan.

Extensive excavations by the project at the site of Sheri Khan Tarakai and small-scale excavations at sites such as Lak Largai and Islam Chowki (see Khan/Knox/Thomas 1991) suggest that three principal cultural phases, defined principally by ceramic forms and decorative motifs, existed during the later prehistoric period in the Bannu area. They are the Sheri Khan Tarakai phase (c. 4500–3000 BC), the Tochi-Gomal phase (c. 3300–2900 BC) and the Kot Diji phase (c. 2900–2500 BC). It was hoped that excavations at Lewan would help to define these and their relationships more clearly.

Background

The site of Lewan was considered by the Cambridge University Archaeological Mission to Pakistan, who excavated the site in 1977–78 in a joint project with the University of Peshawar, to be of an 'Early Bronze Age' context based on the ceramic assemblage, similar to Kot Diji ceramic assemblages they had seen elsewhere in Pakistan. They also identified a component within the ceramic assemblage that differed from the classic Kot Diji assemblages. Although they were unable to clearly define this component either chronologically or spatially at the site, they were able to define it culturally as similar to material recovered from Rehman Dheri period 1, in the Gomal Plain.

A number of questions were left unanswered by the Cambridge team, in particular regarding the site formation processes, the absolute date of the deposits, and the relationship between the two components of the ceramic assemblage. More broadly the Cambridge team suggested that Lewan had functioned as a stone tool manufacturing or "activity specific" site (Allchin et al. 1986, 136), which explained the high density of stones on the surface, and that the site was part of a larger interactive settlement network possibly extending to a radius of 15 km to include other sites of the period or periods (Allchin et al. 1986, 202). It was suggested that these stone tools were traded throughout this network in exchange for other, unspecified, commodities (Allchin et al. 1986; for a critique see Khan et al. 2000). A pattern of settlement and subsistence for the later prehistoric period was also developed which differentiated between permanently settled

Cultural Phase	Sample No.	Date BP	Cal. BC 68.2% confidence (± 1 σ)	Cal. BC 95.4% confidence (± 2 σ)
Kot Diji	NZA-13008	4114 ± 60 BP	2860–2580	2880–2490
Kot Diji	NZA-13009	4117 ± 80 BP	2870–2570	2890–2470
Kot Diji	NZA-13023	4136 ± 70 BP	2870–2600	2890–2490
Kot Diji	NZA-13010	4232 ± 65 BP	2920–2680	3020–2580
Tochi-Gomal	NZA-14718	4334 ± 60 BP	3020–2880	3350–2700
Tochi-Gomal	NZA-14908	4370 ± 60 BP	3085–2905	3330–2880
SKT/Tochi-Gomal	NZA-14716	4746 ± 60 BP	3640–3380	3650–3370
SKT/Tochi-Gomal	NZA-14717	5102 ± 60 BP	3970–3800	4040–3760

Fig. 3. Radiocarbon dates for Lewan.

villages and seasonal camps in areas of specific resources, which led to the notion of settlement patterns in the region based on a mixture of sedentism and transhumance (Allchin et al. 1986, 135).

Methodology

Excavations by the Bannu Archaeological Project aimed to specifically address these unanswered questions, in particular to explore the evidence suggested by the Cambridge team for a specialist lithic manufacturing industry at the site. Although the site had been examined before by the Cambridge team, only a small percentage of the site was excavated, and this was based on an "informal sampling strategy" (see Orton 2000, 2 for a definition). However, the strategy of the Cambridge team did reveal a series of 'pit' features. Given the lack of stratigraphy at the site, the location of these 'pit' features was also a key objective for the Bannu Archaeological Project, in that they were likely to be the only source of archaeological material and absolute dates.

A stratified adaptive cluster sampling strategy was implemented at Lewan based on three key factors. Firstly, that some research had already taken place at the site, and so an opportunity existed to stratify the site according to areas that were likely to be more productive in terms of archaeological evidence. Secondly, that the objective of the project to locate, date and record the 'pit' features was ideally suited to a technique such as stratified adaptive cluster sampling, which can dramatically increase data yields. Thirdly, that the excavation would be restricted by both time and labour resources.

A 200 × 200 m sampling framework was placed in the centre of the site with a north-south orientation. This area was divided into 16 equal 'strata' of 50 × 50 m areas. Each stratum had an initial simple random sample of 10 5 × 5 m units i. e. a 10% sample. The surface of these units was cleared and if any features were identified they were excavated. These units were expanded into a network of sample units by excavating adjacent 5 × 5 m squares if an archaeological feature was intersected (see fig. 2).

Results

Excavations by the BAP revealed a number of pit features, containing a broad range of artefactual material, located in an otherwise sterile matrix across the site, with little evidence of any other stratigraphy. It is clear from the ceramic assemblage and the radiocarbon dates (see fig. 3) that the occupation in the north of the site, with ceramics typical of the Tochi-Gomal phase (as defined by Khan et al. 2000) is chronologically earlier than that in the south of the site. This is the component that the Cambridge team had identified as similar to material from Rehman Dheri period 1. It is also quite likely that one pit feature in particular contains transitional late Sheri Khan Tarakai/Tochi-Gomal phase material, similar to that from Ter Kala Dheri, a site located 5 km northeast of Lewan. The radiocarbon dates provide a much more secure chronology of occupation at the site and are much more closely aligned to the dates already published for the cultural phases in the Bannu Basin and the Indus Valley. In particular there is no evidence for a later Kot Diji phase of occupation at Lewan.

Although the association between the Tochi-Gomal and Kot Diji phases at Lewan is horizontal rather than vertical, it is clear that many elements of the Tochi-Gomal material culture are prototypical of the Kot Diji phase. The principal difference within the ceramic assemblage appears to be the quality of the ware as opposed to the decorative motifs. In the Tochi-Gomal phase it is extremely fine, whilst in the Kot Diji phase it becomes less so, probably as the result of increased production and standardisation.

In the transitional Sheri Khan Tarakai/Tochi-Gomal phase the ceramics are hand-made wares typically in open-mouthed bowl forms with internal brown and black painted decoration. The Tochi-Gomal phase ceramics are of a fine wheel-made ware typically in carinated and open-mouthed bowl forms, with polychrome decoration in white, brown,

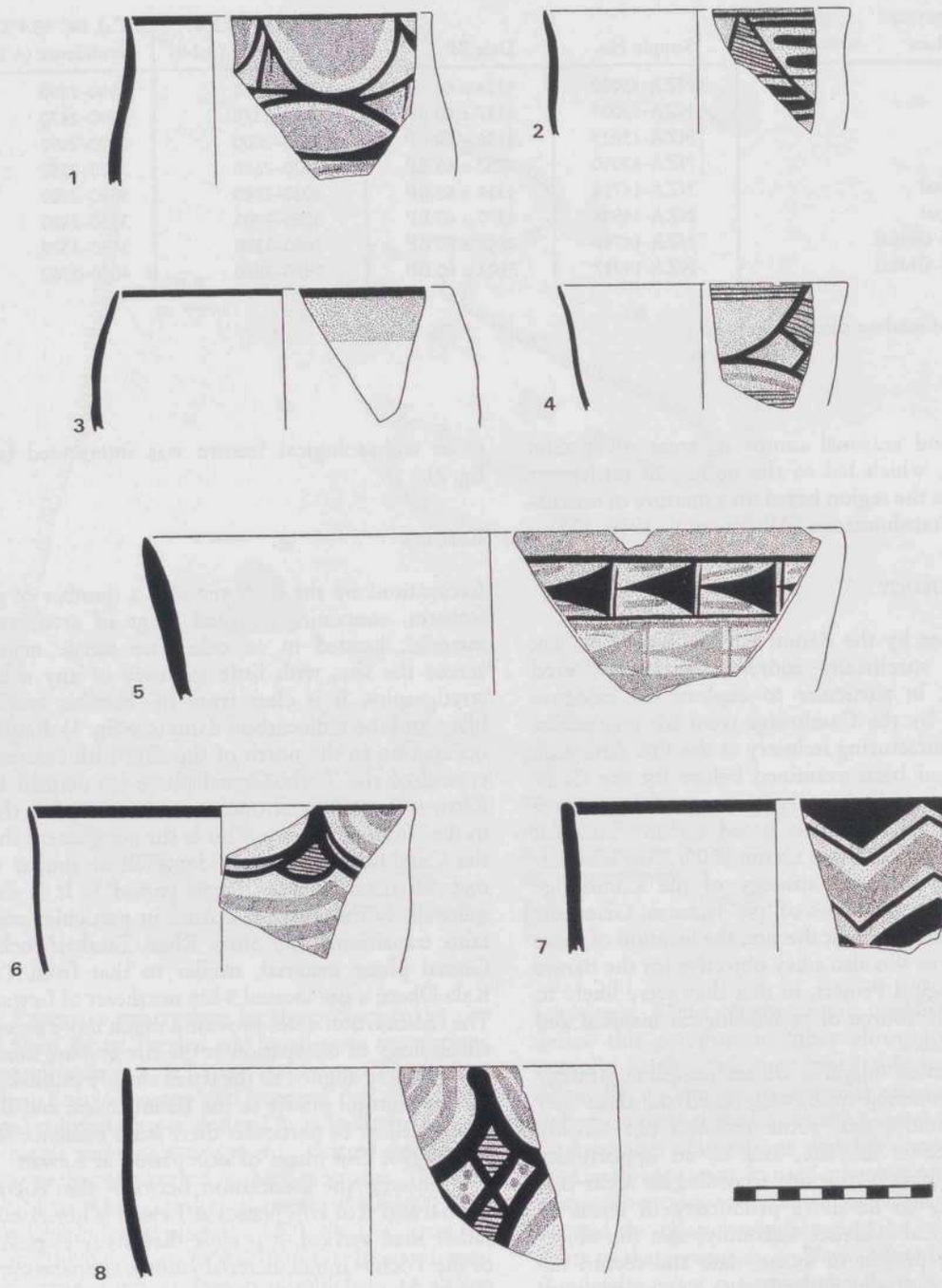

Fig. 4. Ceramics typical of the Tochi-Gomal phase at Lewan.

red, and black (see fig. 4). Many other elements of the Tochi-Gomal phase material culture, in particular seals, figurines, and beads are also similar to the Kot Diji phase assemblages.

The ceramics from the Kot Diji phase of occupation are made on a coarser ware typically in globular jar forms, which are very different to those in the Tochi-Gomal phase, and exhibit bichrome linear decoration of red and black (Allchin/Knox 1981, 242). These vessels are typical of the Kot Diji phase in the Bannu Basin, and more broadly in the Indus Valley (Khan 1964, 1965) (see fig. 5). The remaining material culture of the Kot Diji phase of occupation at Lewan typically included terracotta figurines and bangles, copper or bronze objects, ground and struck lithics, bone tools, and beads. Perhaps one of the most interesting and potentially informative finds of the Kot Diji phase

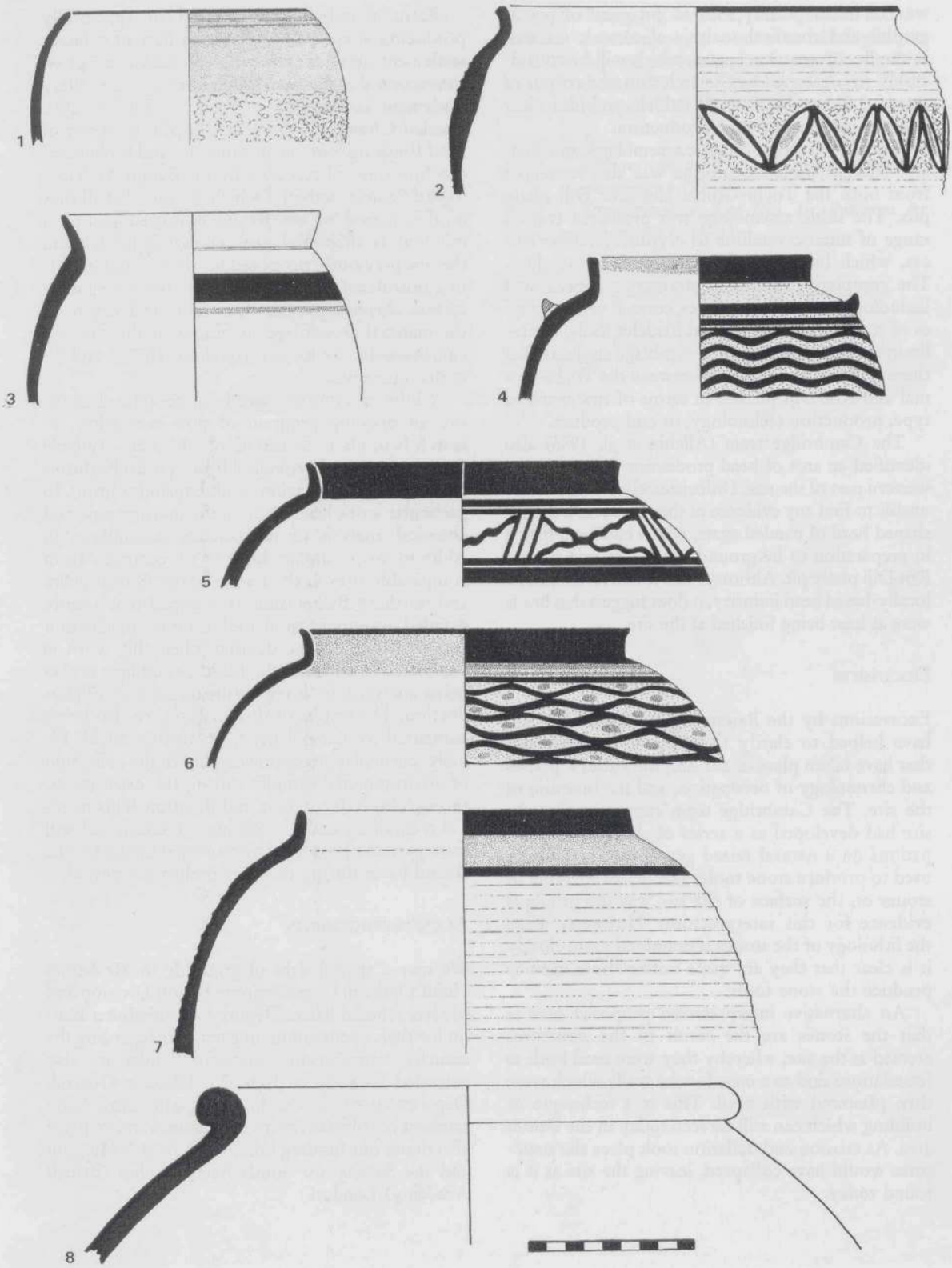

Fig. 5. Ceramics typical of the Kot-Diji phase at Lewan.

was an intact pottery kiln. A program of petrographic and chemical analysis of ceramic material in the Bannu area has begun, which will be considerably strengthened by the inclusion of a corpus of material from this feature, which provides clear evidence of local pottery production.

In addition to the ceramic assemblage, an extensive bladelet lithic assemblage was also recovered from both the Tochi-Gomal and Kot Diji phase pits. The lithic assemblage was produced from a range of microcrystalline to cryptocrystalline silicas, which have been broadly classified as chert. The complete production strategy is represented including raw material nodules, cores at various stages of reduction and modified bladelet tools. A preliminary inspection of the assemblage suggests that there is little differentiation between the Tochi-Gomal and Kot Diji phases, in terms of raw material type, production technology, or end product.

The Cambridge team (Allchin et al. 1986) also identified an area of bead production located in the western part of the site. Unfortunately the BAP were unable to find any evidence of this, however a barrel-shaped bead of banded agate, which had been flaked in preparation to be ground, was recovered from a Kot Diji phase pit. Although this is not evidence of a locally-based bead industry, it does suggest that beads were at least being finished at the site.

Discussion

Excavations by the Bannu Archaeological Project have helped to clarify the taphonomic processes that have taken place at the site, the cultural phases and chronology of occupation, and the function of the site. The Cambridge team suggested that the site had developed as a series of short-term occupations on a natural raised gravel bar, specifically used to produce stone tools. The dense covering of stones on the surface of the site was the principal evidence for this interpretation. However, when the lithology of the stones is examined more closely it is clear that they are quite unlike those used to produce the stone tools.

An alternative interpretation proposed here is that the stones are the result of the structures erected at the site, whereby they were used both as foundations and as a core for the walls which were then plastered with mud. This is a technique of building which can still be seen today in the Bannu area. As erosion and deflation took place the structures would have collapsed, leaving the site as it is found today.

Rather than being a specialised site, specifically producing stone tool artefacts as part of a larger settlement network, the range of industrial activities recorded at the site suggests that it was a village settlement comparable to those at Tarakai Qila, Tarakai Ghundai, and Islam Chowki. Evidence of bead finishing, pottery production, and lithic manufacture were all recorded by the Bannu Archaeological Project, activities which are found at all sites of this period in the Bannu basin, suggesting a much more simplified socio-economic model than the one previously proposed for the site and its role in a postulated regional economy. Both the radiocarbon chronology and the transitional nature of the material assemblage suggests that the site was continuously occupied throughout the 4th and 3rd millenniums BC.

Whilst excavations have been completed at the site an ongoing program of post-excavation research is in place the results of which are available on the Bannu Archaeological Project web site (http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/bap/index.html). In particular work has begun on the petrographic and chemical analysis of the ceramic assemblage, in addition to a similar analysis of ceramics from comparable sites in the Bannu basin, Gomal plain, and northern Baluchistan. It is hoped that a more detailed economic model of ceramic production and exchange can be devised when this work is complete. In addition the lithic assemblage is also being analysed, focusing on the technology of production. The results of this analysis are also being compared to assemblages from further afield. Finally, particular attention was paid to the collection of environmental samples during the excavations, through both dry sieving and flotation. This material is awaiting analysis and interpretation and will form part of a broader environmental model for the Bannu basin during the later prehistoric period.

Acknowledgements

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