A MULTIVARITE TECHNIQUE TO ANALYSE STYLISTIC VARIATIONS IN THE POTTERY ASSENBLAGE - CASE STUDY FROM AN IRON AGE CEMETERY OF SARM, NORTH CENTRAL IRAN

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The study of pottery assemblages may give valuable information in archaeology as both a cultural and chronological indicator. A study is described of an Iron Age burial site of Sarm, north central Iran, where 80 graves were excavated and a total of 1282 pots in combination with other grave materials have been registered during the 3 years of excavation from 2001 to 2003. Compared to other cemeteries in the area, Sarm stands out as the most important burial site between 900 -1500 BC, with an extremely large, rich and well-documented data material. The focus of this work is on two specific and interrelated aspects of grave goods particularly pottery and burial rites. The work has been performed in a systematic manner using a combination of simple descriptive statistics and more complex exploratory multivariate techniques particularly correspondence analysis. The techniques were used to identify type compositional characterization of grave goods (1) to identify types or groups that can be clearly differentiated from other groups to reveal a meaningful archaeological interpretation, (2) to investigate whether there were variations in the type from graves and whether a classification could be used as a basis for an explanation of ritual patterns. Through pattern recognition and statistical analyses, we need to consider possible correspondence between and among the analytical units and ultimately among the various grave types. During this process we would define some of the cultural parameters that shaped burial rites and identify and assess observable patterning that links the pottery styles, grave materials and ultimately burial rites. The results of these quantitative examinations were then investigated to determine if any new patterns could be noted in the data. In general, this study suggests a clear picture of the interrelationships in the data and has led to prove the method to address more theoretically oriented questions.