



FĀRS IX. PREHISTORIC SEQUENCE

FĀRS

ix. PREHISTORIC SEQUENCE

Six archeological sites—Tall-e Muški, Tall-e Jari A and B, Tall-e Gap, and Tall-e Bākun A and B—in the Persepolis plain of the Marvdašt area are the primary sources for the study of the prehistoric cultural development in Fārs. But there was not any consensus among archeologists about the absolute and relative chronological position of the sites that represented the early and middle stages of the Neolithic period (TABLE 1). Nor was much known about the type of fauna and flora that constituted the diet of the prehistoric inhabitants of the region. In 2004, a joint expedition of the Iranian Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization (ICHTO) and Chicago's Oriental Institute initiated a series of small operations at these sites for the specific purpose of recovering faunal and floral evidence as well as collecting samples for radiocarbon datings (Alizadeh, 2006, pp. 13-14, 40-42; *ibid.*, pp. 101-7 by M. Mashkour, and pp. 107-18 by N. F. Miller).

Paleolithic Fārs. The earliest evidence of human occupation is scant and comes primarily from caves (see ĠĀR) and rock shelters in the Kur River basin (FIGURE 1). In the absence of reliable absolute dates and based on comparative analysis of stone tools typology, the date of the occupation of the



caves and rock shelters spans the period from ca. 80,000 to 10,000 BP, consisting of the Middle Paleolithic, Upper Paleolithic and Epipaleolithic phases (see PALEOLITHIC AGE IN IRAN at *iranica.com*). Except for small collections of stone tool assemblages, not much else is known about the early inhabitants of these caves. While the lithic industry of Middle Paleolithic Fārs (ca. 80,000-40,000 BP) differs from that reported from Lorestān (Luristan) and Kurdistan, during the following Upper Paleolithic (ca. 40,000-18,000 BP) and Epipaleolithic (ca. 18,000-10,000 BP) periods, all the early Zagros sites show a similar industry (Piperno; Sumner, 1977; Rosenberg; Smith).

Formative Fārs. Little is known about the beginning of open-site settled occupation. This region, and in fact the entire land of modern-day Iran, seems to have been devoid of human occupation between 10,000 to 8,000 BC. However, sometime in the late 8th millennium the Marvdašt and Arsanjān areas show signs of open-air occupation. Again, aside from the type of pottery that the early Neolithic inhabitants of Fārs produced, not much is known about their culture (see NEOLITHIC AGE IN IRAN at *iranica.com*). The crude pottery of this Formative phase seems to be ancestor to that of Muški. To date, only two sites with this type of pottery are known: A4-1, a rock shelter in the Arsanjān area (Ikeda; Akira Tsuneki, pers. comm.) and Kušk-e Hazār, a mounded site in the Bayzā district of northern Fārs (Alden et al.).

Archaic Fārs. The next phase of Neolithic occupation is comparatively much better known. This Archaic phase is characterized by five different, but presumably related, soft, vegetal-tempered decorated and plain wares (Alizadeh, 2006, pp. 8-10; see CERAMICS). These early Neolithic cultures are named after the type sites, and known as Muški (Fukai et al.), Jari (Egami, 1967; Egami, 1977), Kutāhi, Bizdān, and Jaliān (Miroshedji, 1972; 1974).

On the basis of pottery stylistic analysis and stratigraphic positions of these early wares, the period of Archaic Fārs can be divided into two phases. The Archaic Fārs 1 phase, also called the Muški phase, is known from Tall-e Muški in the Marvdašt area, near Persepolis. This phase is characterized by the Muški ware, first described by L. Vanden Berghe (1954), and later by Sh. Fukai (1973). It is a straw/chaff-tempered ware which usually has a dark core. The surface is smoothed, red-slipped and burnished, and is usually decorated with dark brown/black linear patterns. Shapes are simple and include open bowls with sharp carination, the entire area above which is routinely decorated. Simple or everted rims occur with flat or dimpled base. The occurrence at Muški of a much less common matte-buff ware, decorated with linear designs,



may be related to the buff pottery of the following Archaic Fārs 2 phase (Fukai et al., p. 29). This less common ware has a buff-slip, is un-burnished, and decorated with motifs not found on the red-slip burnished ware. W. Sumner (1977, p. 293) attributes ten sites to this phase: six in the Marvdašt area (FIGURE 2) and four in the other valleys.

The following Archaic Fārs 2 phase is represented by the Jari ware, also discovered and first defined by L. Vanden Berghe (1954, p. 400). It is a straw-tempered, buff-slipped ware; the painted geometric designs are in general similar to those of the Mułki ware. The Jari ware is a soft, chaff-tempered buff ware that is usually decorated with geometric designs. The paint ranges in color from black to brown, and rarely to red. Open bowls with straight or slightly everted rims are common. Some examples of the decorated vessels combine painted linear patterns with incised lines. The Jari ware is reported by W. Sumner (1977) from 48 sites in the Kur River basin and five in the Sarvestan-Shiraz region, indicating a large population increase from the preceding phase.

The dominant Mułki and Jari wares are presumably contemporary with the Kutāhi, Bizdān, and Jaliān wares, three additional soft wares represented by mounded sites outside the Marvdašt plain (Sumner 1977, p. 295). From the site of Kutāhi, near Shiraz, P. Gotch (1968) reported a soft ware, almost identical to the Jari ware and very similar to the painted ceramics from Qal'e-ye Rostam in the Šahr-e Kord area, southwest of Isfahan (q.v.). The characteristic decorative technique on some of the Jari open bowls that combined painted and scratched borderlines also occurs on this ware. The Bizdān ware is also a straw-tempered, soft ware found only in central Fārs (Miroshedji, 1972). Open bowls with simple lip and sharp carination, as in the Muški ware, are the common forms. The bold geometric designs, predominantly maroon, decorate a sometimes slightly burnished buff-slipped exterior surface.

While little information is available from the presumably contemporary settlements represented by the Kutāhi, Bizdān, and Jalyān wares, we know comparatively more about the internal structure of the two settlements represented by the Mułki and Jari wares. The early inhabitants of the Marvdašt region had a typical early Neolithic settlement. Pottery occurred from the beginning of the settlement, as did flint and obsidian blades. While the presence of obsidian points to some type of connection with points northwest, the presence of Persian Gulf shells (i.e., dentalium and cowrie) suggests contact with the southern region. The few copper (q.v.) objects and



beads made of turquoise found at Muški suggest connection through exchange with points east and northeast. There is evidence of some type of unremarkable architecture from the beginning of the settlement at Muški. The few thin walls that were excavated were made of both pisṣ and mud bricks (see BRICK). The architecture of the Archaic 2 Fārs phase from Jari appears more solid. The few published samples suggest small rectangular multi-room houses with open courtyards, hearths, and ovens (Alizadeh et al., 2004; Maeda). The material cultural assemblage from Jari is basically similar to that of Muški. Copper pins, Persian Gulf shells, flint and obsidian blades, spindle whorls, and grinding stone tools constitute the main artifacts reported from the site. The Archaic 2 phase is represented by 53 settlements.

Early Fārs. Excavations at Tall-e Bākun B and Jari A provided evidence for the Early Fārs period, also known as Bākun B 1. These sites are located in the Marvdašt plain near Persepolis. Excavations at Jari A (Alizadeh et al., 2004; Egami and Sono, 1967; Egami et al., 1977), and several other sites (Vanden Berghe, 1954, pp. 395-96) have shown that the early soft ware horizon, at least in the Marvdašt area, was followed by the plain red/pink/buff-burnished ware of Early Fārs, which was itself followed, but was not replaced, by the black-on-buff ceramic of the Middle Fārs 1 phase.

The Early Fārs period is less known than the preceding Archaic Fārs period. At Tall-e Jari this plain ware appears to replace gradually the typical, decorated Jari ware (Alizadeh, 2006, pp. 8-10). Even though this plain ware is in contrast to the previous tradition of at least 5 classes of early painted wares, the settlement pattern of the Archaic 2 phase continued into this phase as well (Sumner, 1994, p. 49), but the number of sites increased from 53 to 102 (*ibid.*, tab. 1).

Middle Fārs. This phase (also known as Bākun B2) is characterized by a completely different class of pottery, though the plain red/buff ware of the preceding Early Fārs phase continued. The new pottery closely parallels the fabric, shapes, and painted decorative designs of the Middle Susiana phase in Kuzestān (Alizadeh, 2006, pp. 11-12; 1992, pp. 24-26).

The Middle Fārs period consists of the two ceramic phases Middle Fārs 1 and 2 that are represented by the black-on-buff potteries from the upper levels of Tall-e Bākun B and Tall-e Gap, respectively, both in the Marvdašt plain. The black-on-buff pottery of Middle Fārs 1 has no known antecedent in Fārs, and most probably was introduced from lowland Susiana. The bulk of the pottery



from Tall-e Gap is comparable to that of the initial phase of the Bākun A settlement, and even more closely related to the pottery assemblage of Late Susiana 1 (Alizadeh, 1992, pp. 24-26). The few painted motifs and shapes that are shared between Gap and Bākun A do not provide strong antecedents for the classic Bākun A pottery, and therefore the possibility of a hiatus between the two phases exists, though it may not be substantial. Nor does any known site of the Middle Fārs period anticipate the type of socio-economic complexity that developed subsequently during the Late Fārs phase, though some button seals and clay tokens are found at Tall-e Gap.

Middle Fārs was a period of increasing interregional contact between lowland Susiana and highland Fārs, as indicated by the similarities in ceramic shapes and painted motifs and compositions. It also seems to have been a period of crystallization of the highland mobile pastoralist groups who played a major role in interregional contact (Alizadeh, 2006, pp. 91-105). The large isolated cemeteries of Hakalān and Parinča (Vanden Berghe, 1973, 1975, 1987; Haernick and Overlaat) in the Zagros Mountains just north of Kuzestān date to the 5th millennium BCE, and are contemporary with the Middle Fārs period.

Late Fārs. This period marks the culmination of several millennia of prehistoric cultural development. Slight regional differences notwithstanding, a vast region in southern Iran was culturally unified during this phase. Most of our current understanding of this late prehistoric period in Fārs comes from the type site of Tall-e Bākun A (Alizadeh, 2006, pp. 83-97; cf. Langsdorff and McCown), and thus is also known as Bākun A phase. This period shows rapid craft specialization, development of administrative technology (i.e., counting clay tokens, seals, and sealings), social and economic differentiation, and spatial segregation of residential, administrative and production sectors of the society.

Late Fārs was also a period of artistic experimentation. The long artistic tradition of painting pottery reaches its zenith with the appearance of the classic Bākun A ceramics, with stylistic links to the ceramics of Susiana and the southern and central Zagros regions. The majority of the settlements dating to this phase were founded on new sites, but their distribution patterns remain unchanged from the previous phase. Moreover, the intermountain valleys northwest of the Marvdaḷt plain, which previously had been devoid of any settlement sites, became sparsely occupied. Almost all these newly founded sites are small and located in the strategic intermountain valleys northwest of the Marvdaḷt plain (Alizadeh 2003, 2006, pp. 51-57).



The late prehistoric Bākun A culture in Fārs is a major source of information on the initial development of the rapid, punctuated evolutionary path that later during the Proto-Elamite phase (see ELAM) of Bāneš at Tall-e Maliān culminated in the formation of state organizations. Long before the appearance of administrative technology and physical segregation of administration, production, storage, and residential units in urban centers of the late 4th and early 3rd millennia BCE, Tall-e Bākun A, near Persepolis in the Marvdašt region of Fārs, stands as one of their precursors.

Subsistence economy. As in many other regions in the Near East, the prehistoric inhabitants of Fārs practiced a subsistence economy that consisted of a mixed strategy of animal husbandry (see DĀM-DĀRI), agriculture (q.v.), and hunting and gathering (see HUNTING IN IRAN i.). The fauna (q.v.) and flora (q.v.) assemblages from the five sites of Tall-e Muški, Jari A and B, and Bākun A and B, collected during the 2004 expedition of Chicago's Oriental Institute were by no means large and diverse enough to allow a definitive reconstruction of the types of plants and animals that were exploited by prehistoric inhabitants of the Marvdašt plain. Nevertheless, the available materials fill a crucial gap in the analysis of prehistoric Fārs (M. Mashkour and N. F. Miller in Alizadeh, 2006, pp. 101-18).

In the Archaic Fārs 1 phase, there is a conspicuous absence of domestic sheep (see GUSFAND) and very low presence of domestic goats (see BOZ) at Muški. In contrast, the majority of Muški bone assemblage belongs to wild species of bovine (see CATTLE) and equids (see ASB). In the following phases, the number of wild hunted species decreased. The number of domestic sheep and goat rise dramatically in the late prehistoric phase (ca. 4500 BCE). During the Archaic Fārs 2 and Early Fārs phases, the main source of meat is sheep and goat with cattle as supplement. Gazelles were still hunted, but less than the preceding Archaic 1 phase. During the Late Fārs phase in the mid-5th millennium BCE, sheep and goats became the main source of meat. Cattle are present, but represent a fraction of the assemblage. This specialization trend of the pastoral economy revolving around the caprid group is similar to that which is documented in the following proto-historic Bāneš and historic Kaftari periods at Tall-e Maliān (Zeder, pp. 81, 136).

Unlike southwestern Iran, where domestic cereals are attested from the beginning of occupation in lowland Susiana and Dehlorān (q.v.), even from the aceramic phases, only barley (q.v.) is attested in much of the prehistoric sequence in the Marvdašt plain (N. F. Miller in Alizadeh, 2006, pp. 107-18). In



the later phases at Jari A, Bākun B and Bākun A, there is evidence of other cereals such as emmer wheat, einkorn wheat, bread wheat, and peas. Wild species of plants are also well represented in the collection, and they represent open ground genera and a suitable source of animal fodder.

The flora analysis indicates that just as today, the Marvdašt plain was primarily an open terrain with scattered trees. In addition, the evidence suggests a rather arid condition that was better suited for an agro-pastoral economy than for farming. While the existing data do not establish the prevailing climatic condition in the prehistoric Marvdašt plain, it does provide some additional support for the hypothesis that subsistence economy in the region may have been primarily based on pastoralism rather than farming for most of its history until the Sasanian period (see SASANIAN DYNASTY at *iranica.com*).

Calibrated radiocarbon dates. Prior to the 2004 archeological expedition of Chicago's Oriental Institute, few reliable ¹⁴C dates were available from the key sites in the Marvdašt region. The separate analyses of two laboratories produced 13 calibrated dates (TABLE 2; TABLE 3) that cover all prehistoric phases (TABLE 1) with the exception of Middle Fārs 2 (Gap phase) and Proto-Bāneš (Lapui phase). The absolute date of the Middle Fārs 2 phase is extrapolated from the preceding Middle Fārs 1 (Bākun B2) and the succeeding Late Fārs (Bākun A). The absolute date for the Proto-Bāneš phase (ca. 4000-3700 BCE) is based on the dates from Tall-e Bākun A and on those obtained from the Early Bāneš phase at Tall-e Kura (Sumner, 2003, pp. 55-57, tab. 13). Based on the terminal date for the Bākun A phase, the two radiocarbon dates from Tall-e Kura (4000-2400 and 4500-3000 BCE) were rejected as too high and too low.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

J. Alden et al., "Kushk-e Hezar: A Mushki/Jari Period Site in the Kur River Basin," *Iran* 42, 2004, pp.25-45.



A. Alizadeh, *Prehistoric Settlement Patterns and Cultures in Susiana, Southwestern Iran*, University of Michigan Museum of Anthropology Technical Report 24, Ann Arbor, 1992.

Idem, "Some Observations Based on the Nomadic Character of Fars Prehistoric Cultural Development," in *Yeki Bud, Yeki Nabud: Essays on the Archaeology of Iran in Honor of William M. Sumner*, ed. N. F. Miller and K. Abdi, Monograph of the Cotsen Institute of Archaeology at UCLA 48, Los Angeles, 2003, pp. 83-97.

Idem, *The Origins of State Organizations in Prehistoric Highland Fars, Southern Iran: Excavations at Tall-e Bakun*, with contributions by M. Kimiaie, M. Maskour, and N. F. Miller, Oriental Institute Publications 128, Chicago, 2006.

A. Alizadeh et al., "Iranian Prehistoric Project: Excavations at Tall-e Bakun A and B, Jari A and B, and Mushki: Reconstruction of the Prehistoric Environment in Marvdasht," *Oriental Institute Annual Report 2003-2004*, pp. 94-105.

N. Egami and S. Masuda, *Marv Dasht I, The Excavations at Tall-i Bakun, 1956*. Tokyo, 1962.

N. Egami and T. Sono, *Marv Dasht II, Excavations at Tall-i Gap, 1959*, Tokyo, 1962.

N. Egami, "Excavations at Two Prehistoric Sites: Tepe Djari A and B in the Marv Dasht Basin," in *A Survey of Persian Art from Prehistoric Times to the Present*, ed. A. U. Pope and Ph. Ackerman, 18 vols., 1938-1977, XIV, 1967, pp. 2936-39.

N. Egami et al., "Tal-i Jarri A: A Preliminary Report of the Excavations in Marv Dasht, 1961 and 1971," *Orient* 13, 1977, pp. 1-7.

Sh. Fukai et al., *Marv-Dasht III: The Excavation at Tall-i Mushki, 1965*, Tokyo, 1973.

P. Gotch, "A Survey of the Persepolis Plain and Shiraz Area," *Iran* 6, 1968, pp. 168-70.

Idem, "Persepolis Plain and Shiraz." *Iran* 7, 1969, pp. 190-92.

E. Haerinck and B. Overlaet, *The Chalcolithic Period Parchineh and Hakalan*, Brussels, 1996.



J. Ikeda, *Preliminary Report of an Archaeological Survey in Arsanjan Area, Fars Province, Iran, 1977*, Kyoto, 1979; private distribution.

A. Langsdorff and D. McCown, *Tall-i Bakun A: Season of 1932*, Oriental Institute Publications 59, Chicago, 1942.

A. Maeda, "A Study of the Painted Pottery from Tape Djari B," *Bulletin of the Ancient Oriental Museum* 8, 1986, pp. 55-86.

P. de Miroschedji, "Prospections archéologiques dans les vallées de Fasa et de Darab," in *Proceedings of the 1st Annual Symposium of Archaeological Research in Iran*, ed. Firuz Bagherzadeh, Tehran, 1972, pp. 1-7.

Idem, "Тяръ Jalyan: Une нѳcropole du IIIe millѳnaire avant J.C. au Fars oriental (Iran)," *Arts Asiatique* 30, 1974, pp.19-64.

M. Piperno, "A Middle Palaeolithic Site in Fars," *East and West* 22, 1972, pp. 183-97.

Idem, "Upper Palaeolithic Caves in South Iran," *East and West* 24, 1974, pp. 9-14.

M. Rosenberg, "The Epipaleolithic in the Marvdasht," in *Yeki Bud, Yeki Nabud: Essays on the Archaeology of Iran in Honor of William M. Sumner*, ed. N. Miller and K. Abdi, Monograph of the Cotsen Institute of Archaeology at UCLA 48, Los Angeles, 2003, pp. 98-108.

Ph. Smith, *Paleolithic Archaeology in Iran*, American Institute of Iranian Studies

Monographs 1, Philadelphia, 1986.

W. Sumner, "Early Settlements in Fars Province, Iran," in *Mountains and Lowlands: Essays in the Archaeology of Greater Mesopotamia*, ed. L. D. Levine and T. Cuyler Young, Jr., Malibu, 1977, pp. 291-306.

Idem, "The Evolution of Tribal Society in Southern Zagros Mountains, Iran," in *Chiefdoms and Early States in the Near East: The Organizational Dynamics of Complexity*, ed. G. Stein and M. Rothman, Monographs in World Archaeology 18, Madison, Wis., 1994, pp. 47-66.

Idem, *Early Urban Life in the Land of Anshan: Excavations at Tal-e Malyan in*



the Highlands of Iran, University Museum Monograph 117, Philadelphia, 2003.

L. Vanden Berghe, "Archaeologische Navorsingen in de omstreken van Persepolis," *Jaarbericht ex Orient Lux* (NR) 13, 1954, pp. 394-408.

Idem, "Le Lorestan avant l'vge du Bronze: Le nřcropole de Hakalan," in *Proceedings of the 2nd Annual Symposium on Archaeological Research in Iran*, Tehran, 1973, pp. 66-79.

Idem, "Luristan: La nřcropole de Dum-Gar-Parchinah," *Archřology* 79, 1975, pp. 46-61.

Idem, "Luristan, Pusht-i-Kuh au chalcolithique moyen: Les nřcropoles de Parchinah et Hakalān," in *Prřhistoire de la Mřsopotamie: La Mřsopotamie prřhistorique et l'exploration rřcente du Djebel Hamrin*, ed. J.-L. Huot, Paris, 1987, pp. 91-106.

M. Zeder, *Feeding Cities: Specialized Animal Economy in the Near East*, Washington, D.C., 1991.