

Tall-i Bakun B, Marv Dasht, Iran

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The excavations

Tall-i Bakun B is one of the two mounds known as Tall-i Bakun, which are situated nearby the Achaemenid capital of Persepolis, on the Marv Dasht plain (Figs. 1, 2). It comprises a circular mound with a diameter of approximately 140 m, and rises to a height of about 4 to 5 m from the surrounding field. As with at Tall-i Bakun A, extensive excavations were conducted at this mound in the early 1900s. Following them, the University of Tokyo's excavations at this mound were carried out for one week from September 25, 1956, along with those at Tall-i Bakun A. For more detailed descriptions of the site setting, the excavation history, and the aim of the Japanese excavations, see the page for Tall-i Bakun A.

The trench opened at Tall-i Bakun B was small, covering an area of 2 m by 6 m, and was located adjacent to the east excavation limit of the University of Chicago's trench (Fig. 3). The excavations reached the virgin soil, which was approximately 4.2 m deep from the surface. The deposits were divided to Layers B1 and B2 from top; these are almost certainly comparable to Levels II and I of the University of Chicago's excavations, respectively (note that the stratigraphic definitions are reversed between these two expeditions). In the University of Tokyo's excavations, no standing architectural remains were recovered. However, the virgin soil exhibited some pits, which may represent quarrying pits for the procurement of clay materials for buildings located outside the excavation trench.

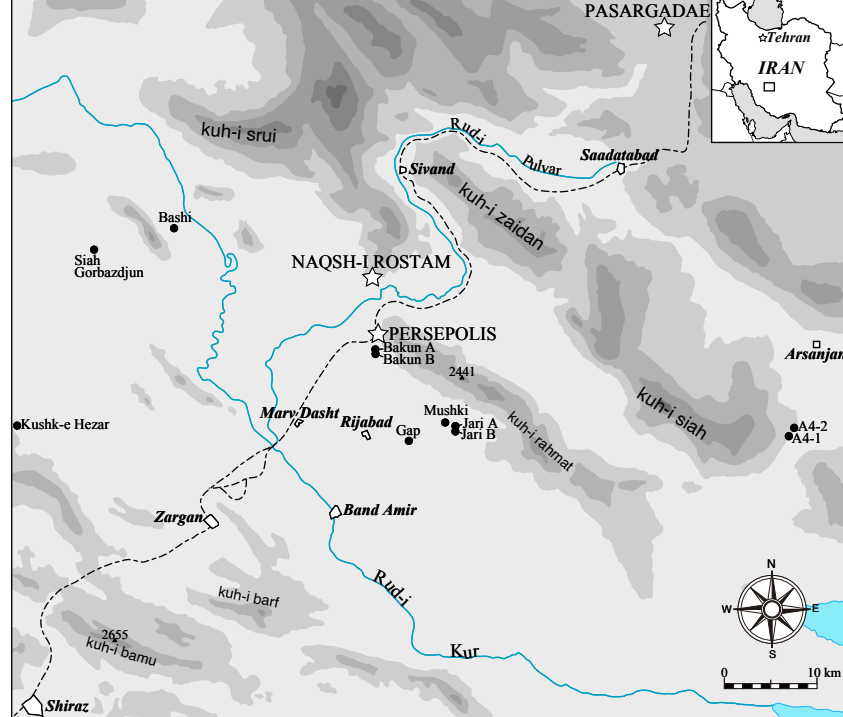


Fig. 1 Map showing the location of Tall-i Bakun B and related sites in the Marv Dasht plain.



Fig. 2 Distant view of Tall-i Bakun B.



Fig. 3 The excavations trench at Tall-i Bakun B, 1956 (Egami and Masuda 1959).

The Chalcolithic remains

The recovered archaeological materials consist of a large number of pottery fragments. According to the excavators, the Layer B1 assemblage contained painted Black-on-Buff ware ceramics, which were typologically earlier than those of Tall-i Bakun A (Fig. 4). The Layer B2 material, however, was essentially dominated by chaff-tempered coarse-ware ceramic assemblage, and contained no painted ceramics (Egami and Masuda 1959). In the current chronological scheme for the Chalcolithic cultural development in southwest Iran, Layer B1 is best assigned to the Early Bakun, whilst Layer B2 is ascribable to the Shamsabad phase of the Pottery Neolithic (Nishiaki 2003). The most recent re-analysis of the ceramic specimens supports this interpretation (Miki 2015). Further, the radiocarbon dates provided by Alizadeh (2006)'s soundings show a boundary between the Shamsabad and the Bakun phases, which was dated at ~5000 cal. BC.

It is noteworthy that the lithic artifacts from Layer B1 have also been studied recently (Fig. 5). The results revealed that a particular core reduction technology, which uses the unifacially prepared cores for pressure blade production, was used in the Early Bakun (Nishiaki 2019). This technology, known in the Chalcolithic period of Susiana plain, is distinguished from the earlier Pottery Neolithic lithic reduction technology known at Jari B. This fact provides a new dimension to interpret the emergence of the Bakun Culture in the highland plateau of Fars. The manufacturing of the distinct painted ceramics of Bakun marks the advent of the Chalcolithic in the southwestern Zagros. In this context, lithic perspectives will shed new light on the current debate regarding the establishment of the Bakun Culture, which has thus far been discussed solely based on ceramic evidence.

The excavations at Tall-i Bakun B and Bakun A were conducted by the Japanese teams with the aim of "obtaining archaeological materials to develop the Japanese research of the Middle East archaeology," which was still in its infancy in 1956 (Egami and Masuda 1959). The results might not have been admittedly so great for the international scientific communities in the 1950s. Nevertheless, the studies conducted since these initial excavations, notably in the last decade, have proved the significance of re-evaluating the cultural dynamics of early farming societies in the southwest Iranian highland plateau, in comparison with Mesopotamian "core regions" in the plain to the west, where cultural development occurred earlier and supposedly made a great impact on the neighboring regions like the Marv Dasht plain. Given the absence of detailed publications regarding the 1930's excavations at Tall-i Bakun B, the materials obtained in 1956 are evaluated as an important source of information to understand the cultural development over this period.*

*The text is after Nishiaki 2020.



Fig. 4 Pottery recovered from Tall-i Bakun B, 1956 (Egami and Masuda 1959).

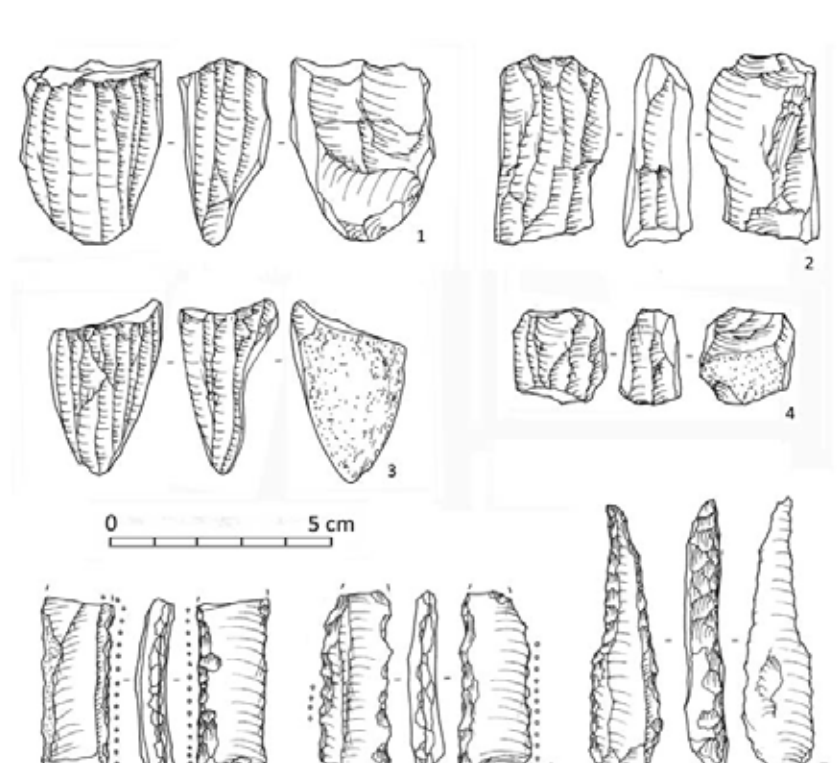


Fig. 5 Lithic artifacts from Tall-i Bakun B (Nishiaki 2019).

Further reading

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