

## Tall-i Jari A, Marv Dasht, Iran

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### The excavations

The site of Tall-i Jari consists of two mounds, known as Tall-i Jari A and B, about 200 m apart from each other, located approximately 10 km southeast of Tall-i Bakun, on the Marv Dasht plain, southwest Iran (Fig. 1). Both mounds were first excavated by L. Vanden Berghe in the early 1950s, which demonstrated their great potential for investigating cultural developments over the Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods. Due to their pertinence to the main research target of the Tokyo University Iraq-Iran Archaeological Expedition, both sites were subjected to intensive excavations in 1959.

Tall-i Jari A is a circular mound of approximately 120 m in diameter, rising 2.8 m from the surrounding field (Figs. 2, 3; Egami 1967). Following a 10 m by 10 m grid system, eight squares were excavated (Squares A to H), located in the southeast quarter of the mound. Square F was dug as a 3 m-wide trench to reveal the stratigraphic relationship between the central parts (A to E) and the southern edge of the mound (G and H). Four of these squares (A, E, F, and H) were deepened to the virgin soil. The then field director, Sei-ichi Masuda, conducted the second season of excavations in 1971 (Egami et al. 1977). A dense succession of architectural levels was recovered, characterized by rectangular mud-brick walled buildings that often contained buttresses inside (Fig. 4). The architecture and the associated ceramic typology led the excavator to divide the stratigraphy into seven cultural layers in 1959, and three levels in 1971. Level I (the latest) of the 1971 season corresponds to Layers 1 to 4 of 1959, Level II to Layers 5 and 6, and Level III to Layer 7 (Miki 2014).

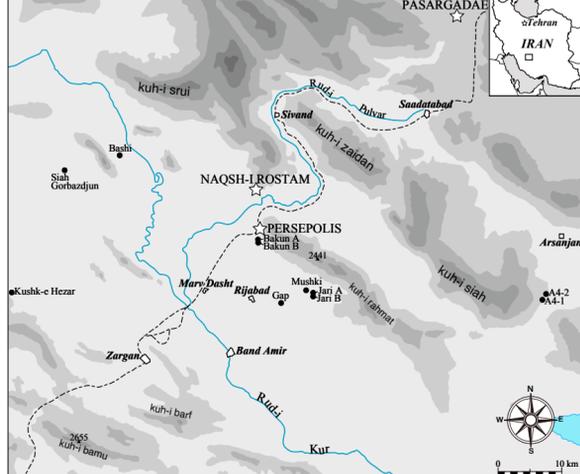


Fig. 1 Map showing the location of Tall-i Jari A and related sites in the Marv Dasht plain.



Fig. 2 Distant view of at Tall-i Jari A.



Fig. 3 The Japanese excavation trenches at Tall-i Jari A, 1959.



Fig. 4 The Chalcolithic architecture at Tall-i Jari A, 1959 (Nishiaki 2003).

### The stratigraphy

Mostly relying on the ceramic evidence, the excavators assigned Level I to the Late Bakun phase of the Chalcolithic, Level II to the Proto-Hassuna of the Pottery Neolithic popular in northern Mesopotamia, and Level III to the Jari B culture of the Pottery Neolithic (Egami et al. 1977). However, this view needs considerable revision today (Nishiaki 2003). A more parsimonious interpretation, based on the published accounts of the archaeological remains and a reanalysis of the ceramic specimens (Miki 2014), would be to assign Level I to the Early Bakun of the Chalcolithic (Fig. 4), Level II to the Samasabad, and Level III to the Bashi/TMB phase of the Pottery Neolithic. The radiocarbon dates for this sequence from Alizadeh (2006)'s excavations point to the occupations being mainly in the 6th millennium BC. The Level II Samasabad layers yielded dates of 6280±70 BP (AA63492), 6170±140 BP (Beta207564), and 6010±40 BP (Beta210982) (Alizadeh 2006). The date obtained from a charcoal sample stored at the University Museum, the University of Tokyo for Level I was 6120±35 BP (Tka13822). In sum, Level I is dated from the early 5th millennium BC, and Level II is dated from the late 6th millennium BC. Although no radiocarbon dates have been obtained for the earliest cultural layers, Level III should be dated from the beginning of the 6th millennium BC (see page for Tall-i Mushki).

Regarding the present state of research, the significance of the Japanese excavations at Tall-i Jari A can be highlighted by at least two points. The most important point is the contribution that it has made to the definition of the pottery difference between the Neolithic to the Chalcolithic in Southwest Iran. As the radiocarbon dates indicate, the Tall-i Jari A records demonstrate a rapid transition at around 5000 cal BC. While the beginning of the Chalcolithic period in the region is marked by the introduction of painted pottery (Black-on-Buff ware), Balun ware and its process have not been documented at any single site. The Tall-i Jari A cultural stratigraphy provides a rare opportunity to elucidate this process, through well-defined stratigraphic records (Figs. 5, 6). Second, the Neolithic remains of Level III are intriguing regarding the understanding of the transition of the early-late phases of the Pottery Neolithic. The transitional phase has been documented at only a few sites, like Tall-i Mushki (TMB) and Toll-e Bashi. The material records, including the architecture and material remains, are considered to be important additions that contribute to understanding the Neolithic development of southwest Iran.



Fig. 5 Chalcolithic burial at Tall-i Jari A, 1959



Fig. 6 Early Bakun pottery in situ from Tall-i Jari A (JAA. P7, Level 3). \*The text is after Nishiaki 2020.

### Further reading

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