

Fahlian (Tape Suruvan), Faras, Iran

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The excavations

The major aim of the Tokyo University Iraq-Iran Archaeological Expedition in 1959 was to study early farming village sites through excavations in the Fars Province, Iran. At the same time, the team also conducted a general survey to obtain as much information as possible about the known and unknown archaeological sites in general. The team's art historians were naturally interested in visiting the historical Achaemenid and Sasanian monuments so popular in Fars. Particular attention was paid to the Royal Road of the Achaemenid period connecting Persepolis and Susa, on which a certain number of way-stations were constructed. To contribute to defining way-stations, which had not been fully identified archaeologically, the team carried out short-term excavations at one of the potential way stations in Fars (Atarashi and Horiuchi 1963).

The investigated site, Tape Suruvan, is situated at the village of Jin Jin, about 6 km west of the town of Fahlian, and 125 km northwest of Shiraz. Situated at the gateway from Elam to Fars, this small mound attracted visitors since the early 1900s. Following the early notes left by Herzfeld (1926) and Stein (1940), Ghirshman (1951) presented a more in-depth interpretation, stating that a site near Jin Jin was probably a way-station, and the column bases visible on the surface may indicate part of a royal pavilion to facilitate the court's journey.

Tape Suruvan is a small mound situated at the edge of a hilly terrace, forming a rather rectangular mound of 75 m by 60 m, rising a few meters from the nearby surface. The excavations were conducted in a week from June 27 to July 3, 1959, after the completion of two months of excavations at Tall-i Jari A, Tall-i Jari B, Tall-i Mushki, and Tall-i Gap. The fieldwork was directed by Ken Amakasu. Starting from one column base visible on the surface, the team opened several pits to locate comparable bases and trenches to determine the size and plan of the building. The longest trench (Trench A) was 54 m in length and 3 m in width. As a result, four column bases and parts of stone architecture and pavement were found. The bases show a bell-shape with carved palmettes in relief, typical of the Achaemenid period. The bases were built in a pit some 1.4 m deep and filled with foundation stones. Other notable discoveries include large stone slabs and parapets. According to architectural observations at Persepolis, parapets of this kind were usually installed at a platform or a staircase in a royal palace. Associated objects were mostly dominated by pottery, whose typological features point to the Achaemenid period.*

*The text is after Nishiaki 2020.

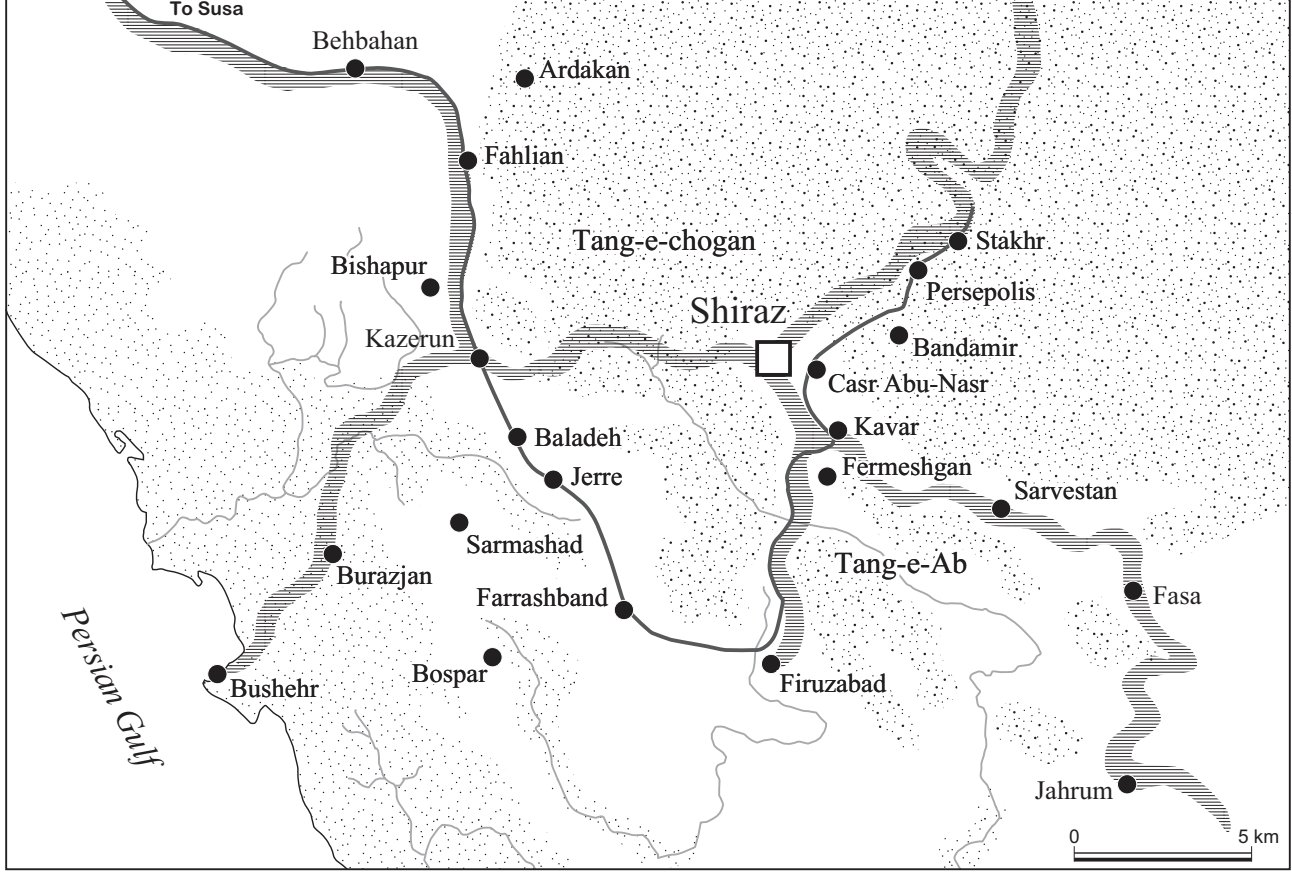


Fig. 1 Location of Fahlian and other way-stations on the Royal Road (modified from Mostafavi 1967)



Fig. 2 Excavations at Tape Suruvan, 1959



Fig. 3 Column base and a stone pavement discovered at Tape Suruvan (Atarashi and Horiuchi 1963)

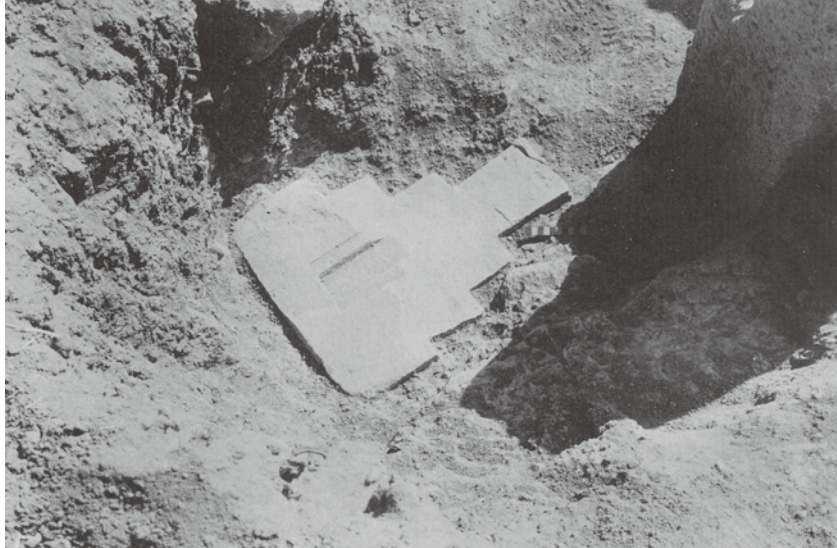


Fig. 4 Stone parapet from Tape Suruvan (Atarashi and Horiuchi 1963)

Future prospects

It should be noted that the excavations of this mound were conducted as a preliminary sounding, to be followed by more substantial excavations in the future. In fact, the excavation report was coined Vol. I (Atarashi and Horiuchi 1963), indicating a plan to continue the research in Fahlian district. However, due to various reasons, further excavations have not been realized to date. Nevertheless, the sounding at Tape Suruvan showed it to have accommodated architecture related to the royal family, likely as a way station of the Royal Road (Mostafavi 1967). The research also revealed that the buildings lay on natural terrace; in other words, the site was selected from a strategic point of view rather than as a historical consequence. The Japanese team located a number of spots yielding Achaemenid remains in the vicinity of Tape Suruvan. Architectural remains with carved stones were identified at the mountain foothill to the southeast of Tape Suruvan, while a possible settlement of this period was located at Tape Mohammed-Kasem, about 500 m northwest from Tape Suruvan. Although presently suspended, continuous research at Tape Suruvan would contribute to archaeologically clarifying the Achaemenid management system of post station management.

Further reading

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