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BIZDAN POTTERY: NEW EVIDENCE FROM THE NEOLITHIC PERIOD AT FORG, SOUTHEAST FARS, IRAN

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Abstract: In the Fars cultural Zone settlements of the Neolithic period emerged from the middle of the eighth millennium BC. In the early seventh millennium BC, societies in this cultural zone, like other societies in Southwest Asia, achieved the technology of pottery production. According to the results of excavations and surveys that have been obtained from the Neolithic Sites of Fars, from the second half of the seventh millennium BC, different pottery styles have emerged in this region. In the northern half of this area, Mushki and Jari pottery styles were common, in the southern part, three distinct pottery styles were obtained: Qasr Ahmad pottery in the Kavar region, Jalyan type in Fasa, and Bizdan pottery in Darab. Understanding the characteristics of the Neolithic period was one of the main goals of the author's archeological survey in Forg Plain, which was conducted in 2019. In this article, based on the surface cultural materials obtained from this region, an attempt is made to study the cultural characteristics of the Neolithic period in southern Iran. The most important questions are: What is the oldest evidence of settlement in Forg? and the common pottery style in this area is influenced by which culture zone? According to the survey, Neolithic painted pottery was obtained from the surface of the two sites, which shows that this plain was under the influence and spread of Bizdan pottery in the Neolithic period. The existence of fertile lands and rivers in Forg can be considered as one of the most important reasons for the attraction of human societies in the Neolithic period.

Keywords: Fars Cultural Zone, Neolithic period, Bizdan pottery, stone tools.

چکیده: در حوزه فرهنگی فارس از حدود اواسط هزاره هشتم پیش از میلاد، شاهد استقرارهای دوره نوسنگی هستیم و در اوایل هزاره هفتم قبل از میلاد جوامع این حوزه فرهنگی، به مانند سایر جوامع جنوب غرب آسیا به تکنولوژی ساخت سفال دست پیدا می‌کنند. با توجه به نتایج کاوش‌ها و بررسی‌هایی که تا کنون از محوطه‌های نوسنگی فارس به دست آمده، از نیمه دوم هزاره هفتم پ.م شاهد شکل‌گیری فرهنگ‌های سفالی مختلفی در این حوزه فرهنگی هستیم. در نیمه شمالی این حوزه، فرهنگ‌های سفالی موشکی و جری، در منطقه کوار سفال‌های نوع قصراحمد، در فسا سفال نوع جلیان و در داراب سفال نوع بیزدان رایج بوده است. شناخت شاخصه‌های فرهنگ‌های دوره نوسنگی، یکی از اهداف اصلی بررسی باستان‌شناسی نگارنده در فرگ بود که در سال ۲۰۱۹ انجام شد. در این مقاله سعی بر آن است تا بر اساس یافته‌های فرهنگی سطحی به دست آمده از این منطقه به بررسی شاخصه‌های فرهنگی دوره نوسنگی در جنوب ایران پرداخته شود. مهمترین سوالات عبارتند از اینکه قدیمی‌ترین شواهد از یکجانشینی در فرگ مربوط به چه دوره‌ای است؟ و فرهنگ سفالی رایج در این بخش متأثر از کدام فرهنگ سفالی است؟ با توجه به بررسی صورت گرفته از سطح دو محوطه سفال‌های منقوش نوسنگی به دست آمد که نشان می‌دهد که این دشت در دوره نوسنگی تحت نفوذ و گسترش فرهنگ سفالی نوع بیزدان قرار داشته است. وجود زمین‌های حاصلخیز و رودخانه موجود در فرگ را می‌توان از مهمترین دلایل جذب جوامع انسانی در دوره نوسنگی دانست.

واژگان کلیدی: حوزه فرهنگی فارس، دوره نوسنگی، فرهنگ سفالی بیزدان، ابزار سنگی.

I. Introduction

Taking into account the rather long history of the Neolithic period studies in the Fars cultural zone, there remain some substantial unanswered questions. Recent excavations by Azizi Kharanaghi in the two sites of Rahmat Abad (Azizi Kharanaghi *et al*., 2012a; Azizi Kharanaghi and Khanipour, 2014; Azizi Kharanaghi *et al*., 2013; 2014) and Qasr-e Ahmad Kavar (Azizi Kharanaghi *et al*., 2012b) and by Author at Tol-e Sangi in Morghab plain (Khanipour *et al*., 2021a) revealed some evidence from pre-pottery Neolithic and also the early pottery Neolithic in Fars. According to the excavations, it was revealed that at about the middle of the eighth millennium BC, Fars was inhabited by people with agronomical -and more probably with an early herding subsistence economy. For the Fars region, the pre-pottery has been introduced as the Rahmat Abad phase since based on absolute dating data derived from Rahmat Abad, Azizi Kharanaghi proposed date of ca. 7450 to ca.7000 B.C. for the earliest phase of Rahmat Abad Tape (Azizi Kharanaghi and Khanipour, 2014; Azizi Kharanaghi *et al*., 2013; 2014). After that, the early phase of Rahmat Abad data was manipulated to have been as the commencing period of Neolithization in the entire Fars region. Soon after it became a criticism against the previous belief that regarded the Mushki pottery as the oldest in the Kur River Basin of the Fars region. In the excavation of the Tol-e Sangi in the pre-pottery Neolithic layers and without any gap, we see the appearance of pottery along with other cultural materials, the pottery obtained from the Tol-e Sangi is generally plain with organic temper.

A period of about 6350 to 5600 BC in the northern half of Fars is introduced as the Mushki and Jari phases. The chronological relations between the two cultural phases of Mushki and Jari have given rise to many arguments from the 1950s to the recent time (Vanden Berghe, 1953-54; Fukai *et al*., 1973; Sumner, 1977; Maeda, 1986; Alizadeh, 2006; Alizadeh *et al*., 2004; Nishiaki, 2010a, b; Pollock *et al*., 2010; Khanipour *et al*., 2021b). The identified sites are generally small settlements that are less than one hectare in area and are

mostly located in plains or valleys. The number of Neolithic sites in the Fars region considerably increased during the pottery Neolithic period. for this period, we cannot solely rely on Kur River Basin (KRB) and its adjacent regions, but rather on the settlements that are located in other regions of Fars as well (Weeks *et al.*, 2006).

Pottery was discovered in the Kur river basin (Vanden Berghe, 1953-54; Fukai *et al.*, 1973; Sumner, 1972; 1977), Kazerun and Shiraz (Sumner, 1977), Arsanjan (Ikeda, 1979), Mamasani region (Weeks *et al.*, 2006; Weeks, 2013), Qara Aghaj River Basin (Azizi Kharanghi *et al.*, 2012b; Bernbeck *et al.*, 2005) and Fasa and Darab Plains (de Miroschedji, 1973; Khanipour, 2020) show a wide variety of painted pottery, basic similarities in the technical process of production and limitations in the form of pottery. Due to the diversity of pottery styles, Alizadeh has considered the northern part of Fars under the domain of the development of Mushki and Jari cultures, and the southern part of Fars dominated by Qasr-e Ahmad culture (Alizadeh, 2021). The author and Azizi Kharanaghi have considered four distinct pottery cultures for the Fars cultural zone during the Neolithic period (Khanipour and Azizi Kharanaghi in press).

Until now most archaeological studies and research, conducted in the Fars region, have been focused on the KRB and Marvdasht Plain in particular. Regarding the diversity of the Fars region landscapes, composed of various valleys and plains with different environmental characteristics, more comprehensive studies, as well as surveys and excavations in other regions, are required to present a more accurate analysis of the Neolithic period in Fars. The results of the studies conducted in the region demonstrate different Neolithic cultures in the southern Fars. According to these studies, the regions such as Fasa and Darab of the southern Qara Aghaj river basin had a different pottery style from that of northern Fars (Khanipour *et al.*, 2021b). Due to this fact, some regions, such as Darab and Forg plains remain almost unknown. Due to the importance of the area, the author surveyed Darab County in 2019. One of the most important objectives of this survey was the identification of the Neolithic settlements and to describe the cultural features of this period. In this article, according to the surface findings, the settlements of the Neolithic period of Forg are studied. According to the objectives, the most important questions are: What is the oldest evidence of settlement in Forg? and the common pottery style in this area is influenced by which culture zone? In this article, while studying the pottery cultures of the Fars in the Neolithic period, the surface findings of the Neolithic period in the Forg will be introduced.

II. Research Background, Neolithic period in Fars

For the first time, some archaeological evidence from Neolithic settlements in Fars is known from Stein's survey (Stein, 1936: pl.XXIII.93, 95–100). Simultaneously with archaeological excavations in Persepolis, the excavation of Tol-e Bakun can be considered the first excavation of a Neolithic site in Fars. During the excavation of this site, coarse plain potteries related to the last phase of the Neolithic period were obtained (Langsdorff and McCown, 1942: 23). Vanden Berghe excavated several sites in the Marvdasht plain, including Tol-e Mushki and Tol-e Jari, and suggested the first chronological sequence of Fars (1951-s1952). After that, the Japanese team conducted excavations at Tol-e Mushki (Fukai *et al.*, 1973), Tol-e Jari A and B (Egami *et al.*, 1977; Egami, 1967), and Tol-e Bakun B (Egami and Masuda, 1962). Vanden Berghe had no success in correctly distinct the two phases of Tol-e-Mushki and Jari, however, he proposed the Jari phase to have been older (Vanden Berghe, 1951-1952: 212-213; 1953-1954). Through the Japanese excavation in the deeper cultural deposits of Tol-e Jari, many Mushki potteries were discovered (Egami, 1967: 2939) but whether these potteries have been associated with Jari's pottery is not yet clear. The excavators believed that the Mushki pottery style is older than that of the Jari (Fukai *et al.*, 1973: 77). William Sumner based on the surveys on the Kur River Basin started comprehensive studies about the Neolithic period in Fars (Sumner, 1972). Also, he introduced Tol-e Kutahi, Tol-e Morge, and also Sarvestan sites (Sumner, 1972: Pl.III. A-H; N-Q; IV.W; III.V; Sumner, 1977: 295-299). Likewise, Miroschedji had limited surveys in the Fasa and Darab plains and introduced Jalyan and Bizdan pottery styles (de Miroschedji, 1973).

After the revolution in Iran and after years of lack of field activities in the Fars Neolithic period, Alizadeh conducted surveys in the Kur River basin in 1995, which led to the discovery of several Neolithic sites (Alizadeh, 2003). He re-excavated five major prehistoric sites including Tol-e Bakun A, Tol-e Bakun B, Tol-e Jari A, Tol-e Jari B, and Tol-e Mushki (Alizadeh *et al.*, 2004). Other studies include excavations at Tang-e Bolaghi (Tsuneki and Zeidi, 2008; Tsuneki, 2013), Tol-e Bashi (Bernbeck *et al.*, 2004, Pollock *et al.*, 2010), a systematic survey on the Koshk-e Hezar (Alden *et al.*, 2004), Tol-e Nurabad in Mamassani (Potts and Roustaei, 2006), Tape RahmatAbad in Passargade county (Bernbeck *et al.*, 2008; Azizi Kharanaghi and Khanipour, 2014; Azizi Kharanaghi *et al.*, 2012a, 2013 and 2014), Qasr-e Ahmad in Qara Aghaj river basin (Azizi Kharanaghi *et al.*, 2012b), Tape Mianroud (Ebrahimi *et al.*, 2014), Hormangan site (Khanipour, 2018; Khanipour *et al.*, 2018), Tol-e Sangi in Morghab plain (Khanipour *et al.*, 2021a) and Tape Pustchi in Shiraz (Sardari & Arab,

2020). During the Neyriz survey, led by Moradi, pre-pottery Neolithic sites were identified (Nikzad *et al.*, 2018). Also, during the author's survey, several Neolithic sites in Darab (Khanipour, 2020) and one Neolithic site in Tojredi district of Fars province (Khanipour and Molaei Kordshooli, 2021) were identified.

III. Darab County, Forg district

Darab County consists of four districts Markazi, Fasaroud, Rustaq, and Forg. Forg district is a subtropical region and is located in the southeastern of Fars province, with Rustaq district to the north, Larestan to the south, Hormozgan province to the east, and Zarrin Dasht County to the west. Before the author's archeological survey, no archeological activities had been carried out in this area and only a few of its significant historical sites had been registered by the Administration of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts of Fars Province. Due to the importance of the region in terms of archeology and the completion of the archaeological atlas of the country, Darab County was surveyed by the author in 2019. Due to its extent, a complete survey of this county was not possible in one season, so part of the county was not surveyed, and a small area was surveyed in the Forg district. As a result of the survey in Forg, sites from pre-history to the Islamic era were identified, among which two sites of Neolithic painted pottery of the Bizdan type and two sites of coarse Neolithic pottery were identified. In this article, two sites with Bezdan pottery will be introduced.

IV. Tol-e Fadaei 1

Tol-e Fadaei 1 is located in Forg (Fig. 1) and at a distance of 1600 meters from Doborji city and 1000 meters from Shah Marz village. The site is about 170 cm high and its dimensions are 90 x 70 meters. Of course, it seems that the above site extends to the north, which is unfortunately leveled by farmers, cultural materials can be seen in abundance on the surface of agricultural lands up to a distance of about 50 meters. Due to the distribution of cultural materials, the site probably had an area of about 8,000 square meters, but today about 5000 square meters remain intact. The site leads to agricultural lands with a gentle slope from four sides (Fig. 2 and 3) and on its surface, there is a lot of distribution of cultural materials including pottery, stone vessels, ground stone, and stone tools.

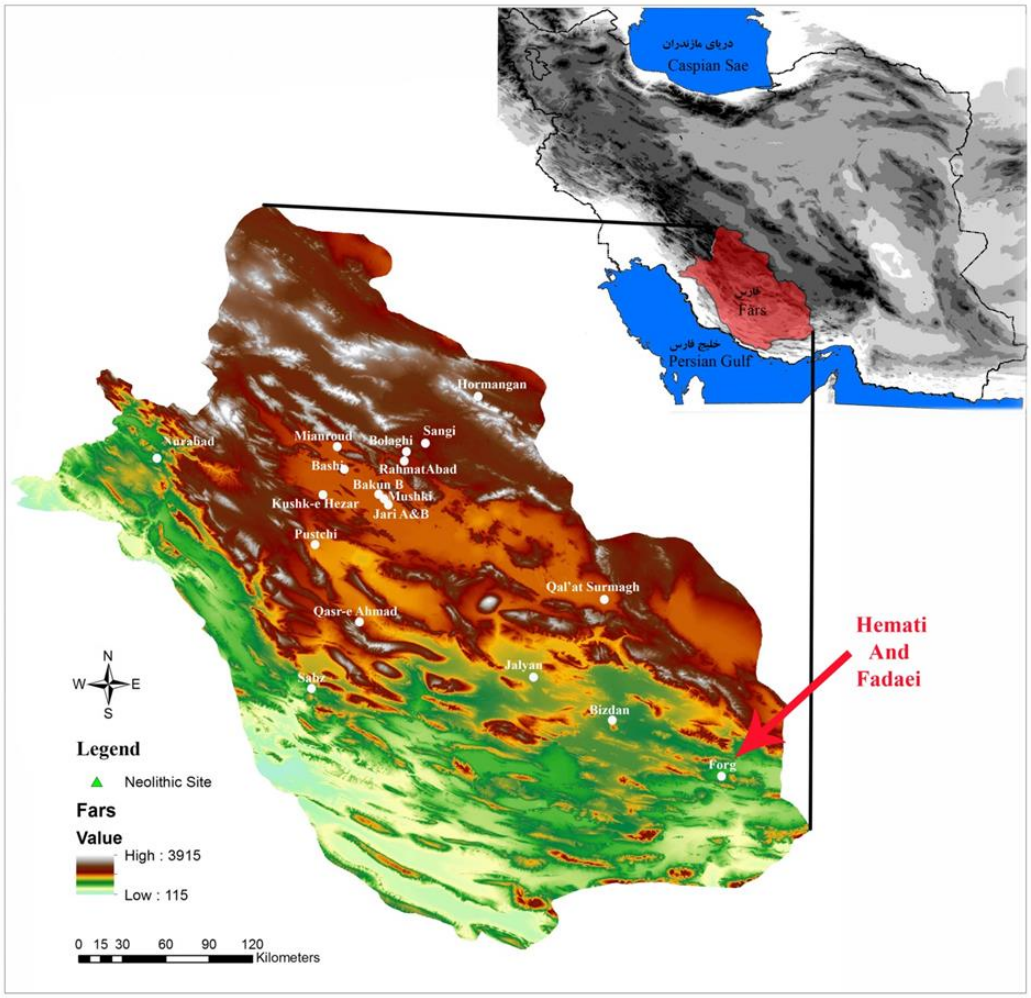

Figure 1. Map of the Neolithic Sites in Fars, showing the location of Tol-e Hemati and Fadaei 1.

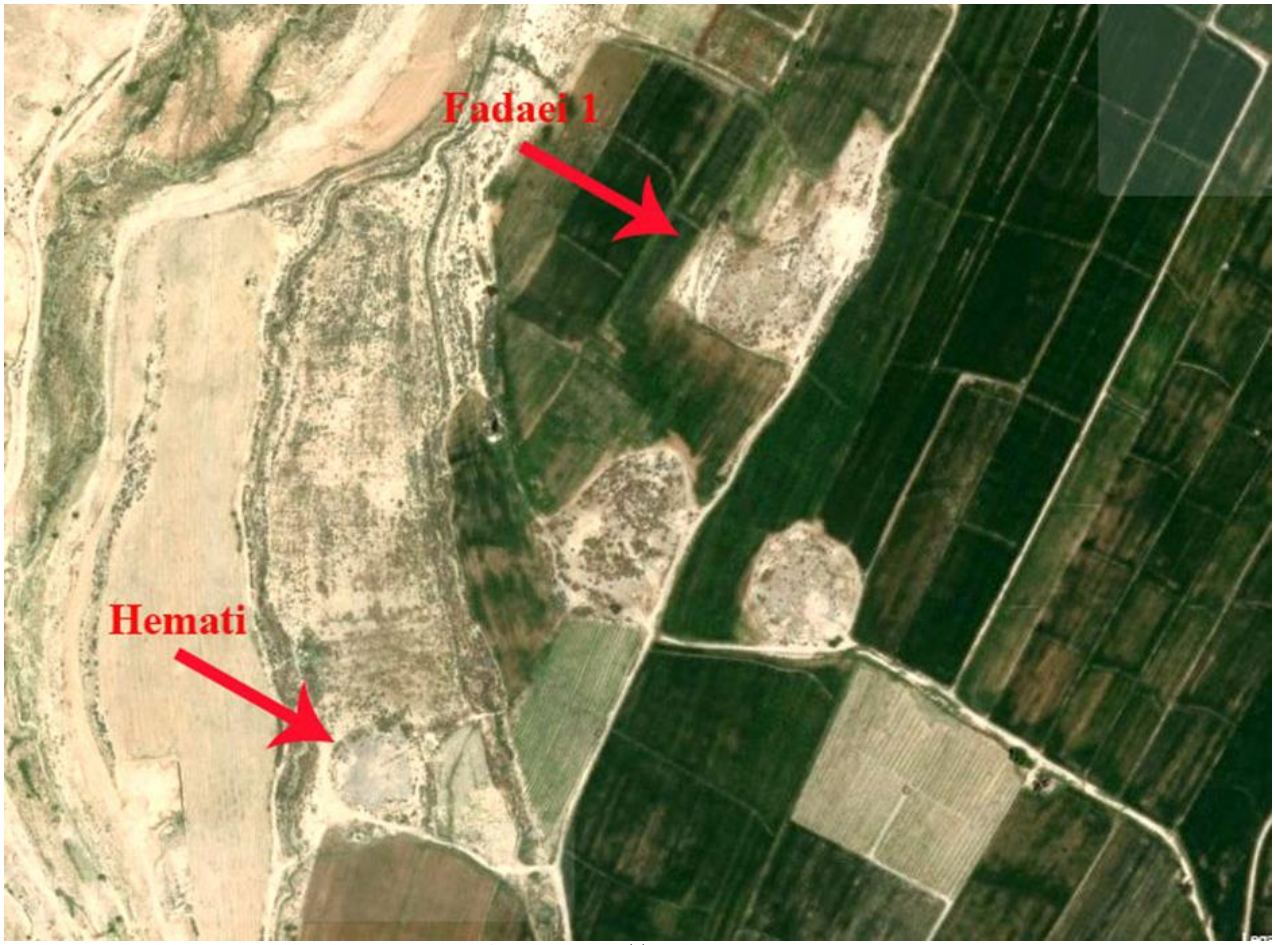

Figure 2. Satellite image, Tol-e Hemati and Fadaei 1.

Figure 3. View of Tol-e Fadaei 1.

VI.1. Pottery of Fadaei 1

During the survey, 24 pieces of pottery were collected from the surface, which is related to two periods. Here, only Neolithic period pottery will be discussed. Six pieces are plain and unpainted, and 1 rim and 9 pieces of body painted related to the Neolithic

period were collected from the surface. The above potteries can be divided into two categories in terms of fabric color: buff and red, although red pottery is rarely seen on the surface. Both types of buff and red pottery can be divided into plain and painted, and in terms of quality, into two groups: medium and coarse pottery. The patterns on all the pottery are of geometric type, which are drawn in black on buff, or red. Patterns usually include lozenges, squares, or zigzag frames that are filled with vertical or diagonal parallel lines. The temper of all potteries is vegetable, although in some samples traces of minerals including fine sand or fine white grains can be seen. The size of the organic tempers also varied, so that on the surface and in the paste of some sherds, especially the coarse samples of depressions that indicate the vegetable temper can be seen.

Although the firing of pottery was sufficient, the non-uniformity of the exterior color of the pottery, such as pottery No. 1, 2, and 3, was an indication of firing in open kilns and the lack of control over the kiln temperature. The outer surface and some inner surfaces of the pottery are well polished. The outer and inner surface of Pottery No. 4 is well polished, but its surface has several vertical and horizontal cracks. Pottery No. 12 is buff-colored, but the inner surface has a thick red slip and is completely polished, and the outer surface has geometric patterns. Pottery No. 7 is the only example of the rim of this collection, which has diagonal lines on its outer surface and a thin horizontal band inside, the inner surface of this pottery is well polished and the inner color in the upper part of the buff and its extension to the bottom is gray. The two pieces of pottery No. 9 and 11, which have a carination form, indicate that in this pottery form, the pattern was probably only drawn on the upper part. The outer surface of pottery No. 13 has a thick buff slip, the surface of which is well polished, and then black patterns are drawn on it, but the inner surface, although polished, has several cracks (Fig. 4). The above pottery is comparable to the pottery introduced as Bizdan type pottery by de Miroschedji from Darab plain (de Miroschedji, 1973: fig. 2, no.1–10).

Figure 4. Neolithic pottery from the Tol-e Fadaei 1.

IV.2. Stone tools

During the survey seven pieces of stone tools related to the Neolithic period were obtained from the surface, including 3 blades, 4 bladeled, 2 Scraper, 5 Flake, 2 debitage, and 3 blade cores, all of which were made of chert stone and their color was in a range of dark and light browns and gray (Fig. 5). The tools are all made with the technique of blade pressure flaking.

Figure 5. chipped stone artifacts from the Tol-e Fadaei 1.

IV.3. Ground Stone

Groundstone is among the most significant discoveries in prehistoric sites. Despite the importance of these finds in the archeology literature, in Iranian archeology, they are often considered very superficially. Stone tools were utilized parallel with the commencement of agriculture and to prepare food, which makes them an integrated part of prehistoric archeological evidence (Wright, 1994; Hole, 1977). Besides the issue of livelihoods and food production, studying them can provide us with useful information about their special functions, social hierarchies, and women's role in ancient communities (Darabi, 2016: 7). The Ground Stone discovered in Tol-e Fadaei 1 includes hand mill, pounders (Fig. 6), and grindstone, made of limestone which has the minimum of corrosion and erosion when it is used for grinding and preparing plant debris.

There are also signs of red pigment of Ochre on the surface of one of the pounders (Fig. 7), the presence of the pigment of Ochre indicates that here the ground stone probably had multiple functions. Previously, in some sites such as Sarab (McDonald, 1979: 305), Chogha Golan (Conard and Zeidi, 2013: 371), and Hormangan (Khanipour, 2018), the red pigment of Ochre has been seen on the ground stones. According to what has been said, a dual function can be considered for the ground stones from Fadaei 1, including the softening of food and preparation of the color pigment.

Figure 6. Pounder from the Tol-e Fadaei 1.

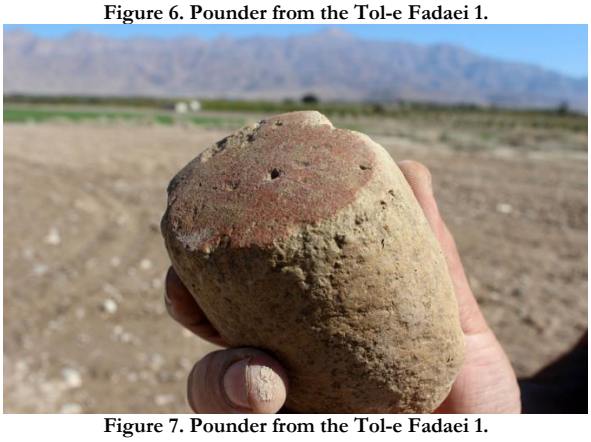

Figure 7. Pounder from the Tol-e Fadaei 1.

V. Tol-e Hemati

Tol-e Hemati is located in Forg (Fig. 1) and at a distance of 1900 meters from Doborji city and 320 meters from Tol-e Fadaei 1. The site is about 250 cm high and its dimensions are 60 × 70 meters. The site probably has an area of about 3500 square meters. On the north and south side of this site, there are agricultural lands and on the west side, there is a riverbed. Unfortunately, on the northeast side of the site, big man-made destruction about 30 meters long and 2 meters deep has been seen, which has destroyed the cultural deposits of this part of the site (Fig. 2 and 8) and on its surface, there is a lot of distribution of cultural materials including pottery, stone object, and stone tools.

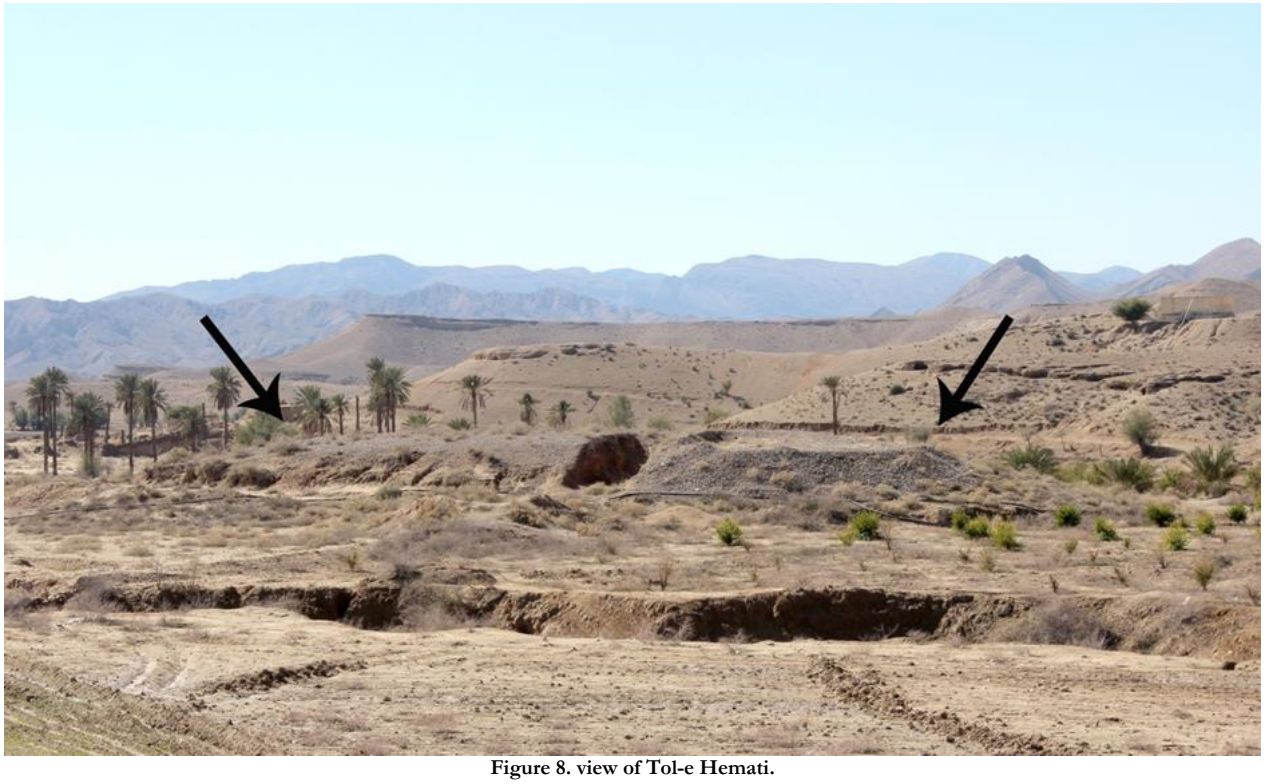

Figure 8. view of Tol-e Hemati.

V.1. Pottery of Tol-e Hemati

During the survey of this site, 16 pieces of pottery were collected, of which 4 pieces are related to the Bakun period and 12 pieces include 6 pieces of the rim, 4 pieces of the body, and 2 pieces of the base are related to the Neolithic period (Fig. 9). The above potteries can be divided into two categories in terms of fabric Color: buff and red, although red pottery is rarely seen on the surface. Both types of buff and red pottery can be divided into plain and painted, and in terms of quality, into two groups: medium and coarse pottery. In terms of characteristics such as manufacture, firing, Fabric color (ext./int./core), temper, finish (ext./int.), exterior coating and treatment, interior coating and treatment, and Decoration of this site is quite similar to the pottery of Fadaei 1. The base of the vessel was not found at Fadaei 1, but two bases obtained from Hemati show that the bases are flat (no. 12) and concave (no. 11). The outer surface of pottery No. 1 is polished and then decorated with geometric patterns, the pattern of which consists of two rows of interconnected horizontal lozenge filled with parallel vertical lines inside them and a zigzag frame which inside this frame is also filled with horizontal parallel lines so that the surface of the sherd is almost completely covered with the patterns. Pottery number eight is red in fabric and on the inner surface, on the outer surface of which there is a thick buff slip, and geometric patterns are drawn on it. Pottery No. 12 also has a buff fabric color, the inner surface of which has a red slip, and the inner surface is well polished, but the outer surface is not polished. The above pottery is comparable to the pottery introduced as Bizdan-type pottery by de Miroschedji from Darab Plain (de Miroschedji, 1973: fig. 2, no.1–10).

Figure 9. Neolithic pottery from the Tol-e Hemati.

V.2. Stone tools

During the surface survey of 24 pieces of stone tools related to the Neolithic period, including 5 blades, 3 bladeled, 1 crested blade, 1 borer, 3 blade core, 1 Flake core, 2 side scraper, 2 end scraper, and 6 Flake, all of which were made of chert and their color was in a range of dark and light browns and cream (Fig. 10). The tools are all made with the technique of blade pressure flaking.

Figure 10. chipped stone from the Tol-e Hemati.

V.3. Stone object

Other surface findings of this site include a stone object with dimensions of 5.8×4.9 cm, in the middle of which there is a depression, which is similar to the excavations of the Hormangan site and Tol-e Mushki (Fig. 11) it was found that the Japanese team referred to this stone object as "rubstone" (Fukai *el al.*, 1973 PL. XXVI).

Figure 11. rubstone from the Tol-e Hemati (a), Hormangan site (b), and Tol-e Mushki (c).

VI. Conclusion

Miroschedji found two types of pottery, different from the Kur River basin, in Darab and Fasa, which he introduced with the Bizdan and Jalyan pottery. Before the author's survey in Darab, our knowledge of the Bizdan pottery style was only the photographs of a few pieces of pottery that were mentioned from two sites in Darab. Unlike Mushki and jari pottery styles, from which various sites have been excavated and a lot of information has been obtained today, the study of Bizdan culture is in its early stages, so in terms of the extent, settlement pattern, absolute dating, and the subsistent, no information is available. During the archeological survey, the author identified two sites with Bizdan pottery in Forg, which shows that this pottery style was used in other plains as well, except in the central plain of Darab. The pottery is all handmade with organic temper, most of which is polished. The designs of all the potteries are of geometric type, which are drawn in black on a buff or red. Patterns usually include lozenges, squares, or zigzag frames that are filled with vertical or diagonal parallel lines. The stone tools obtained from both sites are made by pressure technique and the presence of debitage a blade core and cortical tools indicates the production of stone tools in these sites. Chert has been used to produce stone tools, all of which seem to have used a local stone source. Several ground stones were obtained from the surface of Fadaei 1, a dual function can be considered for the ground stones, including the softening of food and preparation of the color pigment. This article only discussed the expansion of the geographical area of the Bizdan pottery style in the Forg plain. It is necessary to excavate one of the key sites of this period to analyze the economic and social structures of the Neolithic period in Darab and the south of Iran.

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